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CREATING SHARED VISION AND FACILITATING TRANSFORMATION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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A Dissertation Submitted to The Graduate School at the University of Missouri – St. Louis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Education
With an emphasis in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
In the Graduate School of the
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June, 2015

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UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI-ST. LOUIS
GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 25, 2015

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Abstract

Why are some community colleges, regardless of location or size, able to successfully engage their communities (both internal and external) to create highly functional strategic plans that guide their institutions to a shared vision and transformational change? This research sought to identify the positive qualitative elements exercised during the strategic planning process. Contextual elements, such as how leaders craft the strategic planning process, how and to what degree they seek feedback from the college's stakeholders, as well as the social and psychological processes and talents of the people involved in the planning have not been examined in depth in the literature. By examining these aspects, the researcher hopes to create a list of best practices that colleges can implement to enhance their internal processes.

The researcher used qualitative methods via focus group interviews and using Grounded Theory analysis. She visited three community colleges recommended as having exemplary planning processes that resulted in a shared vision. The colleges were geographically and demographically diverse to document commonalities of different types of community colleges. The researcher conducted four homogeneous focus groups at each college (leadership, students, faculty, and staff).

The query related to the strategic planning process that welcomed true stakeholder input and sought transformational change that would create shared vision. The focus of the questions centered on the role leadership had in the process, cultural characteristics of the college that influenced the planning processes, and finally, the role that each individual played in the process.

At the conclusion of the study, the researcher found that a combination of factors work in concert to enable the community colleges in the study to foster a shared vision. Attributes such as loyalty, servant leadership, communication, trust and accountability are but a few of the necessary attributes found among the colleges in the research.

Dedication

This is dedicated to my family, Greg, Emily and Amelia, who sacrificed more than their fair share in order for me to do this. Throughout it all, you loved me, and that means everything. This is as much your product as it is mine.

To my dear parents, Don and Dorothy Kirt, who instilled the work ethic and perseverance to finish what I start. You left this world way too soon. All I am, I owe to you: both credit and the blame.

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This journey began as a means to simply gain additional leadership skills to help me be better in my professional position. When I found the University of Missouri at St Louis' Educational Leadership and Policy Studies program, I hesitated, because I did not plan on earning a doctoral degree. I lifted the decision in prayer and the process took a life of its own. As it goes with God's grace, I have not been sorry.

To Dr. Kent Farnsworth, former President at Crowder College and the Mary Ann Lee Endowed Professor for Education Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Missouri at St Louis, who opened my eyes to new possibilities in higher education. In every class, I sat in awe at his breadth of knowledge and willingness to share in ways that prompted interest in his students. His encouragement and positive reinforcement kept me engaged in the process. In many ways, I did not want to disappoint him by quitting. He is, in my opinion, the epitome of leadership.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

COMMITTEE APPROVAL PAGE ii
ABSTRACT iii
DEDICATION v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS viii
LIST OF TABLES xiv

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE 1

- Introduction 1
- The Importance of Transformational Community College Leadership 2
- Statement of the Problem 5
- Purpose of the Study 7
- Achieving the Dream Colleges and Transformational Leadership 8
- Research Questions 13
- Significance of Study 13
- Research Design 14
- Theoretical Concept 15
- Delimitations and Scope of the Study 15
- Definition of Terms 16
- Summary 19

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE 21

- The American Community College 22
- Community Colleges as “Change Agents” 23
- The State of the Community College 26
- Leadership in the Community College 28
- Transformational Leadership 31
  - Web of Inclusion 36
  - Servant Leadership 38
- Shared Vision 40
  - Value of Vision 43
  - Strategic Planning 45
- Appreciative Inquiry 50
- Positive Psychology 57
- Positive Organizational Scholarship 61
  - Authentic Leadership 62
- Considerations in Light of the Literature Review 66

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY 67

Research Design....67
Choosing Qualitative Methods 67
Sampling and Participants....68
Selection of the Cases 69
Case Studies 71
Data Collection Strategies and Procedures 73
Additional Sources of Data....75
Pilot Research 77
Case Descriptions....78
Recruiting Participants....80
Diagnosis of Personal Strengths with Strengthsfinder....82
Interview Strategies 83
Grounded Theory 87
Sampling Proceeds on Theoretical Grounds 89
Data Collection and Analysis are Interrelated Processes....90
Analysis Makes Use of Constant Comparison....92
Patterns and Variations Must be Accounted For 93
Concepts are the Basic Unit of Analysis....94
Categories Must be Developed and Related 96
Hypotheses About Relationships Among Categories 97
Broader Structural Conditions Must Be Analyzed, However Microscopic ..
the Research 98
Process Must be Built Into Theory 98
Writing Theoretical Memos is an Integral Part of Doing
Grounded Theory 99
Grounded Theorists Need Not Work Alone 99
Quality Standards....100
Objectibility/Confirmability 100
Reliability/Dependability/Auditability 101
Internal Validity/Credibility/Authenticity 101
External Validity/Transferability/Fittingness 102
Utilization/Application/Action Research....102
Limitations 103
Summary....105

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS....106

Case Studies 111
College A 111
College A Findings 114
Loyalty 116
Communication....118
Learning Centeredness....119
Servant Leadership....121

Student Centeredness 123
Community Connectedness 124
Trust 126
Adaptability..127
Transparency..129
Teamwork 130
Positive Change 131
College B 134
College B Findings 136
Communication...138
Loyalty 142
Servant Leadership..143
Trust and Accountability...146
Community Connectedness 149
Teambuilding 151
Student Centeredness 154
Adaptability..156
College C 158
College C Findings 163
Loyalty 164
Servant Leadership..167
Teamwork 170
Community Connectedness 172
Adaptability..174
Student Centeredness 176
Trust and Accountability...180
Communication...182
Summary 191

