AN ETHNOGRAPHY
OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION

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This dissertation entitled

AN ETHNOGRAPHY

OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS FROM CONTINUING EDUCATION

BY

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The purpose of this study is to explore the characteristics of selected community college presidents who had previously held dean or director positions in continuing education areas of community colleges. Also, the study seeks to explain why and how this administrative track led to the presidency. The five primary areas of focus are career choice, preparation for the presidency, perceptions of the presidents about their college and role, perceptions of a dean and a board member of this cohort, and perceptions of the presidents for others in continuing education who aspire to become a community college president.

Snowball sampling identified the five community college presidents in this ethnographic study. Personal interviews were conducted with each president. An academic dean or coordinator and a board member were also interviewed during the college visit. In some cases, the dean of continuing education was interviewed. Data were also obtained from observations and relevant documents.

The findings indicate these presidents are individuals with out-going personalities, confidence, courage, good judgment, and an ability to lead. The presidents value diversity, integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, and respect for others. They involve faculty and staff in the decision-making process. The presidents are committed to serving their communities. Although the presidents do not believe it is necessary to ascend to the presidency via the traditional academic route, three of them did. The presidents believe continuing education people make good presidents because they have characteristics that
are transferable to the role. Several suggestions were offered for those who aspire to become a community college president. The perceptions of the deans and board members about the presidents and the colleges parallel those of the president.

Search committees and boards of trustees may find the results helpful as they choose presidents for their institutions. This study may also interest those involved with succession planning and choosing individuals for leadership development programs. Finally, the results will interest people who aspire to become community college presidents.

Approved: Robert B. Young

Professor of Counseling and Higher Education
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Background of the Study

Community colleges today present many opportunities and challenges for their leaders. Credit, noncredit, and lifelong learning experiences are offered to a culturally diverse population. The number of students attending community colleges is projected to increase over the next decade for many reasons. One reason is the growing number of foreign-born students (Bailey, 2003). Developments in technology and the need for skills will also bring students to community college courses, as will low tuition rates. Finally, collaborative agreements and partnerships with businesses, community organizations, and secondary education will increase the demand for community college education (Bailey).

Community colleges are also in a challenging environment. It is anticipated there will be more pressure by policymakers to increase transfer rates as the number of students who want four-year degrees grows (Bailey, 2003). In addition, part of a community college mission is to provide access to education. Therefore, English as a Second Language and developmental education in basic mathematics, composition, and reading comprehension are offered. However, the large numbers of poorly prepared students can complicate efforts to improve transfer and graduation rates (Bailey). Another challenge is that there are other institutions competing with community colleges for the adult and part-time students traditionally served by them. These include public and not-for-profit four-year colleges, community-based organizations, for-profit companies, in-house company trainers, and even community colleges competing with each other (Bailey). Finally, distance education is growing rapidly. This may cause a disadvantage for
community colleges that have more restricted budgets than the four-year public or for-profit institutions (Bailey).

Over the past three years, education decision makers at the Community College Futures Assembly have identified several critical issues that need to be addressed. The 2003 participants identified the following as the top three overall critical issues: develop creative ways to find “new” sources of money – identify sources of funding and manage resource allocations; address diversity and changing student populations; and develop flexible curriculum practices and ensure development of programs that meet the needs of a diverse population of customers (2003 Community College Futures Assembly). In 2002, the critical issues included distance learning; adequate funding; leadership and accountability; facilities needs; meeting the needs (not wants) of stakeholders, constituents, and the community; responding to change; and resource development (Campbell & Peek, 2002). At the 2001 Assembly, the top issues were to move the focus from teaching to learning; timely responsiveness to community, business, and industry needs; and funding (Campbell & Kachik, 2001).

As community college leaders respond to opportunities and challenges, they need to remember that public and government officials are asking complex questions about the services they provide. It is important to recognize that consumers of higher education want value in the product; students want convenient class schedules and low cost; employers want skilled workers with critical thinking, problem solving, communication, and technical skills; legislators want measurable outcomes and effectiveness; and taxpayers want their money to be well spent.
Community College Leaders

The last of many leaders who founded community colleges in the 1960s are at or beyond retirement. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), there is an impending leadership crisis as college presidents, chief academic officers, and faculty retire (Shults, 2001). An on-line survey of community college presidents conducted by AACC found that forty-five percent of the current presidents planned to retire by 2007 (Shults). Research literature reports that the average age of presidents is increasing. In 1986 the average age of the community college president was 51.4 years (Ross & Green, 2000) and in 2001 it was 56 years (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002).

Research (e.g., Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002; Ross & Green, 2000) indicates that current presidents advanced from traditional senior administrative positions. The research by Amey, VanDerlinden, and Brown (2002) reported that sixty-two percent of the presidents reported that their immediate past position had been as either a president at another community college or as provost. Weisman and Vaughan’s (2002) research indicated that 39% of the presidents had been chief academic officers, almost 7% had been vice presidents with academic overview, nearly 6% held the dual position of chief academic officer and chief student affairs officer, and slightly more than 3% held other positions with academic overview. The three most common prior positions of community college presidents in Ross and Green’s (2000) research were president (27.6%), chief academic officer (24.3%), and senior executive (24%). This research indicates that most presidents follow the traditional senior leadership route, with many advancing from the chief academic officer (provost)
position. However, a study by Moore, Twombly, and Martorana (1985) indicated that the average age of chief academic officers in 1984 was forty-nine years. In 2000, it was fifty-four years (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002). Thus, the average age of the chief academic officer is similar to the president. This indicates that this pool of administrators is diminishing as well.

Christopher Shults interviewed Christine McPhail, director of the Morgan State University Community College Leadership Program, about the forthcoming retirements of community college leaders at all levels. Shults (2001) wrote that McPhail believes that:

While it would be easy to panic at the impending changes, one must view them as a challenge and an opportunity: a challenge to find qualified individuals to replace those individuals retiring, and an opportunity to identify people with a new vision that fits the needs of the community college (Shults, p. 2).

Since the traditional road to the community college presidency is uncertain with the impending retirements of chief academic officers and faculty, community colleges need to identify where future qualified leaders will come from. Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown (2002) concluded that pathways to the community college presidency are changing. Although the majority of the presidents in their study followed the traditional path, 3% of the presidents indicated that their immediate past position was as dean, assistant dean, or director in continuing education or vocational education. This nontraditional pathway to the community college presidency is worthy of exploration because deans or directors in these areas may merit development for the presidential role.
Statement of the Problem

There is an impending leadership crisis for community colleges. As presidents, chief academic officers, and faculty near retirement, there is significant need to explore who are qualified to ascend to the community college president position. One nontraditional cohort for the presidency is deans or directors from continuing education areas of the college. These deans or directors work with community leaders, legislators, and secondary school administrators to plan, develop, implement, and evaluate programs, many of which are self-supporting. The continuing education programs, contract training, and nontraditional credit courses they guide are essential in meeting the needs of the community they serve, a mission of community colleges. However, there is little research about presidents from these areas. We do not know how these presidents perceive themselves or their jobs, nor do we know how others perceive them. Therefore, this researcher undertook qualitative research to study presidents with this background, thereby adding to the body of knowledge about community college presidents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore the characteristics of selected community college presidents who had previously held dean or director positions in continuing education areas of community colleges. Also, the study sought to explain why and how this administrative track may led to the office of the president. The five primary areas of focus were career choice; preparation for the presidency, including previous positions; perceptions of the presidents about their college and roles; perceptions of a dean and a board member of this cohort; and perceptions of presidents for others in continuing education who aspire to be community college presidents.
Research Questions

Since the purpose of qualitative research is to understand how and why a phenomenon occurs there are a limited number of questions that defined the parameters of the study. These initial research questions are broad, open-ended, and non-directional. Consistent with emerging design, the research questions may change throughout the study. In this study, research question three was added after the interviews began.

The following research questions guided this ethnography.

1. How did the presidents make this position a career choice?
2. How did the presidents perceive they prepared for the role of president?
3. How do the presidents perceive their colleges and their roles?
4. How has the previous position as dean or director of continuing education helped or hindered their work as president?
5. How did a dean and a board member perceive the president?
6. How do these presidents believe aspiring deans or directors of continuing education should prepare for the presidency?

Significance of the Study

A study about presidents who ascended from dean or director positions in continuing education is important for several reasons. First, community colleges are important to the communities they serve. In addition to overseeing the diverse student population and programs offered by the colleges, presidents need to be able to work effectively with legislators; be familiar with fundraising and development; develop partnerships with the government, businesses, community organizations, and high schools; and have skills to work effectively with faculty, administrators and staff.
Therefore, it is important that we know more about the leaders of community colleges. This knowledge should help search committees and boards of trustees choose presidents who are appropriate for their institution. Second, although there is a significant research about community college presidents, there is no research that explores the characteristics of presidents from continuing education. Third, pathways to the presidency are changing. “As backgrounds of community college administrators change, so too might leadership priorities and understandings of current issues (as well as strategies to address them)” (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002, p. 585). Having an understanding of presidents from various administrative positions in community colleges may assist boards of trustees in succession planning. Finally, this research should interest those in continuing education who aspire to become community college presidents. The research should offer guidance to them as they prepare for future roles in academia administration.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study confined itself to community college presidents who had been deans or directors of continuing education. Additionally, it considered the experiences of five presidents and various people associated with them. The study was limited to five presidents because the overall population of presidents with this background was small. Therefore, generalization to the broader population is not appropriate.

**Limitations of the Study**

This study had the following limitations. First, the data are open to the researcher’s interpretation. This included describing individuals and settings, analyzing data for themes or categories, interpreting data about its meaning (personally and theoretically), stating the lessons learned and offering further questions (Creswell, 2003).
A limitation with observation is that the observer “may affect the situation being observed in unknown ways” (Patton, 2002, p. 306). Another is that observations are limited to external behaviors of those being observed (Patton). Limitations with interview data include the possibility of distorted responses by the researcher, recall error, reactivity of the interviewee to the interviewer, and self-serving responses (Patton). Document limitations include records that are incomplete or inaccurate (Patton).

**Definition of Terms**

Dean or director of continuing education: A person with administrative responsibilities for community college areas that provide programs, courses, and other educational offerings to meet the needs of the community not met by the traditional academic degree or certificate programs. This may include continuing education programs, workforce development programs, customized job training programs for business and industry, and lifelong learning offerings.

**Organization of the Dissertation**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. Chapter One contains background information about the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, delimitations of the study, limitations of the study, and definition of terms. Chapter Two is a review of the literature. Chapter Three discusses the research methodology. Chapter Four presents the profiles of the five presidents who participated in the study. Chapter Five presents the research findings. Finally, Chapter Six presents a discussion of the data and implications for further study.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Introduction

Community colleges of the early twenty-first century are open enrollment institutions that provide diverse students with educational choices that are influenced by community need. Credit and noncredit courses prepare students for their first career, provide transfer credit opportunities so students can obtain baccalaureate degrees, and offer courses to workers so their skills can be upgraded. Community colleges also offer value and service to their students. In addition to low tuition, the availability of a multitude of courses during the day, evening, and weekend hours, as well as distance learning, permits many to pursue associate degrees and certificates.

As the economy has moved from an industrial base to an information and service base new challenges and opportunities face community college leaders. These include participation in a global economy, new competition and the move toward privatization, distance education, competency-based programs, blurred mission boundaries, and funding challenges (Hockaday & Puyear, 2002).

Research literature about community college presidents is plentiful. However, as presidents, chief academic officers (provosts), senior vice presidents, and faculty retire future leaders need to be identified, trained, and mentored. One such cohort may be deans and directors from continuing education areas of community colleges. However, with the exception of two studies about presidents from community services (e.g., Young & Rue, 1981; Vaughan, 1987), there is no research about community college presidents who ascended from these positions.
The review of the literature in this chapter will be divided into sections. These include historical developments of community colleges, ethnography and culture, community college leaders, pathways to the presidency, presidents from community services, characteristics of community college presidents, and conclusion.

**Historical Developments of Community Colleges**

Many historical events have contributed to the development of the community college of today. Their origins can be traced back to the passage of the Morrill Act in 1862 (Vaughan, 1995). Also called the Land Grant Act, the Morrill Act established land grant institutions and provided access to public higher education for students previously excluded from it. In 1891, William Rainey Harper became president of the University of Chicago, established a junior college at the University of Chicago, and successfully advocated that “weak four-year colleges drop the last two years and become junior colleges” (Vaughan, 1982, p. 4). Under Harper’s influence, Joliet Junior College was founded in 1901 when two years were added to the high school program. Joliet Junior College is believed to be the oldest existing public junior college in the nation.

The early twentieth century continued to bring new ideas. In 1904 the concept that “a state-supported university should contribute directly to improved farming, more efficient industry, and better government” (Brubacher & Rudy, 1999, p.165) was supported by the University of Wisconsin. A result of the Wisconsin Idea was the development of extension services to assist the public and the state government. Also, the University “declared the boundaries of the state to be its campus” (Vaughan, 1995, p.40). As a result, most community college leaders today view the college’s service region as its campus. (Vaughan). Also, between 1907 and 1917, California “passed legislation
authorizing high schools to offer postgraduate courses, provided state and county support for junior college students, and provided for independent junior college districts which had their own boards, budgets, and procedures” (Vaughan p. 40).

The passage of the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (GI Bill) in 1944 by Congress provided financial assistance for veterans of World War II who wanted to pursue higher education. This program, along with “later programs of direct student aid have had enormous impact upon the community college’s enrollment, student body composition, programs, and overall mission”(Vaughan, 1982, p. 7).

The term “community college” was popularized by President Truman’s Commission on Higher Education. The Higher Education for American Democracy publication in 1947 called for “the establishment of a network of public community colleges which would charge little or no tuition, serve as cultural centers, be comprehensive in their program offerings, with emphasis on civic responsibilities, and would serve the area in which they were located” (Vaughan, 1995, p.41).

One of the most important concepts that influenced the development of the community college was the belief that all Americans should have access to higher education. As a result of the various social movements of the 1960s and the availability of student-based financial aid, society “committed itself to the belief that education beyond high school was a right and not just a privilege”(Vaughan, 1982, p. 12). The outcome was the entry into higher education of minority and women students, as well as those from the “lower quartile of their high school graduating class and from the lower socioeconomic segments of society”(Vaughan, p. 12). This “open door” access has become the “hallmark of the community college, and its work with these students is
among the most significant contributions of the community college to the nation’s education” (Vaughan, p. 12).

Since 1965 the federal government has made higher education a possibility for most Americans by passing the Higher Education Act of 1965, the amendments to the act in 1972, and subsequent amendments and reauthorizations, including the 1992 higher education amendments” (Vaughan, 1995, p. 42), and the Pell Grants.

Ethnography and Culture

Ethnography is the “work of describing a culture” (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). The essence of ethnography is to understand another way of life from “the native point of view” (p. 3). Instead of collecting data about people, the ethnographer seeks to learn from people and to be taught by people. The researcher becomes a student and the culture becomes the teacher. According to Spradley (1979), ethnography begins with “a conscious attitude of almost complete ignorance” (p. 4).

Spradley (1979) wrote that the “core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand” (p. 5). The meanings can be expressed in language, or they may be taken for granted and communicated “indirectly through word and action” (p. 5).

Culture is described by Spradley (1979) as “the acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (p. 5). Members of two different groups of people can observe the same event but have different interpretations of the event based on their cultural principles and shared experiences.

Culture is “learned, revised, maintained, and defined in the context of people interacting” (Spradley, 1979, p. 6) with each other. Culture “serves as a guide for acting
and for interpreting” (Spradley, p. 7) experiences. People learn their culture by observing and listening to others, and then making inferences.

Researchers make cultural inferences from three sources (Spradley, 1979). One is from what people say (speech), another is from the way people act (behavior), and the third is from the artifacts people use (artifacts). Knowledge about a given culture can be learned in two ways. One is from language or what people say. The second consists of tacit knowledge. With tacit knowledge, the researcher listens carefully to what people say, observe their behavior, and study the use of their artifacts to then infer what people know.

*Community College Leaders*

A study by the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, directed by Kerr (1984), on strengthening leadership in colleges and universities indicated that the “attractiveness of the presidency” (Kerr, p. 3) has deteriorated. Several reasons were given for this. People who refused presidencies noted that the “new ambience of greater participation by more groups, each expecting consultation, can lead to exhausting multiple negotiations with less likelihood of results than in earlier times” (Kerr, p. 3). Others stated they did not want the long work hours. Half of the academic officers noted that the job had a heavy emphasis on fund raising and public relations and less contact with faculty, students, and academic issues. Kerr further reports that “professional search personnel say that many of the brightest, most ambitious young persons interested in executive positions now gravitate to the study of business administration or law, and then to private industry, business, and finance” (p. 4).
Four Generations of Leaders

Sullivan (2001) writes that there is a need for a “renewal in leadership” (p. 559) as community colleges enter the twenty-first century. Today, community colleges function with a scarcity of resources; changing student and staff demographics; a shift from teaching to student learning; learning outcomes assessment; technological developments that absorb an increasing proportion of the operating budget, challenge traditional instructional methods, and require retraining of faculty and staff; increasing regulation by external agencies; demands for shared governance; public skepticism about the college’s ability to meet the needs of their consumer; competition from private-sector providers; blurring of service boundaries as a result of distance learning; reduced emphasis on degree completion and increasing interest in other forms of credentialing; and a barrage of information (Sullivan, 2001).

Four generations of community college leaders are described by Sullivan (2001). They are the founding fathers, the good managers, the collaborators, and the millennium generation. The founding fathers are the pioneers of the community colleges. The good managers led the colleges through rapid growth with abundant resources.

The collaborators are the current leaders and many are beginning to consider retirement. According to Sullivan (2001), these leaders have several common characteristics. Most of the leaders began their presidencies when they were in their mid-forties to mid-fifties. They were the children of lower middle class families that instilled the value of education as a mean of moving up in society. Many were first generation college and many majored in education, humanities and fine arts, or social studies. Also, many were involved in the civil rights movement, antiwar movement, or women’s
movements before or after college. For many, they began their career path with college or high school teaching, and earned their doctorates in higher education or administration. Also, many have prepared for leadership roles by attending professional development programs. These presidents are “knowledgeable in organizational behavior, change process, and quality improvement” (p. 562).

The emerging presidents, named the millennium generation by Sullivan (2001), resemble the collaborators. However, most were born after the world wars and the civil rights movements. The millennium generation leaders are comfortable with and dependent on computers. They are “skilled collaborators because as rising administrators they have played major roles in negotiating partnerships with governmental agencies, business and industry, and K-12 schools” (Sullivan, p. 570). They have an emphasis on workforce development, have trained for leadership positions, and “appear to be well prepared to address” (Sullivan, p. 570) the challenges presented earlier.

*Pathways to the Presidency*

Moore, Twombly, and Martorana’s (1985) national study of administrators in community and junior colleges reported that studies completed in the mid-60s found presidents “much less likely to have previously been presidents, probably in part a reflection of the beginning growth of the movement” (p. 2). By 1971, nearly sixty percent of the presidents came from within two-year colleges with “fifteen percent having previously occupied a presidency” (Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, p. 2). Moore, Twombly, and Martorana (1985) found that the first previous position presidents held before the presidency were the following: 26.9% were a chief academic officer, 16.6% came from another presidency, 8.8% came from a provostship, 5.7% were acting
presidents, 15.6% held positions at the dean/director level, 3.6% held other types of college or university positions, 5.2% held a faculty position, 2.6% held a previous position in a higher education agency, and 18% entered their presidency from positions outside of higher education. Their study also found that the most frequently held second previous position for presidents was that of chief academic officer (14.1%).

Kubala’s (1999) research on newly appointed community college presidents found that 72.2% of the participating presidents had come through the academic route. In addition, 11.1% of the participants came from student services or student development areas and 16.7% were in the “other” category, which included positions on boards of trustees, or in continuing education, administrative services, institutional development, planning, and marketing. Another study by Kubala and Bailey (2001) compared a different set of community college presidents with presidents from the previous study. Results of the second study showed these pathways to the presidency: 56.4% from primarily academic path; 8.9% from primarily student services; 2% from primarily continuing education; 8.9% from primarily administrative services; 4% from business or government, 6.9% from academic and political or business; 5.9% from academic and student services; 2% from academic and continuing education; 2% from academic, student services, and continuing education; 1% from continuing education and administration services; 1% from academic and administration; and 1% from administration and student services.

Amey, VanDerlinden, and Brown’s (2002) study replicated, in part, the 1984 research by Moore, Twombly, and Martorana. In addition to examining community college presidents, Amey, VanDerlinden, and Brown (2002) studied chief academic
officers, senior student affairs officers, business and fiscal officers, directors of continuing education, and occupational and vocational education leaders. Their research reported that the immediate past position held by presidents were the following: 25% were presidents at another community college; 37% were provosts; 15% had been associate, assistant, academic deans or deans of instruction; 3% had been deans or assistant deans or directors in continuing education or vocational education; and 12% held other administrative positions, including senior student affairs officers and vice presidents for institutional planning or advancement; 2% came from community college system boards; 2% from public school administration; and 2% were promoted directly from faculty ranks.

**Career and Lifestyles Surveys**

Vaughan (1986) developed and conducted a Career and Lifestyles Survey (CLS) of 838 presidents from public community colleges who were members of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges. This research found that 38% of the presidents had been chief academic officers immediately prior to assuming the presidency and that over 7% came from a vice-presidency position. It also found that 4.6% of the 591 presidents who responded to the question had been deans of community services (titles vary so it might have been dean of continuing education) prior to assuming their first presidency. The study also revealed that presidents are high achievers, readily accept the community college mission, and embrace occupational-technical programs as a major part of that mission. Personal attributes with highest ratings were integrity, good judgment, courage, and concern for others. Skills and
abilities with highest ratings were ability to produce results, ability to select capable people, ability to resolve conflicts, ability to communicate effectively.

The Career and Lifestyles Survey was administered again in 1991 and 1996. The 1991 survey of community college presidents by Vaughan, Mellander, & Blois (1994) indicated that 3.9% of the presidents were deans of community services prior to their presidency.

The 1996 research by Weisman and Vaughan (1998) provided information about the profiles of presidents that include demographic characteristics, educational background, professional background, lifestyle, professional activities, community and business relations, and employment conditions. Weisman and Vaughan’s research indicated that, prior to their first presidency, more than 39% of the presidents had been chief academic officers, almost 7% had been vice presidents with academic overview, nearly 6% held the dual position of chief academic officer and chief student affairs officer, slightly more than 3% held other positions with academic overview, 7% were chief student services officers, 6% were campus chief executive officers, and 4% were chief business officer. This study does not report any presidents from the nontraditional path of administrators in continuing education.

*Career Paths of College Presidents*

The American Council on Education conducted research about presidents from higher education institutions in 1986, 1990, 1995, and 1998. The research report by Ross and Green (2000) presented information about community college presidents’ education, career paths, length of service, personal characteristics, and information on the presidential search process. Ross and Green also compared findings between the 1986
and 1998 studies. The prior positions of public community college presidents in the 1998 study were president (27.6%), chief academic officer (24.3%), and senior executive (24%), executive or administrator (7.2%), dean (12.1%), chair or faculty (1.3%), and outside higher education (3.5%); in the 1986 study the three most common prior positions were chief academic officer (25.9%), senior executive (19.3%), and president (17.6%).

Birnbaum and Umbach’s (2001) research described four career paths of college presidents within two major categories, traditional and nontraditional. The traditional category represented presidents whose professional paths “suggest a continuing career commitment to higher education” (Birnbaum & Umbach, p. 205). The two traditional paths are scholar and steward. Scholar presidents “have had full-time higher education teaching experience and their previous two positions were in higher education” (Birnbaum & Umbach, p. 205). Birnbaum and Umbach described this as the “normative presidential career ladder: a faculty appointment followed by successive administrative positions of increasing responsibility” (p. 206). Steward presidents “have never taught, but their two prior positions were in higher education” (Birnbaum & Umbach, p. 206).

The nontraditional category included “presidents whose careers have alternated between higher education and external positions and those who have had no previous higher education experience” (Birnbaum & Umbach, 2001, p. 206). The two identified paths were spanner and stranger. Spanners “maintain significant commitments both to higher education and to other types of institutions or organizations” (Birnbaum & Umbach, p. 206). Strangers are presidents “who have never taught and whose previous two positions were outside higher education” (Birnbaum & Umbach, p. 206).
In summary, Birnbaum and Umbach’s (2001) research found that in associate degree institutions, the majority of the presidents followed the traditional path to the presidency. Sixty-eight percent of the presidents were scholars, 25.5% were stewards, 4.9% were spanners, and 1.5% were strangers (Birnbaum & Umbach). Although the results of this study indicated that the road to the college presidency is down the traditional path, the study used data collected by the American Council on Education in 1986, 1990, and 1995.

_Presidents from Community Services_

The research by Young and Rue (1981) on 753 community college presidents found that 34.2% of the respondents had been deans of instruction just prior to assuming the presidency. Other roles respondents had just prior to assuming the presidency were professors (8.4%), deans of administration (8%), deans of student affairs (7.3%), managers of non-educational enterprises (6.3%), and deans of community services (4.8%).

Young and Rue’s (1981) research about community services presidents revealed the following information. Eighty percent of the 35 presidents held a doctorate degree, 69% held their highest degrees in education, and 87% had spent more than eleven years in higher education. Fifty-four percent of these community services presidents came from small colleges (less than 2000 students) and 43% percent from rural colleges. Although their education left them under-prepared to do two jobs (lobbying and collective bargaining), their on-the-job training provided high preparation for budgeting, hiring and firing of staff, organizing and directing work, and dealing with non-college groups. Community services presidents showed a “persistent appreciation of community-based
education in comparison to others who become presidents” (Young & Rue, p. 11), have a low esteem for transfer education, and support open academic enrollment and general education for all students. Since community service programs have a very low priority in community colleges, deans of community services who aspire to be presidents were advised to “seek an intermediary position of academic dean first, especially if they wish to preside over larger, more urban colleges” (Young & Rue, p. 12).

Vaughan (1987) examined community services as a pathway to the presidency after conducting a survey sent to eleven community college presidents who had been community services administrators. Vaughan wrote that “while many of the same leadership attributes and skills required of the successful community college president are required of the successful community services administrator” (p. 3), there are disadvantages that deter them from the presidency. These disadvantages included placement within the organizational structure (many do not report directly to the president) and the image associated with community services and community services administrators by the college community. Several recommendations for community service deans were made by Vaughan. These included: apply the same standards of quality to community service programs that exist in the college’s other programs, obtain as much experience in the regular academic programs as possible and teach as much as possible; get to know full-time faculty members, work with them in planning courses, understand their role, and communicate the community service dean’s role to them; serve as an academic dean before ascending to the presidency; and take every opportunity to work with the board of trustees since these are the people who choose presidents.
Characteristics of Community College Presidents

One question Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois (1994) asked the seven community college presidents they interviewed was “what qualifications, skills, and personal attributes the effective president must possess today and in the future” (p.63). Responses included the following:

- a tremendous amount of energy;
- a person who is intimately acquainted with his or her community and who is able to bring that community together in real ways to address social issues;
- very sensitive to the needs of the people in his or her organization;
- the ability to see the future and to conceptualize that vision to all constituents and to lead in the practical implementation of the vision;
- the ability to value people, to understand them, and to communicate with them;
- good common sense at being able to know what to do at the right time in the right place;
- sensitivity to read people and respond to them;
- understands that the business of the college is not the same business as a private business but understands that it is similar;
- skills to deal with the legislature and to understand how legislation passes, how you influence legislators, how you work with the general public, and who has the skills in working with boards and their development; understand and know what is happening in the society around them and how it relates to education and educational programs;
- able to motivate other people to become involved in a shared sense of vision;
• the ability to serve as an advocate for the institution;
• lead and provide direction within the institution, but be able to prepare the institution for change;
• flexibility in redefining fundamental concepts, such as access, that fit into the context of the new reality.

McFarlin (1999) created a profile of outstanding community college presidents. Based on literature review, he found nine factors that may contribute to the development of exemplary community college leaders. These factors include possession of an earned doctorate, the specific study of community college leadership as an academic major, an active personal research and publication agenda, preparation as a change agent, status as a community college insider, relationship with a mentor, development of a peer network, previous participation in a leadership preparation activity, and knowledge of technology. Findings indicated that over half of the outstanding presidents and almost half of the normative presidents held a position other than chief academic officer immediately preceding the first presidency. His study also suggests that a positive relationship may exist between being identified an outstanding president and following a nontraditional pathway to the presidency.

Hockaday and Puyear (2002) wrote that certain traits have been identified in effective community college leaders. These include vision, integrity, confidence, courage, technical knowledge, ability to collaborate, persistence, good judgment, and the desire to lead.

The Leadership Task Force of the American Association of Community Colleges (2003) identified characteristics and professional skills that leaders of community
colleges should have. Of utmost importance is that college presidents understand and implement the community college mission. In addition, the presidents must be effective advocates as they work with community leaders, philanthropists, and legislatures; have administrative skills so they can manage the institution; be skilled in community and economic development; and have personal, interpersonal, and transformations skills so they can work with staff as well as maintain and demonstrate a code of ethics.

Summary and Conclusions

As community colleges face the concern for qualified leaders the nontraditional career path of those from continuing education areas should be considered. However, literature review indicates this is a small population and that characteristics about this population is limited. Therefore, research about presidents who ascended from the areas of continuing education was needed.
CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

Since the purpose of this study was to gain an initial understanding about community college presidents who served as deans or directors of continuing divisions earlier in their careers, qualitative research guided this study. Qualitative research is “oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic” (Patton, 2002, p. 55). The researcher collected the data in a natural setting and employed an inductive research strategy, building “toward theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained in the field” (Merriam, 1998, p. 7). Since qualitative research focuses on process, meaning, and understanding, the research report is highly descriptive, conveying what the researcher learned about presidents with this background (Merriam, 1998).

Before beginning the study, the researcher received approval from the Institutional Review Board at Ohio University. Prior to submitting the project outline form to the Institutional Review Board, the investigator was required to complete an on-line training module so that the Ohio University policy on research projects involving human subjects was known. The objective was to protect participants from any potentially harmful impacts.

This chapter presents the research design; participant selection through purposeful sampling; data gathering by means of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document review; and data analysis. Finally, trustworthiness and the role of the researcher are discussed.
Since there are only a few community college presidents with a background in community education and little is known about them, the qualitative paradigm permitted an in-depth, open-ended inquiry about their perspectives and experiences (Patton, 2002). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), there are five features of qualitative research. One feature is that it is naturalistic. Data are collected in the actual setting and the researcher is the key instrument. Second, qualitative research is descriptive. The collected data will take the form of words rather than numbers. Third, qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than outcomes or products. Fourth, researchers tend to analyze the data inductively. Researchers are not trying to prove or disprove hypotheses. If theories are identified, they will emerge from the bottom up. The fifth feature is meaning, or how people make sense of their lives.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have provided another list of the characteristics of naturalistic inquiry. Many of these, as well, applied to this study. First, research is carried out in the natural setting of those being studied. Second, the researcher or other individuals are the “data-gathering instruments” (p. 39). Tacit knowledge, along with knowledge expressed in language, is the third characteristic. The fourth characteristic is use of qualitative methods for the study. The other characteristics are purposive sampling, inductive data analysis, grounded theory, emergent design, negotiated outcomes, the case study reporting mode, idiographic interpretation (conclusions are drawn in terms of the particulars of the case), tentative application, focus-determined boundaries, and special criteria for trustworthiness.
Qualitative research is a broad term that includes many variations. To be more specific, this study was an ethnography; the researcher created a description and interpretation of a culture or social group (Creswell, 1998). Spradley (1979) refers to culture as the “acquired knowledge that people use to interpret experience and generate social behavior” (p. 5). Cultural inferences come from three sources: what people say (language), the way people act (behavior), and the artifacts people use (Spradley). Culture may also be referred to the “beliefs, values, and attitudes that structure the behavior patterns of a specific group of people” (Merriam, 1998, p. 13). An ethnographic study provides a “holistic cultural portrait of the social group that incorporates both the views of the actors in the group (emic) and the researcher’s interpretation of the views about human social life in a social science perspective (etic)” (Creswell, 1998, p. 60).

The conceptual framework of the ethnography was social constructivism. According to Creswell (2003), the assumption in this framework is that “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (p. 8). People develop subjective meanings toward their experiences, as well as toward certain objects. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher “to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas” (p. 8). The goal of this research was to rely “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation being studied” (p. 8). The questions were broad and general so the participants could construct the meaning of a situation when they interacted with the researcher (Creswell). The researcher was expected to listen carefully to what the people were saying or doing in their life setting (Creswell). “These subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically” (p. 8) and are “formed through interaction with others and through historical
and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives (p. 8). It is important that researchers realize that their own background “shapes their interpretation” (p. 8) and that they “acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 8). The intent of the researcher was to interpret the meanings others have about the world. In this framework, researchers generate or develop a theory or pattern of meaning (Creswell). The study that was undertaken sought to understand community college presidents from a nontraditional pathway and concentrated on how they interpret their world.

**Participants**

There were two groups of participants for this study. One group was current community college presidents who had been deans or directors of continuing education areas. Although it was preferable that the adjacent position was in continuing education, the limited numbers of presidents made that impossible. The second group consisted of an academic dean or coordinator and a board member from each community college. During some college visits the dean of continuing education was also interviewed. These subjects offered an alternative view of the president. The presidents’ office volunteered to establish the interviews.