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.........193

Discussion of Findings...195
Loyalty 198
Commitment 199
Willing 200
Resiliency...200
Compassion/care for students 201
Positive regard 201
Caring..202
College culture 202
Maintain the culture 202
Communication..202
Open communication 203
Communication and feedback...204
Purposeful communication 205

Connectedness between divisions....205
Inclusion/transparency....206
Perspective from all areas....206
United in efforts....207
Cooperation....207
Appreciation of the college....207
Appreciation of faculty and staff....207
Pride....208
Servant Leadership....208
Lead By example....209
Supportive leadership....209
Strengths-based leadership....210
Know faculty and staff well....211
Faculty adaptability....211
Strategic Decisions....212
Fiscal responsibility....212
Alignment of intention/purpose....213
Forward movement....213
Caring Culture....213
Valued....214
Respected....214
Empowerment....214
Learning/Student Centeredness....214
Student success....216
Student engagement/purpose....216
Impactful....216
Learning through differences....217
Expected to participate....217
Service-learning....217
Student perspective....218
Accessibility....218
Customer service....218
Communication between students....219
Community Engagement....219
Stakeholder input....220
Community support....220
Responsive....221
Listening to stakeholders....221
Relationships....221
Celebrate achievements....222
Trust/Accountability/Transparency....222
Trust building....223
Positive forward planning....224
Courage....224
Responsive....224

Functional teamwork 225
Faculty dedication 225
Incentive 225
Faced the Brutal Facts 225
Assessment 226
Need for quality institutional research 226
Data-driven results 226
Teamwork 227
Purposeful teambuilding 227
Strengths-based teambuilding 228
Expected to participate 228
Collegiate purpose 228
Professional development 229
Investment of faculty/staff 229
Incentive for professional development 230
Instructional support 230
Innovation/collaboration 230
Staff attributes 231
Engagement 231
Flat organization 231
Adaptability 232
Transformational change 233
Flexibility 233
Buy-in 234
Appreciation 234
Approachable 234
Positive attributes 235
Department level improvement 236
Institutional research 236
Progressive instructional improvement 236
Sourcing Transformation at Community Colleges 237
Leadership 239
College culture 240
Personal 242
Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research 243
Summary 244

REFERENCES 247

APPENDIX A: IMFORMED CONSENT 258

APENDIX B: TERMINOLOGY AND RELATIONSHIP OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORIES 261

APPENDIX C: CODE BOOK.....262

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. Regional Accreditation Chart 11
2. Planning Criteria by Accreditation Agency 12
3. Regional Demographics for Sample Colleges 78
4. Case Study Colleges' Institutional Profile 103
5. College A: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing Shared Vision ...110
6. College A Frequency of Priorities 110
7. College B: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing Shared Vision .. 131
8. College B Frequency of Priorities 132
9. College C: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing Shared Vision .. 157
10. College C Frequency of Priorities 157
11. Cross-case Analysis Categories and Subcategories 194

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW AND RATIONALE

Introduction

> The most successful leader of all is one who sees another picture not yet actualized. The leader sees the things which belong in the present picture but which are not yet there…Above all, the leader should make co-workers see that it is not his or her purpose which is to be achieved, but a common purpose born of the desires and the activities of the group.
>
> Mary Parker Follett, Dynamic Administration (1940).

In organizations, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President typically plays a pivotal role in setting the tone and direction for the entire organization by articulating a vision. The leader's vision is generally given structure and substance through a planning process and ultimately, the extent to which the leader's vision is embraced by the rest of the organization and becomes transformational is determined by how successfully the leader is able to guide, articulate and convince others of the wisdom and efficacy of the plan. Transformational leadership is defined as the ability to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of others by working with and through them in order to accomplish the mission and purpose of the organization (Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989). To transform means to change; therefore, transformational leadership is focused on positive change and a commitment to growth as much for the people involved in the organization as for the organization itself. It is reasonable then that transformational leadership is dependent on guiding a planning process that results in a transformational plan. This

study examines how that process works within organizations that have shown themselves to be successfully transformational.

The Importance of Transformational Community College Leadership

Leaders cannot be leaders unless there are followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989; Yammarino, 1994). One value shared by community college presidents notable for their ability to create a “shared vision” is the high importance they place on follower involvement Kouzes & Posner, 2007; (Roueche et al., 1989). Transformational leaders constantly involved internal and external constituents, including faculty and staff, former, current and future students, social service agencies, educational partners, business and faith leaders within the community, and other community members served by the college. By engaging and understanding the needs, values and capabilities of the constituent base, the transformational leaders are better able to assess the willingness of potential followers to remain committed as the institution undergoes transformational change (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche, et al., 1989).

The Commission on the Future of Community Colleges (1988) notes that “community” not only refers to the people served, but also the climate that is created: “one that includes a concern for the whole, fosters integration and collaboration, openness and integrity, inclusiveness and self-renewal” (p.7). A community college president is central to creating this sense of community within the institution (Roueche et al., 1989). Developing interdependence within a community is critical to creating a shared vision because altruistic teamwork is needed to work for the common good and not fractured, vested interests (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989). To cultivate

various communities of followers within the college and improve teamwork, transformational leaders create a working environment based on common agenda – or shared vision – that is embraceable by the entire college.