Snowball or chain sampling, a specific strategy for purposeful sampling, was used to begin this study (Patton, 2002). With purposeful sampling, individuals were selected because they had insight about the phenomenon and would provide information-rich data. The process of snowball sampling began by asking appropriate people, “Who are information-rich about this topic?” The snowball became larger by asking a number of people whom else to talk with. In preparation for this research the managing director of
the National Council for Continuing Education and Training was asked for names and contact information for presidents from the nontraditional path of continuing education or business and industry. He, in turn, forwarded the e-mail to the organization’s board members. Four board members responded, providing five names of presidents with the appropriate background. A sixth president was identified, as having credentials related to the background, but was not directly from continuing education.

Three of the initial five presidents agreed to participate in the study. Two additional contacts were suggested by an initial president; both were contacted, and agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Methods

Qualitative data may be obtained through interviews, observations, and documents (Patton, 2002). This is called data triangulation and it helps secure an in-depth understanding of the topic being explored. There are four basic types of triangulation: data triangulation uses a variety of data sources; investigator triangulation uses several different researchers; theory triangulation uses multiple perspectives to interpret data; and methodological triangulation uses multiple methods to study a program. Interviews were conducted with the president, dean or coordinator, and board member from each institution. Data were gathered on each president’s campus.

Interviews

Ethnographic interviewing involves “two distinct but complementary processes: developing rapport and eliciting information” (Spradley, 1979, p. 78). As rapport is developed between the ethnographer and informant, a basic sense of trust that allows for
the free flow of information will follow. Building rapport is a complex process that proceeds through the following stages: apprehension, exploration, cooperation, and participation (p. 79). Principles that facilitate building rapport are: “keep informants talking; make repeated explanations; restate what informants say; and don’t ask for meaning, ask for use” (p. 83).

Spradley (1979) wrote about three main types of questions to use for data gathering during the ethnographic interview: descriptive, structural, and contrast. Descriptive questions are the easiest to use and encourage the informants to “talk about a particular cultural scene” (p. 85) or the knowledge they have about their everyday lives and careers. Answers from descriptive questions can be used to discover other relevant questions. Descriptive questions are the “backbone of all ethnographic interviews” (p. 91).

According to Spradley (1979), structural questions enable the ethnographer to “discover information about domains, the basic units in an informant’s cultural knowledge. They allow us to find out how informants have organized their knowledge” (p. 60). Five principles will guide the use of structural questions. The concurrent principle indicates that structural questions should be asked with descriptive questions. The concurrent principle also means that it is best to alternate the various types of questions during the interview. The explanation principle indicates that an explanation should be given before a structural question is asked. This helps the informant know you are moving to a different type of question so they do not limit their response to the question. The repetition principle indicates that structural questions should be repeated several times in order to “elicit all the included terms of a folk domain” (p. 123). The context principle indicates that the informant should be provided with contextual information as
structural questions are asked. Contextual information “expands a structural question,” “aids in recall,” and avoids “making an informant feel he is being tested with a series of short questions” (p.125). Finally, the cultural framework principle indicates that structural questions should be phrased in cultural as well as personal terms.

With contrast questions, the “ethnographer wants to find out what an informant means by the various terms used in his native language. Contrast questions enable the ethnographer to discover the dimensions of meaning that informants employ to distinguish the objects and events in their word” (Spradley, 1979, p.60).

An interview guide approach (Patton, 2002) was used during the interviews. It consisted of a list of open-ended questions (Appendix A). Responses yielded information about the individual’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, feelings, and knowledge (Patton). The interviewer was able to decide the sequence and wording of the questions during the interview. A list of questions was prepared for the president and another list for the board member and dean or coordinator. This approach had several strengths. First, the questions increased the comprehensiveness of the data and made data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Second, interviews remained conversational and presidents could go beyond the bounds of the questions, thereby allowing for in-depth follow-up questions and coverage of the topic. However, a weakness to this approach was that important and salient topics could be inadvertently omitted. Also, interviewer flexibility in wording and sequencing of questions resulted in different responses from different respondents, thereby reducing the comparability of the responses.
Participant Observation

Participant observation added to the interview process and document review so that the researcher was better able to understand the president in a way that would not be possible “using the insights of others obtained through interviews” (Patton, 2002, p. 23). The researcher intended to describe the setting in which the interviews took place, the interaction of the president with others, and any nonverbal communication perceived by the researcher. The vignettes of the presidents, in chapter four, should permit the reader to enter into and understand the culture of the president.

Campus visits permitted participant observation of the president in his natural setting. According to Patton (2002), this direct observation offered several advantages to the inquirer. First, it assisted the inquirer to better “understand and capture the context within which people interact” (p. 262). Second, it permitted the inquirer to be “open, discovery oriented, and inductive” (p. 262). Third, the inquirer had “the opportunity to see things that may routinely escape awareness among people in the setting” (p. 262). A participant observer could also “discover things no one else has ever really paid attention to” (p. 263). Fourth, the inquirer had a “chance to learn things that people would be unwilling to talk about in an interview” (p. 263). Fifth, there was the opportunity to “move beyond the selective perception of others” (p. 264).

Interviews presented the “understandings of the people being interviewed (Patton, 2002, p. 264). Field observations presented the perceptions of the inquirer. The interview data and the observational data of the inquirer delivered a “more comprehensive view of the setting” (p. 264) than interview alone would. Finally, “getting close to the people in a setting through firsthand experience permits the inquirer to draw on personal knowledge
during the formal interpretation stage of analysis” (p. 264). “The impressions and feelings of the observer become part of the data to be used in attempting to understand a setting and the people who inhabit it” (p.264).

Document Review

Document review also took place to help the researcher “obtain the language and words” (Creswell, 2003, p. 187) of the president. According to Yin (2003), document review is useful “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources, to provide specific details to corroborate information from other sources, and to make inferences from documents” (p. 87). All of the presidents were asked to provide their curriculum vitae and their inauguration addresses. In addition, their institutions’ mission, vision statement, and goal statements were requested. The college catalog and web site were reviewed, as well as demographic information about the community. Demographic information was obtained from profiles produced by STATS Indiana, a web service of the Indiana Business Research Center at the Indiana University Kelley School of Business.

Process

Presidents were sent a letter asking them and specific campus people to participate in the study (Appendix B). After the president agreed to participate in the study, dates and times were established for the researcher to be on campus. A confirmation letter was sent verifying the campus visit. Follow-up telephone calls were made the day before the visit.

Before beginning the data collection each participant signed the Ohio University Consent Form which included an explanation of the study, risks and discomforts, benefits, statement about confidentiality and records, compensation, and contact
information. An observational protocol to assist in recording descriptive and reflective field notes was developed.

All interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed. Data will be kept confidential, stored in a file at the researcher’s house, and will be destroyed five years after the dissertation is completed. The names of the participants and their institution will be reported as pseudonyms. However, it may be difficult to totally mask the participants entirely, especially since institutions have been described. Data will be used for a dissertation, articles in professional journals, and presentations.

All data were collected by the researcher. This provided consistency of information from the various presidents and participants. Also, the researcher was able to interact with the participants to clarify, correct, or amplify any comments. Finally, tacit knowledge helped identify nonverbal cues, and provided insight about the study.

During the data gathering process, descriptive and reflective field notes were written by the researcher. Descriptive field notes encompassed the following areas: portraits of the subjects, reconstruction of dialogue, description of physical setting, accounts of particular events, depiction of activities, and the observer’s behavior (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Reflective field notes contained the following: reflections on analysis and reflections on the observer’s frame of mind.

Data Analysis

Inductive data analysis was used to “make sense of field data” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 202) from interviews, participant observations, and documents. In an ethnography, data analysis consists of description, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell,
A description of the individuals, followed by analysis of the data for themes or issues was done in this study.

Creswell (2003) discussed the following generic steps to data analysis. Step one is to organize and prepare the data for analysis. Step two is to read through all the data, obtain a general sense of the information, and reflect on its meaning. The third step involves the creation of a coding process. In step four the coding process is used to generate a description of the setting, people, categories or themes for analysis. Step five is the development of the description and themes that will be represented in the qualitative narrative. Finally, in step six the researcher makes an interpretation of the meaning of the data.

Merriam (1998) wrote that the task in ethnographic analysis is to take multiple data sources and condense them. Preexisting category schemes can be used to organize and analyze the data. However, educational ethnographers more often use a classification scheme derived from the data. “The scheme can employ terms commonly found in the culture itself (an emic perspective) or terms constructed by the ethnographer (an etic perspective) (p. 157). “If the topics or variables within the scheme are seen to be interrelated, a typology may be created” (p. 157).

Creswell (1998) also identified more specific steps for data analysis of an ethnography. Steps include the following: create and organize files for the data, then read through the text, make margin notes, and form initial codes; describe the setting, participants, and events; analyze data for themes; interpret and make sense of the findings; finally, present the narrative and augment it with tables and figures.
In this study, data from interviews and field notes were organized and read for each president. The initial broad categories for the data analysis were determined from the interview questions. Each category was analyzed for themes. Finally, the findings were interpreted for meaning.

*Computer Use*

Data management is an important aspect of qualitative studies. It can be divided into three phases: data preparation, data identification, and data manipulation (Merriam, 1998). Data preparation includes typing notes, transcribing interviews, minor editing. Data identification divides the data into “analytically meaningful and easily locatable segments” (p. 167). “During data manipulation, these segments may be searched for, sorted, retrieved, and rearranged” (p. 167). Although Creswell (1998) and Merriam (1998) discuss how specific computer programs can assist with the data analysis of large volumes of data, the researcher did not use one at this time. The computer does not analyze data, it only manages it (Merriam, 1998).

*Trustworthiness of the Findings*

Validating the accuracy of the findings adds to the strength of qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described four terms for establishing trustworthiness in naturalistic inquiry. They are credibility, instead of internal validity; transferability, instead of external validity; dependability, instead of reliability; and conformability, instead of objectivity. Operational techniques that can be used to establish credibility are prolonged engagement and persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and member checking. Thick description is the operational technique to
facilitate transferability and auditing establishes dependability and conformability.

Establishing Credibility

Prolonged engagement is the investment of sufficient time to learn the culture, test for distortion of information, and build trust with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Persistent observation refers to spending sufficient time with the participants to identify those characteristics that are most relevant to the issue being pursued and to focus on them in detail. Prolonged engagement provides scope; persistent observation provides depth. The researcher spent a day on each campus conducting interviews and observe participants. Since the goal of the study was to gain knowledge about community college presidents who ascended from continuing education, the visits at each college provided sufficient time for prolonged engagement and persistent observation. Prior experience in a community college system assisted the researcher with establishing a rapport and trust with the participants.

Credibility is also enhanced through triangulation or the use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data for this research was obtained through interviews with presidents, deans or a coordinator, and board members. In addition, data were gathered on-site through participant observations.

Another technique for establishing credibility is peer debriefing. A disinterested peer who “knows a great deal about the substantive area of the inquiry and the methodological issues” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 309) was asked to play devil’s advocate for the researcher. This kept the inquirer honest and provided the researcher with opportunities to clear the “mind of emotions and feelings that may be clouding good judgment or preventing emergence of sensible next steps” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 308).
A crucial technique for establishing credibility is member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). All the presidents except one reviewed transcript data for accuracy of information. Changes were made as needed. Informal member checks were used to provide an immediate opportunity to confirm the data during the interview process.

Transferability

Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that transferability and external validity are very different. They summarize that it “is not the naturalist’s task to provide an index of transferability; it is his or her responsibility to provide the data base that makes transferability judgments possible on the part of potential appliers” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 316). This study provides a description of all aspects of the research. This should enable readers to decide whether or not they feel the results of the study are transferable to other settings with similar frames of reference.

Dependability

The inquiry audit, like a fiscal audit, examines process and product (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). When examining the process of the inquiry, the audit is looking at the “fairness of the representation” and “its dependability of the inquiry” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 318). Examination of the product is “from the point of view of accuracy” (Lincoln & Guba, p. 318). The final product has been supported by the data, findings, interpretations, and recommendations of the study.

An inquiry audit cannot be conducted without an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Comprehensive records have been kept by the researcher and include raw data, data reduction and analysis products, and synthesis. Although a complete audit trail will be maintained, no formal audit is intended.
**Researcher**

In qualitative research, the role of the researcher is that of primary data collector. As such, personal values, assumptions, and biases need to be made clear at the onset of the study (Creswell, 2003).

Since I am a first generation college graduate, I find great delight in helping a confused and bewildered student succeed in academia. I believe that community colleges are the backbone of our communities. Therefore, strong leadership, especially from the president, is essential. It is the president’s role to have a vision and to ensure that the college is meeting the needs of the community constituents.

This research interested me because I work in the community education and workforce development division of a Midwestern community college and I wondered why so few of the directors or deans from this nontraditional college area pursue the presidency. To be successful in these positions the directors or deans need an entrepreneurial spirit, leadership skills, communication skills, and vision. They also need confidence and courage, especially since the traditional academic side of the college often does not understand their areas. Since this division is usually expected to support itself or make a profit, these administrators understand budgeting finances and resources, negotiating contracts with state and local business leaders, and obtaining grant money for programs. They promote the college’s mission as they work with their staff and implement workforce development programs. Finally, continuing education deans or directors work with outside constituents including legislators, superintendents from secondary education, and other community leaders as well as with internal constituents, including the president.
Summary of Methodology

This chapter established the research design for the study and explained the processes for participant selection, data gathering, and data analysis. Trustworthiness and information about the researcher were also discussed.
CHAPTER FOUR

Profiles of the Presidents

Introduction

The profiles of community college presidents with prior experiences in continuing education are presented in this chapter. Each vignette describes the community, the college, and the president. The perceptions of a dean and a board member from each college are then presented. If interviewed, the perceptions of the dean of continuing education and other college personnel are reported. In order to maintain anonymity, the names of participants and colleges have been replaced with letter designations that reflect the order in which they were visited.

President A

Community

The residents of eleven jurisdictions (ten counties and one city) in a rural area of a southern state are served by this community college. The area was beautiful as the sun gleamed through the many pine trees across the countryside. In 2002, manufacturing was the largest industry in seven jurisdictions, retail trade in three jurisdictions, and health care and social assistance in one jurisdiction (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003).

The population for the area is 190,842 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). The median household income in 2000 varied from a low of $27,899 to a high of $32,002 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). Fifty-eight to 69% of the adults had a high school diploma or more; 8% to 19% had a bachelor’s degree or more (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003).
College

The college is part of a statewide system of community colleges. It has the largest service area (approximately 4,200 square miles) of any community college in the state and it operates under a local board. The college is financed primarily by tuition and state funds, supplemented by contributions from federal funds and participating localities.

This two-year public community college has two campuses. The campus that was visited is within a quarter mile of a major freeway. The setting is quiet with well marked one story brick buildings nestled among tall pine trees. A lake was glistening in the afternoon sun. Modular units that house a four year higher education institution were noticed, as were the picnic tables. It was later discovered that prisoners care for the grounds, thus keeping the cost of landscaping reasonable.

Review of the college catalog indicated the first campus site opened in September 1970, with approximately 55,600 square feet located on one hundred acres. Due to the large service area a second campus site, approximately forty miles northwest, opened a year later with approximately 57,500 square feet. A center for workforce training opened on each campus in the early part of 2001.

The Campus Without Walls was opened in 1985. The administrative offices are located in a city nearby. This campus permits county residents to enroll in continuing education programs that develop and strengthen job skills. Students can also enroll in several certificate, diploma, and degree programs, as well as community service programs.
College documents revealed the mission statement as “[college] is dedicated to the belief that all citizens should be given an opportunity to acquire an educational foundation that develops and extends their skills and knowledge.” The college’s goal is:

To provide diverse instructional programs ranging from developmental studies to associate degree curricula in academic, technical/vocational, lifelong education, and workforce development. Through various activities, students will also have the opportunity to develop their roles and responsibilities as participants in a changing society.

A 2002-2003 statewide annual report revealed the annual full-time equivalent enrollment to be 3,049. The annual unduplicated headcount for the same time period was 7,878. According to a 2004 college report, 63% of the students are female, the average age is 27, and the majority attend college part-time and also work.

Credit programs are approved by the state board for community colleges. In addition, associate degree programs are approved by the state council of higher education. The college is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.

The college offers the following programs: occupational-technical education, university parallel/college transfer education, general education, continuing education, developmental studies, apprenticeship training, and special regional and community services. The 2002-2004 college catalog indicated the eight elements of their general education requirements are communication skills, learning skills, critical thinking skills, interpersonal and human relation skills, computational and computer skills, understanding culture and society, understanding science and technology, and wellness.
The college runs on a semester based academic calendar and offers classes to students still in high school, people working toward a general education degree, or students in their first year of college through completion of an associate degree. In addition, the college has a cooperative program with a four-year higher education institution located on their campus that enables students to earn a baccalaureate, masters, or doctorate degree without leaving the area.

Continuing education and community service programs include degree or certificate courses with or without college credit during day and evening hours; classes, forums, lectures, exhibits, short courses, art and music festivals to promote cultural affairs of the community; various community development programs and seminars; non-cataloged special courses or programs for the community’s industries, businesses or professions, directed and taught at the college or at the client’s site by faculty and staff; and special services such as Speaker’s Bureau and use of college facilities. Noncredit courses and activities are offered on a self-supporting basis.

Review of the table of organization showed that the provost of each campus; the dean of admissions, records, research; the vice president of finance and administration; and the dean of workforce development report directly to the president. The dean of institutional advancement/director of foundation, the vice president of technology and grants, public relations, and the administrative secretary also report to the president.

Description of President A

President A is an outgoing, energetic individual who is enthusiastic about his work and what he does in life. He is in his mid-sixties, married, and has children and grandchildren that he proudly talked about. The president designs award winning
birthday, holiday, and all occasion cards that are mailed as greetings to people or are sold, with the proceeds donated to the college. In addition, he enjoys running marathons and is pleased that he has “not missed a day of running in seventeen years.” As his schedule permits, the president also enjoys playing basketball with the college students on Sunday evenings and taking them out to eat afterwards. According to his secretary, President A is adventuresome, illustrated by his dog sledding and bicycle trips in Europe with his wife and another couple.

The president was neatly dressed in a navy sport jacket, tie, blue and white gingham shirt, and gray slacks. He proudly wears a Sports Hall of Fame (basketball) ring from a community college in Mississippi.

One of the first items noticed upon entering President A’s office was the trophy on his desk. His office is warm and comfortable with a desk; credenza; meeting table with a small television and neatly stacked piles of paper; and bookcases filled with books. Photographs of his family, marathon posters, his artwork, and photographs of President Kennedy are attractively hung on the walls.

*Education and Career Path*

Although “everyone in my neighborhood went to the technical high school” this first generation high school and college graduate insisted on attending the college preparatory high school because of the football and basketball teams. He confesses he “was not a star” academically, but he knew where he wanted to attend school.

The president has numerous degrees, beginning with a bachelor of science degree with a major in education and minors in social studies and psychology. He has a master of arts degree in administration and supervision and a master of science degree in
educational psychology and counseling. He pursued a doctorate so he could become a
community college president. President A has an education specialist degree in
educational psychology and counseling and a doctorate in organizational development
(administration). Post doctoral work includes a certificate in management development
for college and university administrators, and attendance at the Institute for Educational
Management, Institute for Adult Learners, and Presidential Seminar: Leading
Institutional Advancement, all at Harvard University.

President A started his professional career as a teacher, counselor, and coach in
the inner city elementary, junior and senior high schools of a Northeastern state. He
started his community college career as an associate professor of psychology and as a
coordinator of special education projects. Administratively, he advanced to director of
community services, assistant dean of instruction, associate dean, dean of the division of
community services, and vice president for instruction prior to this presidency. President
A continues to teach at his college as a professor of psychology, as well as at various
other institutions of higher education as a visiting professor, adjunct professor, or
dissertation consultant.

President A was hired for his current position in the early 1980s. Hiring a person
from outside the geographic area was an attempt by the governor and a few local board
members to prevent the college from closing due to low enrollment. Twenty-one years
later it can be concluded that the plan worked.

Although numerous national, regional, and local honors and awards have been
bestowed on this president, only three will be noted. In the past four years the president
received an American Association of Community Colleges award. In the mid-1990s his
original artwork featured on a Christmas card to raise funds for Phi Theta Kappa received an award. Finally, in the mid-1990s, the president was awarded the trophy that is on his desk.

A review of the president’s resume indicates his accomplishments at the college have been tremendous in the areas of enrollment; institutional effectiveness; new program development, including the Honors Program and the Center for Business and Workforce Development; development and implementation of five off-campus sites; faculty and staff development; interagency networking; resource development; athletic activities; and strategic planning. The president also consults nationally; lectures at state, regional, national, and international conferences and symposia; and author’s articles. He currently has a book in preparation.

*Personality*

The researcher observed President A as a friendly and talkative, responsible risk-taker who is passionate about his work and proud of the institution’s accomplishments and contributions to the community. These can be evidenced by the following statements:

*We committed ourselves to outreach, bringing education to people. We have a large cyber college and outreach centers, we have dual enrollment, the largest dual enrollment program in the commonwealth, we are in every high school. This spring we will have four students who will graduate from the college before they graduate from high school.*

He added:

*We start programs. If the program is needed we don’t worry about the resources and we have been pretty lucky that the resources have followed*
us. Sometimes I think if you wait until you get the money, it’s never going to happen.

Also, “I am also doing a running program in one of the prisons. We are going to pre and post-test the inmates to see if there is a behavioral change from running.” Finally, “We have the largest inmate education program in [state]; inmates can get Cisco certification.”

According to the president, the college “is doing a lot of things” and he functions “at half speed,” because if he “went full speed, people would be uncomfortable. So I learned, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.”

The president “loves the job” and does “everything I like to do.” President A has a positive attitude and believes his childhood in a “multi-ethnic, multi-racial environment” contributed to his conviction that you “keep going after what you believe in.” He also does what he thinks is the right thing to do. To illustrate, ten years ago cigarette machines were removed from campus. This area of the country is tobacco country. The provost is a tobacco farmer who said nothing. A board member is also a tobacco farmer who said nothing. One newspaper reporter noted his displeasure by saying the president could keep running right out of the county and state.

Most positive statement. The president was unsure of what people would say was most positive about him. His perception of himself: “I think I am high energy, I try to be fair. If I go after something I never give up on it. I might back off a little, but I am coming back.”

Painful experience. The president’s most painful experience was early in his career when he was “ naïve.” He was an “aggressive person who had power because he had money” and he would “run over people who didn’t agree with him.”
Values and Beliefs

President A describes himself as an “odd man out” and says he has always been that. In high school “everybody had black leather jackets and long hair.” The president had a crew cut, white bucks, wore v-neck sweaters, and never belonged to a gang. He is an Irish-Italian northeasterner with a strong accent who attended college in the deep south, then attended a Jewish university in the North “where you could count the number of Christians,” and became president of a community college in the rural part of a conservative southern state. In addition, he is a vegetarian and a long distance runner.

When asked about the personal values that guide his decisions and actions, the president responded:

I am committed to egalitarian education and I am committed to diversity.
People know my values; my family knows my values; my little grandchildren know my values. When [my grandson] and I went to play basketball we were the only white people in the gym. You can feel a little uncomfortable in that situation. Of course, black people make you feel comfortable. If the situation was changed, I am not so sure if a black person will feel comfortable among whites.

At one point the president said “my values come across my work, my life, my family and that is a commitment that grew out of one, growing up in an ethnic environment; two, working in a rural black environment….“ According to the president two things changed his life, personally and professionally:

One was working in the intercity with all black kids. I worked in a really tough neighborhood, never coached a white kid, never met a malicious
kid…. This told me what I was going to do. I never wanted to work in the middle class community. I always wanted to work, actually urban community but rural, poor. The second thing is I got my two degrees in psychotherapy, it really let me get a handle on myself. I learned rational motor therapy and I got to introspect and understand myself, which was really a personal revolution for me. I am very comfortable with myself and I know I can never say I didn’t know when I do something. I know everything I do because I learned a concept of self-talk. Before I do something I always question. I know when it is good for me, self-defeating, or bad. I do self-defeating things, but I can never say that I am not aware because I am always aware. I make a choice and I am willing to suffer the consequences.

Other beliefs include “if the game is never over, you can’t lose, that is my little metaphor for success. The game isn’t over unless you think it’s over, so don’t think it’s over.” Also, “everybody has failures and we are not all good at everything we do, so don’t get discouraged.”

The president shared the following saying by Alan McGinnis, *Bringing Out the Best In People* and said it is posted in every classroom:

The history books are full of stories of gifted persons whose talents were overlooked by a procession of people until someone believed in them. Albert Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before he could read. Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school. A newspaper editor fired Walt Disney because he had “no good ideas.” Werner von
Braun failed ninth-grade algebra. Haydn gave up on making a musician of Beethoven, who seemed a slow and plodding man with no apparent talent. There is a lesson in such stories: Different people develop at different rates, and the best motivators are always on the lookout for hidden capacities.

This saying reflects the beliefs of the president. It is a reminder to faculty and staff that they are there to help people learn.

*Leadership Style*

According to the president organizations work because of their leadership. President A stated: “You don’t learn leadership in graduate school. It’s an interesting dynamic. You are going to see different leadership styles, but those organizations that work have strong leadership.”

The president believes:

Any organization that works has congruency of mission. There needs to be congruency in mission. It’s like the coach’s responsibility to get people to play together; congruency in mission is the president’s responsibility. You have to get the board and everybody singing from the same song sheet and understanding what the mission is.

The president believes his leadership style is participatory, but added:

You also are going to need to make decisions and you sometimes need to make tough decisions, you need to be willing to do that, but I do a lot of things I did as a coach. I give people a fair game; I walk around; I talk to people. Also, and this is advice I give to some of my colleagues that are
interested in advice, you can’t let people get to know you too well. So I keep a bit of a distance too, because, number one, if they know you too well, they are going to find out your weaknesses and I don’t want people to know my weaknesses, my vulnerability. The other thing is a little mystique. So I walk around, talk to people, and I certainly try to reinforce positive things that go along with our mission but I also stay a little aloof and mysterious. I have a bit of charisma, I guess that comes from coaching and I know how to get people excited and love for the game. I also tell them you are going in the game yourself, I can’t get you up in the game. I guess the bottom line is, the secret is, getting people committed to the mission, selling your board on the mission.

*Perceptions of the President About the College*

*Philosophy.* President A’s philosophy about recruiting students to the college is: “We have to work with the adults because they are the indigenous people who have their roots here. They are going to stay so we really need to advocate adult education and get people involved, get adults involved.” President A further said:

Our philosophy is community service, continuing education, workforce development. I run around telling people we will do anything, anyplace, anytime and of course it is very easy for me to say, but they deliver and I never had to eat my words.

*Mission.* An article written by the president in 1995 provides insight about the impact of the president on the mission of his community college. The president wrote:
The mission of a rural community college is a simple one: to meet the educational needs at every level of the service area community and to work to develop a tradition of education that includes a realization of the importance of higher education…. It is the responsibility of the president of the community college to articulate the comprehensive mission of the rural college and to get congruency of this mission from the local board, local political entities, state legislators, faculty, and the total college community…. The president must understand the importance of institutional charisma and personality…. From the institutional charisma comes the Three E force that should drive all community colleges: Energy, Experience, and Enthusiasm…. The secret to providing comprehensive services is through strategic planning, community education, collaborating with other agencies, and building coalitions…. The president is the political educator of the institution and has the responsibility for making state legislators aware of the college’s mission and helping them understand the mission in order to ensure their support and commitment to providing resources for the college.

Vision for the college. The president’s vision for the college is to have “flexibility to meet changes; to meet the needs of the community.”

Major effects on campus. The president’s message in the catalog and student handbook states that the college is recognized for “the leadership it has provided in the development of innovative programs” and that the college “takes pride in its community-based education approach to meeting the needs of the service area constituents.” He
further wrote that the college is a “dynamic institution, always developing and changing
to meet the new and challenging needs of a complex society…. We are truly a college of
and by the community.”

*President’s perception of faculty.* The president believes the college has a “very
collaborative faculty. It is amazing. They never complain. They haven’t had a raise in
three years and I never heard a faculty member complain.”

*Wall of honor.* President A pointed out the Wall of Honor in the new workforce
development building. The Wall honors those whose “generosity and spirit have
strengthened the college.” Purchasers of the one hundred dollar bricks include the
president’s doctoral advisor, previous students, and his entire family. The brick with his
name on it was purchased for him.

*Role of President with External Parties*

*Developing community partnerships.* The president becomes involved as needed
in developing partnerships with organizations in the community. Often, he opens the door
and the workforce development and continuing education people follow by doing the
detail work. According to the president:

You just name the organization and we are a partner with them. We
partner with everybody. We partner with the planning districts and they
built our facility in [city], they built it and gave it to us. The program we
are running in [city] is manufacturing technology; dual enrollment
program came directly out of what the businesses in our area told us they
needed.
President A believes:

It takes quite awhile to develop these kinds of relationships and to get to know your legislators and the communities. People [presidents] come in and stay for three years and leave. I am not so sure how much they can really accomplish.

*Linkages with secondary schools.* According to President A, the college has the “largest dual enrollment program in the state. We just put a brand new physics and chemistry lab in the vocational school. We are doing a pre-engineering program with the school divisions.” In addition, students in the secondary schools come to campus, or the president talks with them in their schools. President A added: “I have a great relationship with the superintendents.”

*Fundraising.* In the past the college “raised a fair amount of money” by doing a “run for scholars” event. Also, the president did a couple of biathlons. Recently, however, the college has not had any “big fundraisers.”

*Work with legislators.* Regarding his work with legislatures, the president said: “We have great relationships with all the legislators.” He’s a Kennedy democrat; legislatures are republicans.

*Pathways to the Presidency*

The president “agrees with George Vaughan” about being a provost, but said he “didn’t need it” to do his job well. He continued:

It [being a provost] had to be on paper for the people. I think that’s changing. The workforce development people, continuing education, community services people, they know how to get things done and they
get things done. I think that is what the president needs. So given my

druthers, I would pick those kind of people to be president. Workforce
development people make good college presidents.

The president also said: “If you are an academic vice president or dean too long you just
become a faculty babysitter.”

*Recommendation to others.* When asked how aspiring deans or directors of
continuing education should prepare for the presidency, the president responded:

I want to say it this way. The process is a crapshoot and it doesn’t matter
what your qualifications are or what you have accomplished necessarily. It
is a matter of personality…. To be a good community college president I
think you need to have a comprehensive background in community
colleges, you have to be positive and proactive, and you have to buy into
egalitarian mission.

For those aspiring to become a president, an article written by President A
presented his ideas about challenges rural community colleges will need to address in the
future:

Future challenges for rural community colleges include marketing the
community college product, ensuring a people-friendly environment, and
continuing to promote egalitarianism…. Community colleges may have to
take on another important challenge: the restructuring of higher education.

*Perceptions of Others About the College*

The chairman of the local board, the dean of instruction, the dean of continuing
education and workforce development, and the dean of institutional advancement/director
of the foundation were interviewed. The chairman of the local board discussed his perceptions of the college and the president over lunch in a friendly, local restaurant in a nearby small town where the board member works as an insurance agent. Local board members are appointed for a four year term by elected county officials. This is the board member’s second term. An interesting note is that the board member’s father was on the board and supported the hiring of the president. Currently the board member’s father is on the State Board for Community Colleges.

The dean of instruction has been at the college for eleven years. He was a faculty member for seven years and a division chair before becoming the dean. The dean is a polite gentleman who likes his job and is pursuing his doctorate in community college leadership through the program housed on campus.

The dean of continuing education and workforce development was a friendly, talkative gentleman from the south. He wore a navy sport jacket and had a Mickey Mouse tie on. The dean was hired by the president in 1984 before workforce development was popular and he loves his job. He actually grew up in the area, left to go to college, and returned. Prior work experience includes retail, private industry, and adjunct teaching.

The dean of institutional advancement/director of the foundation has been at the college for three years. She has a background in fundraising from private colleges.

College’s mission. The dean of instruction responded the college’s mission is “to be all things to all people.” The dean of continuing education and workforce development said “to be a comprehensive college and do whatever is needed to help our people get where they need to get” so that the needs of the community are met. The dean of
continuing education then discussed the need for “collaborative partnerships.” These statements reiterated what the president had written in his article.

*College does well.* According to the board member the best thing the college does:

It meets the needs of the community. I just don’t think it’s with youth, which is important because our curriculum demands it. Fifteen years ago we started to get an influx of migrant labor without a green card…and the college formed a class for farmers for conversational Spanish. You have a group with a need, they can meet it.

The dean of instruction talked about meeting the needs of students “to get them prepared for employment, to improve their employment situation like providing continuing education for them, to prepare students to transfer to four year institutions and we’re pretty successful at that.”

*Values shared by employees.* According to the dean of instruction:

One of the biggest things is that the folks who work here are generally here because they want to help people advance in whatever way they want to. We are very student friendly. The faculty is very willing to spend extra time and effort with the students.

Another value shared by employees, according to the dean of institutional advancement, is that “everybody deserves a chance.” These statements also reiterate what the president said.

*Challenges facing the college.* According to the board member the biggest challenge comes from “being in a rural area” with fewer [state] representatives. “You go
to [the] northern [part of the state] where there are more representatives because the population is higher and they get more money.” The dean of instruction noted several challenges.

One of them is the perception that community colleges are second class citizens when it comes to higher education and many of our top high school students do not come to community colleges, they go right to a four year school, which is fine. Where we do capture many of them is in our dual enrollment program. Economics are helping us to overcome the perception that students should go directly to a four year school. We are getting more and more traditional high school students.