Another trait specific to transformational leaders is their ability to see past the present and anticipate the future needs of the organization. Kouzes and Posner (2007) refer to this as "prospecting the future" (p. 110). Leaders need to be ever-mindful of the future direction of the college so that present demands do not derail the organization's ability to plan in order to foster the shared vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al, 1989). Transformational leaders possess both a vision of the college's potential and the willingness to commit resources and embark on unchartered territory. Dick Brownell, former President of Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in North Carolina states that "by focusing leadership on change, the president/CEO can create structures and processes that not only match resources to needs, but also unleash creativity to help cope with challenges" (Rouesche et al., p. 269). This matching of resource to needs is crucial with transformational leadership and shared vision because it lessens the likelihood of competition from vested interests that waste resources. This matching of resources to needs often occurs throughout the strategic planning process. The convergence of the planning process with transformational leadership creates an environment where department leaders have a direct impact on the future of the college as their management strategies reflect the strategic plan, and mirror the transformational shared vision of the leadership, as well as support the efforts necessary to achieve strategic goals (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

The development of an institution's mission and priorities are in large part the responsibility of the CEO, who often draws upon input from mid-level leadership, positions that have authority over departments and programs. Departmental goals, which align with the overarching mission and institutional priorities from the CEO's office, allow each mid-level leader to collaboratively elicit plans and new initiatives that blend with the direction of the college. When each department goes through the assessment and planning process, and the resultant plans are consistent with the overall priorities from the CEO, the college begins a collective move forward. This leadership is the transformational cog that allows the wheels of progress to move in a common direction.

Shared vision occurs when all faculty and staff join to create annual and multi-year plans that are congruent with the purposes stated in the strategic plan, and infuse the strategies with energy; the unified efforts promote a shared vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Ideally, the shared vision evokes a higher moral connection in faculty/staff who perceive their actions to have deep purpose. Kouzes and Posner (2007) likens this to committing to a cause, not a plan. The glue that brings together the mission and the people is the strategic planning process. Leaders who infuse these relationship qualities to the planning process can be considered transformational because they created a shared vision through the process. Ultimately, transformational leaders are mission-oriented and embrace a shared vision via relationships throughout the college as a means for unified change (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989).

Finally, not all leaders with these same qualities are successful because there are systems within and external to the organization that have to function together to achieve success. For example, Myran, Baker, Simone, and Zeiss (2003) explain that

organizational culture is a key to transformational change, and change-oriented culture develops only in environments where the leaders empower faculty and staff to respond to new circumstances with innovative solutions that uphold the mission, vision and values of the institution (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Statement of the Problem

As Bryson (1995) notes, strategic planning processes are as varied as the institutions in which they are practiced. The steps to planning may be defined in the literature (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995), but implementation is flexible and ultimately determined by those involved. This variety in implementation, particularly when the results lead to positive institutional change, is insufficiently documented, particularly among colleges headed by transformational leaders. Yet, understanding the implementation process that accommodates transformational change is critical to replication at other institutions, and the literature makes a compelling case for transformational leadership and effective planning in America's community colleges. For the purposes of this study, the researcher is undertaking a search for evidence of transformational leadership in successful planning processes. The researcher intentionally ignored all the ways the process can go wrong, and instead sought to identify the components of functional planning that include broad stakeholder input and lead the process to go right. The researcher believes that this will create a more focused and functional view of the process.

Investigating what is "right" with the world is known as Positive Psychology and has been utilized mostly in education and therapeutic settings. The term "Positive Psychology" was first used by Abraham Maslow (1954) in explaining his view that

psychologists had invested too much time on the darker, meaner side of human nature, thus virtually ignoring the power of human potential (Lopez & Snyder, 2009). Martin Seligman popularized Positive Psychology as a field of study during his tenure as President of the American Psychological Association, where he asked that more attention be paid to the good in people (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Peterson, 2006; Seligman, 2002; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). The basic premise of Positive Psychology is that there is a basic goodness in people that is as authentic and real as are their inadequacies (Peterson, 2006). Since Seligman's call to investigate the positive side of human nature, the application of Positive Psychology has been applied to organizational management and through an evolutionary process has become Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS).

POS studies the positive aspects of organizations and their members (Cameron et al., 2003). The linguistic focus of POS is on improving the human condition by using words such as excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, and virtuous, for example (Cameron et al., 2003). It differs from traditional organizational study, which focuses on wealth creation, competition, and survival of the fittest. The differences between traditional organizational study and POS are most apparent when contrasted against one another in analysis (Cameron et al., 2003). Traditional organizational study focuses more on the rudiments of survival, which may be negative, competitive in nature or have dysfunctional properties; whereas POS studies the positive dynamics such as resilience, meaningfulness, positive connections, and positive spirals (Cameron et al., 2003). Myran et al. (2003) suggest that transformational leadership in the new millennium will need to be more like the POS model, where the leadership charts the

future course for the college, and creates an environment that empowers the rest of the college with the capacity to achieve the objectives. Shared commitment and mutual support will be necessary for institutions to survive in the wake of dynamic transformational change (Myran et al., 2003).

Despite the literature that encourages colleges to “become transformational,” no documented evidence was found that links Positive Psychology or POS specifically to effective planning processes within higher education. Snyder and Lopez (2007) studied collective hope and how it operates in goal-directed thinking of large groups of people. POS has begun to examine the relationship of authentic leadership and companies known to have environments that foster hope (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Hope is a theme used often in Positive Psychology. Many of the concepts found in high-hope companies were also found in community colleges that were known to have shared vision: open communication between employees (or faculty and staff) and management (or administration), a clear mission statement that was shared throughout the organization, where inclusive decision-making and feedback was encouraged and accountability existed throughout the organization. Yet, nothing in the literature ties the broader approaches of Positive Psychology to strategic planning approaches.

Purpose of Study

Positive Psychology is most simply defined by Snyder and Lopez (2007) as being “the things in life that make it worthwhile” (p. 3). It involves the scientific approach to examining the strengths of a system and its positive functioning. By using a technique called “Appreciative Inquiry” to examine the positive elements of transformational leadership, collegiate planning, and community engagement, the researcher assumes

these conditions and attributes exist in highly functional organizations. Further, the researcher expects to find the elements common to strong, functional planning that enhances shared vision and create transformational change.

This study soughtto uncover attributes of community colleges with successful strategic planning systems that contribute to their planning and transformational success. By investigating the processes employed by community colleges that have included broad stakeholder input in the strategic planning processes, the researcher hoped to find common results that were considered exemplary by specialists in the field. This study attempted to answer the question, "How do transformative community colleges successfully engage their communities during the strategic planning process, examine information to influence processes within the college, practice good leadership, create a shared vision, and promote transformational change?"