Another challenge offered by the dean of instruction is the lack of “employers in the area employing students who have good technology skills in the computer areas. So that really limits what we offer. No sense in training people to be network administrators when there are no jobs in the area for that.” A third challenge includes the “many under-prepared students who have been laid off from repetitive assembly type jobs needing to be retrained in some other area.”

Also, the dean of instruction, the dean of continuing education and workforce development, and the dean of institutional advancement responded that the budget is a concern every year. The dean of continuing education and workforce development said the college “may be short on resources, but we don’t tell anyone no.”

Vision for the college. Each interviewee supported the president’s response. The board member said: “Whatever the future brings. A business closes down, you got a workforce that needs retrained, we retrain them. Whatever presents itself, the college has
always been there.” The dean of instruction responded: “continuing to grow and meet the changing needs of our community.” The dean of continuing education and workforce development stated “continue what they are doing; more centers, more partnerships, distance learning…. Be comprehensive – do whatever citizens need”. And the dean of institutional advancement said “to train people in this area to be good employees for companies that are here, to provide quality education because if we don’t provide quality education here, many people would not get it because they are not going away from home.”

Perceptions of Others About the President

President’s personality. The board member described the president’s personality as “always friendly, never met stranger, talk about anything”. President A is “the right man, for the right job, at the right time…. He cares about the community, he cares about the people in the area. Sometimes cares too much.”

The instructional dean believes the president is a “very friendly, outgoing” person who is “always wanting to try something new to expand what it is that we are doing here.” He continued:

We are doing quite a few pilot projects for the community college system. He wants to be on the innovative edge, to be a leader. For the most part he is perfectly happy to step aside and let people do their jobs that they were hired to do. He is not a micromanager at all.

The dean of continuing education and workforce development believes the president is “positive, upbeat almost all the time, even with budget cuts, layoffs he keeps going, keeps doing new things; positive attitude.”
**Most positive statement.** Although interviewed separately, the board member and the dean of continuing education and workforce development had the same response: “his visibility, his personality…. He does a good job at running the school; a good job at the college.” The board member added “Hope he stays until he is ready to retire. Hope he does not plan on retiring for awhile….We are fortunate to have him; we are lucky and blessed he is here.”

The instructional dean responded:

His upbeat attitude. He has a story to tell, saying the game is never over as long as you keep playing. Don’t give up; if they knock you down you just get back up and try again. Persistence pays off. He maintains that positive attitude. Even if things are negative they are going to turn around, things will get better.

The dean of institutional advancement said President A:

Very much believes that everybody has strong points and that everybody has a potential and so you are never afraid of making mistakes. I think he does a good job of trying to find the way to know where your strengths are.

**Leadership style.** According to the board member, the president’s style changes. “It is what he needs it to be at the time. If he needs to be calm, he is calm.” The board member made an analogy of the president being like a football coach.

You want to treat everybody the same, but you can’t. Some people respond to different tactics and techniques. I would be scared if he did have only one way of doing something, my way or the highway. You can’t
say I am always democratic. But there comes a time that you got to be
president.
According to the board member, “the school has grown” with the president’s leadership.
“It may not have grown in buildings, but the students and high school students, and what
the school is capable of doing has grown.”
The instructional dean responded the president’s leadership style is:
Pretty much hands-off for the most part. Those underneath him do the jobs
that they were hired to do. He is more the public face of college with local
business leaders, politicians, newspapers, and so forth. He pushes the
image of the college out in the public and political sector.
The dean of continuing education and workforce development said the president’s
leadership style “changes, tough when needed; like coaching, everyone is different and he
needs to encourage accordingly.” He also said the president lets him do his job and is not
a micromanager. Furthermore, if the dean has an idea, he has the freedom to pursue it.
According to the dean, the president sees the bigger and broad perspective or picture
because of his background in community services, is supportive to staff, is constantly
doing something new, and expects other people to come up with different things to do.
He believes President A “is one of the pioneers of presidents in the community college
system for getting things changed, using new approaches. People listen to him.”
The dean of institutional advancement believes President A is the “best delegator
I’ve ever met.” This permits the president “to keep a lot of balls in the air.” The president
is:
Very good about making contacts and having connections. He spends his
time on the big picture instead of the small picture…He creates the
environment of shared responsibility. Even though we have a small office,
we can count on the rest of the college to [help] get the projects done.

*Major effects by the president.* The instructional dean responded:
The main things are being willing to try new stuff. He is not a stick in the
mud. This is the way we’ve always done it, let’s stick with it. It’s nice to
have the support when you want to try something new. He is always
supportive in trying new things.

*President’s most important job.* The board member responded: “Besides running
the school, he is a kind of lightening rod for the school. Everything he does is important.
It is hard for him to take a day off because there’s always something going on.”

*President’s role in community partnerships.* The board member, instructional
dean, and dean of continuing education and workforce development agreed President A is
active with local business leaders, public and private school officials, and legislators. The
instructional dean added “Most of our board members are local business owners or
former local business owners who still have a handle on things. We do a lot of workforce
development.”

Regarding linkages with schools, the instructional dean said the president has
“more contact with the superintendents than any other level. We meet twice a year with
the superintendents. As far as the local principals and so forth, that is my area and
counseling and student development.” He went on to say that the president and other
members of the president’s staff “meet with our local legislators on a very frequent basis…. Political connections are very good at this point.”

In addition, the dean of continuing education and workforce development said the president has “good legislative support, keeps legislators informed, meets with them on a regular basis…. He his staff “stay in touch with high schools, state agencies, and companies.” He went on to say the “president is not in the office. He meets with all groups, does front end work, and then gets others on campus involved.”

The dean of institutional advancement summed it up by saying:

The president “has the opportunity to meet more people than we do. He has the opportunity to be in more places than we do and he uses those opportunities to make contacts and find out about different programs and different things he thinks we might be able to do.

President’s role in fundraising. The board member’s response was “We used to sponsor a fund raiser, now we have a person at the college for the foundation office.” He added, “we raise funds in other ways, not just with a fundraiser per say or the foundation.” For example, to get equipment for the truck driving course “we went to the trucking companies” and asked them for “some vehicles to drive.”

The dean of institutional advancement, who is also the director of the foundation, said the president “gets involved through his contacts in the area, and through his ability to talk about what we could do if have the funds. He is a good visionary.”

Community perception. Regarding community perception of the college and the president, the board member said:
I think from everything I hear, because I am on a lot of committees and
boards and stuff like that, everybody in the community feels we are lucky
to have both of them. You know the community college is so interwoven
in everything we do now.

Faculty experience prior to the presidency. The instructional dean believes “it is a
real good idea” for presidents to have faculty experience. He also believes presidents
should “step back into the classroom on occasion, even if it’s not for a full semester, to
take a course or to co-teach a little bit, to be in touch with the typical classroom in these
days,” to see the personalities of the students, to see “what the faculty are facing in their
classrooms on regular basis.”

Faculty perception. The instructional dean responded “I think he is viewed pretty
favorably by faculty these days. I think they recognize the fact that he provides them with
a lot of freedom to do different things, what they like to do, and is supportive of folks.”

President B

Community

The residents of six jurisdictions in an urban area in a Southern state are served by
this community college. In 2002, manufacturing was the largest industry in four
jurisdictions, followed by retail trade in two jurisdictions. (Indiana Business Research
Center, 2003). The population is 289,498. The median household income varied from a
low of $30,719 to a high of $48,731. (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). Seventy-
two percent to eighty-six percent of the adults have a high school diploma or more; ten
percent to twenty-eight percent of the adults have a bachelor’s degree or more (Indiana
Business Research Center, 2003).
College

This two year public institution is part of a statewide system of community colleges. It operates under policies established by the state board for community colleges and a local board. It serves four counties and two cities. College B is the fourth largest college in the system and is the largest single campus college. Review of a report by the president reveals the college has the second highest service rate (enrollment per percentage of population) in the system. The college is financed primarily by state funds and supplemented by local governments and the educational foundation.

The college, easily accessed from the highway, was established in the mid-1960s and is located on a seventy acre campus. Twelve buildings provide classroom and office space. The humanities building houses studio, gallery, lecture, and computer graphics lab space for the art department, a photography darkroom, a multipurpose room, and two classrooms. A two-acre community arboretum with a greenhouse is also on campus. The courtyard is planted with shrubs that reflect the four seasons. Several temporary buildings are also on campus. Day, evening, and weekend classes are provided. In order to meet the specific needs of the business community three off-campus sites are strategically located throughout the service area for workforce development and lifelong learning offerings. According to the president, “we try to be where the people are and be as responsive as we can be. We are an opportunity and access institution…we keep tuition low, no dormitories, no athletic teams on purpose.”

The vision and mission statements were observed in the college catalog. The vision statement of the college is “[college] will deliver comprehensive educational and workforce development programs that will meet citizens’ needs, both private and
corporate, to strengthen the local economy and improve the quality of life in our community.” The mission of [the college] is “to provide comprehensive higher education and workforce training programs and services of superior quality that are affordable and accessible and that meet individual, business, and community needs in the [city] and surrounding areas.” According to the college catalog, the college endeavors to fulfill the mission by “fostering the belief that all people should have an equal opportunity to develop their skills, knowledge, and values.”

The 2002-2003 statewide annual report revealed annual full-time equivalent enrollment was 4,353 students; the annual unduplicated student headcount was 13,112. The 2001-2002 report by the president revealed 57% of the students are female, 25% are evening students, 75% percent are currently working, 49% are older than 25, and 610 were awarded degrees and/or certificates in Spring 2002. The president stated:

About 30% to 35% of the high school graduates come here first. We are about 35% to 40% transfer college and about 60% occupational technical programs…. We have a very large workforce component that spends most of their time with industry and business.

The college is approved by the state board for community colleges, by the state council of higher education, and is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In addition, certain curricula are accredited by specialized professional organizations.

Programs of study include degree programs (associate in arts, associate in science, associate in applied science), certificate programs, and career studies programs. General education, synchronous and asynchronous distance learning, and a weekend college are
also offered. The workforce development and lifelong learning program provides continuing education, training, skills information, and educational support to existing, expanding, and new businesses and the community. Finally, programs and cultural opportunities are offered for personal enrichment and to promote a sense of civic responsibility and global awareness. General education goals include communication, learning skills, critical thinking, interpersonal skills and human relations, computational and computer skills, understanding culture an society, understanding science and technology, and wellness. Two universities offer baccalaureate offerings on campus. The college is on semesters.

A review of the table of organization showed that the vice president of academic and student affairs, vice president of financial and administrative services, the vice president of workforce development and lifelong learning, the vice president of institutional advancement, the director of institutional research and planning, and the human resource manager report to the president. Also, an administrative coordinator reports to him.

**Description of President B**

President B is a friendly, talkative person with a southern accent who loves his job and was eager to tell his story. He is in his late fifties, married, and has grown children. The president was dressed in a black herringbone sport jacket, navy slacks, white dress shirt, and tie. President B gave me his undivided attention throughout the interview.

The president’s office was tidy and it held cherry furniture including a desk, leather chairs, credenza, bookcases, couch, and coffee table with magazines. Attractive
prints hung on the walls and beautiful plants softened the room, making it feel warm and inviting. Personal items were not noted.

**Education and Career Path**

The president, a first generation college graduate, has a bachelor of science degree in business administration, a master’s of education in education/business education, and a doctorate in educational administration. President B started his professional career upon graduation from a military college as an instructor in business and finance at a military academy. He then became an instructor in business administration and management in a technical college. Within a year he became director of the extension division. The president was promoted to dean of continuing education at the same technical college, loved the position, and stayed in it for twelve years. Since he was not getting a presidential appointment, he became a vice president for academic and student affairs for four years. Prior to assuming the presidency at this college in 2001, the president had been a president in the same community college system for almost ten years. The president’s charge was to “bring this college to another level, be more proactive, more responsive to the community, more responsive to business and industry.” The board wanted “more endeavors in more places, make this main campus be more proactive as far as bringing what we have out to the public, don’t just sit here and say here we are come use us.”

A review of the president’s vitae indicated he has received many honors and accomplished many things during his career. Honors include being appointed chairman of state system’s workforce development task force; receiving the Medallion of Excellence, a United States Senate Productivity and Quality Award as well as being named a Paul
Harris Fellow from Rotary International. Accomplishments are in the areas of curricular and instructional improvement; economic development; financial management and development; capital projects where he secured over $7,000,000 for an economic development/business technology building; and external funding: foundation and grants where he increased foundation assets from approximately $500,000 to $4,500,000 in four years.

The president belongs to many professional and civic organizations, including the North American Advisory Board of the International Association of Colleges, the National Alliance of Community and Technical Colleges, the American Association for Higher Education, the American Association for Community Colleges, the League of Innovation for Community Colleges, Chambers of Commerce, and the Rotary Club. Also, he has authored or co-authored several publications.

*Personality*

The president began talking about his personality by explaining his role in the hiring process of employees. When the president came to the college:

I made a point of being part of every interview for every full-time and part-time position in this college, and most people say “why in the world does the president want to get involved with full-time and part-time employees?” My point is this, and I will answer your question in a round about way. You are hiring people for full-time positions, you are looking to people for maybe twenty years plus, you are looking for people to come in your college to make a tremendous impact in your institution, not only today but down the road, so you have to be involved if you are president.
You have to make people understand how important you think their positions are and you want to make them understand what the community college is all about. That is not a given all the time, just because some people work in community colleges and come here for jobs doesn’t mean that they really understand the philosophy of the community college and how we do business, so what I try to do in those interviews, I try to show my personality to them. I want them to see that I am a person who really believes in the community college philosophy. I am a person who believes in our mission. I am proactive. I am excited. I believe in what are we doing. I am enthusiastic about what we are doing, and I think that gets to be contagious. In other words, I am just not sitting here watching the water run, you know. I am out there in the stream paddling with you. I am not trying to be right, right here, but I want people to know that I look forward to coming into work. I look forward to what we do. I am enthusiastic about it and I hope it catches within.

President B further believes presidents need to be motivators who set the example for others on campus:

I am not being mushy here, you can’t be too much of any one thing, but people know that this president likes what we do, he is excited about what we do, and is very supportive of them. If they catch that enthusiasm also, because enthusiasm is contagious and what happens is, faculty needs to be enthusiastic to get their students enthusiastic, and I believe that students can see through you, and staff can see through supervisors in the first
week. If they see a hum-drum personality that is just not with it about what they are teaching, enthusiastic about their career or so forth, or someone working with their supervisor that everyday is a pain to come to work, then I think what happens is your morale goes down, your enthusiasm goes down and your being proactive goes down…. I am a highly motivated, enthusiastic person who tries to be very realistic, tries to be a person who speaks his mind, a straight shooter. I don’t have a hidden agenda, and I think people see through that very quickly. If anything positive happens here I try to give all the credit to everybody else, and I mean that sincerely. A president is only successful if his people are successful and we try to get that enthusiasm here…. But my point is, you can assume that, the president has got to be aggressive and proactive and you always have to be active talking about your institution and if you don’t, you sit behind your desk everyday. The president has to be out. The president has to be on circuit, you know you really do.

**Most positive statement.** The president responded that people would say he is “a hard worker, a team player, a good listener, a person who involves people in the process.” He went on to say he is “open, fair, and does not play one party against another.” He believes in treating “each other as family.”

**Painful experiences.** The president’s most painful experience happened at this institution:

I ran into a number of folks who did not have those high standards and those high expectations and they were doing things not in a professional
manner. Some of our folks were not following the guidelines, were not following policies and procedures, were not doing things in an ethical manner, whether that was from an administrative position or faculty position with the students. If you are going to have those high expectations and those high values, you have to meet them head on, so if you find employees who are not doing things correctly that can be a litany of errors, you can’t tolerate that. And if it’s clear-cut that they are doing things improper, then they are dismissed. So that was very painful to do, especially as a new president coming in. I was not looking for something like that but it surfaced.

President B described another painful experience that occurred:

You get disagreements between some faculty members and deans, distrust builds up over a number of years, there is always some friction there that has never been ironed out…. In the past I had some faculty members come to me and say that there were some real problems that have been going on for years at that institution and had never been addressed. Of course I had to look at it from both sides so I started reviewing some of those issues and found out that was correct. So we brought in both parties and put it on the table. I don’t believe in festering, this is a Southern word, festering, because festering leads to dissension, leads to unhappy employees, leads to lack of quality in the classroom, lack of respect for employees. So to stop festering of certain issues we just had the parties come together and put all the issues on the table. We found disenfranchised parties, brought
them together, and really worked in a manner so they felt comfortable
talking about their misunderstanding or mistrust or whatever and once
they actually talked, see getting people to talk is the key component to
start with, and they have been holding this inside for years, maybe the
supervisor treated them in a certain way or said something there one time
that they’ve always held a grudge. Whatever the reason may be. So those
were areas that were painful.

The president continued to say that once he got people to talk, it spread through
the “grapevine quickly”:

If there are issues out there this president is one who will get to the bottom
of the barrel to figure out what the bottom line is and correct it. What I
found that happens then is, some people will go back on their own,
without going through this process, and will start talking to people again,
and get some things worked out. What really works is when people on
their own, without any help from anybody else, finally sit down and talk to
somebody and open up, because they knew they can open up and there
would be no retribution or whatever against them, because the president
was not going to allow that to happen. Painful issues are issues. Those
were issues of mistrust among peers, those are painful issues because
those issues can cripple an institution. If it gets to be large scale you can
get an institution in crisis because the institution does not trust itself.
Trustworthiness comes from relationship building between peers and if it
is not there you got to make it be there.
The president’s final thoughts on painful issues related to the board. Although presidents can have painful experiences working with board members, this president said: “I never had real painful issues with boards. My board has always been very supportive. I’ve always been very supportive of them and involved them.”

**Values and Beliefs**

The president strives to have a college that is based on principles and values: Values of honesty and trustworthiness; values on straight talk, what we say is what we mean. We try to do what is right, you know, treat people fairly, treat people as you want to be treated. Let’s provide a good customer service to people, don’t pass the buck, and don’t send them around to ten different spots. Let’s be open and honest. If we have some sores out there, let’s admit them and bring them to the forefront.

President B also believes “integrity is very important”:

We have worked with our faculty and staff. We will accept nothing but high standards in the classroom, meaning the way you treat students, respect is very important, you don’t demand respect you earn respect, that is with faculty to students, with supervisors to employees. You have to earn the respect of your employees. The president has to earn the respect of his peers and you do that by consistency of decision making. You don’t treat one person different than another. I think this is very important. Consistency is one of the issues that I’ve always tried to work on.

Another belief that was part of the president’s inauguration address:
Community colleges have become the eagle’s nest of American education. Under their wings, one of every two high school graduates begins the college experience. Under their wings, two of every three minority students find access to higher education. And under their wings, businesses find partnerships for education and retraining to help make America competitive in the international marketplace.

_Greatest reward._ President B believes his greatest reward is graduation:

You see mothers and daughters graduating at the same time, you can see grandma graduating sometimes, you see first time college students who, given the opportunity, excel tremendously…. They get the skills, and they get the competencies they need to be successful with their life and raise a family and do the things they need to do and get a good job and so forth.

The president explained why students who come to community colleges are successful and what this means to him:

They get into a smaller class environment, they get their head on straight, they get focused, they get into the groove of studying and doing college work and they are not in this big university where there are so many students that you are just a number. They get in an environment and they get success, their self esteem rises, wait a minute, I can do this, and once they realize that, get out their way, because they are going to go. We should never close our eyes to the fact that there are still many folks out there that if it weren’t for us, they would never have the opportunity. And so I feel, I tell my pastor this, you talk about saving souls and really making a difference in peoples’ lives. You come to the community college
one day. We are saving souls and changing peoples lives everyday, because we provide the opportunities and possibilities that people in many cases never had before. What we do is wonderful and I get excited about that. That is why I am gratified. We make a difference in people’s life everyday, and I really believe that.

Dissatisfying about the president’s role. President B responded:

What is dissatisfying is that, when you look at community colleges compared to our sister four year colleges and universities, there is a hierarchy there that the four year colleges and universities really consider themselves the elite institutions, and we are kind of the people’s institutions, and that is what we are, and that does not bother me at all, but it bothers me that they don’t see community colleges as being bastions of academic excellence because we are mostly open door institutions and things of that type. But you know that is okay because we impact most people and we make a real difference.

The president went on to say that many of the leaders in the communities are graduates of four-year higher education institutions:

Their allegiance and their fund giving is still mainly towards those four-year colleges and universities, even though 90% of their employees in their companies may be through the community colleges. I see people give tremendous sums of money [to large universities]. Just a small portion of that would go so much further here. We could go so far, with just a tip of what they get. If somebody gives a million dollars, just give
us one hundred thousand of that and that one hundred thousand will go as far for us as that nine hundred thousand is going to there, because they are going to take the majority of their money and invest it. We take a lot of money we get and put it back in the community. We are doing something now in fundraising that we call “heaven and community help itself.” Our healthcare providers have had a really hard time lately with nurses, rad [radiology] technicians, all the different allied health professions and we do all of those. So we actually have gone back to them and said we will double the size of all our programs if you help us pay for it. They didn’t skip a beat. They have given us millions of dollars now so we have double the size of our RN programs, our LPN programs, and this is a pittance in what somebody gives to a four year school. It is just disappointing to me to see somebody get five million dollars a year, ten million dollars a year or whatever, to improve the athletic field when five million dollars could touch a lot of lives. So I get frustrated about the perception of values of monies with two year colleges and four year colleges and universities. I am not begrudging them, it’s just that, community colleges really in the last twenty years have started doing this fundraising stuff.

Another disappointing issue for the president:

Some folks out in the real world out there have some negatives about community college students. They don’t know the whole story. We do take a variety of students and we do take some students who are borderline students. It’s a fact of life. So that is what we are all about, it’s part of our
mission. I always say to some of these folks, you know, when high schools graduate students, some of the students still can’t meet college work. What are you supposed to do with those? Just dig a hole and pour those kids in a hole and just close it up because they are of no value to the world? That is not true at all. About 10% of our student body is made up of what we call “developmental study students.” We are delighted to have them because we are going to make them productive people and they are going to be future taxpayers and productive workers in your companies. Then we have some students who can compete with anybody anywhere, but they come here first. So that gets frustrating at times because people read into things, even sometimes high school students read into that. I mean, sometimes it’s not ‘chic’ to go to a community college.

Leadership Style

The president’s experience in continuing education and working with “many business and industry folks, both in local and state levels” taught him that involving people in the decision-making process is important:

I would attribute a lot of my growth to working not just in the education component but working with that community and business component. I saw how they worked with employees, how they worked with the training programs, how they did this to upgrade their employees, and I really got a lot of involvement there and I really saw different perspectives of those folks, and from that, and from academics, I learned that nothing is going to succeed unless you involve people. You have to involve people in the
process and when it came to training I found that you need to involve those who you are looking to train to be part of the solution. They need to be involved in actually determining what needs to be set up in this program, and it is amazing if they are involved how much attentive and how much more responsive they are to the program itself.

The president also learned from his continuing education experience:

Establishing a mutual rapport, and a rapport means that your employees have the right to speak to you good and bad. If they have a concern and if they feel comfortable talking to you about those concerns, I found that the companies that did that had the great success in the training, and they had the greatest success at the end of the year profit margins too, because their employees seem to be more productive, they seem more efficient about what they did and they seem to be happier type employees. Therefore, I brought that back to the academic setting and if you are involved in academics and a college setting you know that faculty, rightfully or wrongfully, disenfranchise from the administration. They don’t feel like they are part of the process, so we really make the effort here to make them part of the process. Now that does not mean they run the show because they do not, but they get the word in and I can assure you the majority of the things they have in mind are the same things that I do and we try to instill those into all of the decisions we make, and because of that I feel we get a great response to a lot of initiatives.
For example: faculty had been nervous about layoffs because of budget cuts. The president went to the faculty and staff and presented the issue upfront, the amount of money they had, the percentage of cuts that had to be taken. He then asked faculty and staff:

Look at your priorities and see just what are the most critical components, what are the areas you would determine are maybe the weak links of your areas. The tough decisions are not made by the hierarchy on top just looking at a piece of paper saying lets get rid of that one and that one. Decisions were made by some in depth analysis by divisions and by departments. They themselves determined what they saw as their strengths and weaknesses and they were very candid about it. So when we had to make some tough decisions. We had no turmoil because these were decisions made by the whole team. Not everybody was happy but overall we had a majority of folks because they were involved and they were part of the process.

President B tells his faculty, administrators, and staff he has “very high expectations” for himself and for everyone else: “I think that is important. They know my expectations of myself are no less than what I expect of them.” Along with this, the president believes in academia we tend to evaluate ourselves on the high side, especially in public institutions:

If you look at the faculty and staff, if you went from one to ten, everything is about nine and a half. It’s just the way we do things, and in reality everybody is not a nine and a half, but people feel more comfortable. What I find with supervisors is they can’t look somebody in the eye and
say you need to do a little bit more work on this and what I say to them is, you’re not being punitive. You are helping them.

Evaluating faculty and providing constructive feedback is important as a leader:

When faculty comes to our campus we don’t evaluate those folks the thirteenth week of the first semester. We evaluate them the second and third week because if they have things not going well you don’t want them to go the whole semester, going the wrong way, so we try to get our folks in, but that’s constructive criticism. We want them to succeed. I mean the faculty and the classroom teachers are the ones who make the college. Because I tell them, it’s the classroom teacher, the image and the reputation of the college is not me, it’s what comes out of the classroom. It’s those who go to the four year colleges to transfer, it’s those who go into the world of work to work, it’s those who come out of here and take individual courses, just to take a course or two, they feel comfortable when they finish, they got their money’s worth. That’s what it’s about.

Finally, the president gives all faculty and staff an opportunity to evaluate him each year:

Not many presidents do that. We give them an evaluation form, they don’t have to sign it, and they can say whatever they wish. The pro and con is very helpful to me because I get back a lot of responses from them, so I guess that is part of this openness again. Of course, I have feelings like everyone else and I like the good things they say and I don’t like the bad things they say, but I do get some legitimate complaints that sometimes I didn’t see. I try to be one who can take criticism. I think part of
management is you have to be able to take criticism because that is what life is about. I always joke and tell faculty and staff, we agree to disagree. You go home to your spouse you agree to disagree. Everything is not always perfect. If we agree to disagree, we do it in a professional, respectful way. I try to not get too emotional and I ask people to try to not get too emotional because that kind of skirts away from the issue when it gets too emotional.

Management style. The president involves people in the decision-making process but holds them accountable for their actions. President B tells his vice presidents and deans he is counting on them to run the college because they are there, “running the nitty-gritty everyday where the rubber meets the road as the term goes.”

I don’t micromanage what you do, but I hold you accountable…. We come up with goals and objectives but I let them make those goals and objectives happen, I don’t go sit over their shoulder and say now you got to do this, you got to do that. They set all that up and then sit down with the president and go over those things. If they ask my advice, I give them some direction but I hold them accountable to make that happen. I hold our faculty accountable in how they treat students in the classroom. In my mind there is a line between faculty and students and they know where I stand on that. I think part of my management style is that you have strong values. You have to have values, you have to give people the latitude to make decisions on their own.

Another part of the president’s management style is his belief in diversity.
I believe in women and minorities being a great part of the process. This is an institution that did not have many females as part of the senior management team, so we make great strides to put women in deans’ positions and other positions now because they earn it. I believe that people who should get the jobs are those that merit those positions. When I first started I didn’t work that way, I had to learn by the school of hard knocks. I had to learn that you come in there as a young whippersnapper you know it all, you start telling everybody what to do because you are just out of college, you know all the stuff, but you learn very quickly that does not go over well. You really learn the value of people and colleagues and the value of clients and students.

Perceptions of the President About the College

The president believes he sets the tone for the campus:

I want faculty that look forward to coming to work. A lot of times you go on campuses the morale is low, people are always saying something is wrong, something is not working right. Well, we want to address those things. We go out to see our faculty, divisions, once or twice each semester. The vice president and I meet with them late in the afternoons just to talk and ask how are things going. “What areas can we address? What are some of the problems? What are some of the positive things going on? What is it that I can do for you?”

President B, also, tells faculty and staff that his position at the college is to help them succeed in their jobs.
In other words, I want you to be successful in the classroom, I want you to be successful in your administrative staff position. It is amazing. I mean we had meetings when I came here with all the staff members. We brought in small groups to come in here to talk to the president. I had large numbers that said they had never been in the president’s office and they had been working for ten years, never being up here in the president’s office, never in some cases even spoke to him. I try to be inclusive, I try to involve people, I try to get their opinions, I want to know their thoughts. From those classified meetings I think we responded to four or five key things they had on their minds, that maybe to you and me would not be a major hurdle, but to them it was the world and it was not that difficult to address. So that is why I work with supervisors. You have to listen to your employees, nothing is too small, and bring things back to the table.

The president also talked about his open door policy:

I’ve been here [in community colleges] thirty-plus years, so I guess call me seasoned now, I am seasoned in this thing. I still make a lot of mistakes but I think we do more positives that we do more negatives, but you know I try to be very candid, I try to be very open. This is truly an open door presidency. I have one or two people a week that want to talk to me about certain things and what I try to do is go their office. I try to go on their territory, I go in their office and shut the door, we sit down and talk, and I think they feel very candid so the open door is always there. I mean a sincere open door not just lip service.
College strengths. When asked about what the college does well, the president answered: “we respond to the needs of the community” by offering courses the community needs. In addition, the president believes quality is tied to the “rapid response” of offering courses.

Challenges facing the college. There are three challenges according to the president. Although the college is doing ok “even with budget constraints,” it could do more if they had more finances. Another challenge is to “maintain the cutting edge on equipment for programs.” The third challenge is to maintain low tuition.

Faculty. In the summer the college has a “return to industry” program where three to five faculty members return to what the president called the “real world.” The president stated:

If I have an accounting teacher, they may go to a CPA office in the summer. I have a person in a certain area, they may go into that area. So, therefore, they get to go back in the real world to see what their students are going to work in once they finish college. They get a different perspective. They can then come back to the classroom with a whole different vision. You know, it is more than just bookwork. You got to put the practical in there too. It is important that faculty members see the areas that their students are going to.

The president believes this program is necessary because our work environments change quickly. Although the person may have worked in his field prior to teaching, if he has not kept up “the world will toss them aside, so we make sure that our people get back” into the work world.
Obviously we can’t do more than three to five every summer, but [when] you keep doing it on a yearly basis, you gradually get your folks back into that, and is very helpful to us, because a key of a community college in my mind is the college transfer. I get how well the transfer students did in the four college. Our students meet or exceed the GPA of the students that started in those colleges as freshmen, so it can’t get any better than that. In our occupational/technical programs, we get surveys back on our graduates that went to a particular company, so we see how they did once they went to work. If most do well, that is great. If some don’t [do well], we want to find out what areas we need to concentrate more on in the classroom. So that is very important to us.

Role of President with External Parties

The president believes that the philosophy of community colleges is to “respond to the needs of the communities which we serve.” Prior to his becoming president, many in the community had never been on campus:

We have so many that do, but still a lot of people who don’t. We try to bring in a real diversity of people to come and see what we are all about. They are stunned when they hear our enrollment. They are stunned when they hear all the different things we do. You would think they would know but they don’t know. You are at the institution. You think everybody knows what you are doing. Don’t you assume that one bit. I was with a doctor the other day. I told him we can get transfer credit here and so forth. He said: “I had no idea you could go there and get college work.”
*Developing community partnerships.* According to the president, “partnerships are based on relationships”:

You are not going to develop a partnership until either you or your workforce people or community people develop some relationship with some company or some group, and they have to see the mutual benefit. When you work with industry and business and folks from the outside, you are developing what I call relationships with key movers and shakers in your community.

The president believes it is important to work “diligently with our industry and business base” and to provide quality programming to them because they are the people that have financial and management resources. The president provided two examples. One, the campus has a beautiful arboretum and “a full arboretum committee of community folks” who gives “us piles of money because they love that arboretum and everything it does.” Two, the college receives money from “folks involved in industry and business training because we meet their needs for the workforce.”

According to the president, community colleges do not get most of their money from their alumni base. The president explained:

Ninety percent of your money comes from friends of the college and those in the community and those in the industry and business segment. So any good community college today has to put a tremendous emphasis not just on your in-house academic programs but you have to make sure you are responding totally to all the needs of your community from, as I keep repeating myself, the industry and business base, the community base,
because those folks see value, they want to see some value added. If they can see the value to them or their companies or their business, they will give back to that particular community college, not just financially, but they will also serve on their advisory committees, they will also be proponents for you before legislative bodies, they will open doors for you to meet people that you may not have an opportunity to meet, they will open doors to you for foundations that maybe their corporate offices have. President B also believes it is important that presidents be able to speak the language of their business partners because it establishes a relationship between the two of them. The president stated “it has really paid off for me in this career coming from continuing education.”

*Linkages with high schools.* The college has a large dual enrollment program that permits students to meet some of their high school graduation requirements while simultaneously earning college credit.

We have the largest dual enrollment courses in [state] at our college. We offer the dual enrollment courses in the high schools where they have to meet our criteria. In other words, the teachers have to be a master’s degree teacher, they have to teach our curriculum and we have about 2500 students in the public schools here who take dual enrollment. So you know they finish high school, have the first semester of college already done and some cases the schools pay eight percent of the tuition
Fundraising. The president explained his role as the lead fundraiser for the college. The college has a Foundation Board made up of community leaders who are involved with potential donors. After the door is opened:

I have them here for lunch, show them a presentation of the college, and give them an overview of what we are about. I am out making speeches all the time selling the college, so I am the lead fundraiser. My time is made available whenever they want me to work with them to raise funds. We have these campaigns…. Most of them will say: “You know, we value what you do,” and so forth, and most of them end up giving us some money.