While much is written separately on each item listed above, no comprehensive model addresses all of the strategic planning components and their functional union. Contextual elements, such as how leaders craft the strategic planning process, how and to what degree they seek feedback from the college's stakeholders, as well as the social and psychological processes of the people involved in the planning, have not been examined in depth in the literature. As a result, this study seeks the positive qualitative elements inherent in community engagement and collegiate planning.

Achieving the Dream Colleges and Transformational Leadership

Community colleges, by their very nomenclature, denote a designed connection with communities. How community colleges respond to and communicate with their constituents determines a symbiotic relationship that is unique in higher education. While

it seems logical that community colleges would nurture this symbiosis, some college leaders are more adept at relationship-building. One population of colleges noted for their exceptional community/college relationships are successful participants in the Achieving the Dream (ATD) initiative.

Achieving the Dream is a national initiative underwritten by the Lumina Foundation and a number of other national funders that requires participating community colleges to focus on improving completion for populations with comparatively low student success outcomes, such as minority and low-income students, and to concentrate planning on improving student outcomes in general (Achieving the Dream, 2005). Consistent with their broad goals, ATD seeks to use data to identify strategies that increase student success and to expand public support for raising postsecondary achievement (Achieving the Dream, 2005). ATD helps participant community colleges create mechanisms to collect and analyze data that is then used in decision making capacities.

In order to become an ATD school, community colleges must provide evidence that they have strong ties with their communities (stakeholder input), and that they have internal mechanisms (assessment) that use data to inform their decision making (evaluation) (Achieving the Dream, 2005). Institutional buy-in gets internal stakeholders pulling in the same direction of the shared vision, whereas external stakeholder input ensures that colleges make decisions relevant to the communities in which they exist.

The prospect of transformational change for ATD schools is focused on four areas for participating colleges: institutional change, policy change, public engagement, and

knowledge development. Institutional change challenges the college to create basic and pervasive change based on data in all facets of the institution. Policy change seeks to examine and evaluate college policies through data that are gathered and examined in order to draw conclusions about policy effects. As a result, future policy decisions are based on data, not convenience or supposition. Public engagement assumes an expectation that colleges already have a measure in place in order to become an ATD school. Public engagement is necessary in gathering stakeholder input during the strategic planning phases, as well as in maintaining transparency when creating synthesizing that input into strategic initiatives. The more input and communication that takes place during this process, the greater the internal and external transparency. Lastly, knowledge development is derived from data-driven instructional and student support processes (Achieving the Dream, 2005).

Every community college in the United States is evaluated by a regional accrediting body. Table 1 illustrates the organization of the states by criterion group. One major criterion common among all regions is the strategic planning process. As discussed earlier, this topic is important enough to be one of the major evaluation criteria; however, the accreditation mechanisms for assessing the effectiveness of planning vary from region to region. ATD colleges stress the assessment and strategic planning processes in a uniform manner across accreditation regions, making them a natural population for this study.

Table 1

Regional Accreditation

Region	Accreditation Title	Acronym
South: Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, South Carolina, Virginia	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools	SACS
Middle States: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, US Virgin Islands, other international locations	Middle States Commission on Higher Education	MSCHE
New England: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Three institutions in Greece, three in Switzerland, and one in Bulgaria, Bermuda, and Lebanon,	New England Association of Schools and Colleges	NEASC
North Central: Arkansas, Arizona, Colorado, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, North Dakota, Nebraska, Ohio, Oklahoma, New Mexico, South Dakota, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Wyoming.	Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools	HLC
Western Region (community and junior colleges only): California, Hawaii, Territories of Guam and American Samoa, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Republic of Palau, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands	Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges	WASC-AACJC
Western Region (senior institutions): California, Hawaii, the Pacific Islands, and East Asia	Western Association of Schools and Colleges – Accrediting Commission for Senior Colleges and Universities	WASC-ACSCU
Northwest: Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, and Washington	Northwest Commission of College and Universities	NWCCU

Table 2 depicts representative criteria related to planning and the regional accrediting bodies that look specifically for this evidence (Leeper, 2009). It demonstrates the variety of mechanisms for evaluation. To facilitate selection of colleges that are viewed as models of transformational planning, a more uniform assessment mechanism is required, and ATD provides that mechanism.

Table 2

Planning Criteria By Accreditation Agency

Criterion Mechanisms to Evaluate Planning	Regional Accreditation Agencies						
	SACS	MSCHE	NEASC	HLC	WASC-AACJC	WASC-ACSCU	NWCCU
Appropriate to Needs to Meet Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning is Clearly defined	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning Defines Future	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Demonstrates Capacity to Fulfill Mission		✓	✓	✓			✓
Evaluates/Demonstrates Institution is Effectively Accomplishing Mission & Goals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Includes Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Institution-wide/Broad-Based/Multiple Constituencies/Participatory	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning is Integrated	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Planning is Ongoing/Continuous	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Planning is Research-based/Appropriate Quantitative & Qualitative Data	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resource Allocation based on Mission & Goals		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Results Communicated to Public	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Results in Continuing Improvement/Institutional Renewal	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Success of the Plan Evaluated	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Systematic Review of Institutional Mission	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Use Results of Assessment Activities	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Used to Establish/Align Priorities		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Research Questions

The following four questions directed this study and guided both the methodology employed and the theoretical framework underpinning this inquiry:

1. How is positive leadership exhibited within organizations where effective stakeholder engagement occurs in the planning process?
2. What are the positive qualitative elements inherent in functional community college planning where effective community engagement has been employed?
3. How are colleges successful at gathering stakeholder input during strategic planning that leads to shared vision?
4. How are community college stakeholders allowed to participate in the planning process relative to their strengths?