The college also provides cultural events to the community. The president tries to cultivate donors during this time:

We run four or six of those [cultural events] a year. Bring in some outstanding cultural performances. We bring about 25 to 30 couples [to campus] and we call them friend raisers, not fund raisers, and we have dinner and wine and we have a little reception, and … just have a good time and after that we will walk over to the cultural event…. have a great performance. They have a great night, and they have a different perspective of the community college. I will only take about five minutes there [to] give a few highlights of the college [because] that is not what the program is about. The program is mostly, we are glad to see you. I mix the group with some of the key faculty and staff people, so I have one of our people sitting at every table, not congregating at their own table. I
want them mixed up with the general public. What I want the general public to do is get a better sense of the value of our employees.

Pathways to the Presidency

President B believes that experience in continuing education “is the greatest background developer for any particular president that comes up.” The president stated he received an “encyclopedia of training” while in continuing education and workforce training because he did “a little bit of everything”:

In my background, continuing education dealt with academic programs in which I had to work with the academic division chairs, deans and so forth because we ran all the evening programs so we had to make sure that the all academic criteria was in place. We did the hiring of all adjunct instructors working with the deans, so we had to put in place all of the academic credit programs in the evening hours. Continuing education did that coordinating with the division chairs. Any programs that were offered off campus were in what we call industry sites, we did the same thing, we all put them all either on credit basis or non-credit basis.

He went on to say that many people “in the academic arena don’t have the full grasp of the continuing education side.” In the president’s mind:

Continuing education is really what the community college is all about. We cover a lot of areas, everything from the flower arranging course to the most sophisticated industrial training program. That is quite a variation there. You have to have a good team to make that happen.
Although President B is aware that most presidents come from the academic arena, he believes continuing education served him well and he “wouldn’t change anything for it.” Since he enjoyed his continuing education job because of the variety it provided, he almost stayed there permanently.

I was not a person sitting behind the desk all the time. I was out. I was out working with community folks. I was working with industry and business. I was out finding what the needs were and bringing them back to the college. I was actually assisting at one time with placement because I was the guy that worked industry and business.

Today, President B believes that he is still a great advocate for continuing education because continuing education touches the lives of the people in the community.

We have a little of everybody out there come to this college. I mean from the judges, the lawyers, the doctors and everybody else, they are taking individual courses. My neighbor down the street, big time judge, but he comes here to take French classes all the time because he likes to go to France, and speak the language, speak French when he goes over there. I got many people taking English courses and tax courses, everyday I hear people saying, I am always out there taking something. To them they just come to take one or two courses but they see us as a resource, and I call that continuing education, where we offer individual courses all over the place, that they come to and also the computer programs today and software courses is a big deal for us. And a lot of people take those as individual courses.
Need for academic experience. The president’s attempt to become a president directly from continuing education failed:

Even though I was getting good vibes from everybody and I knew I knew the work, I was getting the smiles, the hand shakes, the pats on the back, but I wasn’t getting to the next step, I wasn’t getting the job. The people who were the academic vice presidents were. So, I worked hard and a position opened and I made a great pitch. I went in and sold myself. I tried to show how continuing education can be beneficial to this vice president’s position and I got to be a vice president [for academic and student affairs].

When the president interviewed for his previous position [community college president]:

I could sell the faculty members on those interview committees because I had the background in academics, and there I could also sell the business people on the boards because they say, hey there is a guy that also understands business and industry, and in faculty, there is a guy who also understand academic affairs, here is a guy that has a good blend that can make it happen.

The disconnection of continuing education from mainstream academic thinking is a weakness identified by the president. Faculty does not see the relationship between continuing education and the college:

Faculty say what do those folks in workforce do, what are they doing every day there? What is continuing education doing? What are the community folks doing out there? We are here working a number of
credit hours each week, and we are doing our job and so forth, and here we are seeing budget restraints and so forth. Why don’t you just cut those folks out there, because they are just doing some peripheral stuff, they are not really into the real nitty-gritty of what community college is all about.

As a president, it is his responsibility to see that the continuing education department “does not get disenfranchise from the other part of the college”:

It is important that relationship building even internally in the organization be maintained. I make it a point to bring the workforce and community folks before my faculty all the time. They give reports about what they are doing. They keep the faculty fully involved with training that is going on out there. They also talk to the faculty about potential programs, our areas of concern that industry has that they need to be concentrating more in the classroom, in other words, the key to a classroom graduate is how do they respond when they go to work, so therefore we have to make sure that those folks that are doing the classroom work are fulfilling the need of the industry and business. The folks in workforce, continuing education, and community services have got to maintain this bond with full-time faculty so they can understand what is happening. If not, they don’t look at you as the full partner in that institution. Now, a lot of that has to do with tunnel vision of faculty. All they look at is what they do everyday and they don’t see outside of that tunnel sometimes. Therefore, it is imperative that the president involve workforce, continuing education, and community
service as much as possible in in-service programs, workshops and seminars and different things.

Recommendations to others. The president recommends that deans and administrators from continuing education get experience on the academic side before trying to obtain a president’s position. The academic side believes “they are the academic principals, and you are just pretty much coordinating for them.” Therefore, potential presidents need the experience of making decisions about academic faculty and programs. The president believes that a person who gains academic experience and continuing education experience will be a very successful candidate for a presidency. “I’ll put a continuing education person with academic experience against any person who is just an academic person.”

Perceptions of Others About the College

A board member and the dean of natural sciences, mathematics, and health technology were interviewed during the college visit. The board member, a pleasant, older gentleman who met with me in the conference room adjacent to the president’s office, had been a member of the search committee when the president was chosen. The dean, a veteran of the college for nineteen years, has been in her current position for a year and a half.

Mission. The board member believes that community colleges, including this one, are “essential in every state” because they provide job training and education for people who “would not normally get it anywhere else.” Community colleges also provide “retraining for people in a changing job market at a cost that most people can afford.” The dean concurred that “the college has a very broad based mission that strives to hit a
variety of segments of the community. We are a really valuable community resource and our mission allows us to meet community needs in a much quicker way than a four-year institution might do so.”

**College strengths.** The board member stated that because “of the president’s experience, the college has taken off in the last two years.” The college was a “well kept secret,” but during the past year the president has been able to “raise the visibility of the institution by working with industry, all of the businesses in the community, by speaking with community groups service organizations.”

We have really heightened the visibility of what this institution provides, and that is credited to our new president. He is a very outgoing individual and knows the value of this level of education. Within our community, which is a very heavily loaded for medical care, they are just crying for nursing skills, lab techs, all kinds of employment opportunities in the medical field. This institution has stepped up to that and we are channeling our efforts to what the job market is in this community…. In the last year we also provided four-year degrees because we have some relationships with local four-year institution.

The dean believed the college does “a variety of things well,” including its health programs “which are very strong, good success rate, competitive high quality applicants.”

We have been very responsive to business and industry where our IST programs are core courses. Social sciences and humanities provide a wonderful opportunity for students to transfer to four year institutions. Also, as colleges cut back on course offerings, we are seeing a lot of
university students coming here to pick up courses that they are not able to get, but they can here, and that does allow them to complete their degrees. And we also have workforce training that respond pretty quickly to non-credit needs of business and industry.

Values shared by employees. The dean responded, “there is a commitment to students. I also think there is a commitment to educational quality.” The board member was not asked to comment.

Challenges facing the college. The board member’s response was about the financial struggles of the college because of the “significant reduction in the funding that comes from the state.”

We are a state institution, and because of the economy, the state has cut back on funding. As a result we had to use more part-time staff. We have, in the opinion I think of everybody that is on the board and in the administration here, we would like to change that. The number of part-time professors and instructors we have here is too high. That is a challenge. We’ve had to cut back on some of the services and staff. We had to take a very hard look at some of the courses that we offer where we haven’t had the students to sustain them. We had to raise tuition, not significantly, because the tuition in our community colleges system is very inexpensive compared to a four-year, even a four-year state institution, but still we had to raise tuition, and those are challenges that we face. We like to offer education to anybody that walks in the door and we don’t turn
anybody away. I think the funding at this point and number of full time
staff is an issue, for all higher education institutions in the state.

The dean responded that funding is their biggest and ongoing challenge. Related
to this is the ability to attract and compensate qualified faculty. The faculty of the college
is an aging faculty and several retired last year. The dean felt a need to be able to “be
competitive and reach out to qualified persons nationally so we can continue to have
strong faculty.” The dean also identified the need for “more full time faculty.” However,
she feels they are “very fortunate to have many qualified faculty.”

Vision for the college. According to the dean the president makes the
“community aware of all of the facets that are available to them through the various
programs, courses that are available at the college.” There is “more visibility, more
penetration in the community and I think that is driven by the vision that we need to
continue to meet the emerging needs of the area.” Also, there is a “desire to make
concrete relationships with external agencies and businesses, to seek funding in a variety
of ways from a variety of sources.”

Perceptions of Others About the President

The board member stated the president “is very experienced.” Since President B
came “from a smaller community college within the state, he knew the system; he knew
the organization, the personnel.” During the interview process, the president was
interviewed by the staff, academic staff, the search committee, and the board. There “was
just no question that he was the right person for the job at this time. His
personality, in order to put [the college] on the map, was just exactly what we needed.”
President’s personality. According to the board member, the president is “extremely outgoing, which was a real breath of fresh air. He is a very hard man to keep up with:

I would suggest to him that he ought to meet with so and so. Well, he had already had breakfast with that person the week before. I cannot tell the number of times that I would suggest something for him and he had already done it. Had breakfast or had a luncheon arranged or had a person into the college.

The board member also commented that the president is “into what he is doing. He loves what he is doing. Everybody here thinks that he is outstanding.” He went on to say that the president, also, “knows the value of this level of education.”

The dean stated the president is “dynamic”:

He is interested in how the college fits in with the overall community. He is someone who builds relationships with community leaders. He is a good listener, he is approachable, and he has a sense of humor, which is nice. He is also, I think, politically savvy. He has, you know, a military-based education and that is very much a part of his persona. He is precise and he wants the facts. He wants to know what we are able to do, not what the roadblocks are, but how do you get around that. He is someone with a very firm vision of what he wants to accomplish. And he is willing to rely on the strengths of the people on his team to get things done.

Most positive statement about the president. The board member responded with “his experience, and his personality and his direction of mission for this institution.” He
then talked about the five and a half million dollar campaign the president initiated because there was a need for it. “He saw it needed to be done and he just gets things done.”

According to the dean, the president has “been tremendously effective in external fundraising for the college and getting commitments from community leaders and agencies to see the college as a partner.” She believes that in the past two years the president has “raised the level of awareness among the leadership in this region of the college and what the college is doing.”

*Leadership style.* The board member believes the president is “friendly, outgoing, and people tend to gravitate to his personality.” Also, the president is capable of making difficult decisions. Finally, the board member stated the president “has an uncanny skill or ability to select the right person for the job. I’ve seen that in numerous occasions when a position is being filled.”

According to the dean, the president “is an individual who has a plan in mind; a leader with a plan, a goal, a vision.” The president is, however, open to having additions to the plan. “He is willing to acknowledge if there are issues that would detract or places that we shouldn’t go.” The dean also reiterated that the president is a good listener who does not want to be surprised. “He wants solid ground work to be laid in anything that we do, and I think he is also a leader who is fiscally responsible.”
President’s strengths. The dean believes the president’s greatest strength is “his ability to interact with community leaders, his fundraising abilities, his willingness to allow autonomy to the persons who are entrusted with various positions and authority.” The board member was not asked to comment.

Major effects by the president. According to the board member “enrollment here is up significantly which in itself is a challenge because of the facilities and the number of faculty that we have to support.” In addition to the community campaign, the dean mentioned that the president “has enabled us to grow the health technology area pretty significantly.” In addition to developing very strong relationships with the area healthcare agencies, the president “has been willing to hire new faculty to support efforts.”

President’s most important job. The board member believes the president’s most important job “is to promote the institution in the community.” The president has developed an extremely good administrative staff and a very good faculty that run the college on a day-to-day basis. This, then, makes it possible for the president to be in the community talking to business leaders about what the college can do for them. President B also talks with the secondary education people about what can be done for students who cannot go to a four-year institution.

The dean believes the president’s most important job is “to provide leadership.” She believes the president “is the ultimate representative of the institution and he or she, if there was a female president, needs to portray the college in a positive manner and be able to recognize the opportunities to get the college’s message out there.”
President’s role in community partnerships. According to the board member, the president “is out there”:

As soon as an industry in this community or our service announces that they are having a significant lay-off for whatever reason, we have this person on their door step within a couple of days…We are there trying to help with retraining people. We are trying to take a proactive role instead of just waiting. We go out there and tell people what this community college has to offer. A lot of times we try to do that in conjunction with the state employment agents. Also, we have a very close relationship with the economic development board and frequently they will bring an employer here just to show what we have to offer as far as education for hiring new staff or whatever they may need.

The dean stated: “we do have a real strong dual-enrollment program that accounts for about ten percent of our total enrollment.” She also believes the president has met with all of the secondary education leaders and has been “responsive to the area high school as they pursue their dual-enrollment needs.”
President’s role with legislators. According to the board member the president began meeting with state representatives within his first month at the college. Also, when the state legislators have community college day, the president has taken “several board members and a couple of the administration people” to the state capital. In addition, once a month, either the president someone from the college travels to the state capital to spend time with their representatives.

The dean agreed with the board member that the president “has been very involved with our area legislators.” Local members of the House and Senate have been on campus. The president is also involved with the community leaders such as the mayor and members of city council. According to the dean, President B is on a number of local boards, “so that broadens his view of what’s happening in the community.”

President’s role in fundraising. The board member stated the president is:

Very active in the Foundation because he is the one that was the driver behind it. When we get a prospect for any kind of fairly significant contribution there is no hesitation on his part to be a part of that process, either by going out with one of the Foundation Board members, or in making the call on that business, or hosting a luncheon here in this conference room.

Faculty experience prior to the presidency. The board member likes “to see somebody who has been in the classroom, who’s maybe gone on to become head of a department, who has had some experience, perhaps in a smaller institution, in administration.” The dean it is “helpful to have, at least somewhere in your past, some
teaching experience, because you do have to maintain an appreciation of the perspective of the faculty.” She added:

I guess someone who has what we might consider the liberal arts background where you truly are able to see the global picture, are able to apply that global picture to the scope of what’s being done in your area. I do think management skills, and management and leadership to me are two different things. Management skills are crucial, leadership skills are crucial and a knowledge of the community college system.

Faculty perception. The board member believes the president is “well liked by the faculty and held in very high regard with the faculty here.” The dean responded there were mixed feelings about the president “because we have a fairly large number of faculty who have been here a long time and changes are usually not easy.” To some extent, the dean believes faculty is “still working on forming an opinion of him.” She also said the president is “better one on one than he is with a group.”

I think there are a lot of faculty who have had the opportunity to interact with him, have seen the changes he has made, and feel really positive towards him because he is very supportive of faculty initiatives. He is willing to put money where money is needed, if money is available.

President C

Community

This rural county in a mid-Atlantic state is picturesque with heavily forested mountains, lakes, and rolling hills. The countryside boasts family-owned farms that have been handed down from generation to generation. Businesses range in size from very
small to over one hundred workers. In 2002, retail trade was the largest industry in the county. The 2004 Chamber of Commerce book reveals recreational activities such as boating, swimming, golf, tennis, camping, hiking, backpacking, fishing, kayaking, rafting, and snow skiing abound and attract tourists to the area.

The 2002 population for the area is 29,878 (Indiana Business research Center, 2003). The median household income in 2000 was $32,238 (Indiana Business research Center, 2003). Slightly more than seventy-nine percent of the adults had a high school diploma or more; almost fourteen percent had a bachelor’s degree or more (Indiana Business research Center, 2003).

**College**

The college is located on a sixty-two acre campus, overlooks a lake and resort, and is approximately one mile from a major highway. It was founded by the Board of Education in the early 1970s. The campus has seven buildings that consist of classrooms, faculty and administrative offices, a gymnasium, science and computer laboratories, bookstore, game room, dining facilities, student government offices, continuing education offices, and a dormitory. Since the buildings are connected by covered walkways, people do not need to go outside in the cold weather. A seven member board of trustees, appointed by the state’s governor for six year renewable terms, presides over the college.

The 2003 college catalog reveals the mission statement is to “provide quality higher education, lifelong learning, and access to the universe of information so that individuals, businesses, and the community can achieve personal, entrepreneurial, and collective success.” There are twelve general goals and six specific goals that identify the
main purposes and ideals pertinent to the region, its people, heritage, culture, and economy. These six specific goals include the education goal, the student goal, the communiversity goal, the economic development goal, the cultural goal, and the environmental goal.

The college’s financial report indicated the college served approximately 800 credit and 3,200 non-credit unduplicated students for the year that ended June, 2003. This same report revealed the college had 345 credit and 165 non-credit full-time equivalent students in that time period. The flat enrollment growth was attributed to smaller class sizes in the local high schools.

The college is accredited by the Commission of Higher Education, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. It is also approved by the State Higher Education Commission. It is a member of the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Junior College Athletic Association.

Educational experiences directed toward specific occupations and careers are provided by the college. The associate in arts degree (transfer or college/university parallel programs) prepares students to transfer to four-year colleges and universities without loss of credit. The associate in applied science degree (career or occupational programs) provide students with entry level skills and knowledge in fields such as business, technology, and para-professional support. The certificate programs provide job entry skills and knowledge in particular areas such as adventure sports, agricultural management, business management, computer information technology, human services, juvenile justice, and natural resources and wildlife technology. The college catalog indicates courses are available for students who demonstrate a need for academic
development in various levels of language arts and mathematics. According to the county Chamber of Commerce, the college has acquired a national and international reputation for its adventure sports degree and a regional reputation for its program in natural resources and wildlife technology.

In addition to the academic courses, I observed in the college catalog the college offers many other programs for the students and the community. There is an active athletic program that includes an inter-collegiate men’s and women’s basketball, women’s volleyball, men’s baseball, and golf. There is an art program and an art gallery that provides educational and entertaining exhibitions. The music program encourages students to take advantage of private voice and instrumental music lessons. The theatre department offers a wide range of theatrical activities on and off campus. The library is available to students, faculty, and the community. Also, the college offers and receives courses over the interactive television laboratory.

The Division of Continuing Education and Training is designed to meet the lifelong learning needs of the community. Courses are offered so people can upgrade their work skills, learn more about themselves, improve fitness, develop a hobby, or enhance communication skills. Also, courses can be designed for specific businesses.

The college promotes regional economic development and enters into partnerships with regional government, business, industry, and public and private economic agencies. Multi-cultural programs and global education are supported by the college. Finally, since it is in an area of natural beauty, the college serves as a leader in environmental awareness by fostering an appreciation for the environment, by promoting
a balanced approach to environmental issues, and by striving to operate in an environmentally sensitive manner.

The strategic planning process guides how operating plans are established and how resources are allocated. The 2003 financial report indicated eight goals and associated strategies were initiated in fiscal year 2003, with end goals to be reached by fiscal year 2007. The goals relate to the following areas: operating funds, compensation package, full-time equivalent enrollment in credit and noncredit programs, the outcomes assessment plan, global education, information technology, partner in economic development, and capital projects.

The table of organization shows the following people report to the president: special assistant to the president, the dean of academic and student affairs, director of enrollment development, dean of information technology, dean of administration, dean of continuing education and training, and the director of personnel. In addition, the executive assistant/interim institutional research officer, the administrative assistant, secretary, and press officer report to the president.

Description of President C

President C is in his mid sixties, married, and has one child. The president was dressed in navy slacks, white dress shirt, and tie. His suit jacket was off. He listened and answered questions politely. Since the president was not feeling well the day we met and had taken the morning off, I was grateful he interviewed with me that afternoon.

The president’s office was neat and comfortable. Built-in bookcases covered the wall behind his desk. The area between the two windows contained a sink and cabinet
with coffee supplies. An oval table with chairs was available. Personal photographs were around the office, and plants added a warm touch to the room.

Education and Career Path

The president has a bachelor of arts degree in social studies, two masters degrees, and a doctorate in philosophy. President C began his professional career as a high school English teacher in a Northeastern state. For eight years he was a lecturer and teaching assistant in philosophy, logic, freshmen composition, public speaking, and applied logic in colleges and a university in the northeastern United States. In addition to teaching while working on his graduate degrees, the president was head of residence at a university. Throughout his career the president has taught; he still maintains a faculty position as professor of philosophy, logic, and ethics at the college. On the administrative side, the president has been a dean of students in both a college and a community college, and immediately prior to his presidency was the dean of student and community services at a community college in a northeastern state. The president was appointed by the board of trustees in the mid-1980s.

According to his vitae, the president has several publications. In addition, he has presented at numerous national conferences. Currently the president holds membership in Phi Delta Kappa, the National Education Association, the American Association of University Administrators, the League of Woman Voters, and the American Association of University Women.

Personality

The president described his personality as “open and relaxed, a hard worker, capable” but he was not sure of the most positive thing people would say about him:
“They might say that I am respectful of other people’s opinions and views, that I am open to other people’s thinking. I am not a dictator.”

*Strengths.* The president described himself as “organized. I am very logical. I am a very good listener, I think, not dogmatic. And I am effective. I put things together and they happen.”

*Painful experience.* When asked to describe a painful experience, the president had to stop and think because, “I don’t dwell on them. I absolutely forget such things.” He then said:

I think they are more dismaying experiences than painful ones. I am dismayed when people (we have something called Principles of Just and Humane Community) violate the principles and make assumptions about what other people are doing, what is motivating them. I can’t give real specifics. Something came up just recently. I am working on a reorganization and I was doing it very privately before bringing it forward to the cabinet for review, which I did last week. The rumor that was going around as to what was going to happen with this reorganization, was hysterical; it was hysterical as to what people were thinking, and there were all kinds of attribution going on, which has no basis in fact and sometimes the attributions are unflattering, but I don’t get bent out shape about that.
Perception of faculty. The president was not sure how the faculty perceives him, but said “I think they think I am fair-minded, that I am pro-academics… I think there is respect. I sense that. They are always very respectful around me.”

Values and Beliefs

The personal values that guide the president as he makes decisions are “principles, respect for other people, principles in the value of communal thinking and consensus building, principles about human rights and dignity.”

The most important thing in the president’s work is “being a contributor in peoples lives and in the life of the community. Helping people to become, to reach their aspirations, and the community to reach its aspirations.”

Satisfying about president’s role. The president likes the continuous challenges that each day brings. He never knows what may happen the next day. He added:

I like building. I think of myself sometimes as an architect, putting structures in place that will abide for some period after you hang up your spikes, which I’ll be doing in a couple of years…but it is nice to think that you contributed to something that endures. So really, like that building process, I am a program developer, I like doing that kind of activity. I like to see these things start. I like to see them perpetuate, they don’t always, but I like to see programs happen. And I like to think I’ve spent some time developing a culture, and the culture has enough inherent value that it will continue. It may not.

Greatest reward. According to the president, “seeing this college grow, develop, and survive” has been his greatest reward:
It is a very small institution and it had had a long history of severe problems and nearly came close to closing. But it was nice to see that ship ride itself and then go on and develop a course for itself and move in that direction. It is a very strong, stable, little institution now, and it has done some wonderful things. It has a lot of unique features and qualities to it. We have four signature programs, and we have our governance system. I think we have a very distinctive style in working within our community and things of that nature. I think the attitude of the institution, the way the people work together, these are really nice things to look back on and contemplate.

**Philosophy.** A review of a philosophy statement written by the president in the 1980s is still current today:

Without compromising their mission, community colleges need to become more entrepreneurial. They need to recognize that they have products to sell through their community services division; they need to develop new programs responsive to market conditions, and they need to work with regional businesses and industries, public schools, social services agencies, and private citizens, groups, and clubs to make the colleges centers of community life and education.

**Leadership Style**

The president practices “the consensus model of governance,” which is centered in a college cabinet, rather than a presidential executive council. The cabinet offers administrative counsel to the president:
It’s made up of twenty members of the college. We are a very small college, so that is a fifth of our workforce. They represent the different constituencies at the college in various ways so every constituency is represented in six ways to Sunday. All the issues that come before the college go there, and the objective is not to vote but to arrive at a consensus.

The president clarified what consensus meant to him:

Consensus for me doesn’t mean unanimity. If a couple people out of twenty don’t agree we’ll probably close the matter there, but we usually strive for very high level of consensus. There is a whole kind of give and take process that occurs, and a lot of very good thinking goes on. People contribute to that, and at the end of it we arrive at a decision. It is a time consuming process but the investment upfront usually results in decisions that don’t need to be undone after they are made. The cabinet is the recommending body to me, but in my seventeen years I only vetoed cabinet decisions twice. So whatever they say, whether I agree or not, I usually do it.

Perceptions of the President About the College

Mission. When asked what was important about the college’s mission statement, the president responded it was “interesting because it is a mission and dual statement that really lays out some of the fundamental principles underlying the institution”:

It makes it clear that the institution is a learner-centered institution. I was writing papers on learner-centeredness long before that concept became
popular. In fact, I talked to Terry O’Banion about it. And I think we really focused on learners as the important people of the institution. You’ll see it in the goals, the commitment to the community, to economic development, to environmental sensitivity. So I think it really does reflect where our fundamental beliefs are.

Vision. The president’s vision is that:

People in a small rural community would be able to access higher education at every level through their local community college, not that we would be the direct deliverer, but we will broker higher education at levels above the associate degree. I would like to see the campus grow to an extent. I would like it to always be a small college (although I suspect events will overwhelm that idea eventually), one that continues to be a learning center, that remains committed to its community, that helps us build this community to become what it could be and is starting to become, which is a premier community in the United States. Someday I would like to just look back and think, yeah, that is what this college can do.
College strengths. The president believes the college “gives students an outstanding education”:

Over the last ten years or so we have, in the majority of those years, had the highest success rate among the students that transfer from one college to another [state] institution. When we do not score highest, we are typically the second highest. So our students are well prepared.

He added that the college has “signature programs” that give the institution an identity:

We have developed programs, which are highly distinctive and have received national and international awards in rural telecommunications. I think our governance structure, as I mention, is highly distinctive. I don’t know one quite like it anywhere.

Values shared by employees. According to the president, values shared by employees are “students, we have all student centered.”

Challenges facing the college. The challenges the college faces, according to the president, are mostly due to the size of the institution:

In a tiny institution like ours, fixed costs absorb a large part of the budget, so we are always struggling to be competitive in terms of salary. We have the lowest salary scale in the state. We have to be highly resourceful to give our students comparable education and we have to make hard choices. To illustrate, we don’t have a full time political scientist, we don’t have a full time
physicist, chemist, philosopher, and so on. We have a very tiny faculty, so we have those struggles to deal with.

The president further explained somebody is always questioning whether or not the institution should exist:

We’ve been very successful in fending off those kinds of challenges and very successful in evidencing our institutional stability despite our institutional size. If you look at our debt budget ratio, we have no debt. If you look at our reserve in proportion to the budget, we have an amount equal to one seventh in reserve. That’s about 13% and the Middle State Association is very happy if you have 5%. So we have all the indicators of institutional strength and stability despite the challenges.

In a philosophy statement written by the president, he had the following to say about community college presidents meeting the challenges of the 1980’s: “The challenge to community college leadership is twofold: to find new sources of revenue and to develop a positive and supportive work environment that promotes, sustains, and gives recognition to individual effort and creativity.”

Role of President with External Parties

Developing community partnerships. According to the president the college does a lot of collaborating with businesses and organizations through their continuing education division:

We are very active in the economic development of the county. I’ve been in respects a sparkplug for things to happen. I think it is generally recognized that we are probably, if not certainly, among the top institution
in the state in terms of being aggressive about involving ourselves in the economic development, community development of our area, our service region. We are very proactive in that regard.

Linkages with high schools and colleges. When asked about linkages with secondary and post secondary schools, the president answered that the college has a “long history of articulation with high schools that goes back maybe fifteen or sixteen years.” Now they have an active Tech Prep partnership with the schools:

We have a lot of courses that we send over distance learning into the high schools to augment their curriculum. As a result of that, there is the opportunity to provide and enrich studies for advanced students. It’s been a very profitable relationship for many, many years.

Regarding linkages with colleges, the president stated “We have articulations all over the place. Our main receiving institution is [name] State University. We have articulations and agreements with them, a long history of cooperation and mutual support.”

Fundraising. The president’s role in fundraising has been “somewhat minimal.” He put together a foundation when he first came to the college, but he does “not work at it in the way other presidents do.” However, the college has had “good fortune, people like the college and they want to be supportive of it.”

The president added the college is “entering into our first major capital project fundraising campaign, and we’ll see how well we do at that. This is trying out new territory for us, and I am optimistic, but it’s too soon to tell.”

Work with legislators. The president’s relationship with legislators is “an ongoing but unscheduled process” that “often has to do primarily with issues that arise.”
Over the years the president has “cultivated very positive relationships” with local legislators, including county and state government officials:

> Whenever I need to speak with somebody, I just call. I always get my calls through. They are always very receptive and supportive. We are in the throes now of a very big project that requires a lot of cultivation of political figures and alignment of them and I am doing that. I have another project with a colleague and we’ve just completed over forty individual interviews with legislators in order to present our justification for a bill, which we have before the legislature. So, you show up at chicken dinners, you shake hands, you work respectfully with your government officials and try to give them courtesy accounts of anything that may come up that they need to know. You try to give them what they need so they can be supportive.

*Pathways to the Presidency*

*Previous experiences.* When asked how previous positions as dean of student services and continuing education helped or hindered him, the president responded “None of them hindered me. They all helped. It was a developmental process, learning how to administrate, working effectively with people.”

The president has an academic degree that “tended to balance my administrative history in terms of getting a position like this.” While working on his doctorate the president was head of a residence hall and discovered his ability to “listen to people and counsel people”. Also, since he was eleven, the president had worked in a family business where he learned to bring “a practical business sense” to his work.
While working on his dissertation the president offered to teach a course for free at a nearby small private college:

Of course they were very skeptical. They were also very desperate so they took me on…. I think I was kind of entrepreneurial in the sense of being resourceful. When I went to the community college after writing my dissertation, I became dean of students there.

While at the community college the president “worked with a fellow in financial aid who had been a newspaper publisher for 25 years.” This person was:

Very savvy about communities, how communities succeed. He gave me some principles, which really became indelibly imprinted in my mind. The first task of a community college is to become indispensable and the best way to become indispensable is to become very active in support of the community’s aspirations taking on the duties that people are doing as volunteers because volunteers invariably exhaust themselves, and then the good work that got done becomes temporary and discontinues for a period of time. Then somebody gets hot to trot again and they resurrect the activity in a kind of serendipitous circle. He basically said, the first thing you have to do is to make your institution indispensable.

When the president took his current position, a “guiding principle” he brought with him was the amount “you get back in terms of community support by becoming community oriented”:

We had to be actively engaged in moving a community forward. In fact, I took some important leadership positions in supporting economic
development and tourism development within the community and it really solidified the business community around this institution. I can ask for just about anything and get it because there is just such a strong feeling about what the institution gives as opposed to takes.

Recommendations to others. When asked how deans and directors in continuing education should prepare for the presidency, the president responded that a number of things might be useful.

One is to contemplate getting a degree in a business area or academic area, because I think one of the biggest impediments they have is the presumption that the natural line of ascension is through the academic office to the presidency. As an academic person I think that if they can teach it is great. I would pick up a course, teach it, and try to evidence I am an effective teacher.

Other suggestions included attendance at board of trustees’ meetings because “I think it is a really good thing if they show their presence, show their interest.” Attendance at professional development activities is another suggestion because it “would strengthen them in improving their areas of weakness.” For example:

If a continuing education dean does not know accounting, I would say go to a good accounting seminar, be able to talk the language of balance sheets and be able to go to a board meeting and make a contribution.

Finally, the president recommends that the aspiring president work with credit faculty “and try to be of service to the credit division. Offer opportunities to full-time faculty to do interesting things.”
Academic experience. When asked if the president needs to be a provost or vice president of academic affairs before assuming a presidency, the president responded:

It depends on what kind of institution you want the presidency at. If you want to be at a very large institution, you are more likely to need an academic background. You are going to have to look at the structure of the community colleges you are going to apply to. You need to get to the tier below the president. I am sure there are exceptions, but typically I think you want to be a row below the presidency. The higher you go in the chain of command or in the hierarchy, the more global you will become. Breadth is, I think, an important attribute. A president needs to have a comprehensive vision of the role, and scope, and value of the different parts of the institution. It all has to fit together organically as a functioning kind of organism, and it is hard to get that perspective insofar as you are basically working on behalf of your own division. Your perception tends to be more circumscribed.

Perceptions of Others About the College

A board member and the dean of continuing education were interviewed in the conference room outside the president’s suite of offices. The coordinator of mathematics and director of distance learning (one person) were interviewed in the college cafeteria as we ate lunch. All were friendly, knowledgeable, and willing to answer my questions.

The board member is a real estate agent who has seen many changes in the area since moving here twenty-four years ago after graduating from college. The coordinator of mathematics and director of distance learning teach both in the traditional classroom
setting and with distance learning. Regarding distance education, she proudly said the college has been involved with it since 1993. “We are on-line but we also have a very strong interactive television component.” The dean of continuing education has been at the college for almost thirty-one years. He is from the area, went away to college, and returned.

*College’s mission.* When asked what was important about the college’s mission, the board member answered “as a community college its role is to be available to folks in the community that may not have access to opportunities outside the area.” She also said the college is a good partner in the economic development of the community.

The coordinator of mathematics believes that:

The college mission to support community outreach is a very important part of the mission that you don’t always see accentuated, even though for a community college system, especially in [state]. I’ve always felt that all entities of the community colleges have to be in partnership and the strength comes from the synergy of all the pieces working in the best kind of harmony that you can get. You don’t get best results if the community outreach piece doesn’t know what the academic piece is doing, doesn’t know what the president’s office is doing, so communication is the real key, action is the real piece.

The dean of continuing education said “we have a mission statement that has several goals associated with it. The primary mission being education and that is broken down into credit and non-credit.” He went on to say that the college has goal statements that refer to economic development and environmental concerns. He further said:
In the non-credit we have tried to be more specific and deal with workforce development issues. We are very connected with the business community…. And then of course, on the opposite side of that, we do adult basic education programs, literacy programs. On the one hand, it is sort of the chicken and egg question, which comes first, jobs or training, and really they need to come together. We need to have jobs available, we need to train. On the other hand, business won’t come unless we have a trained workforce that could supply the manpower needs that they would need. So basically the emphasis is on credit, credit has 600 or so credit students

*College’s strengths.* When asked to describe what the college does well the board member believes the college does a number of things well:

I think this college has sort of taken on a particular role in regards to community development, economic development and so forth. I think it’s been a very good partner with the county in that respect, probably due to its mission and probably due to the particular people who are in roles that had the ability to influence that. I think the college has made a strong attempt to be responsive to the needs of the workforce in the county. Education, I think, the success track, the success records of the students who have gone through the program here, speaks well for the college.

The mathematics coordinator said she thinks: “the communication piece, in comparison with many other institutions that I have worked with, works best here.”

Although the cabinet is not “a decision making body,” it gives the president “an
understanding of the climate of the various parts of the campus.” The cabinet members represent a department or division and are “to go back and talk to the other members” of the area, thereby encouraging communication.

The second biggest strength identified by the math coordinator is the “leadership that the president brings to the campus” because everyone is working in unison. The campus is looked at “as a whole.” “What is the best for the campus as a whole permeates everything we do.”

The third strength of the college is that it is student centered. According to the math coordinator, “every person that works in this college from maintenance to the academic area, to the students affairs area, to the MIS area, to the president’s office, all understand what that means.” To her, being student centered means the college provides the resources:

To the students to make them be the best they can be, but to stay rigorous with have high standards, and make the student to come to the level of the bar, and I think we are very good at doing that. Our students are very competitive when they transfer across the state. We still hold one of the highest transfer averages in the state.

A fourth strength identified by the mathematics coordinator is the positive relationship between the college and the county and state political leadership. “They are on this campus numerous times, we know them by first names, and that is a strength.”

Finally, the math coordinator said the board of trustees “meets with the faculty and staff twice a year and they take seriously whatever is said.” The issues are presented
to the president, who then “makes recommendations resolving the issues back to the board, so there is a wonderful two way street dialogue.”

The dean of continuing education answered the college takes pride in their ability to have a “very close relationship between faculty members and students” because they are a small institution:

We give a lot of personalized individual attention, we care about our students, students can contact administrators and instructors whenever they want, an open door policy. I know that people, the academic dean, the president and others talk with a great deal of pride about the quality of our instruction here at the college. We have many, many success stories where people have gone from here to other colleges actually discover that they had very strong base of education.

With respect to continuing education, the dean of continuing education believes one of their strengths is knowing their community:

We have a list of virtually every business in this county. We associate with the Chamber of Commerce. I am on the Development Corporation. So we have really attempted to talk to businesses, and non-profits, and agencies to see what their needs are…. We’ve just started an incubator building down here for business technology kinds of businesses. The building is now about sixty percent occupied and that is an example, I think, of our trying to meet the needs of the business community and say well, we are not only in this for training per say, but also to help grow business in a real sense.
Values shared by employees. The board member believes there is “a strong loyalty to the college and it’s mission.” There is a “dedication to accessibility” so financially it is important “to making sure our costs don’t get too high to keep people from coming.”

The mathematics coordinator said there is an “appreciation for each person’s individual make up, that people are not as quick to make negative judgments.” She sees a “willingness to give people that second chance.”

The continuing education dean believes “there is a sense of camaraderie here, there is a togetherness.” Everyone in the college is on a first name basis. Since the staff “wear many hats, we know each others business.”

He added “There is a sense of common purpose, a shared purpose. Even though not everybody would be a one hundred percent happy all the time.”

Challenges facing the college. According to the board member cost is a big challenge, “relative to the amount of tuition” the college can charge and “budgeting adequate financial resources.” The college is very small and in an economically underdeveloped area in some respects, and the “economic scales work against a college of this size.” She further stated that “salaries are not as high we would like them to be and we would like very much to bring more resources to some of the programs here, but money is an issue.”

The mathematics coordinator also believes “our biggest limitation has to do with finances for this institution as a whole, for salaries.” The second challenge is the need for resources within the classrooms. They have “the basics”, but grants need to be written for additional things.”
For the continuing education dean, having enough people to have a class run becomes a challenge at times. “We cannot offer the diversity of courses, programs, and time slots. I think we loose students to other colleges.”

Vision for the college. The board member believes the vision for the college is to continue to follow the mission, to “be a player in the continued growth of the county,” and to train and retain people who live in the area. The board member mentioned some specific vision points that the college is involved in right now. One is the development of the community athletic recreation center. Another is the “possible role in development of the community art center. These are:

- Things that would benefit students as well as the community at large. I think that is kind of how the college tends to see itself in the broadest sense. Essentially, delivering quality education is important and overlaid with some of these other issues as well.

The mathematics coordinator said “the vision, in order for this community college to really continue to move into the future, involves the total community and the total state”. She went on to explain that the president is working on a project with state officials and local commissioners to “creatively get financing for this endeavor.”

The mathematics coordinator continued: “The bringing of the community onto the campus for as much as we can” is another vision. The vision “is for us to be the best rural small community college that we can be, and that means excelling in all areas, academic and community service.”

The dean of continuing education responded the college is “here to be a partner in this community, to share in whatever community experiences we can.” He emphasized
the business community “in terms of being a partner with business, with non-profits, with agencies, and sharing together the educational ventures that would help to improve our business, really our social fabric in this community.”

Perceptions of Others About the President

In general, the board member said the president “is very committed to the well being of the college, very competent and capable in working towards the various goals that have been mentioned.” The board member believes the president “has a particular strength and interest in the coordination of what the college can offer to the health and growth of the county, the economic development angle.” In addition, “he has been a very strong guiding figure, I think, in the identity of the college.”

President’s personality. The board member observes the president as being “friendly, very capable, organized, political in terms of a personality type and human relationships.” He is able “to carry on human relationships with political awareness, with social awareness.”

The mathematics coordinator said the president “is truly the most humane president that I’ve ever worked for.” She acknowledged the president “is a philosophy major” and that “what you hear and what you see is what you get”:

There is a no camouflage, there is no façade. He truly wants people to work as a team. He wants you to bring forth ideas. He wants you to try things. He is willing to say there is going to be some failure; he’ll tell you there are a few things that he started that didn’t work out as he had hoped that they would, but you know, nothing ventured nothing gained. He is energetic. He does so many things, the community focus, he is out in all
the communities. He asked that each of us, he may even forgotten this, that each of us actually be involved in one of the organizations of the community, and to take some kind of leadership role.

The dean of continuing education replied the president was appointed when the college was at its lowest and near closing. This dean believes the president “is the most intelligent person” he has ever worked for. The president is a “quick study, quick read.” After the president assessed the situation, he began to build “a sense of togetherness and common purpose, a sense of team, and the rest is history.” President C has “a sense of student service, he has a sense of excellence of quality” according to the dean:

The continuing education dean added the president “never downgrades people.” The dean believes the college is “very fortunate to have him here as president for seventeen years.” The dean believes the president has “total confidence in his competence. He’s always optimistic, happy, a pleasant kind of a leader.”

*Most positive statement.* Both the board member and mathematics coordinator appreciate the president’s vision for the college. According to the board member “the vision of the college is clearly articulated in his mind, and…he is able to inform the board in an organized and consistent manner. It makes for a productive board.”

The continuing education dean said “I think his vision of excellence of quality” is the most positive statement about the president. “We don’t have to be Harvard, we can be us, and do things well and do it in a professional way. We have an important intricate service to deliver to this community and it is our responsibility to do it.”
Leadership style. The board member said “I’m sure he would identify it as a consensual style. I think for the most part that is fairly accurate. I think he certainly has strong opinions and he has not tried to present those but certainly hopes for consensus.”

The mathematics coordinator said “His leadership style is one of cooperation, he does understand that he is the top man and buck stops there.” She went on to explain that large issues are discussed with a group of key administrators.

The dean of continuing education said: “The president believes in the participatory governance and we have cabinet, we have administrative counsel, and we have committees.” The dean added that the president “allows people to do their job” but he will give his ideas when asked. The dean continued that the president does “more micromanaging” when jobs are not getting done.

President’s strengths. The board member believes the president’s strengths are “his sense of vision, his organizational skills, thinking, writing, literary capabilities, very literate.”

The mathematics coordinator responded: His knowledge. His ability to analyze and synthesize to make good evaluations, because he really does. He tears the problems apart and he puts it back together again in new ways and comes up with some really creative ways that are outside the box. So his strength is in his knowledge and his ability to analyze, synthesize and evaluate before making decisions and that comes from his philosophic background I think. He is a good practitioner of philosophy.
Another strength of the president, identified by the math coordinator, is that he is a “people-person so he values humans and their contributions.” The president “has an ability to plan and he expects planning from each of his people. We all know the mission and goals and everything we plan, including the budget, is related to missions and goals.”

Major effects on campus. The mathematics coordinator responded “Survival. Without him, I am not so sure that this campus would be here right now. Community confidence and political support for increased funding has increased and he is done it.”

The continuing education dean responded:
You know, I think, just bringing people together, that we can do the job we are asked to do a job here, we can get it done here, we are going to do it and then he put himself, he invested himself fully in the doing of it. He works weekends, nights.

President’s most important job. The board member responded:
As a head of the institution, there are a lot of important jobs that come together there. Certainly the guiding figure… the unifying person or personality for the college, in terms of its faculty, staff, employees; the head executive, the main organizer. Also important is his role in the community as representative of the college.

President’s role in community partnerships. The board member believes the president “has been very successful in that respect.” The mathematics coordinator said the president is “looking for the right partnership all the time. He is out in the community, well respected.”
The dean of continuing education said the president “is involved in that as it’s needed or helpful”:

We just developed two partnerships and I was involved every step of the way, but it took his involvement to really jell the partnership and now we have ongoing classes, courses that we are doing in cooperation with them. I would say it could not happen to the degree it happened without his involvement.

Secondary and post-secondary relationships. According to the board member and dean of continuing education President C has collegial relationships with the other community college presidents in the state. The mathematics coordinator said “We have a very close relationship with the two high schools in the county.”

President’s role with legislators. Regarding the president’s work with legislators, both the mathematics coordinator and dean of continuing education believe the president has spent many days in the state capital talking with legislators about important projects. According to the mathematics coordinator, the president is “well respected and visible.” The dean of continuing education remarked “With respect to the delegates and county commissioners, he knows them all on a first name basis. There is a lot freedom in calling them, in talking about things. So he is very involved, he is very active.”

President’s role with fundraising. All three interviewees stated the president works regularly with the Foundation.

Faculty experience prior to the presidency. When asked if the president should have been faculty prior to ascending to the presidency the board member thought faculty experience “would be a valuable asset.” The mathematics coordinator did not think it was
“ultimately necessarily that they come through that rank to be a good president” as long as they have “experience or work in an integrated fashion.” The continuing education dean believed there “would be some advantage but I don’t think they necessarily had to have that experience”:

I have seen some very good people do some very good things, who didn’t have that particular experience. They have to be open minded and willing to see, to learn and appreciate what a good faculty member is, just like if they didn’t have the continuing education experience they certainly need to appreciate what continuing education is and learn about.

*Experience prior to the presidency.* The board member believes “experience within colleges and community colleges specifically” is necessary prior to becoming a president:

In other words, I am sure there are some benefits of coming from a teaching position or just some knowledge of educational systems. A necessary skill is obviously an administrative skill, certainly not everybody who comes from a teaching background has that skill. The teaching element is probably as important to be able to understand and empathize…An awareness of the political scenario certainly seems to be a very important skill or experience to have.

The mathematics coordinator believes a president should have a “broad base of knowledge across all levels of education and community. The president has to be “willing to delegate” to people he trusts can do the jobs. The coordinator believes a president can come “from any discipline including continuing education or community outreach.” is to
The dean of continuing education believes a president should have a doctoral degree. In addition:

This person should have some sense of what the larger community is with the non-traditional student. I think having experience in the non-credit area would be a tremendous asset for the president to have in terms of that particular experience that would help him understand the parameters, not only in the associate degree or certificate, but also the non-credit aspect.

*Faculty perception.* The board member believes the president is perceived “very well. He has been very strong, very positive figure, and is perceived that way.”

The mathematics coordinator said:

Our president is perceived as a strong president. I do know that there are some people that feel he does not understand faculty issues because he didn’t come up through the ranks and that is all part of standard thinking, so I don’t find that to be abnormal. He has never put pressure on the faculty senate since I’ve been here. Some of the faculty really doesn’t see the need for the community pieces. They feel he should be spending his time on campus and paying closer attention to bringing more monies in for campus without realizing that, first of all, you have a dean to run the academic area and secondly that all of us have to try to bring money into campus. One person cannot do it.
President D

Community

The residents of an urban county in a Southern state are served by this community college. In 2002, retail trade was the largest industry (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). The population was 2,283,953 and the median household income was $43,324 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). Seventy-five percent of the adults have a high school diploma or more and 27% have a bachelor’s degree or more (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003).

College

This two year public institution is located on 243 beautiful acres with a spring-fed creek and lakes. The campus is easily accessed since it is on a major highway and close to a major freeway. The college opened in the early 1970s and is one of several colleges in a county district. Fourteen buildings, including a performance hall, greenhouse, planetarium, and fitness center, are on campus. A seven member board of trustees, elected by the citizens of the county, governs the community college district. Revenue is derived from local taxes, state and grant funding, and student tuition.

Review of the college catalog indicates the mission of the college is short and easy to remember: teaching, learning, community building. The vision statement, also reviewed in the college catalog, for the college expresses several goals, including:

Students and community stakeholders choose [name] college for its quality learning environment, affordability, and accessibility; [name] students and stakeholders discover visionary, innovative, flexible design and delivery of curricula, programs, and services that coincide with
student learning styles and needs; and [name] successful students improve their abilities as independent thinkers, lifelong learners, responsible citizens.

In a review of a college document it was observed that the following values were the foundation for the work at the college: mutual trust, wholeness, honesty, fairness, considerate and open communications, mindfulness, cooperation, diversity and creativity, responsible risk-taking, and joy. Review of the same document indicated the strategic planning priorities for student learning 2003 – 2009 are response to community, student success, employee success, and institutional effectiveness.

Statistical information about the students at the college was obtained by reviewing college documents. The college serves approximately 14,000 credit students and 9,000 continuing education students each semester. Fifty-four percent of the students are women, 46% are men, 33% attend full-time, 66% attend part-time, 87% are baccalaureate bound, 13% are career program bound. The average age is 28 years.

The college is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. It confers the associate in arts degree, associate in sciences degree, the associate in applied sciences degree, the associate of college/university transfer degree, and certificates. In addition to offering courses in flexible formats, the college offers a fast-track degree program, honors courses and an honors scholar program, global studies and global scholar program, world languages division, multicultural center, adult resource center, career information and placement services, center for tutoring and learning, disability services, and American English and
Culture Institute. The college also has an intercollegiate athletics program and an intramural sports program.

Continuing Education and Workforce Development courses are designed for adults age eighteen or older. There are a multitude of courses in various topic areas. The college’s corporate services provide training programs that are designed and customized to meet the specific needs of a business. Examples of content areas are computer technology, telecommunications, and English as a Second Language.

Although the college has received several distinctions, only three will be mentioned. It is one of twelve community colleges selected by the League for Innovation to participate in a five-year project to develop institution-wide learning college models. It is, also, one of seven mentor colleges for a project by the American Association of Community Colleges. Finally, the college is one of two community colleges recognized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities for an innovative program.

Description Of President D

The president, a first generation college graduate, is a man in his late fifties who laughs easily and frequently. The president supported his way through college with scholarships and by working. President D was dressed in a suit with a long-sleeved white shirt, brown walking shoes that looked comfortable, and a green and blue tie. The president was first observed at a Student Forum where students and others from campus had an opportunity to ask him questions following his brief presentation about the district expansion, the need for a bond levy, and the importance of voting. President D appeared comfortable as he answered the questions in a forthright manner.
During the interview the president was talkative and friendly. The interview took place in a conference room across from his office. Cut flowers were in water with a note that each person on the floor should take one. The president’s office is actually two rooms. Upon entering is an area that has a beautiful oval conference table with six chairs around it. There is also a sitting area with a loveseat, two chairs, and a smaller table designed to match the conference table. The paneled brown wall actually hides the bookcases behind it. A beautiful blooming orchid was noted on the small table, as was a glass vase on the conference room table. Since space is at a premium, this area is also used by the vice presidents for meetings. The president’s working office is adjacent to the area just described. It is long and narrow with built in desk space on three walls so he can roll from one place to another. This area contains the typical office equipment plus personal photographs. There is a window so his secretary can pass notes to him if the conference area is being used by others. According to the president, his desk area was neat and organized today because of the efforts of his secretary.

Education and Career Path

The president was valedictorian of his high school class. He earned his bachelor of arts degree summa cum laude in English, French, history, and religion in 1967 and his doctor of philosophy in 1972 in higher education administration and English. He has completed post-doctoral work in France and Costa Rica as well as attending the Summer Institute for Intercultural Communications at Portland State University. In addition, the president has completed numerous studies in mind-body-spirit work through seminars, conferences, and workshops at the college, the National Wellness Conference, and the Fetzer Institute.
Before assuming the presidency at this college in the late 1970’s, the president was on the college’s founding staff as director of community services, followed by positions as assistant dean, associate dean, and dean of instruction. President D was also the district’s director of instructional television, assistant to the chancellor, and assistant chancellor of operations and planning.

The president has taught adult basic education, general equivalency diploma preparation, college level French, humanities, graduate level change management theory, community college curriculum and instruction, and higher education administration. He has served as humanities faculty at the college since it opened in the early 1970s.

President D is a frequent consultant, keynote speaker, and author with community colleges, higher education organizations, civic and business groups in 38 states and abroad. His topics include building and celebrating organizational community among employees; leadership development; strategic planning; the role of humor in organizational culture and productivity; establishing organizational values; intercultural communications; service learning; the role of arts in culture; organic organizational structures and accountability; environmental scanning; the organizational deployment of national Baldridge criteria for comprehensive institutional effectiveness; embedding the learning college; and nurturing authentic behavior in teaching, learning, and leadership.

President D has served on numerous national, regional, and state boards and task forces, including the state Higher Education Coordinating Board and the board of the American Association of Community Colleges. He has earned numerous honors and awards for his academic, organizational, and community leadership, as well as for his teaching and instructional television productions. In local community leadership roles,
the president has served in various capacities for such organizations as Rotary, chambers of commerce, parent teacher association, hospitals, bank, church, arts organizations, and planning and economic development councils. President D was also selected as the recipient of a 2004 leadership award.

*Personality*

The president described his personality as “erratic.” He has taken the Myers Briggs, True Colors, and DISC and believes he “knows himself.” According to the president, he is identified as an introvert on the Myers Briggs; but the presidency requires an extrovert. To compensate, the president is aware that he needs time to recover and be by himself at times. The president seeks balance in his life and believes in listening “deeply to one self and others.” He “seeks clarification, does not rush to judgment, and believes in humor for the institution and himself.” President D is “a person of action, but does not rush to the bottom line.” He believes in “responsible risk taking.”

The president also said:

I am giving you this description of myself but in any organization there will be people who would have an antithetical view of who I am. I think by and large, particularly with people that work with me most closely, but faculty in general in the college, see me as a community builder, as a person who listens, and a person who helps them have fun, and people tell me that a lot. The other reality in being here as president for a quarter of a century, is that my most virulent detractors are no longer here and it is amazing how one or two people just know that they are going to outlast you, how much trouble they can cause for whatever reason you don’t
know, I was young then, I was a fool, get over it, you know. I don’t know. I’ve faults as a human being too. Well the nice thing for the new people who came is that I am a more evolved human being that I was back then and I don’t and I don’t tend to create so many enemies.

*Most positive statement.* The president believes people will say he is “the kid who likes to have a good time.”

*Painful experience* The president believes “disappointments in personnel” have caused his painful experiences: When people, in spite of their better selves mess up so badly that they can’t be salvaged here and they have to move on, it is very painful, because I don’t follow that dictum of don’t befriend your employees. Life is too short, and I think it is not whole person. I think real people connect with real people, so I become friends with people who work here. I do realize that my relationship is different because of my position that I hold, so when people have to depart under situations like that, it is personally painful.

President B then explained how he deals with the pain:

What eases the pain is that in almost every situation that I can think of, is that we can talk about their future anyway, and what their strengths are, where they have been, how we might continue with the relationship beyond this point to have more important success in life kind, and it’s been rare that people left here really ticked off at me personally.

The president gave another example of a painful experience that happened early in his career. It had been determined that he had “violated policy” and should be terminated. Fortunately, the person who had hired him “went to bat for me”: 
The chancellor just read me the riot act, and said [the vice chancellor] thinks you are salvageable so he froze my salary for like four years as a statement to everybody that you don’t do something like that and that was very painful and I felt bad, but again I was young and so you know moved on.

Stressful situation. Later in the president’s career the chancellor who had wanted to terminate him asked him to become the district’s director of instructional television. Needless to say, he was “very skeptical, not only because I felt uncomfortable doing that but because…this is the man who wanted to fire me:

I just told him that I didn’t want the job. “You wanted to fire me. I don’t know anything about this. I am wondering what your motivation is, and is it because you want to fire me?” I was very blunt. He looked at me across the table, his desk, very sternly and said “I have probably hired some meatballs in my day, but never intentionally, and so my motivation is because I think you can do this job.” I said: “Ok, well, thanks for making that clear.” But that kind of confrontation was necessary for him, but that was probably pretty stressful and at this age I may have not survive it.

Values and Beliefs

The president’s responded that the college’s value statements “are also my personal values, although they didn’t come in a vacuum”:

It was a huge multi-year college review, but I was involved in the conversations. From time to time as you get ready for an accreditation visit, you review all those things because you have to, the value statement
has changed very little from the time that it was in the format you see to now.

The president tells new employees in orientation:

This institution is not the institution that we started with because this is not the community we started with and so its evolved as our community has evolved and is not just passive. We believe that our community is at least in part what it is because we have been here to help shape it. So we are both a responder to the community and a shaper to the community, and the values that we have stood a test of time. They tend to be what keeps us grounded as we change constantly and daily.

The president went on to say that a person who left the college to assume a presidency said that she learned from this president that:

Today’s organization chart is tomorrow’s trash because we are constantly changing that organization chart to capitalize on the strengths of people that we have, to mesh with environmental scans that drives us to make our decisions. As people leave it is always an opportunity to now what, what is the best way to capitalize people’s strengths or to help them get renewed with strengths that we haven’t drawn on because now we have somebody else in the mix. I mean, all of that is very fluid, but the values tend to not change that much, and we give people who want to be an employee here, all that stuff in advance. So we give them the values and we say, if this doesn’t ring true to you, this is probably not the best place to work.
The president, also, shared that a consultant hired by the district office “didn’t like the format…about our value statement and said this is kind of the latest way to do values statements.” The president “was open” to the recommendations. However, President D found the “statement is owned by this community and they didn’t want anything to do with changing it. A few words here and there have popped up over the years, but basically it is our value statement.”

**Humor.** Humor is an important part of who the president is. It is, also, a part of who the institution is because for the past twenty years joy has been a value in the college’s value statement:

We have a value called joy, which is taking your work seriously and yourselves lightly. We have a very serious mission, but if we start taking ourselves seriously that is when we stray…. As young people we are taught early on, get your work done and then play. It is all this segregated life that is carried through school. You’re punished for cutting up in class. You know, all that kind of stuff. But we tell our faculty, unless students are having fun they may not be learning so well, and unless you are having fun you may not be teaching so well. So we are going to help everybody learn to have some fun here at work. If you put off having fun till after work you don’t have much time left. Since most of our people stay here for life, it appears, why don’t we have fun doing this?

Humor is threaded throughout activities during the year:

At the beginning of the year when we bring all employees together in one place and we kick off the year, from day one …when I became president,
it is a humorous take on our serious business and the humorous part is on us, doing the best we can as valuable human beings. It is fun and I’ve never had to insist that people be there. Standing room only. People come because they know it will be fun and it will be a celebration. So a lot of who I am is the kid who just likes to have a good time.

Greatest reward. The president said his greatest rewards happen daily: The people that we hired and we brought into the organization who continue to inspire me and do great work and help students be successful, help each other be successful, come up with fantastic ideas and carry them out, and that is what I love about this job. I am having too much fun. I love the people I work with.

Leadership Style

The president uses a “situational” yet “whole person” approach to leadership. He delegates to people who are ready for delegation and tries “to get out of their way;” he is more directive “for people who need more direction”:

President D is a “creative thinker” who has “bright ideas” that he is “constantly throwing out” to people. However, he is “very clear to the people who report to me”:

Don’t take my brainstorming as a directive. If you do you are not being loyal to me. You can get me in trouble. You can get the institution in trouble. If you have any concern about all the stuff that I throw out, you better raise it. We will talk. I will listen, and [we] will come out with the best idea.
The president does not want people to be reticent because he counts on them “to call my hand and that is in the value statement.” So really my style, I think, is revealed through those value statements because we value how we treat one another.

*Perceptions of the President About the College*

*Vision for the college.* The president’s vision is that the college continues “to get better and better as a change agent and not as just as a responder to the external change.” President D believes the college is “a college of human potential”:

We refer to ourselves as a community college. That is counter cultural you know. As I mentioned in that forum we have some 120 nations and 91 languages [on campus]. We want to model how the world could be, so it is very idealistic. Yet day in and day out we behave as if we are doing very important work in building community, showing how we can behave in community, and as a result our students can learn how to do that when they go out into the community. Over a period of time we will have a very positive impact on the community.

*Challenges facing the college.* According to the president, the college has the economic challenges “the world faces” that are “localized through the nation, the state and the local region.” However, to get more revenue, the district has “more to work with than many places” because of the “good board leadership and a chancellor who are willing to do that.”

Another challenge the president identified they are working on concerns the retirement of faculty and administrators:
We are doing, as sophisticated as we can, projections of when our faculty and administrators are eligible for retirement. We are matching that against our experience on how long people in different groups actually wait until they retire… About 20% of our original faculty is still with us. We are fortunate with the ones who have been here that long at [the college], that they can continue to be leaders and exciting people, helping to bring new people in. They bring their own energy, so it is not like we are stuck with faculty who need to retire, so that part is not the challenge.

The challenge is how to pass on the wisdom from the experienced faculty to the novice faculty. Many of the original faculty “were public school teachers” who “had to learn how to be a good community college teacher”:

How do we help them learn that in a shorter period of time? We are constantly learning how people are learning, you know. How do we fast track new faculty that we select? We have to select faculty who understand that being part of the college is they need to learn how to be a good teacher-learner themselves, and that that will be their career here. Then we have to have programs in place for them. We believe we are ahead of the curve on that. I think we are up to the challenge, but that is big.

Facilities are a third challenge identified by the president as a challenge for the college. Campus has been “full most of the time that we’ve been here…because we haven’t been able to get rid of temporary buildings in spite of building. So we never build enough, fast enough to get ahead of the curve.”
A fourth challenge is the “almost infinite enrollment of people who need college” in the college’s service area. The people coming to the community are “replacing people who had college degrees.” To reach the people who need training, the college is “doing two things at once.” They do outreach activities to people so they penetrate the parts of their market that needs them most. Also, they are using the Baldridge approach, with “key performance indicators,” on these markets. However:

These students take up more square footage if you will, because they can’t be in large group instruction, because they can’t go it alone. You have to have more non-teaching space for support services, and you are spending more in administration with advisors, case managers, and things we didn’t even think about before.

It becomes a challenge when college staff is trying to meet the mission and others outside the college want to know the graduation rate. There are other ways to measure students’ success in community colleges. “So communication with people who, by law, hold you accountable for how you spend public money” is a challenge. According to the president:

That bottom-line mentality of the American culture is one of our biggest challenges because it is a complex world and we are trying to operate as a whole-person institution in a bottom-line society where a lot of people don’t behave as all people.

*Perception of faculty and staff.* The president believes faculty perceives him as “generally very positive, because we have our act together pretty well for bringing in new people now.” All new employees begin orientation on Mondays and the culture of the
organization is discussed. Every quarter there is “a pool side chat” at the president’s home:

It is a requirement that they come to one of those as a new employee. We talk about what they learned in orientation, the values, tell us with fresh eyes what you’ve seen. They know coming that they need to do that. We have a very rich conversation, and it gives me the opportunity to interact with every new employee at least in their first year. I try to do it more often. The other thing is that they get a flower on their desk when they arrive. I make the final decision about all the faculty with the chief academic officer and the division dean.

As time permits, the president teaches a team-taught honors course because he enjoys “the interaction with the students.” Teaching, also, “helps me to get grounded at the faculty level” and helps him “be a better administrator.” The president stated his role “with faculty is to allow them to do their job and keep everything that is not related to the job and student success, keep them free of that.”

The president acknowledged a “built in tension there between faculty and administration.” However, he believes “faculty are more or less willing to let administrators do administrative work” if a “trust level and balance” have been established. He has found that faculty “wants to be more of the administrative process if the trust is not there, or decisions have been made that they disagree with.”

The president explained the college is in a non-bargaining state and that their governance structure is very simple. Therefore, the college has “all kinds of councils, the council of teaching and learning, the council of community building” and that he attends
those meetings so he can interact the faculty and staff. President D, also, has “almost weekly times for anybody to drop in on me.” The college has a “faculty council, which is made up of members of the faculty association and their elected officers.” According to the president, he meets with the faculty association “monthly on a regular basis, but the president and I interact more frequently.”

The president believes “it takes teams of people to teach our students, it takes teams of people to build community and that is really is part of our culture.” President D believes faculty, at this given point, would say “He understands us, we share his values, he realizes we need to hire more faculty, he is hiring more faculty.” Faculty are:

Very pleased with the way we orient new faculty and that includes the senior faculty helping us to do that. We have a superb professional development operation for our adjunct faculty. We worked out a way to compensate them for participating in it…. In addition adjunct faculty have dedicated space with computer access and space for them to meet privately with students.

Role of the President with External Parties

Developing community partnerships. The president stated the college is involved with a lot of community businesses and organizations. President D becomes “when the vice presidents see the opportunities.” According to the president, his vice presidents “are very skilled” in what they do, and go to him so together they can “strategize” about what to do. The president acknowledged he does “give them tips and leads.”
Linkages with high schools. According to the president the college “recently created a partnership that involves a university, a major employer in the state, and the college.” This model will then be used “with other feeder institutions in other programs.”

Another project is the investigation of creating a charter high school here, “focused on junior and senior level only.” The focus would be “on students who are ready to do dual credit so we are not setting up a separate faculty and separate classes. We are going to mainstream them, and they are going to be students who can be successful.” The president explained the college is not “going into the high school business, but we are helping students who are ready to go get out of high school and on with it.” He further explained “the delicate part in that kind of partnership” will be for him to work with the superintendents of the public schools. The president does not want to “hurt those relationships so it is going to require a lot of effort to help everybody understand these are partnership approaches and there is more than enough for all of us.”

Fundraising. Fundraising is “not a primary expectation of mine and I don’t have a lot of experience at it.” The president has a “personal antipathy for it. I don’t feel comfortable with it.” However, he has done some fundraising and has “been pleased with it.” From listening to fundraisers, the president understands:

You have to approach it genuinely. You are giving a person with money an opportunity to feel good about their wealth. I have to work myself to that point because what I really feel like I am doing is begging them for money. I don’t feel good about that so I am glad that I don’t have to do it on a regular basis. I am just glad we have a district wide foundation with
excellent folks. When they need me to meet with somebody with them they call me, and I am glad to do that.

*Work with legislators.* Most of the work with legislators is “handled officially through our central office,” according to the president, “so I am free of having to do that, which is fine with me. On the other hand, because I’ve been in this community for a long time, the legislators who are in our service area and I tend to go back a long way.” The president does feel “comfortable in talking to those that I know well.”

*Pathways to the Presidency*

The president gave a detailed account of his path to the presidency, including his goal to be a chief academic officer. As he described being appointed president he said:

> The search was under way and I don’t know what possessed me to do it but I just wrote a hand-written note to the chancellor saying hope the search is going well. If you don’t find anybody that you like, just know that sometime I may like that job.

A week later he was meeting with the chancellor about the position and was appointed president:

> So I became president which was a little awkward because the people at [the college], they did not want me to be president because I’ve been tainted by being in the district office, because I come through community service, because they have never seen me in an academic role and they wanted their vice president of academic affairs; that is the only way people
became president, so what was all this about and so I had my challenges ahead of me, as to, ok, now how can I be successful particularly when this man is still here as the chief academic officer, so I had my work cut out for me but I think I was too young, too naïve, too idealistic to realize how much trouble I really am, and so I just kind of charged into this thing and here I am still….It has been lovely, it is about building relationships, honoring people and realizing that most of the stuff is not about you, not to take things personally you know and all that kind of stuff.