Significance of Study

The purpose of this study was to identify common attributes in transformative community colleges that have successfully solicited, processed, and converted broad stakeholder input; used data from the stakeholder input to create shared vision; and created a strategic plan for a transformational process that propels the college forward, as indicated by their designation as an ATD institution and affirmation of their ATD coaching team. An examination of the qualitative contextual elements that occur between people within the system during the process were as much a part of the study as were the actual steps that are employed. The study becomes significant, then, in that it identifies those elements that proved to be particularly helpful to institutions creating successful planning processes – and by implication, other processes that benefit from broad stakeholder input.

The researcher used Positive Psychology as a framework from which to work. Specifically, she was looking for the cultural and relational elements that allowed success to occur. Snyder and Lopez (2007) advise researchers using Positive Psychology to consider culture as a major influence in the development and manifestation of positive functioning and the study has significance in that it also demonstrates the usefulness of this framework in examining effective institutional processes.

Research Design

The researcher chose to utilize qualitative analysis and an instrumental multiple case study method with colleges that have been identified as successful and participatory planners serving as the focus of the cases. In this situation, the researcher wanted to learn about the process these outstanding colleges followed to gather, synthesize and create the strategic plan, as well as the roles that faculty, staff, students, and other community members played in the process. These methods gathered rich descriptive information that were analyzed and reconstructed to highlight commonalities among colleges achieving shared vision and transformative change.

The research design for this study specifically employed grounded theory methodology to analyze and derive the common positive qualitative elements that exist among community colleges known to be exemplary planners. Using positive sampling, four community colleges were chosen that are geographically and demographically different to achieve more generalizable findings. Instrumentation included focus group interviews made up of four important populations to the community college: students, faculty, staff, and external stakeholders. Additionally, an instrument known as Strengthsfinder was used to gauge whether focus group participants in the Strategic

Planning focus group included individuals with a variety of strengths and whether or not they feel they are able to function using their strengths during the planning process.

Theoretical Concept

Because no existing literature chronicles this type of analysis, the theoretical framework became one of discovery, which was why grounded theory was chosen. This theoretical approach allowed the data to drive the analysis so the results were grounded in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). A study of this type had not been completed before. Using Positive Psychology as a lens during the research was a unique way to formulate taxonomy of characteristics of successful colleges who conduct strategic planning and foster a shared vision.

Delimitations and Scope of the Study

This study looks only at the strategic planning process within community colleges that have been identified as being transformational, and is therefore not intended to examine processes that occur within other sectors of higher education. Additionally, in order to identify community colleges with consistent elements of community engagement, the researcher chose to evaluate populations from colleges that participated in the Achieving the Dream Initiative (ATD). Each community college was allocated an ATD Leadership Coach and a Data Coach to mentor them through the intense data gathering and assessment processes employed by ATD. The coaches were drawn from a pool of nationally recognized former CEO's and institutional researchers who had extensive leadership and management experience.

The researcher requested nominations only from the Achieving the Dream coaches of colleges that exhibited exemplary community engagement and had utilized

this input in a successful planning process. From this group, the researcher selected to study four colleges. Participation was therefore limited to colleges who applied to participate in Achieving the Dream, were selected, and were nominated by their coaches. Since the initiative is only active in twenty-seven states, colleges in the remaining 23 states were not considered which potentially limits the generalizability of the study results. However, because Achieving the Dream leadership views the college sample as being reasonably represented of community colleges throughout the nation, this should not be a serious limitation.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions serve to bring greater clarity to the discussion of planning and transformational change, and will be utilized throughout this study:

Appreciative Inquiry (AI): the co-evolutionary search for the best in people or situations. In the broadest sense, it is the discovery of that which gives “life” to a system when it is at its best. AI involves the systematic questioning which allows the system to apprehend and identify the potential positive energy (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a).

Data gathering and assessment: the examination of internal data sets, such as retention statistics in the community college that can then be used to inform decision making (Achieving the Dream, 2005).

Hope: the capacity to find pathways to desired goals, along with the motivation to use those pathways (Snyder, 2002).

Hope theory: a theory which centers around an individual’s belief in his or her ability to find workable mechanisms to achieve a goal and their ability to begin and maintain momentum toward a goal. Hope theory is an important construct to understand

when learning how a person (or in this case, an organization) creates adaptive and effective strategies instead of getting mired in the stressors that could inhibit their progress. Hope theory is associated with higher performance, perseverance, better moods at work, and is closely associated with optimism (Lopez & Snyder, 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Optimism: the ability to attribute good outcomes to internal, stable and pervasive cause (Seligman, 2002).

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS): a new field of study in the organizational sciences that focuses on the positive aspects of functional organizations. Positive Organizational Scholarship studies the motivations, facilitation and identification of positive phenomena in organizations. The scholarship further studies how these phenomena can be identified, researched and studied so that managers can capitalize on the positivity (Cameron et al., 2003).

Positive Psychology: the scientific approach to discovering the strengths that promotes positive functioning (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Resiliency: the capacity to endure and succeed in adversity (Masten, 2001).

Self-efficacy: the confidence in one's ability to meet a goal (Bandura, 1997).

Servant leadership: a concept designed by Robert Greenleaf. Servant leaders chose to lead in order to make a positive difference in the world. Servant leaders are intuitively predisposed to lead with the best interests of the organization and its people as the top priority. With Servant Leadership, the servant role comes first, as the leader sees himself/herself primarily as being of service to the institution and its employees (Farnsworth, 2007; Greenleaf, 1977).

Shared Vision: the result of transformational leaders setting the mission and values for an institution and the rest of the organization committing their support to the stated mission via the measurable goals/objectives located in the strategic plan (Roueche et al., 1989).

Stakeholder input: the outcome of gathering the impressions of those with a vested interest in the organization, as well as measuring how well the organization is meeting stakeholder needs (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995; Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

Strategic planning process: "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does and why it does it" (Bryson, 1995, p. 5).