**Recommendation to others.** The president gave several suggestions to those in continuing education who aspire to become community college presidents:

To be extremely flexible. To realize that the jobs that they have totally require being the most agile in the organization; there is a great opportunity to be creative and innovative. To do the job well that they are hired to do, and realize if they do, that is their best chance to get recognized by others to do other things. Also, to let it be known what their career goals are. If they are in an institution that has leadership development programs, participate in them. If they are in an institution that doesn’t have them, they are probably in the best position to help the institution introduce them because they are probably already teaching in that corporate world, so things that they are helping their corporate community learn to do, try to figure out to help their institution be a better institution. I think people in continuing education are still in some of the most exciting things.
The president believes flexibility is important “because funding sources are constantly changing every time there is a change in administration, at the state or at a federal level”:

The continuing education person who needs the comfort of doing the same thing, the same time next year that they did last year is probably in the wrong field and they are probably are not going to be a good college president either. Just know that life in these times is full of constant change and learn how to thrive on it, and to be energized by it, and to see it as an opportunity, and to not fight with your administration to hang onto something that needs to evolve. I had some that I’ve really had to rescue from themselves, saying you know, you really can give this up, your identity isn’t associated with it, and the more you fight us about it the less we think of you. We are really good people who want you to be successful. I had to move some people out of continuing education to where I think they would be more successful.

Prior academic experience. When asked if the position of provost or chief academic officer should be considered before assuming the presidency, the president answered:

I think it is the faculty’s expectation that their president come through that office. In my case I would not have become president of this college had it not been that the normal route was overruled by the chancellor who had other ideas in mind, who was able at the time to make arbitrary decisions,
and so that may be why I am still in this position, I can’t get another job.

My background is not that pedigree.

The president believes “it is not by accident that this institution is very entrepreneurial.” President D has:

Several vice presidents that have their hands in workforce development and partnership building in community relations because I see it all integrated and I don’t think I would have approached it this way had I gone the route that I thought, which was through the path of liberal arts professor who became a chief academic officer. I think the community college is a great place to become a college president.

President D believes a “very solid academic background” and a variety of positions that help people gain knowledge and skills are important. When the president was getting his doctorate he was doing “student development work managing a twenty-two story high rise with students in a huge institution where I had to have a full array of student activities and counseling and tutoring and I mean, I had a mini-college there.”

The president believes it is good to do a number of different things before becoming a college president because “you are probably going to be more sensitive to the important role of all that at your institution, and honor it all, and support it all, and realize it has to be a team.” President D has people “coming up through the ranks, who don’t have a clue about what the other folks do” and believes part of his job as president then, “is to give them opportunities.” The president will “mix the organization up” so he doesn’t “have the silos”: 
I will have something that may be typically in student development and assign it to the chief academic officer. Or, that is why so many people are involved in workforce. They just need to know that is where the world is and so just to be real tidy with your organization and get people an opportunity to realize as I had to do.

While in the district office, President D learned that the people there “were real people dedicated to the mission” just like he was. The president said:

It was a very humbling kind of thing and I’ve never forgot learning that.
As a result I am much less likely to rest judgment about people doing things that I don’t do everyday and honor them is a strategy that tends to work well.

Perceptions of Others About the College

A board member and two deans were interviewed. The board member lives in the college’s district and has been a member of the board for thirty years. The dean of the division of math, science, and behavioral science received his doctorate in zoology in 1969 and went into administration in 1981. The dean of program development and technical education has held her current position for five months. Prior to this she had been the dean of continuing education. She has been at the college for seven years.

College’s mission. The board member believes the mission “is very full.” She views the college has a “wonderful facility” that has served “many people” and “changed many lives.” The dean of math believes that “service to the students and the community” is what is important t about the mission:
The mission statement is a three word statement: teaching, learning, and community building. Really it’s good; it’s on everyone’s mind…. It has emphasis on academics and yet community building implies workforce development.

The dean of program development believes that all three aspects of the college’s mission, teaching, learning, community building, are important because they cannot be separated from each other. “All of them are vital to the workforce and definitely to the instructor that is in the classroom.”

*College strengths.* The board member believes the college does everything well. “It is well thought of in the community.”

The dean of math believes the college carries its mission out well by training “students on all levels, and of all ages and of all types and that includes high school students, returning students. We have a lot returning for more training and in some cases for their first training as adults.”

The dean of program development referred back to the mission and said “I think what we do best is that, teaching, learning and community building.” She talked about the quality of the faculty both in the credit and noncredit courses:

The quality of the faculty comes across through the caring and the sharing.

The extra things that they do, from tutoring the students, advising the students, having student organizations….Teaching is a component that this college does on a daily basis. Teaching just doesn’t come from faculty. It comes from staff and it comes from administrators.
Values shared by employees. According to the board member, “quality and respect for the student” are values shared by faculty, administrators, and staff:

To let the student have his own feeling of importance and to respect himself as well as all those around, but more than that. To be able to learn, not just at the pace he likes to learn at, but in all things he needs to fulfill his lifelines or prepare for his next step in education.

The dean of math believes that “trust, honesty, openness are values shared on campus. Also, he thinks “there are very few hidden agendas and a sure mission. I think everyone is free to say what they want to say and often do.”

The dean of program development said “joy is definitely shared by employees on this campus”:

We celebrate through our employee of the month parade. We celebrate achievements when employees get forty-five in the doctoral program. We celebrate the five-year award for employees, which is a big deal. We have International Student Day; not only are students involved but staff is involved in that. We celebrate when we bring on a new employee. Of course you know we have the other values of mutual trust and honesty, but joy is probably one of the biggest values that we have.

Challenges facing the college. The board member’s responded the college is going to have “more students than we have ever imagined within the next few years.” The board has “spent a year studying capital expenditure possibilities, done architectural feasibility studies, what economics might mean in the future as far as the need to train workers.” The board talked about how the four year and two year institutions “should fit
hand and glove for real quality.” She concluded that the board also looked “at the faculty to be sure that our faculty is aware of its high points and low points, which are not many because we have a very fine faculty.”

The dean of math responded “money of course, budget, the shifting demands that tend to catch you unaware.” The dean of program development said:

The challenges are being able to continue to perform at the level we currently perform at. Another one of our biggest challenges is how we are going to meet our strategic plan with the resources that we have because the state is cutting funding to community colleges and universities.

The dean also talked about closing the gap for international student who want an education; people in the United States who have a degree but need trained for a job; and people from other countries who are here, have a degree from their country, and need education in the United States.

Vision for the college. The board member responded “be all it can be.” The dean of math said:

To continue to meet the needs of the students in the community in the best way that we can. To maintain a good emphasis on academic transfer for those who are going on to complete their education, to retrain those who need retraining because of changing market conditions.

The dean of program development believes the vision of the college is to:

Continue its strong effort in academic transfer, its growth in technical programs, and its ability to rapidly respond to workforce needs through our continuing education and corporate services training. But one of the
things that is going to be a key focus within the next five years is our
response to the community because our community is changing.

Perceptions of Others About the President

Before any questions were asked, the board member said the president is
“imaginative, creative, works well with people and is fearless as far as trying new
things.” She continued:

The president is a great guy, he is a well educated person in many fields,
there is nothing that you can talk about that he doesn’t know a lot about or
can explain to you a lot about it. His highest priority are students. His
ability with numbers, he doesn’t make money, but he makes it go a long
way.

President’s personality. The board member responded the president is “friendly,
gentile, very polite. He is funny, funny, funny. He can be funnier than funny. I don’t
know how he does what he does, but he is a very well round person.”

The dean of math said the president is “outgoing and gentle, well read, very
literate, very interested in the arts. Has been less concerned with sciences and technology
in the past but I think he has been giving it more attention recently.”

Two things that would capture the president’s personality, according to the dean
of program development, are his gentle spirit, and his vision. She made an analogy
between the president and a rose:

I guess I can look at him like a rose, and I’ll say that because of his
personality. As a man, he is gentle. As a leader, he is stern but kind. As a
visionary, he is aggressive like a thorn of a rose, that would prick you if
you touch it…. His vision is so far advanced that there is usually a lack of understanding for those who can see it, they need to touch that thorn to understand. He tries to help us see his vision, so like a rose that comes in spring fully develops by having discussions with senior leadership, making that vision, having that vision being alive, those dots aligned through participatory management, then you see that rose start to open, and the sweetness that you smell from it, is the faces of the students that we see, the number of graduates that we see come out of programs, the joy that you see in faculty and employees.

**Most positive statement.** The board member said the president has “many interests outside the college. He works well with the people in the city. He has been head of many city organizations. He uses resources that others have not known about well.”

The dean of math believes the president has many positives. He is “very approachable, and well liked, and you can always get a hearing with him whenever you need to see him.” The dean of program development simply said “I would probably say the character of the man.”

**Leadership style.** The board member believes the president is “like a pied piper.” She went on to say that most trustees “think he is wonderful because everyone has their little problems but his don’t show and he is very thoughtful of other people.” The president is “well liked and respected.”

The dean of math responded: “he is a decision maker who listens to those he supervises, but feels comfortable making a final decision that is his own.” The dean of program said the president has a “participatory management style.”
President’s strengths. The dean of math believes the president’s leadership style plus “his gentleness, his interest in the arts, and his orientation towards having the college being one that encompasses everything” are the president’s strengths. “Everything, meaning academics, the arts, yet also being interested in aspects of WFDCE [workforce development and continuing education]. Making this college a full scope, full breath college.”

The dean of program development believes the president’s strengths are “he knows the staff, and he knows his faculty, and of course his over thirty years of experience, community college leadership, and he cares. Also, he is a man that comes from continuing education which means, he knows how business works.”

Major effects by president. The board member said the president has been at the college “since the beginning and everything he has done has been very important to the campus.” The dean of math believes the president has made the college what it is today. The growth of the college and its reputation are due to the efforts of the president. The dean of math believes the president cares. The president is involved in the hiring process. The president has “given his stamp of approval on every faculty member that has been hired.”

The dean of program development also responded the president has been at the college “a long time” and has taken the college to where it is today. The president has been a “a part of developing faculty, developing staff, developing himself.” She believes the president can be seen in “every aspect of this college, from the way students’ programs are set to the way we deal with companies and their needs.” The president “celebrates and definitely recognizes creativity among faculty and staff, rewards it by
saying that is great, let’s do it, how can we do it.” Finally, the dean believes the president’s greatest effect is his promotion of “creativity which has led us to the growth I think we have today.”

*President’s most important job.* The board member was brief by saying “being president.” The dean of math said several things are important:

- Keeping the college visible and bringing it to the attention of the public,
- and presenting the views of the college to the board and making sure that the colleges’ programs reflect student and community needs. He is quite heavily involved at different times in internal matters in terms of programs, ways to promote the college and increase enrollment and to serve community needs. I think he is more involved perhaps than most presidents would be on internal as well as being a very visible face externally.

The dean of program development responded “I would say cultivation, cultivation of learning, cultivation of teaching, you know, cultivating the image of this college. He will probably say leadership, he would probably say serving.”

*President’s role in community partnerships.* The board member believes the college has “a lot of partnerships,” including the college’s work with high school students. Although the dean of math is “not fully aware” of the president’s involvement with the community, he suspects the president leaves most of the work to the vice president of continuing education and others in the organization. The dean does believe the president becomes involved when dealing with large companies.
Regarding the president’s work with high schools and four year institutions, the dean of math believes the president has been “very enthusiastic about linkages with high schools and universities.” Although the president “has become personally involved in linkages with neighboring university feeders in terms of president-to-president agreements and direct involvement,” the dean does not think the president’s “involvement with the high schools has been quite as direct.” President D does meet with “the head of the school district we are in, but I think he leaves the finer details of that and the sort of courses that we offer through high schools to lower level administrators, who are involved in high school liaison.”

*President’s role with legislators.* According to the board member “the president is highly regarded by most of the legislators that know him. He has been called upon many times to do things.” The dean of math was “not entirely aware if he has worked with legislators.”

Since the president is “very suave” when dealing with businessmen, the dean of program development believes the president is comfortable working with legislators. The dean believes the president “is very astute in political matters that surround education. He is very aware of the political agendas, so I think he can sit at the table with the best of them and not have a problem.”

*President’s role in fundraising.* The board member believes the president “does very well” with fundraising “because he knows so many people outside the college.” Both deans stated that the district foundation is primarily involved with fundraising. The dean of math added “in terms of his enthusiasm for getting money via grants and government programs, I think he is enthusiastic.”
Faculty experience prior to the presidency. Although the board member believes presidents should teach a class “sometime” because it “makes them see the problems as well as the satisfactions of faculty,” she does not believe presidents have the time to teach full time and be a top administrator.

The dean of math does not believe the president has to have been a faculty member in the past:

I can’t see that as a necessity. Obviously we bring something to the position; but I don’t think it is in any way essential. It’s, I mean, it would give a perspective but on the other hand I think it [presidency] is such a different position. My impression of most faculty is that their attitudes are very narrow and focused and quite removed from administrative viewpoints.

The dean of program development answered both “yes and no” to the question. She believes that presidents with classroom experience can understand faculty and can relate to them. In addition, the presidents with classroom experience “can relate to parents of students who may have issues.” Finally, the president can relate to businesses who place demands on the corporate services training or continuing education training people “for what they need in the classroom, and being able to say, we can or we can’t deliver that based on what we would have to put out.”

On the other side, the dean of program development does not believe the president needs faculty experience because she believes effective presidents can come from continuing education or student services. People in these positions have to “interact with all services of the college which included teaching, which included learning.” She does,
however, believe the president should teach some adjunct courses and should get some professional development for institutional learning.

Preparation for community college presidents. The dean of math believes the president needs to have an “appropriate personality” for the job, “a breath of awareness of the larger environment.” He is not convinced “that training in higher education management is an essential part of that, I think that may have some value,” but he does think “a more broad sort of education and awareness of the world is more important.” Also important is the “background of the person.”

The dean of program development said that both bad and good experiences were needed prior to becoming a president. The “journey” to the presidency starts with the person recognizing that “continuous learning, continuous teaching and continuous community building” are part of the job. The president may have a “strong faculty that may or may not agree with everything that is done.” The president needs to be “aware of their own integrity.” Another part of the journey are the “students who have complaints about how the school is operated, who have complaints about faculty.” The journey is also going to have “board members, chancellors that disagree or agree or support decisions that have been made.” Finally, the president needs to be able to “make the right decision for the institution.”

Faculty perception. The dean of math believes the faculty view the president as “as approachable, someone who listens, as a decision maker, strong decision maker.” He believes the “president has had good faculty support but not universal over time and there is a period, not many years ago when he introduced a new top administrator” that the faculty “viewed as a negative thing.”
The dean of program development believes the faculty “perceives him as a man.”

A man that makes mistakes. A man who is not perfect, but yet a man who is understanding, who is kind, who is gentle, who is supportive, who is dependable, who they can call in the middle of the night and he is just as alert about their issues as he would be at six o’clock in the morning. A man who is aware of what is going on the campus, who wants to be part of what is going at the campus, not someone as a president that is distant.
President E

Community

This community college is nestled in the foothills of a Southeastern state. The area is known for furniture manufacturing, tourism, education, health care, culture and shopping. In the late 1990s the area was named as one of the ten best places to raise a family by a national magazine. Boating, canoeing, water skiing, camping, rock climbing, golf, snow skiing, hiking, and fishing are popular sports. In 2002, manufacturing and retail trade were the largest industries in the two counties served by the college (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003).

The population for the two county areas is 121,370 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). The median household income for 2000 per county was $24,224 and $24,378 (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003). Slightly more than 66% and almost 82% of the adults had a high school diploma or more; more than 10% and slightly more than 33% had a bachelor’s degree or more (Indiana Business Research Center, 2003).

College

This college is a comprehensive, post-secondary higher education institution operating in partnership with the state community college system. The main campus of college is located on a beautiful ninety-eight acre site on a major highway. The college opened its doors in the early 1960s as a technical institute. In the early 1970s the college was authorized to offer college transfer courses and its name was changed to community college and technical institute. A second campus opened in a neighboring county in the late 1980s and a job training center and a civic center were added to the main campus a few years later. A career center was established on the college’s main campus in the late
1990s. The career center is a cooperative effort with the college, business and industry, and the public school system to provide skilled trade and technical occupations training for high school students.

The Strategic Plan for 2000 – 2005 is a result of a participatory process that involved faculty, students, and staff at the college. Also, community individuals from the two-county area participated in a daylong discussion of the college’s future. The plan will be reviewed and evaluated annually to ensure successful implementation. A review of college documents revealed the vision for the college is it:

Aspires to be the best community college in the state of [name] and to be a national model for community-centered higher learning. The college envisions itself as an effective and dynamic leader in convenient, student-centered lifelong learning; advocate of educational, personal, social, and economic growth and development; creator of innovative programs and services that respond to the needs of all its stakeholders; and partner who guides the community and its stakeholders towards the best quality of life. Review of the same document indicated the strategic directions for 2000-2005 include:

The college must focus in forming key alliances and partnerships among all its stakeholders; the college must lead all segments of the community in adapting to rapid social and technological changes; the college must advance convenience learning, preparing all students with world class knowledge and skills; and the college must seek to maximize financial resources.
The 2005-2010 strategic plan includes:

The college must advance in collaboration with stakeholders; the college must operate with fiscal and organizational stability; the college must participate in the economic development of its service region; the college must embrace a global perspective in instruction and services; and the college must use technology to provide stakeholders the opportunity to access services.

Further review of college documents indicated the mission of the college is to “provide accessible, quality instruction; support economic development through comprehensive resources to business, industry, and agencies; offer diverse services and opportunities which improve the quality of life.”

The college is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The diploma, associate in applied science, associate in arts, associate in fine arts, and associate in science programs have been approved by the state department of community colleges and the state board of community colleges. Individuals programs are accredited by their professional associations. The college offers over fifty curriculum programs. The Corporate and Continuing Education Division of the college provides a variety of courses to meet occupational training needs of employers and personal enrichment needs of community individuals. Review of college documents revealed 4,000 curriculum and 8,000 continuing education students are enrolled per year.

The January 2004 organizational chart shows that the executive vice president/vice president of instruction reports directly to the president. The following report to the executive vice president/vice president of instruction: vice president of
student services, vice president of facility services, vice president of finance and administration, dean of college transfer programs, dean of technical programs, dean of continuing education, dean of basic skills, executive director of second campus, dean of technology and instructional support, cooperative high school program liaison, and evening/weekend director, plus a secretary and program assistant.

Description of President E

The president is in his late forties, married and has two children. He is a friendly, tall, thin, red head. The president was dressed in a dark suit with a white long-sleeved shirt. His office is large, neat, and comfortable with cherry furniture. The office was tastefully decorated and had a sitting area. Personal belongings were on the president’s desk and two chairs were opposite the desk. Also noticed were a laptop, a television that was on but the sound was on mute, and plants around the room. Walls contained the president’s diplomas; photographs of the president with legislators and chief executive officers; a print of the Red Lion Squarer in New Castle-Under-Lyme. For relaxation the president does counted cross-stitch and has the state mansion, capital, and state flag hanging on a wall. Photographs of his family were on the bookcase and figures of pirates were placed around his office. President E has a backdoor out of his office and teased that you “always need a back door to escape.”

Although the president has an administrative assistant and secretary, all correspondence for my visit was managed personally. President E spoke to people and called them by name as we walked to the dean’s office. There was no inaugural address or ceremony when he became president because of the expense involved. The president believed the money could be spent elsewhere.
Education and Career Path

The president graduated in 1977 with a bachelor of science degree in education and worked for the Department of Correction as an education specialist. President E then became the continuing education coordinator for two community colleges that were in adjacent counties. While completing a master of education degree and a doctoral degree in education the president worked as an assistant director of housing. Upon graduation, he became the dean of extension and community services division at a technical community college, and then associate vice president for continuing education at the same college. The president became an interim president at another community college, then returned to the previous technical community college to become vice president for continuing education. He assumed the presidency of this community college in 1995. The president said:

It’s a great job, there’s no question about that, and it is a way to give back, and it’s just an opportunity that I find interesting. It’s not much different than continuing ed, which is where I spent most of my time because no two days are alike, so no matter what you’ve got planned there is always somebody or something waiting to change that and so it is not boring by any means.

President E is a member of the state Community College Adult Educators Association and the state Community College President’s Association. He is on the board of directors for the Chamber of Commerce and the Communities in Schools program. Currently he is president of the state association of community college presidents. He has
also held the vice-president, treasurer, and secretary positions for that organization. In 2003 he was awarded the community college president of the year award in his state.

**Personality**

The president describes his personality as “fairly out-going, extravert rather then introvert, even-tempered.” After having two children and being at the college for nine years, the president believes he is “fairly easy going.” He said “It takes a little more then it used to get me mad.” Even though the president believes it is “very difficult to get me angry,” he can become angry. “I’m more of a nurturing type person, but I do have some type A tendencies. I think we all do. I don’t expect any more of other people than I do of myself, but I don’t expect any less either.”

**Most positive statement.** The president laughed and said he thought most people appreciate a sense of humor. President E believes people appreciate his sense equity:

Most people would probably say fairness, but fairness is relative to a lot of people…I’m real pleased that my board of trustees gave me the highest ranking on ethics, morals, those kinds of things. I think most people would probably say that.

The president, also, believes there are three other comments others would say about him. One, he is “supportive of people.” Two, “I wouldn’t ask anyone to do anything that I wouldn’t do, and there aren’t many things I won’t do, or attempt to do, or I think are beneath me.” The president is not a “condescending” person. Finally, he believes people will say he has “a little sensitivity too.” “Those are the things I see in my evaluation, so that gives you some idea.”
**Painful experience.** President E translated painful to frustrated and responded that the budget process and the fiscal constraints were most frustrating:

When I say that I mean the process.... I mean the political process and it’s probably different from Ohio. We’re funded on a local level and a state level. So I’ve got two levels of politics involved and that’s probably the most painful thing. Knowing that there are things that we need to do, things we could do if we had resources, faculty salaries, all these things and people look at me and say “you tell us, you’re suppose to provide these things, we’re telling you that we need them, why aren’t you delivering” and so that is probably the most painful thing, not being able to do that.

**Values and Beliefs**

The president tries “to keep my family somewhere in the forefront. President E then looks at what is occurring at the college because he sees the “institution as a family.” The job of president is a 24/7 job, regardless of “what anybody says”:

I cannot separate as much as I might like to at times. My family is important to me, this institution as a family is important to me, the community is important to me. Providing a good example for all those entities is important to me…. I’m entrusted with this position. People that were the founding presidents, people before me are very, very highly thought of and respected, and I owe that to this institution, and I owe it to me professionally and personally. I have a high value on professionalism,
a high value on the perceived and real reputation of this institution, the
[state] system and the field as a professional.

*Greatest reward.* The president’s greatest reward is knowing that when he goes
to bed at night “I’ve done what I can do to somehow make it better for people in this
community. Might not have done it; but I go to bed knowing I tried. That’s what gets
me through.”

*Leadership Style*

Over the past several months the president has “put a leadership program together
and served on that as a panelist.” He has also reviewed a “two-year program in
leadership” at a university and will be presenting at a leadership program at a community
college in the near future:

It’s been almost like “leadership mania” here in the last few months which
is interesting and it caused me to think about it probably more than I
would have and certainly a lot more since leaving graduate school in ’88.

The president described his leadership style as “situational, eclectic”:

In this job there are different situations that call for different types. I’m
looking at leadership as the means by which you achieve a goal through
others, meaning that I clearly understand that it’s not management from
the standpoint of doing it, but as I told you earlier, I think it’s my job to set
the tone, create the environment, and allow this institution to operate in an
arena that is nurturing for faculty and staff, employees, students.
Perceptions of the President About the College

Mission. The president believes there is a “focus on quality of life, there is a focus on work force development, there is a focus on quality academic preparation.” To President E:

Those are the things that need to be done to make this a strong viable community from the standpoint of those issues, quality of life. We’re in a beautiful part of the state and the quality of life needs to be there. We need to have quality academic programs, and our economic welfare is very important to us, because the community is very important to us.

Vision for the college. President E believes the 2005 – 2010 strategic plan is “very clear that the institution is poised to grow through collaborative effort, and provide quality service to the community and beyond, to remain relevant to constituent groups around here, and be a leader and catalyst for change.”

Values shared by employees. The president responded that “loyalty, quality, sense of family support, community, tradition are values shared by others on campus:

I think you’d see them in people because of that family atmosphere and focus on quality and focus community. You see it in the mission, you see it in the objectives. It just permeates. In fact, I told the head of SACS [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools] that the first year I was here and the chair of the visiting team. You know, my job is not to screw things up around here, and you know that’s about the best I can say, so I’m trying to do what I can to make things better, but over and above all, I better not screw things up. When we had our exit interview, she said, do you remember what you told me when we sat
down in the interview. I said yes. She said I got news for you, these people around here aren’t going to let you screw things up.

Major effects on campus. Since the president has been at the college, the student body has increased and the number of facilities have increased. Also, the college serves two counties and a permanent campus has been developed in the other county. Previously, the second campus was in “abandoned buildings, a school bus garage, abandoned health department, abandoned child care center.”

One of the things the president is most proud of “is championing and seeing the development of the annual planning process at the institution” The planning process:

Allows for everyone at this institution to have input into setting the annual priorities of the institution that drives the budget, so the priorities drive the budget, the budget doesn’t drive the priorities. That’s one of the reasons why, if I can’t provide everything, even if people look at me and say “why aren’t you doing it,” they understand hey, at least there’s attempt there.

Another project the president orchestrated was the development of a “functioning high school on this campus; enlarged the facilities to have a functioning career center or vocational high school here.” In addition, he has just secured funding to build a building that will:

Bring a state university, a regional university here on campus as well. I’ll give them space, they will have faculty here, so what we will see that I can’t find in any literature research is a functioning high school, a community college, and university on the same piece of property
connected by a common HVAC system that I think can truly put us in a position to create the seamless continuum of education.

Lastly, the president talked about the strategic planning process on campus. Thirty-six of the thirty-seven initiatives from the 2000-2005 strategic plan have been met early. The strategic planning initiatives “along with our annual planning process are guiding the institution for the next few years.” The president hopes “that a lot of those things have led to an atmosphere here at the institution where people are encouraged to be innovative, think outside the box, and grow as much as they can.”

**Challenges facing the college.** The president previously discussed the fiscal challenge. Another challenge identified is the “limited space in the face of tremendous enrollment growth.” A third challenge is:

- Faculty, staff moral because of finances, money. It’s not bad, but...... yea, everyone wants more money. You can’t satisfy it anyway, but still, I’ve given bonuses that the state hasn’t given or raises that the state hasn’t given, trying to keep everybody up a little bit.

**Perception of faculty.** The president responded:

As far as faculty maybe saying: “He doesn’t understand me or he doesn’t understand what goes on in the classroom,” that sort of thing, I’ve not gotten the impression that is a difficulty because I’ve never professed to them or anyone else that I’ve got a long history of knowing what happens from their standpoint in the classroom. But I spent thirty years in a classroom as a student and I would report to say that I’ve got some idea of what goes on in the classroom. I’m not preparing a daily lecture or
delivering an exchange in the classroom but I’m still involved in learning activities. I think I know enough about the exchange in the classroom to have an idea, but I also have an academic vice president who serves as my executive vice-president who spent thirty years in the classroom. So I think there is enough advice that we can get interchanged to have an idea of what’s going on.

The president explained it is his job to set the tone and environment for the college:

So people can nurture themselves and grow. It’s my job to get rid of the paper blockade, and go after the money, and create a situation where they can do what they need to do, and that is to satisfy our student and make sure our students are happy. I don’t expect to go over into the classroom and run it, and I don’t expect them to come over into the administrative side and run the administrative side of the institution. We’ve never really had that battle. And I don’t think they think any less of me, I don’t think any less of them because they’ve never been outside the classroom in an administrative role.

Regarding faculty, the president loves “the inter-relationship” between faculty and administration. He commented that “if the faculty was not here, we would be in trouble, but if the students weren’t here, we wouldn’t need faculty.”

Role of President with External Partners

Developing community partnerships. According to the president the campus has a corporate and continuing education department that works with community businesses and organizations. President E is vice president on the Chamber and serves on the
economic development commission. The college and the president are involved when a business or industry begins to think about moving into the area. Finally, the president meets with local municipalities monthly. He said: “I’m there. I’m physically there.”

Linkages with high schools. The president believes he has a good relationship with the superintendent of public schools. It was the superintendent of schools that nominated him for the community college president of the year.

Fundraising. The president had this to say about fundraising:

I either want your money and or your friendship and or both. It is a situation where you have a lot of friends. I would say I don’t have a lot of very good close personal friends, most of those folks are probably from college, because I’m in a situation of, I’m pretty much after your money. You know that’s not, I’m not saying that in a negative way, but I’m not making friends just to get their money.

The college’s Foundation is “in the middle of our annual fund drive.” Therefore, everywhere the president goes he takes “the opportunity to talk to people about annual funds.”

I went to a fundraiser for somebody else Saturday night. I paid my money to eat and take my wife so we could raise funds for one of the high school booster clubs, but while I was there, I was going around saying to people, ‘do you realize not only are we here supporting the Booster Club, but I’m in the middle of my annual fundraiser.

Although fundraising is “not far from my mind, it doesn’t consume me.” Since the president is not “given a directive by the board of trustee’s to raise X amount of
money,” it is not “the first and foremost thing” he does. President E believes that since
the college does so many things well, he does not need to “sell the institution to people
because they look at me and they identify me with the institution.” The college is
something the community “wants to support and put their money into.”

Work with legislatures. On a local and state level the president is “constantly
trying” to keep the representatives “abreast of what we’re doing for the community, and
what we’re doing for business and industry, what is occurring at the institution.” The
president believes it is important to:

Get them involved because I think if you don’t, and you only go to them
when you need something, their focus and vision of the institution is going
to be “oh, here he comes, he wants money, and how can I get away from
him.”

President E personally meets with the representatives to update them. In addition, he may
contact via the telephone, fax, or e-mail. The president also visits the representatives in
the state capital.

This year the president is the president of the president’s association in the state
so that puts him “in a situation where I’m dealing with the general assembly.” The
president is “dealing with other people and so it’s sort of a different look this year.” Now
it is his “chance to get down there and impress upon these people that we need money,
we need this, we need that.” The president has been able to “meet with the chairman of
the education oversight committee, speaker of the house, senate president pro tem, and
we’re meeting with several key legislatures and trying to talk about the systems’
priorities.”
The president has also driven to Washington, D.C. with local representatives and others from the college to meet with their congressmen and our senators. He said “I could walk into a congressman’s office and his chief-of-staff would call me by name.”

President E trusts his executive vice president and his vice president of student services to meet with legislatures from time to time as well. In addition, legislators are invited to campus. Finally, it is accepted in this community to talk with representatives when they are in the community, be it at church or in grocery stores.

**Pathways to the Presidency**

President E believes people who are in continuing education have “certain aspects” that are transferable to the president’s role. The “ability to reach out” is one aspect:

Your focus is not so much building based, or your focus is not so much internal, or not such a narrow focus, and you certainly need, I think in this position, a broad focus. The [ability] to reach out, and to touch different factions, and work with different people and different constituency is a transferable skill. Being flexible enough, and not worry to the point of being rigid about someone ruining your day or, you know, something coming up, “I’ve gotta do this or I’ve gotta do that.” I mean you’re a utility player and being a utility player is important.

**Recommendation to others.** The president reiterated that people in continuing education have attributes that are “very critical and transfer very well” into the president’s position. President E would tell “most people in continuing ed not to buy into the mistaken perception that without ‘academic experience you are less than anything
else.” The president “just challenged a group of people who were at our system office at the state capital”:

I made them raise their hands and pledge that they would never, ever use the word non-credit again. In fact, never look at anything in continuing ed as “non” because we were not “non”. I know that’s not correct, but I wanted to impress upon them that once they start that, that it is non this and non that, and that perception is internal, that perception is not external. In this institution we have one academic area; it has many sides, but it is one academic area.

The president believes “people need to avail themselves of leadership opportunities, to not discount themselves, and to do an excellent job in what they’re doing. President E is a “strong proponent of people in continuing ed being in this position because I believe they see it and handle it a whole lot better [than others].”

To those people in continuing education, the president would say it is possible to become president. “I’m proud of what I do. I’m proud of the fact that I’m from continuing ed. People know from here that I’m from continuing ed. There were people that told me that I would not get to this position without that [academic experience].”

Perceptions of Others About the College

A board member and dean were interviewed. The board member was an older gentleman who is the vice president of a company, has been involved in various community activities for many years, and is especially interested in helping people obtain an education. Board membership is comprised of fourteen members, appointed by the public school system, two county commissioners, the governor, and the student
government association. This board member was appointed by the public school system just before the president came. We talked over lunch in a quaint local restaurant where the president had called ahead to request a quiet area.

The dean grew up in the county, went away to college, said she would never return, but did. She has been at the college for thirty years. Currently she has two titles. One is dean of corporate and continuing education, the other is dean of technical programs which includes their curriculum program as well as industrial and public service programs. Since her office had piles of paper all over, we talked in the conference room.

*College’s mission.* The board member believes the college’s mission is “the people’s education”:

As an employer, I see the mission of the community colleges is better suited to prepare students for jobs that exist in this community. It can give hands on skills, they can give the skills that are actually needed. From a student’s prospective it offers a less expensive opportunity for them to develop those same skills that are actually for jobs that exist in this community. In this particular community college the youngsters that go on to four year institutions make better grades than kids who go directly to four year institutions, and I think that’s probably two-fold. I think they have picked up a couple years of maturity. Now, also they have developed some study habits because of the smaller classes and they themselves have become more focused.

The dean believes the:
Most important thing that we do in the state community college system, specifically here at the college, is to have a pulse on what the needs are of our community, not only for new businesses trying to locate here, but expanding businesses here. Everything we do has to focus off workforce development, in every program. We even see college transfer as a workforce development opportunity because we are preparing students to go on to the four school and then get into the workforce. So we feel we’re a part of that.

*College strengths.* The board member believes the college does “a lot of things very well.” The college has been “a source of pride for the community”:

The community rallies around the college, supports it greatly. A year from now to my knowledge, this will be the only community college in the country that will have on its campus a career center, which is a high school component of community college, a four-year college component which is the teaching center from a state university.

Another strength offered by the board member is the continually growing enrollment at the college. He is “very pleased with the focus they give on trying to make sure their courses are germane to what is happening in the real world:”

Every year at graduation I meet someone who is sitting there with a BS degree, who can’t get a job, has gone back to the community college to get that technical training that furnishes them a job. From my work with communities and schools I know if the parent is getting their GED degree or their high school diploma that the children and grandchildren are going
to stay in school, and that’s the biggest incentive that someone is doing that.

The dean believes the college’s strengths are their:

- Relationships, collaboration, and partnerships with business and industry and in our service area, which includes two counties. I think our community looks to us first. We may not be able to meet their needs, but we can put them in touch with those who can.

*Values shared by employees.* The board member believes there is:

- A real dedication to helping the students. I think they take a real interest in them as individuals and that they want them to succeed, they want them to get a good education, and to visualize the opportunities that are before them.

According to the dean, the employees “are focused on student learning.” The students “are our most important assets”:

- We all understand that we all wouldn’t be here, there would be no reason for us if we were not taking care of our students. I think that holds us again accountable. We’re not doing training for training sake, we’re not having education for education sake, we try to seek out those areas where these people can find jobs, and then to train them to the best of our ability to meet those jobs.

*Challenges facing the college.* According to the board member, the college has gone through “very severe budget constraints”: 
As is typical in down economies, the enrollment in the community college is up just as funds are being restricted. So the challenge is how do you offer as many courses you need to offer when people are available for them.

According to the board member, local employers stress to educators that they “need people who can do several different jobs and that sometimes the community college is the best place for them to get some of that training.”

Increased enrollment is another great challenge that stressed the infrastructure of the college. Recently, over 200 cars were parked on the grass because there were not enough parking spaces for them.

Another challenge is “staying current with technology and the changing dynamics with the local labor market,” according to the board member. The community college serves a “very vital function” for people who are in my age group who are not great with computers, it gives us an opportunity to go back and take courses.” The board member does not know what “we’d do if we didn’t have the community college, because technology can easily pass us by.”

Another challenge as a board member and as a community citizen is the “fact that the pay scale of the instructors is less than what they’d make in the public school system, certainly less than at a four year institution. He believes:

A great injustice in the community college system in [state] is that it keeps people on a temporary position. They may work them a lot of hours, but they don’t qualify them as full time, so they don’t get benefits unless it’s a
great savings to the community college. It’s an injustice to those who teach.

The dean responded the college’s “biggest challenge is our budget”:

Our revenues have been down for the last several years. We’ve had budget cuts; however, our enrollment has increased, so that makes it very, very difficult. I think a second piece of that which in [state] is not a part of your state allotment or federal budget or equipment dollars. We do not have, we have not had equipment dollars to replace or to purchase equipment for new programs and new projects and further of course facilities. The facilities are aging, most of the buildings were built in the 60s, we have some built in the 80s, but after a while that wears out and I think those are our challenges.

Vision for the college. The board member responded the vision for the college is “to continue what it has already been doing: a place for continuing education as well as to expand its role to serve the community at the high school level, and the four-year level, and to be a more complete education facility then it currently is.”

The dean believes the “two plus two plus two concept” will grow. The college has a career center which is a high school located on our campus, and they are in the process of building a building that will house a state university.

Perception of Others About the President

According to the board member, the president “is a facilitator and a change agent” who does “a good job of appraising the resources of the community and sometimes the resources of individuals within the community and how they can be used .... for the
community college’s benefit…and the community’s benefit. The board member believes the president is a “very effective leader who is willing to listen and think about the options.”

The dean responded that she and the president “have known each other for many, many years. I served on committee’s with him before he came to the college.” She was both delighted and shocked when he became the president:

Continuing education people don’t get the recognition for their concepts and vision. We jokingly have always made the statement, if you can do continuing education, you can do anything and I think that sincerely, I think that is true.

Another thing noted by the dean about the president is that “he sees instruction is instruction is instruction. It does not matter, there are no delineation between the curriculum, the continuing ed, the basic skills. We are in instruction, we’re in instruction.”

President’s personality. The board member believes the president is “an easy person to talk with”:

You feel like you’re being listened too and that you’re being engaged in conversation and not talked down to. Actually he welcomes your input.

At the same time I don’t think anybody tells him how to do his job. I mean I think he does a good job of staying on task.

The dean responded that the president is “a very caring individual; sometimes to his demise. He is an excellent listener, good sense of humor.”

Most positive statement. The board member said “his willingness to listen and
cooperate.” The dean said “I think he makes a special effort to get to know individuals, regardless of where they work or what their job is, he knows something about them; he talks to them about things going on personally in their lives.”

**Leadership style.** The board member believes the president “has a sense of where we need to be going as a community and as a community college”:

He has a vision for that and he uses the board very well I think as a sounding board and he keeps us informed but he also keeps us out of the details. Community leaders seem to like him very well because he is open and he facilitates a lot of things. He keeps things that need to be confidential, confidential. He helps share the vision.

The dean believes the president has a “shared leadership” style. President E “trusts the people around him.” Although he ultimately makes the decisions, the president “generally asks for input.” However, the decision “may not be what I wanted,” but he did ask. The president is not “a dictator.”

**President’s strengths.** The board member answered “his ability to communicate; to project a positive image for the college and himself.” The dean responded “he doesn’t react hastily. He gives things thought before he makes a decision and I think he is very approachable.” She added the president “looks very, very hard to find a fit within the institution before he removes an individual” because of budget or program cuts. Also, the dean finds the president to be “very, very sensitive to. He’s just a nice person.”

According to the dean, the president publicly told people when he first came “if you don’t fit where you are, we’re going to try find a place for you to fit, and if we can’t, we’ve done all we can do.” She “can name five individuals that have been moved to other
areas that are flourishing where they are now, where they were dying for one reason or another in their former position…. I think that’s really unique for a school.”

Finally, the dean said the college was a family when they started because they were small. Now, they are much larger, but she believes the president brings a sense of “family” to the college. “We need to take care of each other and we need to value [each other]. I like that. It’s wonderful.”

*Major effects by the president.* The board member believes the career center [high school] is one effect the president has made. Another “very significant contribution” is the president’s willingness to “help the community.”

One major effect noted by the dean is the president’s views that “instruction, instruction, instruction.” In addition, the dean “feels everybody is valued to what their role in student learning is. I think that is very important, whether it’s a business office or the maintenance or housekeeping or faculty.”

*President’s most important job.* The dean believes the president’s most important job “is to be a politician in the community, and the state, and representative in the nation. I think it’s his job to build relationships.”

*President’s role in community partnerships.* Both the board member and dean agree that the president is a part of the community and civic organizations. The board member said “There’s a real collaboration I think between the local businesses and the community college. You know, when they have needs we try to support them. They are constantly trying to appraise what courses they should be teaching.”

Regarding the president’s relationship with public schools, the board member said there was a:
Level of cooperation between our superintendent of schools and the community college that we were never able to have before. Because the two of them work together, I think we have created things that neither of them could have accomplished by themselves.

The dean said the college is involved with several programs that link the college and high schools, including dual credit, dual enrollment, and tech prep.

**President’s role with legislators.** According to the board member, the president “works very well with the local elected officials. The legislators that I know personally think well of him and he has their respect.” The dean stated the president “has lots and lots of contacts.”

**Role in fundraising.** The board member said “two things happen there very nicely.” One, “there has been some significant contributions that have enhanced the college.” Two, since “the college’s foundation has raised more money every year,” he believes “the community college is perceived of value and perceived as making a positive impact [in the community].”

The dean responded that “other than the foundation, we’ve not really done any formal fundraising.” She believes the president “works very closely with our foundation. He’s always looking for ways to collaborate or procure external agency funding. I think he’s pretty strong in that area.”

**Faculty experience prior to the presidency.** Both the board member and dean do not believe community college presidents need to be faculty prior to the presidency. The dean said:

I think that they should certainly have had different experiences within the
community college. They should have worked with students at some point, in student services, in one of the instructional areas, be it basic skills, continuing ed, or curriculum. I don’t think that someone who has been a CFO for instance would make a very good president.

Faculty perception. The board member stated: “early on there were some who thought he was making a lot of changes. Now I think he is perceived as a strong advocate for them. He certainly is to the board. He advocates for this faculty and for the institution.”

According to the dean “there are some who love him and some who don’t.” The people who do not “are the ones who believe that they are somehow different from him and his background, continuing ed.” They question what he “could possibly know about their areas.” The president has “totally upset the apple cart now”:

Our vice president of student services, also from continuing education, will become our next executive V.P. in July…I sat on his screening committee and I had a bet going that because he was from continuing ed he would never be considered for that position. So I was quite pleasantly surprised. Come July of ‘04 we will have a president from continuing ed, we will have a executive V.P. from continuing ed, and we will have, if I continue in the school role, and I do see that for a while longer, we will have a V.P. of technical programs and continuing ed. It has caused quite a stir to be perfectly honest with you. The majority of the them feel good about it, but there are those who, I don’t know if they’ll be able to hang in there or not with culture and the way we’re going to focus ourselves.
Quite frankly in our college transfer and particularly in our health sciences we have individuals and groups of individuals who feel like they are somehow elite. I think that’s a challenge for a president and faculty.
CHAPTER FIVE

Findings

Introduction

This chapter contains the themes that emerged from the data collection. The initial broad categories for the data analysis were determined from the interview questions. Data analysis began with reading the transcripts, field notes, and other materials obtained during the campus visit. Each category was analyzed for themes common to the five presidents.

The interview guide approach provided a somewhat systematic process for data collection. Interviews were conversational and respondents were able to go beyond the bounds of the questions, thus allowing for more follow-up on topics. However, this approach led to questions not being asked of all participants. Also, flexibility in wording and sequencing of questions resulted in different responses from different participants, thereby reducing the comparability of responses.

The broad categories contained in this chapter are the presidents’ perceptions of themselves, their leadership style, their communities, their colleges, and their career paths. Perceptions of others about the college and the president are discussed within the appropriate broad categories. The chapter ends with a summary.

The Presidents’ Perceptions of Themselves

Although the presidents are individuals, common themes were identified. The major themes for this category are personality and values. The sub-themes for personality are inner motivation to succeed, out-going personality, people-person, enthusiasm,
responsible risk-taker, and accepting their humanity. The sub-themes for values are principles, diversity, and humor.

**Personality**

The presidents used numerous adjectives from “relaxed” and “fairly easy-going” to “energetic” and “aggressive” to describe their personalities. Overall, President A presented an analogy between himself and a coach. As a coach he knew “how to get people excited and love the game.” President B talked about his enthusiasm for the college’s accomplishments and said: “We are saving souls and changing peoples’ lives every day because we provide the opportunities and possibilities that people in many cases never had before.” President C sometimes thinks of himself “as an architect” who is “putting structures in place that will abide for some period” and as a “program developer,” seeing projects and programs start and perpetuate. Seeking a balance in his life, listening “deeply to oneself,” and promoting humor “for the institution and himself” is one way that President D describes himself. Finally, President E described himself as “a nurturing type person” who is “even tempered.”

*Inner motivation to succeed.* The presidents are comfortable with who they are and have an inner drive to succeed professionally for themselves, their faculty and staff, and their communities. President A said:

I am very comfortable with myself and I know I can never say I didn’t know when I was doing something. I know everything I am doing because I learned a concept of self-talk. Before I do something I always question. I know when it’s good for me, self-defeating, or bad.
President A also said:

Our college is doing a lot of things and I function at half speed, because if I went full speed, people would be uncomfortable. So I learned, when in Rome, do as the Romans do.

An example provided by President B is this:

I don’t have a hidden agenda, [since] I think people see through that very quickly. If anything positive happens here I try to give all the credit to everybody else, and I mean that sincerely. A president is only successful if his people are successful.

President C believes his most important work is “being a contributor in people’s lives and in the life of the community. Helping people to become, to reach their aspirations, and the community to reach their aspirations.” Finally, President E said his greatest reward was knowing that when he went to bed at night he knew he had “somehow made it better for people in this community. I might not have done it; but I go to bed knowing I tried.”

*Out-going personality.* Another theme is that four of the five presidents are extroverts. President D calls himself an introvert but since the job requires him to be an extrovert, he compensates by taking time to recover, being by himself at times. President D believes in seeking balance in his life and listening “deeply to oneself and others.”

President B said:

I try to be a person who speaks his mind, a straight shooter. The president has got to be aggressive and proactive. You always have to be active, talking about your institution, and if you don’t, you sit behind your desk
every day. The president has to be out. The president has to be on the
circuit, you know you really do.

President A said he has a “high energy level.” Also, “if I go after something I never give
up on it. I might back off a little, but I am coming back.”

*People-person.* A third theme common to the presidents is their interest in people.

President A had the following quote by Alan McGinnis, *Bringing Out The Best In
People,* posted in every classroom.

The history books are full of stories of gifted persons whose talents were
overlooked by a procession of people until someone believed in them.

Albert Einstein was four years old before he could speak and seven before
he could read. Isaac Newton did poorly in grade school. A newspaper
editor fired Walt Disney because he had “no good ideas.” Werner Von
Braun failed ninth-grade algebra. Haydn gave up on making a musician of
Beethoven, who seemed a slow and plodding man with no apparent talent.
There is a lesson in such stories: Different people develop at different
rates, and the best motivators are always on the lookout for hidden
capacities.

President B described himself as a “team player,” and “good listener,” who is “open, fair,
and does not play one part against another.” He believes in treating “each other as
family.” President C described himself as being “respectful of other people’s opinions
and views.” He is “not a dictator.” According to President D:

The people that we hired and we brought into the organization who
continue to inspire me and do great work and help students be successful,
help each other be successful, come up with fantastic ideas and carry them out, and that is what I love about this job. I am having too much fun. I love the people I work with.

*Enthusiasm.* A fifth theme common to the presidents is their enthusiasm for their jobs. President B talked about his enthusiastic personality.

I am a person who really believes in the community college philosophy. I am a person who believes in our mission. I am proactive. I am excited. I believe in what we are doing. I am enthusiastic about what we are doing, and I think that gets to be contagious…I am not sitting here watching the water run. I am out there in the stream paddling with you….I look forward to coming into work. I look forward to what we do. I am enthusiastic about it and I hope it catches.

President A’s enthusiasm can be demonstrated by his metaphor for success. The president tells students, faculty, and staff:

If the game is never over, you can’t lose. The game isn’t over unless you think it’s over, so don’t think it’s over….Everybody has failures and we are not all good at everything we do, so don’t get discouraged.

*Responsible risk-takers.* Finally, the presidents can be described as responsible risk-takers. Evidence of this can be demonstrated by President A who said:

We start programs. If the program is needed we don’t worry about the resources and we have been pretty lucky that the resources have followed us. Sometimes I think if you wait until you get the money, it’s never going to happen.
Responsible risk-taking is a value on President D’s campus. Students and colleagues are encouraged to respond to challenges, consider carefully, and move forward in spite of possible criticism.

*Accepting their humanity.* The presidents are human beings who have feelings, make mistakes, and dislike painful experiences as much as anyone else. One president talked about the need for managers and presidents to be able to take criticism. He tells faculty and staff that “everything in life is not always perfect” but they can agree to disagree in a professional and respectful way.

President A talked about being “naive” early in his career, being an “aggressive person who had power because he had money” and he would “run over people who didn’t agree with him.” President D “violated policy” and was almost terminated. This president was fortunate that “the person who had hired him…went to bat for me.”

President B and President D said that terminating people provide painful experiences for them. As a new president to an institution, President B encountered individuals who did not have high standards, who were not acting in a professional and ethical manner, and who were not following guidelines, policies, and procedures. After pursuing the proper disciplinary channels, the individuals were terminated.

President D acknowledged it is painful when people “mess up so badly that they can’t be salvaged here and have to move on.” The president explained that “what eases the pain” is when “we can talk about their future anyway, and what their strengths are, where they have been, how we might continue with the relationship beyond this point.”

Another painful issue acknowledged by President B is the “mistrust among peers” because this issue “can cripple an institution.” If the mistrust occurs “in a large scale you
can get an institution in crisis because the institution does not trust itself.” Issues of distrust that had built up over many years between some faculty members and deans were a problem the president had to address. His answer to the issue was to have people talk with each other about the problem and the solution. However, the individuals had to learn they could be open and there would be no retribution against them. According to President B, “trustworthiness comes from relationship building between peers and if it is not there, you got to make it be there.”

Values

Values were important to the presidents. The sub-themes for this theme are principles, diversity, and humor.

Principles. The presidents value ethical and moral principles such as integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, and respect for others. According to President B:

Values of honesty and trustworthiness; values on straight talk, what we say is what we mean. We try to do what is right, you know, treat people fairly, treat people as you want to be treated. Let’s provide a good customer service to people, don’t pass the buck, and don’t send them around to ten different spots. Let’s be open and honest. If we got some sores out there, let’s admit them and bring them to the forefront. But you know, integrity is very important. We have worked with our faculty and staff. We will accept nothing but high standards in the classroom…Respect is very important, you don’t demand respect, you earn respect, that is with faculty to students, with supervisors to employees. You have to earn the respect of your employees. The president
has to earn the respect of his peers and you do that by consistency of
decision making. You don’t treat one person different from another.

President C also talked about respect for other people, the value of “communal
thinking and consensus building,” and “principles of human rights and dignity.” Also,
President C talked about the values of the college being his personal values. In addition to
the values that are often thought of such as trust, honesty, open and considerate
communication, and fairness, this college had some values that are not commonly seen.
These include wholeness (the mind-spirit-body connection), mindfulness (silence used
for reflection and understanding), cooperation, and joy. For President C, joy means
“taking your work seriously and yourself lightly.”

President E talked about a sense of equity in all aspects of his job. He said:
Providing a good example for all those entities [family, institution,
community] is important to me, through an ethical, moral kind of
leadership and position that reflects well on me and reflects well on the
college, knowing that I cannot, that I can’t separate the two….I have a
high value on professionalism, a high value on the perceived and real
reputation of this institution, the [state] system, and the field as a
profession.

Finally, President A talked about the importance of doing the right thing, even if it
is an unpopular decision. To illustrate, ten years ago, he had cigarette machines removed
from campus. He is in tobacco country; the provost is a tobacco farmer and said nothing;
a board member is a tobacco farmer and said nothing. One newspaper reporter noted his
displeasure by saying the president could keep running right out of the county and state.


*Diversity.* Diversity is another value common to the presidents. President A commented:

I am committed to egalitarian education and I am committed to diversity….My values come across my work, my life, my family, and that is a commitment that grew out of one, growing up in an ethnic environment, and two, working in a rural black environment.

President A talked about two things that changed his life, personally and professionally. The one noted here is his work in the inner city with all “black kids.”

I worked in a really tough neighborhood, never coached a white kid, never met a malicious kid…This told me what I was going to do. I never wanted to work in the middle class community.

Diversity and creativity are values at President D’s college. Students and colleagues are encouraged to be original, to communicate successfully with all the cultures on campus, and to use creative ideas that work.

*Humor.* Although only President D and President E mentioned having a sense of humor, it was observed in all of them. Humor and having fun is extremely important to President D who said the most positive statement people will say about him is that he is “the kid who likes to have a good time.” President D values humor not only for himself but also for the college. The president tells his faculty “unless students are having fun, they may not be learning so well, and unless you are having fun, you may not be teaching so well, and so we are going to help everybody learn to have some fun here at work.”
Perception of Others

The perceptions of the board members and deans about the personalities of the presidents parallel those of the presidents. This group of presidents was most often described as friendly, energetic, positive, outgoing, innovative, visionary men who are good listeners, have a sense of humor, are relationship builders, and care about the community. The presidents were perceived as having the ability to work well with people. Also, board members and deans believe the presidents are visible in community activities.

The Presidents’ Perceptions Of Leadership

Although the presidents have their individual leadership styles, two common themes were identified. One, the presidents are people-oriented; another is their decision-making style.

People-Oriented

All the presidents believe it is important to involve people in the decision making process. President A compares his style to a coach. “I give people a fair game. I walk around. I talk to people…I know how to get people excited.” President A believes that an organization that works has “congruency of mission” and just as it’s “the coach’s responsibility to get people to play together,” it is the president’s responsibility to obtain “congruency of mission….to get the board and everybody singing from the same song sheet and understanding what the mission is.”

President B “learned that nothing is going to succeed unless you involve people in the process.” The president also believes it is important to establish a “mutual rapport” with others so they “feel comfortable talking with you about those concerns.” President B
tells his vice presidents: “You are running the college because you are there….I am counting on you….I don’t micromanage…but I do hold you accountable…to make those goals and objectives happen.” Although President B gives people latitude to make decisions on their own, he is available to give direction when asked. Also, the president “has very high expectations for myself” and high expectations for others. 

Although it is time consuming, President C governs by “the consensus model of governance.” All the different constituents of the college are represented, “a lot of very good thinking goes on and people contribute to that, and at the end of it we arrive at a decision.”

_Situational leadership._ Two presidents described their leadership styles as situational. President D delegates to “people that I think are ready to have delegation and I try to get out of their way.” This president is “more directive” for people who need direction. President D, also, relies on his people not to be “reticent” because he is a creative thinker who is constantly throwing “bright ideas” out. However, his brainstorming is not to be taken as a directive because “you can get me in trouble, you can get the institution in trouble.” The president values talking and listening to others so together they “come out with the best idea.”

According to President D, a colleague learned from him that: 

Today’s organization chart is tomorrow’s trash because we are constantly changing that organizational chart to capitalize on the strengths of people that we have, to mesh with environmental scans that drive us to make our decisions, and as people leave it is always an opportunity to know what is the best way to capitalize on people’s strengths or to help them get
renewed with strengths that we haven’t drawn on because now we have somebody else in the mix.

President D also shared that he has a poolside chat at his home every quarter for new employees and they are required to attend. Topics of discussion include what they learned in orientation and college values. The president tells the attendees:

Tell us with fresh eyes what you’ve seen, and they know coming that they need to do that, and we have a very rich conversation, and it gives me an opportunity to interact with every new employee at least in their first year. I try to do it more often.

With his “eclectic” situational leadership style, President E believes “different situations … call for different types” of leadership. The president also believes “it’s my job to set the tone, create the environment, and allow this institution to operate in an arena that is nurturing for faculty and staff, employees, students.” President E believes they have a sense of family on campus. In addition, President E has developed an annual planning process “that allows for everyone at this institution to have input into setting the annual priorities of the institution that drives the budget, so the priorities drive the budget.” Also, people are encouraged to be innovative, to think outside the box and grow as much as they can.

Two presidents disagree about how close a president should get with employees. President A believes that “you can’t let people get to know you too well.” This president believes that keeping a bit of a distance from people, “a little mystique” is good because doing this prevents people from knowing “my weaknesses, my vulnerability.” President D does become friends with people who work at the college because “life is too short,
and I think it is not whole person [to do so].” “I think real people connect with real people.”

_Faculty as part of the team._ The theme of being people-oriented continued as the presidents talked about faculty. President B talked about making the faculty feel a part of the decision making process. He said:

Now that does not mean they run the show because they do not, but they get the word in and I can assure you the majority of the things they have in mind are the same things that I do, and we try to instill those into all the decisions we make, and because of that I feel we get a great response to a lot of initiatives.

President B also talked about wanting faculty and staff to succeed. The president believes:

The faculty and classroom teachers are the ones who make the college.

The image and the reputation of the college is not me, it’s what comes out of the classroom. It’s those who go to the four year college to transfer, those who go into the world of work, those who come to take individual courses, they feel comfortable when they finish, they got their money’s worth.

In addition to having an open door policy, President B also “goes out to see faculty” with his vice president once or twice a semester to get their opinions and hear about issues.

Also, all faculty and staff are given an opportunity to evaluate him annually. Finally, the president believes it is important for faculty to stay current, so three to five faculty “return to industry” every summer.
President D noted that his role with faculty is:

To allow them to do their job and keep everything that is not related to the job and student success, keep them free of that….It takes teams of people to teach our students, it takes teams of people to build community, and that is really a part of our culture.

President E believes it is his job “to get rid of the paper blockade and go after money and create a situation where they [faculty] can do what they need to do, and that is to satisfy our students and make sure our students are happy.”

*Decision-Making Style*

Even though the presidents have a participatory leadership style, they all agreed that the president needs to be willing to make decisions, including tough decisions. This was illustrated by comments from President B and President D above. President C, who uses the consensus model of governance, has only vetoed cabinet decisions twice.

*Perceptions of Others*

The perceptions of the board members and deans about the leadership style of the presidents also parallel those of the president. The board members and deans responded that the presidents listen to what others have to say and involve others in the decision making process, but know that they are ultimately responsible for the final decision.

*The Presidents’ Role In Their Communities*

In this category, the involvement of the presidents and their colleges in their communities will be discussed. The themes that have been identified are educational partnerships, role with legislators, and community service. Sub-themes under educational partnerships include secondary schools, and four-year higher education.
Educational Partnerships

All of the presidents and their representatives from the college are committed to serving the people, businesses, industries, community agencies, and secondary schools in their area. When appointed, President B’s charge was to “bring this college to another level, be more proactive, more responsive to the community, more responsive to business and industry.” The board wanted “more endeavors in more places, make this main campus be more proactive as far as bringing what we have out to the public. Don’t just sit here and say here we are, come use us.”

President A noted: “We committed ourselves to outreach, bring education to people….You just name the organization and we are a partner with them. We partner with everybody.”

The level of involvement for each president varied from opening the door (so the workforce development and continuing education people could follow to do the detail work) to strategizing with vice presidents. President C said:

We do a lot of collaborating, a lot of work for business and organizations through our continuing education division primarily. We are very active in the economic development of the county. I’ve been in respects a sparkplug for things to happen. I think it is generally recognized that we are probably, if not certainly, among the top institutions in the state in terms of being aggressive about involving ourselves in the economic development, community development of our area, our service region. We are very proactive in that regard.

Several of the presidents commented about the need to identify benefits for both parties in order for a partnership to succeed. According to President B, “You are not
going to develop a partnership until either you or your workforce people or community people develop some relationship with some company or some group.” President A had the same opinion and added:

It takes quite a while to develop these kinds of relationships and to get to know your legislators and the communities. People [presidents] come in and stay for three years and leave. I am not so sure how much that can really accomplish.

*Secondary schools.* All of the presidents talked about their linkages with the local high schools. Most of the conversations were about dual enrollment and articulation agreements. President A said their “dual enrollment program came directly out of what the businesses in the area told us they needed.” President C talked about their active Tech Prep program using distance education to augment and enrich the high schools’ curriculum. For President E, a major accomplishment has been the creation of a career center or vocational school on campus and the recent procurement of funds so that a state university will also be on campus, thus having a high school, a community college, and a university on the same property to provide seamless education.

*Four year higher education.* The presidents have also been involved in developing innovative programs with four year higher education institutions. In addition to the partnership being developed by President E that was discussed above, President D has created a partnership between the community college, a major employer in the state, and a university for educating engineering students. The two rural communities also have links to four year institutions so the people in the community can obtain bachelors, masters, and doctoral degrees without leaving the area.
Role With Legislators

The majority of the presidents have great relationships with their elected officials and regularly keep local, state, and national representatives abreast of what the community colleges are doing. President C said this about his work with legislators:

It’s an on-going but unscheduled process. It often has to do primarily with issues that arise. Over the years I’ve cultivated very positive relationships with local officials, both county government officials and state government officials. Whenever I need to speak with somebody, I just call. I always get my calls through. They are always very receptive and supportive.

President E believes it is his responsibility to stay in contact with the legislators. He said that he personally meets with them, calls them, sends them faxes and electronic mail, and visits them at the state capital or in Washington, D.C. The president also invites the legislators to campus.

In an article by President A, he wrote:

The president is the political educator of the institution and has the responsibility for making state legislators aware of the college’s mission and helping them understand the mission in order to ensure their support and commitment to providing resources for the college.

For President D, most of the work with legislators is handled through the district office so he is not active with the politicians. However, the president is comfortable talking with legislators because “I’ve been in this community for a long time. The legislators who are in our service area and I tend to go back a long way.”
Community Service

The presidents are active members of their communities. They serve as board members, officers, committee chairs, and members of a variety of organizations, including but not limited to, economic development boards, regional planning partnerships, hospitals, churches, secondary schools, and the Rotary Club. All belong to the Chamber of Commerce in their area.

Perceptions of Others

The perceptions of the board members and deans parallel those of the presidents. The presidents are perceived as being active and effectively involved in the community with all the various organizations, businesses, and industries. The board members and deans believe the presidents are committed to providing the educational programs that are needed by the people in their communities. Also, these group supported the presidents’ views that the president and his representatives have good partnerships with secondary schools and that the presidents have on-going relationships with legislators.

The Presidents’ Perceptions of Their Colleges

This category includes themes about how each president views his college. The themes are meeting the educational needs of the community and the role of the president. Sub-themes for meeting the educational needs of the community are change agent and student as learner. Sub-themes for the role of the president are challenges facing the college and fundraising.

Meeting the Educational Needs of the Community

The presidents are committed to their institutions meeting the educational needs of their communities. This was noted in their conversations and in written documents
such as mission and vision statements. When asked what the college does well, President B responded “we respond to the needs of the community…there is quality tied to the rapid response….Every effort [is made] to offer courses that the community needs.”

Although President C was talking about his college, his response about his vision for the college is worth noting:

People in a small rural community would be able to access higher education at every level through their local community college, not that we would be the direct deliverer, but we will broker for that….One that continues to be a learning center, one that remains committed to its community, that helps us build this community to become what it is, starting to become, which is a premier community in the United States.

Change agent. President D talked about the community being different today from what it was when the college first started. He said:

This institution is not the institution that we started with because this is not the community we started with and so it’s evolved as our community has evolved. We believe that our community is at least in part what it is because we have been here to help shape it, so we are both a responder to the community and a shaper to the community….Over a period of time we will have a very positive impact on the community. So my vision is that we continue to get better and better as a change agent and not just as a responder to the external change.

President E also talked about the college’s impact on the community. The strategic plan is clear that “the institution is poised to grow through collaborative effort
and provide quality service to the community and beyond, to remain relevant to constituent groups around here and be a leader and catalyst for change.”

*Students as learners.* Although all the presidents talked about providing quality educational courses and programs and servicing students, only one talked about the college being learner centered. President C said the “institution is a learner centered institution…that learners are the important people of the institution.”

*Role of the President*

Although the presidents said it differently, they all believe they “set the tone for the campus.” President A wrote in an article that it is the “responsibility of the president of the community college to articulate the comprehensive mission of the rural college and to get congruency of this mission from the local board, local political entities, state legislators, faculty, and the total college community.” As President B said “I think we have to be motivators, we have to be folks who set the example.” He believes people need to know the president likes what he does, is excited about what he does, and is very supportive of them. President B tells faculty and staff “My position here is to help you succeed in your job.” When President C was hired the college was on the verge of closing. Therefore, his responsibility has now become his greatest reward: “Seeing this college grow, develop, and survive….it is a very strong, stable, little institution now and it has done some wonderful things.”

*Challenges facing the college.* All the presidents agreed that fiscal constraints were their most prominent challenge. The availability of finances for obtaining state of the art equipment for programs, maintaining low tuition, staying competitive in terms of
salary, and having enough facilities are important areas that the presidents address frequently.

President D identified another challenge that he has begun to work on. That is, how to teach new faculty what they need to know in order to be “good teacher-learners themselves” in a short period of time. Faculty is retiring and it is important that they “pass on that wisdom” that they learned over the length of their careers to the faculty who are just starting their careers.

**Fundraising.** Accruing money is one of the responsibilities for the presidents. Each of the presidents has a Foundation Board that he works with.

President B considers himself the lead fundraiser. “I am out making speeches all the time, selling the college.” The president frequently has potential donors on campus for lunch and a presentation about the college. President B also has “friend-raisers” several times a year. For a friend-raiser event, twenty-five to thirty couples are invited to dinner on campus and then they attend the cultural event being sponsored by the college. During dinner, college faculty and staff are seated at the tables so they can talk with the guests. The president talks very briefly about the college since this is more of a social event. President E has an annual fund drive for the foundation and he takes the opportunity to talk with people whenever and wherever he can. The president went on to say that people in the community identify him with the positive impact the college has on the community and they, therefore, contribute money to the college.

President C said “We have had good fortune. People like the college and they want to be supportive of it. We are entering into our first major capital project fundraising campaign. …It’s new territory for us.”
It is not a primary expectation for President D to raise money. He does not have a lot of experience doing it, he does have a “personal antipathy for it,” and he does not feel comfortable with fund raising. The president has, however, met with people in the community when asked by the district wide foundation representatives to do so.