Strengths: the combination of talents inherent to each person and the ability to accomplish a task with near perfect performance. While talents are specific to the individual, strengths are refined when included with knowledge and skill (Clifton, Anderson, & Shreiner, 2006).

Transformational leadership: the result of a leader driven by his/her strong internalized values and ethics, which enables the leader to delegate responsibility and autonomy. The leader articulates clear long-term goals, develops a culture supportive of change, builds trust among their followers, and supports the organization’s efforts at continuous development toward its full development, while supporting problem solving skills among the rank and file (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Summary

Considerable research exists on the building blocks of community engagement, strategic planning processes, constructive assessment and building a shared vision. However, very little information exists that puts the pieces together and examines the dynamics that occur when they operate in concert symbiotically. Much of what was studied in this project analyzed human interaction, and how colleges select the personnel who gather, evaluate, and process information in order to create strategies that mobilize information throughout a systematic planning process, allowing the rest of the college to embrace and engage in a shared vision.

Areas of interest include the planning process: How does the leader organize and support planning? Is successful planning a result of the leadership or the composition of the planning team? How are planning decisions made? How are planning teams chosen? How integral is the community in the process? How closely is the rest of the college aligned with the process as it occurs? The researcher was particularly interested to learn if there are prescribed steps that a college can follow in order to realize successful planning or if successful planning is a synergistic by-product of the planning team and leader.

Because the focus of this study involved strategic planning and the positive aspects inherent in colleges that do it well, the researcher decided to take a Positive Psychology approach and investigate the positive aspects instead of the negative aspects. While researching Positive Psychology, the researcher discovered Appreciative Inquiry, which is a totally unique process that can be applied to any planning process for any type of organization. The research on Appreciative Inquiry revealed the newer realm of Positive Organizational Scholarship, which has as its focus the positive organizational

topics of strengths-based development, Hope Theory, Virtuous Organizations and Authentic Leadership. The researcher was interested to see if any of these topics emerge during the study phase of this project. In Chapter Two which follows, the pertinent, existing literature is reviewed as a basis for grounding the study, identifying gaps in the current literature, and indicating how these finding contribute to the existing body of research on planning and transformational leadership in the community college world.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to examine community colleges that have identified the value of broad stakeholder input and have used it to create successful planning models that exhibit transformational leadership. This literature review represents a thorough examination of the development of the American community college system and delineates a discussion of effective leadership within this critical sector of higher education. The chapter provides an examination of the components of transformational and servant leadership, as well as the organizational structure that supports a collective forward movement with a common vision. The development and value of shared vision are explained. The chapter also analyzes comprehensive strategic planning that involves broad stakeholder input. The need for community colleges to involve their stakeholders in the planning process is explained, once again linking the community college to its community. Because the researcher was interested in the positive aspects of the strategic planning process, the initial discovery of Appreciative Inquiry was particularly useful concept from which to operate. Appreciative Inquiry research gave rise to the overall tenets of Positive Psychology, which include Hope theory, strengths-based leadership, Positive Organizational Scholarship and Authentic Leadership. All of these theoretical concepts pertain to this research project, and will be explained in detail in the following pages. The chapter concludes by demonstrating that there is room in the current literature for a study that specifically examines how successful transformational leaders use the planning process to engage broad communities to advance their vision.

In order to find answers to the questions posed, the researcher conducted an exhaustive review of available literature on the American community college,

organizational structure and leadership, strategic planning, Positive Psychology and its theoretical derivatives, which include Appreciative Inquiry, Positive Organizational Scholarship and Authentic Leadership.

In reviewing the history and philosophy of the community college, the researcher looked for evidence to suggest that community colleges are unique in their symbiotic relationship with their communities. With this unique purpose in mind, the researcher examined the organizational structure of community colleges, as well as the leadership necessary to maintain the nimbleness required to respond to the perpetually changing educational and workforce needs of their communities.

The American Community College

Community colleges were created in the early 1900's with the founding of Joliet Junior College to extend higher education to high school graduates who weren't accepted at the few universities with admissions requirements and to alleviate professors from having to teach lower division coursework (Higher Education for American Democracy: The Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education, 1947). Community colleges chose to be open-admission institutions, and have varied responsibilities to meet the needs of the communities in which they reside. Ideally, community colleges should have a highly symbiotic relationship with the stakeholders of the college, including internal faculty and staff, K-12 educational institutions in the district, the surrounding business community, and the community at large served by the college. The college's strategic plan should delineate and value the internal/external stakeholder relationship. This plan also serves as a guide by which all departments of the college should operate and from which the specific communities should expect to receive service.

The first community college leaders established these colleges for the sole purpose of responding to the needs of the community (Roueche et al. 1989). As part of the symbiotic relationship between community and college, the critical role of stakeholder input can be traced back to the origins of the community college movement. Community colleges have, and continue to provide opportunity toward continued enrollment or gainful employment. In the ever-changing economic landscape, colleges must directly connect to the community and remain in sync, especially during the strategic planning phase, in order to respond to economic trends. A healthy relationship requires that the communication between the community and the college remain open and honest. Maintaining this communication exchange requires a continuous gathering of stakeholder input on the state of the college and on expectations for its future, which historically has been the undervalued or overlooked component of strategic planning (Roueche et al., 1989).

Community Colleges as "Change Agents"

In 1901, J. Stanley Brown, Superintendent of Joliet Senior High School, and William Rainey Harper, President of the University of Chicago, conspired to create an experimental post-secondary educational program. This 'junior college' was originally designed to provide grades 13 and 14. Because of the emphasis on general education, these years were thought of as an extension of already existing high school programs (Rudolph, 1990). The plan was to provide lower division general education courses for students in their home areas, prior to attending the University of Chicago. The result was the nation's first public junior college, Joliet Junior College named for the town in which it resides, Joliet, Illinois (JJC, 2008, para. 1). Junior colleges grew slowly over the next

40 years, with universities remaining the domain of the elite. At the close of WWII community colleges experienced dramatic growth when thousands of young soldiers returned home in need of further education (Rudolph, 1990). Even with record enrollment in higher education, there were still more returning veterans who could benefit from higher education, but were not able to access because of admissions requirements, location and availability of institutions. Many of the returning soldiers did not even have a high school diploma.