Perceptions of Others

The perceptions of the board members and deans seem congruent with the views of the president and the college. This group believes the colleges meet the educational needs of the community, and that the colleges are responsive to collaboration and partnerships with business and industry. The board members and deans also talked about the commitment to students, student learning, and providing quality programs.

The constituents also agreed with the presidents that budget constraints and decreased funding were the major challenges facing the college. Other challenges mentioned by the deans, but not the presidents or the board members, included working with under-prepared students who need training, having enough people in classes so the classes run, continuing to perform at the current level of quality, keeping programs current, closing the gap for international students who want an education.

Overall, the board members and deans were in agreement with the presidents’ responses about their role in working with their Foundation Boards. This group provided addition insight, however. One dean said the president talks to his contacts in the community and tells them what could be done if funds were available. Another dean indicated the president is always looking for ways to collaborate or procure agency funding. Lastly, a dean of the president with a district foundation said the president is enthusiastic about getting money via grants and government programs.
The Presidents’ Perceptions Of Their Career Paths

The common themes identified for this category are education, career path, career preparation, experiences in continuing education, and recommendations to others.

Education

All of the presidents have a doctoral degree. Four of their doctorates are in education or a field relating to education. One president has a doctorate in philosophy.

Career Path

None of the participants intended to become a community college president. After obtaining a baccalaureate, each president began his career in education. Three of the presidents were secondary education teachers, one taught adult basic education and GED preparation in a university, and one president was an education specialist for the Department of Corrections.

Except for one, each president’s first job in a two year institution began in a nontraditional position. Two presidents were directors of community services, one was an instructor in a technical college and then became director of the extension division, another was dean of students, and one was dean of extension and community services.

Although each participant walked a unique path to the president’s office, the common theme is that after having successful careers in community colleges, each decided he wanted to become a president and made plans to obtain the position. President A “just sort of wanted to be president.” President B said that after being in continuing education for twenty years he felt he was “multi-talented in so many areas” and although he enjoyed continuing education, he thought he wanted to be president. President C had been a dean of students and continuing education for twelve years. He “began developing
ways of working with people,” and learned how to “exercise authority and lead people.”

As he continued in his career he began to think he would “like an opportunity to apply at a higher level,” so he “began to look around” and “here I am.”

When the position for president became open, President D thought:

I am really enjoying this, I don’t really want to apply for that job but one day that would be a good job because I can be back on campus, I could interact with faculty and deans, and we can have great academic conversations and, you know, it will be just like being a student again. I miss all that and I could read books, you know, do all the things that academics spend their lives doing.

This president does not know what possessed him, but he wrote a handwritten note to the chancellor saying “hope the search is going well. If you don’t find anybody you like, just know that sometime I may like that job.” In a week the president was meeting with the chancellor and was offered the position of president.

President E graduated with a doctorate in education and had an opportunity to go back to a community college. The president then decided that if he was “going to stay in the system” that being in a top leadership position “looked like a nice place to end up.”

Career Preparation

The participants had a variety of positions immediately prior to their current presidencies, including vice president for instruction, president of a community college, dean of students and community services, assistant chancellor of operations and planning, and vice president for continuing education. President A knew if he wanted to become president he needed experience in academic administration so he obtained it.
President B attempted to become a community college president directly from continuing education, but the offers did not come. “I was getting good vibes from everybody…I knew I knew the work…I was getting the smiles, the handshakes, the pats on the back” but he was not getting the job of president. Therefore, the president became a vice president for academic and student affairs for four years. He then applied for a president’s position, made “a great pitch” and “sold myself” to the faculty and the board members. He believes he was accepted by the faculty because of his academic background. The business people on the board liked him because of his background in continuing education and he understood their needs.

While working as dean of student services President C became responsible for the community services division. At the time, he was also working with a person who had been a newspaper publisher for twenty-five years. According to the president this individual was “savvy about communities, how communities succeed.” This person gave the president some “principles which really became indelibly imprinted on my mind.” He told the president that the

First task of a community college is to become indispensable and the best way to become indispensable is to become very active in support of community aspirations and to take on the duties that people are doing in the community as volunteers because volunteers invariably exhaust themselves.

President D received his doctorate in 1972, and became president of his college in 1979. In those seven years, the president served as director of community services, assistant dean, associate dean, dean of instruction, as well as director of instructional
television, assistant to the chancellor, and assistant chancellor of operations and planning. However, the selection process was awkward for the president. First, the vice chancellor recommended the college’s chief academic officer for the position, and second, the faculty did not want him as president because he had “been tainted by being in the district office and had come through community services.” Although the president knew he had his “work cut out for me,” he was too young, too naïve, and too idealistic to “realize how much trouble” he was in. Over the years, he has learned to not take things personally and to build relationships with people.

President E began his career as dean of extension and community services. The president advanced to an associate vice president for continuing education, an interim president, and a vice president for continuing education.

The career paths of these presidents revealed that only one president has never been a faculty member or administrator on the academic side of the college. Another president was dean of students and community services and has been a faculty member. In addition to having a career path in continuing education, three of the presidents were in administrative positions on the academic side of the college before becoming president. President C made an interesting point:

The higher you go in the chain of command…the more global your perception has to become and that is an important attribute that a president needs to have, a comprehensive vision of the role, and scope, and value of the different parts of the institution. It all has to fit together organically as a functioning kind of organism, and it is hard to get that perspective when you are basically working on behalf of your own division.
Experiences in Continuing Education

When asked if ascending to the presidency through the traditional academic route was necessary, three of the presidents responded “it had to be on paper for the people.” They believe it is a faculty expectation that the president come from a provost or chief academic officer position; however, President E does not believe academic experience is needed. President C said if a person wanted a presidency in a large institution, experience was needed at “the tier below the president” in order to obtain a global perception and value the different departments of the institution.

All five presidents believe that workforce development, continuing education, or community services people have the skills and experience to make good presidents. Several reasons were given for this. President A said:

It [being provost] had to be on paper for the people. I think that’s changing. The workforce development people, continuing education, community services people, they know how to get things done and they get things done. I think that is what the president needs, so given my druthers, I would pick those kinds of people to be presidents.

President B attributes part of his growth with leadership and management skills to his experiences in continuing education. He said:

I involved myself with so many business and industry folks, both in local and state levels, and I saw how they operated….I saw how they worked with employees, how they worked with training programs, how they did this to upgrade their employees, and I really got a lot of involvement there, and I really saw different perspectives….I found that companies that
[involved employees in decisions, establish rapport with employees] had the greatest success in training, and they had the greatest success at the end-of-the-year profit margins too, because their employees seemed to be more productive, they seem more efficient about what they did and they seem to be happier-type employees.

President B also believes it is important that presidents be able to talk the language of business and industry personnel because “they like that, they can feel a relationship there between the two [of us].” A final comment was “It has really paid off for me in this career, coming from continuing education.”

President D said:

I do believe that it is not by accident that this institution is very entrepreneurial. I have several vice presidents that have their hands in workforce development and partnership building in community relations because I see it all integrated and I don’t think I would have approached it this way had I gone the route that I thought, which was through the path of liberal arts professor who became a chief academic officer.

President E believes that continuing education people have characteristics that are transferable into the president’s position. First, continuing education people have a broad, rather than narrow, focus. Second, they have “the ability to reach out and to touch different factions, and to work with different people.” Finally, continuing education people are “flexible” and are not going to worry or be rigid if they need to alter their plans for the day. “You’re a utility player and being a utility player is important.”
President B identified a weakness by coming from continuing education. From the perception of faculty, presidents from continuing education are “not in the mainstream of the college.” Faculty does not understand how continuing education people impact the college. Therefore, he believes that relationship building needs to occur inside the organization. The president thinks it is “imperative that the president” involve continuing education people in in-service programs and different aspects of the college, making them visible to faculty and others. He also believes that people in continuing education need to maintain a bond with faculty so faculty understands what is happening.

Recommendations to Others

All of the presidents suggested recommendations for others in continuing education who wanted to become community college presidents. The majority of the presidents recommended professional development courses and doing your job well. In order to be a good community college president, President A believes the following characteristics are needed: a comprehensive background in community colleges, a positive attitude, being proactive, and valuing an egalitarian mission.

President E believes people should “not buy into the perception that without academic experience you are less.” President B recommended obtaining experience on the academic side so you are making decisions about faculty and programs.

President D recommended that people be extremely flexible, creative, and innovative. “The flexibility is important because funding sources are constantly changing every time there is a change in administration.” The president continued that people should get recognized by others and let their career goals be known. Furthermore, since we live in a world of constant change, people should learn to thrive on change, be
energized by change, and see change as an opportunity. Finally, he believes it is good for a person “to take the opportunity to do a number of different things before they become college president because you are probably going to be more sensitive to the important role of all that at your institution…and realize it has to be a team.”

President C recommended getting a degree in a business area or an academic area. This president believes one of the biggest impediments is the “presumption that the natural line of ascension is through the academic office to the presidency.” The president also suggested that continuing education people work with credit faculty, “try to be of service to the credit division and offer opportunities to full-time faculty to do interesting things.”

Finally, President E said “I’m a strong proponent of people in continuing education being in this position because I believe they see it and handle it.” This president is proud of what he does and that he came from continuing education.

*Perceptions of Others*

The perceptions of the board members and deans about the career paths of the presidents varied. The majority of the board members believed faculty experience was needed prior to becoming a president. The deans were split on this topic, with some saying yes and some no.

Various deans believed presidents should have the following experiences prior to becoming a president: some teaching experience so they maintain an appreciation from the faculty perspective, some curriculum development experience, a liberal arts background so the global picture can be seen, knowledge of the community college system, and management and leadership skills. One continuing education dean said:
There would be some advantage [to being faculty] but I don’t think they necessarily had to have that experience….They have to be open-minded and willing to see, learn, and appreciate what a good faculty member is, just like if they didn’t have the continuing education experience they certainly need to appreciate what continuing education is and learn about [it].

Other responses from board members and deans included an awareness of the political scene, a broad knowledge base across all levels of education and the community, willingness to delegate, to be goal and mission oriented, understand the need for a partnership between academics and continuing education divisions, right personality, broad education and awareness of the world.

**Summary**

The findings of this study were reported in this chapter. A review of the narrative profiles and transcripts resulted in finding major themes in each of the categories. One category was the presidents’ perceptions of themselves. Major themes in this category were personality and values. Sub-themes for personality included inner motivation to succeed, out-going personality, people-person, enthusiasm, responsible risk-taker, and accepting their humanity. The sub-themes for values were principles, diversity, and humor.

The second category is the presidents’ perceptions of leadership. Major themes included people-oriented and decision-making style. Sub-themes for people-oriented were situational leadership and faculty as part of the team.
The presidents’ role in their communities was the third major category. The themes identified were educational partnerships, role with legislators, and community service. Sub-themes under educational partnerships included secondary schools and four year higher education.

The fourth major category was the presidents’ perceptions of their colleges. Themes included meeting the educational needs of the community, with sub-themes of change agent and student as learner, and the role of the president, with sub-themes of challenges facing the college and fundraising.

The final category is the presidents’ perceptions of their career paths. The common themes were education, career path, career preparation, experiences in continuing education, and recommendations to other. No sub-themes were identified.

The themes were discussed in detail, frequently presenting a president’s response in his own words. Perceptions of the board members and deans were discussed within the appropriate category.
CHAPTER SIX
Discussion and Implications

Introduction

This chapter includes an overview of the study and a discussion of the major findings, and implications for further research. It concludes with personal reflections, and a summary.

Overview of the Study

As presidents, chief academic officers, senior vice presidents, and faculty retire, future leaders need to be identified and trained. One nontraditional cohort for the presidency includes the deans or directors from continuing education areas of the college. However, there is little research about how presidents from continuing education perceive themselves or their jobs. Also, little is known about how others perceive presidents with this background.

The purpose of this ethnographic study was to explore the characteristics of selected community college presidents who had previously held dean or director positions in continuing education departments of community colleges. The study was guided by the following research questions.

1. How did the presidents make this position a career choice?
2. How did the presidents perceive they prepared for the role of president?
3. How did the presidents perceive their colleges and their roles?
4. How had the previous position as dean or director of continuing education helped or hindered their work as president?
5. How did a dean and board member perceive the president?
6. How did these presidents believe aspiring deans or directors of continuing education should prepare for the presidency?

The potential presidents were identified by snowball sampling that was initiated by four board members from the National Council for Continuing Education and Training. A letter explaining the research project was sent to each potential president by the researcher until five presidents agreed to participate in the study. Two of the five presidents contacted the researcher before follow-up phone calls were made. Telephone calls were made to establish interview dates and to answer any questions the presidents might have. A confirmation letter was mailed and a telephone call was made the day before the campus visit to reconfirm the appointment.

Personal interviews were conducted with each president, a board member, and an academic dean. In some instances, the continuing education dean was also interviewed, and in one instance the dean of institutional advancement was interviewed. A total of fourteen people were interviewed. The presidents volunteered to contact the people for the interviews. Observation and document review also contributed to data gathering. An interview guide approach, consisting of a list of open-ended questions, was used during the interviews. All interviews were taped and transcribed within two weeks.

During data analysis the communities, colleges, and presidents were described. The broad categories for beginning the data analysis were obtained from the grouping of the interview questions. A coding process was used to identify themes. Interpretation of data then followed.
The Researcher as Instrument

This research interested me for several reasons. First, I work in the community education and workforce development division of a Midwestern community college, and I wanted a research topic that centered around continuing education, business and industry, and workforce development. Second, I wanted the experience of completing a qualitative rather than a quantitative study. I have a technical background and tend to be comfortable with the systematic format of quantitative research. Conducting open-ended interviews and using a literary style of writing for the research project offered personal growth opportunities for me. I wanted the experience of gathering, analyzing, and interpreting qualitative data. Finally, understanding people, especially leaders and their characteristics interests me. Community colleges are the backbone of our communities and strong leadership, especially from our community college presidents, is essential. Although I believe I am a leader and an effective manager, it is not my intent to become a community college president.

This study was planned as descriptive research to provide a picture of presidents with a background in continuing education. No generalizations can be drawn from this study.

Although my graduate courses and my work in a community college contribute to my ideas about the roles and responsibilities of community college presidents, I do not have a close relationship with any community college president. Also, except for two studies from the 1980’s about community college presidents with a background in community services, my literature review provided only quantitative research about community college presidents in general. Therefore, I was open to understanding the
beliefs of this group of community college presidents. Theories about these presidents with a background in continuing education emerged from the bottom up.

Discussion

This section relates the major findings of the study to the findings in the literature. The discussion will include a profile of the presidents, leadership style of the presidents, perceptions of others about the presidents, and the presidents as effective leaders.

Profile of a President

Personality. Although each president is an individual, there are similarities in their personalities. The presidents in this study are friendly, out-going, positive, persistent, energetic, hard-working individuals who care about their faculty, staff, students, and communities. They are easy to talk with, are good listeners, and have a sense of humor. In addition to having an inner motivation to succeed professionally, the presidents also have a desire for their faculty, staff, and their communities to succeed. Confidence was portrayed in the presidents’ manner of speech, their interaction with others, and their physical being. The presidents have courage and are responsible-risk takers who have learned from mistakes they have made. Good judgment is exhibited by the presidents’ ability to make decisions that have helped their colleges grow. The presidents are enthusiastic about their jobs and the positive influences they have on their colleges and in their communities. Finally, the desire to lead is evident by the number of years the presidents have been in their positions: twenty-five years, twenty-one years, eighteen years, twelve years, and nine years. The personality traits of confidence, courage, persistence, good judgment, and a desire to lead exhibited by the presidents in
this study were identified by Hockaday and Puyear (2002) as traits in effective community college leaders.

Values. The presidents value diversity, as well as ethical and moral principles such as integrity, fairness, trustworthiness, and respect for others. Integrity was a trait Hockaday and Puyear (2002) found in effective community college leaders. Boggs (2003), too, wrote that leaders of community colleges must have integrity, honesty, high ethical standards, as well as being fair, dispassionate, and equitable. Boggs further states that leaders “must ensure that students are respected as individual learners and protected from disparagement, embarrassment, or capricious behavior” (p. 20).

Education and Career Path. After obtaining baccalaureate degrees, the presidents began their professional careers in education and eventually found their way to a community college where each excelled in various positions such as director of community services and dean of students. Although they did not intend to become community college presidents, each participant eventually made the decision to pursue this path because he believed he could do the job well.

Part of career planning consisted of earning a doctoral degree, a factor identified by McFarlin (1999) that may contribute to the development of exemplary community college leaders. Although the majority of the presidents in this study majored in education or higher education and administration, none had an academic major in community college leadership, another factor identified by McFarlin (1999) that might contribute to the development of exemplary community college leaders.

Academic and nontraditional positions, such as vice president for instruction, president of another community college, dean of students and community services,
assistant chancellor of operations and planning, and vice president of continuing education, were held prior to becoming a president. As noted, all the presidents in this study held several positions in community colleges. Three of the presidents had academic experiences prior to becoming a president and two did not progress through the academic ranks. Data collected by McFarlin (1999) indicated that less than half of the outstanding presidents in community colleges use the traditional path to the presidency.

Although the presidents do not believe it is necessary to ascend to the presidency via the traditional academic route, several believe it is a faculty expectation and, thus, that the experience was needed in order to obtain the job. The presidents do believe that workforce development, continuing education, or community services people make good presidents because they have characteristics that are transferable to the president’s role.

Leadership

*College*. The presidents in this study are transformational leaders who believe it is important to involve their faculty and staff in the decision making process. Transformational leaders motivate people to “do more than we originally expected to do” (Bass, 1985, p. 20). Characteristics of transformational leaders include charisma, described as vision, respect, trust, confidence; inspiration, described as optimism and enthusiasm; intellectual stimulation, described as encourages a re-examination of existing values, foster creativity and use of intelligence; and individualized consideration, described as personal attention to all members, acts as an advisor, gives feedback for personal development (Brehm, Kassin, & Fein, 1999). This characteristic of involving people in making decisions was identified by Boggs (2003) as necessary in today’s
environment where faculty and staff want to be involved in decisions, especially those that concern them. However, the presidents hold position power, and have the authority to make final decisions.

Another characteristic of transformational leadership that the presidents exhibit is charismatic power (Fisher and Koch, 1996). The presidents provide vision and a sense of mission for their colleges. Over the years the presidents have made their colleges what they are today. They are continually meeting the needs of their traditional and nontraditional students by providing quality programming and increasing enrollment, the number of buildings on their campuses, and the number of campus sites in the community. Although fiscal constraints are the most prominent challenges, accruing money, whether it be through annual fund drives or obtaining grants or some other unique avenue for money, is one of their many responsibilities.

Also, the presidents set the tone for the campus and are catalysts for making things happen for their constituents and their colleges. They often open the doors with organizations so their faculty and staff can then follow and provide the detail work to implement a project. The presidents encourage innovation and creative thinking. These, too, have been identified by Boggs (2003) as important characteristics for college presidents.

Finally, the presidents have received numerous awards and honors from professional and local organizations. They are leaders who have presented at numerous conferences. A review of resumes indicated that the majority of the presidents in this study have published within the past six years. Only one president has not published.
Communities. The presidents are committed to serving the people, businesses, industries, community agencies, and secondary schools in their areas. The presidents continually develop and strengthen relationships and partnerships with organizations in the communities. The presidents collaborate with community people and are change agents who have helped impact the communities they serve. In addition, the presidents have solid working relationships with their legislators. Finally, the presidents are active members of their communities as they serve on boards and chair committees. Preparation as a change agent is another factor identified by McFarlin (1999) as a trait of exemplary leaders.

Recommendations to others. Each of the presidents made recommendations to others in continuing education who wanted to become community college presidents. The suggestions include obtaining a comprehensive background in community colleges; maintaining a positive attitude; being proactive; valuing an egalitarian mission; attending professional development courses; performing your job well; obtaining experience on the academic side; being extremely flexible, creative, and innovative; getting recognized by others, letting your career goals be known; learning to thrive on change; and doing a number of different jobs in a community college.

None of the presidents suggested developing a relationship with a mentor. However, mentoring programs have been found to be valuable in assisting people to obtain a presidency (Boggs, 2003).
Perceptions of Others

Each representative of the college was positive about the president, perhaps because the presidents volunteered to set up the appointments with them. It is my belief, however, that the representatives were honest as they answered the questions.

Overall, the perceptions of the board members and deans about the college parallel those of the president. Both groups talked about meeting the educational needs of the community, developing relationships and partnerships with community organizations, and providing quality programs that support student learning.

Effective Leaders

The presidents in this study have many of the characteristics of effective leaders identified by McFarlin (1999), Hockaday and Puyear (2002), and Boggs (2003). The following factors were either not pursued with the presidents or did not surface during the interviews: participation in a leadership preparation activity, relationship with a mentor, development of a peer network, previous participation in a leadership preparation activity, and knowledge of technology.

The characteristics of the five presidents in this study can also be compared to the characteristics and professional skills of leaders of community colleges that have been recommended by the Leadership Task Force of the American Association of Community Colleges (2003). The first characteristic is the president should understand and implement the community college mission. The five presidents all voiced the importance of serving the community. The presidents understood the role of their college in the community; have created student-centered environments; valued diversity; and promoted teaching, learning, and innovation.
The second characteristic identified by the Task Force is effective advocacy. These presidents know how to work with their community leaders and legislators on matters that concern the college. As discussed previously, the presidents are familiar with fundraising for the college.

The third characteristic includes nine administrative skills that are essential for effective presidents. These are governance and organization, organizational development, promotion of diversity, assuming the role of a chief executive officer, personnel issues, research and planning, day-to-day management, managing technology, and managing relations with print and electronic media. These skills were either discussed with the five presidents, their constituents, or reviewed in documents for the five presidents.

The fourth characteristic identified by the Task Force is community and economic development. Interviews with the presidents and their constituents emphasized that all five presidents were skilled in developing partnerships with business and industry, developing linkages with high schools, participating in strategies for community development, and implementing workforce development strategies. One skill, developing linkages with universities, can be identified for the majority, but not all, of the presidents.

Ten skills are related to the fifth characteristic of personal, interpersonal, and transformational skills. It is the researcher’s belief that the presidents work with staff to promote the college’s vision, values, and mission; maintain and demonstrate personal ethics; project confidence and competencies of a leader; interview and evaluate personnel effectively; balance all aspects of the job; and are flexible. Four skills the researcher is not comfortable commenting about include: the presidents’ ability to model diversity in
any type of environment; public speaking, including being articulate with media; and operating at the highest level of personal transformation.

Shults (2001) described a 2001 online survey of community college presidents that was conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges. The results indicated that presidents believe they are not prepared for all aspects of their job. These included the “overwhelming nature of the job, being unprepared for the level of politics involved, fundraising, budgeting, and the amount of relationship building they were expected to accomplish.” Two other areas that presidents reported being unprepared for are their work with governing boards and the incivility within their campus communities (Boggs, 2003).

When the findings of the present study are compared with those of this 2001 survey, community college presidents with a background in continuing education seem prepared for their roles. Although the presidents in the study or their constituents responded they work evenings and weekends, they all voiced they love their jobs and the work that they do. In addition, these presidents feel comfortable building relationships with faculty, staff, and community organizations, including legislators. None of the presidents in the present study believed he was unprepared to work with his board. All the board members report that the presidents are respected by the community and the other board members. The presidents were also comfortable with their ability to manage finances and with fundraising, although one president reported that he was pleased fundraising was not an expected responsibility for him. Incivility on campus was not discussed with the presidents or their constituents.
Implications for Further Research

This study was a snapshot picture of five community college presidents with a background in continuing education. The study conveyed how these presidents perceive themselves and their jobs. Also, the study uncovered how others perceive presidents with this background. Finally, it revealed topics for further research, which can be subdivided into research questions.

First, these presidents have many characteristics of effective leaders. However, are these presidents successful because of their experience in continuing education or because of their personalities? What would a personality inventory reveal about effective presidents? How would the findings from a personality inventory compare to research about effective leaders?

Second, the selection criteria used by the board of trustees when choosing a president is important so the right person is chosen for the college. What attributes do board members look for when determining who to hire as president? How knowledgeable are board members about the role and responsibilities of community college presidents?

The third area concerns the selection committee. Who should be on the selection committee for choosing the president of a community college? In addition to board members, what roles do faculty, administrators, staff, students, and community members have in the selection process? How are committee members educated about their role on the selection committee as well as the role of the president?

A fourth area involves leadership training. How are leadership programs structured for those who want to pursue the presidency? Should there be different leadership programs or tracks for leaders with various backgrounds? Do administrators
in continuing education need the same leadership course as potential presidents who rose through the academic ranks of faculty to provost? Are successful presidents willing to mentor potential leaders, especially those from the nontraditional areas of the college?

A fifth area concerns preparation for the presidency. How should administrators in continuing education prepare for the presidency today? What skills do they have that are transferable to the role of president? What skills do they need to obtain? Is teaching experience necessary for faculty satisfaction? Is teaching experience necessary for success as a president?

The sixth area includes characteristics of presidents. How have the attributes for presidents changed over the past fifty years? What characteristics were identified as important for presidents in the past? How do these attributes compare to those needed for presidents today? What will be the attributes for future presidents?

Seventh, this research was with community college presidents with a background in continuing education. Studies of presidents from other nontraditional areas such as student services and senior level nonacademic administrators might be conducted to determine their leadership abilities as president and to compare their abilities with those from traditional backgrounds.

Eighth, the presidents in this study have a keen interest of serving all the members of their communities. They are truly interested in all students, traditional and nontraditional. The presidents are interested in developing partnerships with community businesses and industries, community agencies, secondary school systems, and legislators on various levels. Also, the presidents value and support their continuing education or community education and workforce development divisions. It would be interesting to
study whether all presidents have this keen interest in serving the community and supporting their continuing education divisions. Or, is this interest in the community specific to this population because of their backgrounds in continuing education?

Ninth, although all the presidents had a background in continuing education, only two did not have academic experience. Therefore, one might consider similar research with only presidents who came directly from continuing education. At the present time, this research is unlikely to occur since there are few presidents with only a continuing education background. However, it may be possible in the future as more presidents come from nontraditional pathways.

Finally, an interview guide approach, consisting of a list of open-ended questions, was used during the interviews. This approach permitted me to decide the sequence and wording of questions during the interview and provided for in-depth follow-up questions. Responses from the participants yielded a breadth of data about the individual’s experiences, perceptions, opinions, and feelings. The interview guide approach has a weakness, however, especially for the inexperienced qualitative researcher. Since all participants were not asked the same questions it was difficult to analyze the data at times. Future research may consider structured interviewing in order to capture data that are more easily coded.

**Personal Reflections**

This project interested me from the beginning. It was more than just a topic for the purpose of completing a degree. It was an opportunity to embark on a journey that I knew almost nothing about. It was a challenge. The topic brought out mixed feelings. On one side, it was a subject that needed to be explored and there was excitement as I
discussed the project with my advisor. On the other side, there was some doubt about the usefulness of the research. However, the enthusiasm for the project won and remained throughout the project. Having the opportunity to meet five gracious presidents and their staff, as well as visiting their beautiful campuses in various states, is an experience I will cherish for some time to come.

It was uncomfortable for me to make the initial contact with the presidents to see if they were willing to participate in the study. These are busy men and I wondered if they would be willing to spend time with me. I was prepared for rejection, so I was thrilled when the first president called and said he thought this was an interesting topic and he would be pleased to participate. President A also volunteered to contact other presidents if I needed him to. Thereafter, contacting other presidents became easier.

I also became nervous immediately preceding my introduction to the presidents. This nervousness subsided once the president and I began to talk. Not only were they individuals who could put people at ease rather quickly, their offices were inviting and comfortable rooms for dialog. Plus, the presidents wanted to tell their stories.

As I have gone through the process, it has been an academic learning experience as well as a personal enrichment endeavor. I actually enjoyed conducting the research, from the planning phase to the narrative phase. Personal growth can be exhibited by an increased sense of self-confidence. I am much more comfortable sharing my thoughts in meetings now, although I remain a good listener. The ability to take a massive amount of data and categorize it into something meaningful is a skill I have learned as a result of this study. However, fine-tuning this skill will take more practice. Finally, another piece of knowledge is that good writing happens over time. This, too, will take more practice.
Summary

The information presented in this narrative is the story of five presidents with a background in continuing education, as interpreted by the researcher. They are leaders who compare favorably to research about effective community college leaders. They are intelligent, innovative, creative, visionary men, dedicated to the mission of their community college.

This research has added to the body of knowledge about community college presidents by portraying presidents with a continuing education background. As a qualitative study, the findings are not to be used to make predictions. The findings, however, may be helpful to search committees and boards of trustees as they choose appropriate presidents for their colleges. The research should also be of interest to those who are involved with succession planning and choosing individuals for leadership development programs. Deans or directors of continuing education areas should be considered for top leadership positions in the community colleges. Finally, the research should interest those in continuing education who aspire to become a president.
REFERENCES


Appendix A

Interview Questions for Presidents, Deans, and Board Members

Interview Questions for Presidents

Name
College
Date/Time

Career Path

I have reviewed your curriculum vitae.

How did you choose this career path?

○ How did you choose to become a community college president?

Preparation for the Role

Tell me how you prepared for the role of president.

○ How did formal education prepare you for a leadership role?

○ How have work experiences or participating in organizations contribute to your development as a leader?

○ Have you attended a formal leadership institute (program, course)? How did this contribute to your development as a leader?

○ What role did a mentor have on influencing your career?

○ How did your experiences in continuing education contribute or not contribute to preparing you for the role of president?

○ Discuss the benefits of ascending to the presidency via the continuing education or business and industry route.

○ Discuss the weaknesses of ascending to the presidency via the continuing education or business and industry route.
The Person

Tell me about who you are.

- How would you describe your personality? How do you use these traits to your advantage?
- What personal values guide your decisions and actions?
- What is the most positive thing people can say about you?

Role of President

Tell me about the role of the president.

- What is important to you in your work?
- What is the easiest for you to do in your work?
- What is most difficult about your work?
- Describe your leadership style.
  - What leadership skills do you consider important?
- Tell me about a painful experience you have had while president.
- What has been your greatest reward as a president?
- What is satisfying about your work?
- What is dissatisfying about your role?
- What are your strengths?
- What are the major effects you have had on this campus as president? Which have given you the greatest satisfaction?
- What accomplishments are you proud of?
- How do you deal with stress?
- How do you work with legislatures on matters that concern the college?
What is your role in fund raising and development?

Discuss your role in developing partnerships in the community with organizations, businesses, and government agencies.

Discuss linkages the college has with high schools and your role in developing them.

The College

Tell me about your organization and how it has changed over the years.

What was it like when you first came here?

What is it like now?

What is important about the college’s mission?

What does the college do well?

What challenges does this college face?

What values are shared by employees on this campus?

What is your vision for the college?

Faculty Perception

Tell me about faculty.

What are they like?

Describe the governance system (or faculty senate) on campus.

How do they (faculty) perceive you as a president?

If he did not teach: Were there issues you had to overcome with faculty because “you were not one of them” at one time?
Recommendations to Others

- How do you believe directors or deans in continuing education who aspire to be community college presidents should prepare for the role?

Other

- Is there anything else you would like to mention or discuss?

Interview Questions for Dean and Board Member

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Perception of the College

Tell me about the college.

What was the college like when you first came here?

- What is it like now?

- What is important about the college’s mission?

- Describe what this college does well.

- What challenges are facing this college?
  - How are they being handled?

- What values are shared by employees on this campus?

- What is the vision for the college?

Perception of the President

Tell me about the president.

- How would you describe his personality? How are these traits used to his advantage?
What personal values guide decisions the president makes?

What is the most positive thing you can say about your president?

What is the president’s most important job?

Describe your president’s leadership style.

What are the president’s strengths?

What major effects has the president had on this campus?

What experiences do you believe prepare a person to become a community college president?

How often do you see the president?

**Faculty Experience**

Do you believe community college presidents should have been faculty prior to their presidency role? Why or why not?

How is the president perceived by faculty?

**Relationship with Others**

How does your president work with legislatures on matters that concern the college?

How does the president become involved with fund raising and development?

Discuss your president’s role in developing partnerships in the community with organizations, businesses, and government.

Discuss your president’s role in developing linkages the college has with high schools.

**Other**

Is there anything else you would like to mention or discuss?
Appendix B

Initial Letter to Presidents

Dear Dr.…..:

I am a doctoral candidate at Ohio University in the Higher Education Administration Program. My dissertation study is titled “An Ethnography of Community College Presidents from Continuing Education”. You have been identified as a president with a background in continuing education. As an educator working in continuing education, community education, and workforce development, I would appreciate your assistance.

In order to collect my data, I need to interview presidents, their academic deans, and a board member. It is anticipated that interviews will take approximately two hours for each participant. All information will be kept confidential and the results of the study will identify interviewees with a pseudonym.

If you agree to participate in the study, I will spend a day visiting your campus. In addition to the interviews, I would like the opportunity to participate in any other activities you deem appropriate to further my understanding of your role. The results of the study will help us understand how presidents with your background perceive themselves and their jobs. It will, also, help us understand how others perceive the president.

Within the next two weeks I will be contacting your office to ask if you are willing to participate in the study. If you are, I will schedule a visit between January and March, 2004. I realize you have a busy schedule and appreciate your consideration in supporting my doctoral endeavors.

If you have questions, please contact me at dmuzyka@csc.edu; 614-287-2681 between 8am-4:30pm or 614-871-2976 after 5pm or on weekends.

Sincerely,

Diann Muzyka, RN, MS
Doctoral Candidate, Ohio University
December 8, 2003