Additionally, technological and sociological changes in the US created a need to evaluate the role of higher education in the US. The job market was becoming more and more industrialized and technical, which required higher education and training. The influx of massive numbers veterans who were uneducated and untrained potential employees further strained the nation's resources, with high demand and few options for higher education. The sociological impact of the war also created a societal shift, as diverse groups of people who, previously might not have come into contact with one another, were now seeking employment in the nation's cities. Technology that created the atomic bomb opened opportunities for further exploration and research, which created also created demand. A shift in the nation's foreign policy from one of isolationism to a more peace-keeping responsibility created a need for the citizenry to understand political, sociological, economic and cultural of other countries (Higher Education for American Democracy, 1947).

About the time these soldiers were beginning their academic careers, Higher Education for American Democracy: The Report of the President's Commission on Higher Education (1947) articulated the importance of free access to two years of study

beyond the secondary system. In 1947, the soldiers were afforded free tuition and other benefits for attending college through the Serviceman's Readjustment Act, or GI Bill. The Truman Commission, as it became known, trumpeted the value of a college education for the entire nation's youth (Dongbin & Rury, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989; Higher Education for American Democracy, 1947; Vaughn, 1983). The Commission also played an integral role in the maturation of the community college when it advocated the name be changed from "junior colleges" to "community colleges". The Commission used the term "community" for the newly designed entity whose purpose, which was,

> To serve chiefly local community education needs. It may have various forms of organization and may have curricula of various lengths. Its dominant feature is its intimate relations to the life of the community it serves (Higher Education for American Democracy, The Report of The President's Commission on Higher Education,1947, Ch. II, p. 5).

According to Vaughn (1983), community colleges would provide open access and respond to the educational needs and interests of the students. They would do this by surveying the local community to determine needs, providing programs that serve a cross section of the population at times when working adults can attend, integrating vocational and general education coursework, and offering the first two years of a bachelor's degree or professional study. From the beginning, the commission realized the importance of stakeholder input to the viability of the community college.

Even though the Commission was sanctioned in 1947, community colleges would not experience rapid growth until the 1960's and 70's. It was during these years that states passed legislation enabling the creation of community college districts and a flood

of GIs returned from Vietnam. During the decade of the 1960's, on average, one new community college opened somewhere in the United States every week (Dongbin & Rury, 2007).

The State of the Community College

As evidenced by the services provided to WWII and Vietnam veterans, the community college has provided access and opportunity for countless Americans who might otherwise not have had the opportunity to participate in higher education (Roueche et al., 1989; Townsend & Twombley, 2001). While the American community college is based on egalitarian education and democratic ideals, the initial junior college mission can be distilled to its basic purpose: to provide a liberal arts education as an introduction to an academic discipline and to facilitate transfer to universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Eaton (2007) notes that the expanded mission of the more comprehensive community college education is for lifelong learners and must also include career and technical education for workforce development within its mission. In both urban and rural areas, community colleges seek to engage their constituents throughout life, offering curriculum as varied as children's programming and senior citizen personal development classes (Eddy & Murray, 2007).

It was important to understand that even with the egalitarian ideals and open access that community colleges profess, some detractors to the system exist (Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Cohen and Brawer (2003) cite social and political critics who believe that many students who begin their careers at the community college become limited in their future prospects. These critics believe that the community college reinforces class differences by providing training programs for students that only prepare

them for positions that workers currently do without additional training. Because the community college serves the most diverse student body in higher education, with student interests ranging from completing a few courses for job advancement to acquiring only the skills required for initial employment, graduation and transfer rates are low. This leads other critics to charge community college with failing to adequately prepare students for completion and transfer to a university or for employment (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The community college system, however, does provide a mechanism for the American populace to exit and reenter higher education seemingly with ease, a function Cohen and Brawer (2003) describe as the "lungs of the system." To the degree that the system's critics may express valid concerns, it becomes increasingly important that broad community engagement becomes part of the college planning process.

These realities make strategic planning more complicated for community colleges than other educational institutions. For example, if stakeholder input is such that the race or social class arguments arise during the input phase, careful attention must be taken to ensure that the planning process is not derailed. The composition of the whole community should be the focus of the college. Not one specific demographic or group. Likewise, community college demographic trends both impact and are impacted by economic climate, immigration patterns and current political climate of their community as well as governmental funding agencies (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

Due to shifting economy and demographics, the new millennium will find community colleges faced with more first generation college students, more under-prepared students, and increasing numbers of adult students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003;

Filan, 1999). Community college leadership will also experience a shift to provide training for the service industries rather than for manufacturing and will need to justify decisions using data-informed measures because of level or decreased state funding (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Roueche et al. (1989) predicts that community colleges will also be the mechanism that allows technology to be shared between the nation's educational entities and corporate America (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

In rural regions, the community college is often the only location beyond the local public school for leisure activities, social gatherings, cultural enrichment and economic development (Eddy & Murray, 2007). The close relationship that exists between the college, business and industry, and community creates a unique opportunity for the college to fill a recreational role through community theater, community art courses, programming for children, presentations, and other events (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Because of this multiplicity of roles, the leadership of the community college needs to be as progressive and service oriented as the institutions themselves (Myran et al., 2003; Roueche et al., 1989).

Leadership in the Community College

The state of community colleges and the relationships that they engage in are impacted by societal shifts and economic changes. These demographic, technological, economic and financial forces create challenges in higher education, in general, but particularly at such community-focused colleges. Community college presidents must lead as changes continue in the role of women and other minorities in society, birth demographics, population patterns, family structure and job market availability for

educated people (Kolp & Rea, 2006; Roueche et al, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). The World Wide Web, satellite television and radio, and mobile phones link people to each other for information sharing in new ways. This has resulted in a world where people are wired to each other and to a global economy fueled by technological changes (Bennis, 2003; Kolp & Rea, 2006; Roueche et al., 1989; Senge, 2006; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Change is magnified by the interconnectedness of the global community in which the college now operates (Bryson, 1995; Kolp & Rea, 2006; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Therefore, college leadership must be ready to address the fact that all of the aforementioned issues will cause the traditional mission of its academic liberal arts or career education to blur as communities request more dual credit courses for academically talented high school students, as well as greater college preparation coursework to serve incoming first generation and underprepared developmental students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Hockaday & Puyear, 2002). Communities will continue to demand alternative options in their endeavor to be self-sustaining and remain current with the global community; community colleges must continue to remain responsive to those demands.

Community colleges are, by mission, nimble enough to make transitions posed by the employment market, demographic changes, and economic demands just discussed (Campbell, 2002). The key to maintaining flexibility is gauging the extent and urgency of community needs, which become evident when constituents have regular opportunities to provide feedback to the institution (Bryson, 1995; Myran et al., 2003; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Such information is useless, however, if it is not presented in a culture in which trust is great enough that the organization as a whole is willing to investigate

change in order to grow and develop a culture that is reflective of the leadership of the institution (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007).

George Boggs, former President and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges, notes that the original visionary community college leaders developed a mission that responded to their constituents, focused on student learning, and had an entrepreneurial spirit (Campbell, 2002). This mission of inclusion created a reputation for community colleges being flexible, innovative, creative and responsive to the education and training needs of a changing society. Therefore, community colleges are exposed to the same effects of the economy as businesses—changes in community demographics and to both subtle and profound changes in culture. To coordinate these challenges, community colleges need dedicated and capable leaders (Campbell, 2002). The multifaceted purpose of the community college requires that leaders constantly shift their focus from the student body, to local workforce needs and the economic climate, to the employees who work within the institution, and to the avocational and social interests in the community.

Myran et al. (2003) uses the analogy of a ship's captain to explain past leadership practices, where the captain was the only source of problem solving and decision making. Community colleges of the 21st century will need more architectural leaders who can build systems and structures that allow for a more integrated decision-making process among departments. Likewise, college operations will more successful if they share a commitment to the institutional plan. The degree to which leaders integrate perspectives from across the college will influence the success of the college in reaching their goals. It is crucial that individuals within the organization have a clear understanding of their role

in supporting the strategic goals of the institution. It is this deep understanding that is the heart of shared vision (Myran et al., 2003; Roueche et al, 1989). The community expects their community college to be responsive, and the leadership must rely heavily on interaction and transaction, not hierarchy, to meet this expectation (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Spaid & Parsons, 1999). In order to respond in a timely manner, the community college president must understand and respect the influences of shared governance, local boards of trustees, the leadership structure, and faculty unions and senates (Eaton, 2007).

Therein lies a perpetual conflict between the need of the leader to respond to the community and the need for the leader to manage the rising costs on the college and students alike. The ability of the president to remain open to the input of others within the college will affect his or her awareness of challenges facing the institution and student body. The current reality is that while the college strives to remain responsive to the community, rising college costs have affected both the institution and the students (Eaton, 2007). The challenges of ensuring course transferability and providing developmental courses for underprepared students and support services for first generation students only heighten the fact that tuition and fees will be affected by economic changes. State funding is not likely to grow with the demands put on the community colleges. Thus transformational leaders will need to seek alternative funding streams in addition to state and local funding in order to provide services necessary for student success (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Hockaday & Puyear, 2002; Townsend & Twombly, 2001).

Transformational Leadership

The need to manage competing demographic, technological, economic and financial forces requires leadership to give attention to these competing forces and

prioritize initiatives, while maintaining an organization that is open to change and willing to work cooperatively for the betterment of the college. This type of leadership must be transformational. Transformational leadership, in this setting, is defined as "the ability of the community college CEO to influence the values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of others by working with and through them in order to accomplish the college's mission and purpose" (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989, p. 11). Alongside this leadership, management is defined as "the ability to integrate the skills of people with the components of technology for the purpose of organizing those elements necessary to accomplish the college's mission and purpose" (Roueche et al., 1989, p.11). The union of transformational leadership and comprehensive management of personnel creates a synergy greater than the sum of the two efforts. Undoubtedly, this union will stimulate a change in the political and social realities of the college that will not only affect the students and the community, but also the faculty and staff within the college (Roueche et al., 1989).

Four major components to transformational leadership have emerged through this literature review: personal integrity, communication throughout the organization, climate of respect and collaboration, and quality of relationships. Although authors use different terminology, the concepts semantically support the four themes. Table 3 compares the terminology and the relationships discussed by the authors reviewed.

The first component of transformational leadership centers on the personal integrity of the leader and the need for the leader to possess and lead with a strong moral compass (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989). This trait is more than the leader’s display of

actions and rhetoric. It is a reflection of a values-driven passion that comes from deep inside the person and is more of a “calling.” Greenleaf (1977) describes this trait as being a “servant first.” Servant leaders embody the desire to lead the organization with service that brings honesty, ethics and true morality to the organization (Greenleaf, 1977). By setting the example of leading with complete integrity, the leader can influence the organization to seek the higher standard by creating an atmosphere of trust in the leader (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989).

The second component of transformational leadership involves communication throughout the organization. When ideas are welcome and creativity is recognized through positive communication, the organization as a whole becomes more transparent, more relaxed and better able to seek creative solutions for growth (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989). Positive communication that is pervasive throughout the organization can range from a general expression of appreciation for a job well done to public recognition of innovative ideas that helped propel the organization forward. In transformational organizations, innovation is welcomed with the realization that growth requires change and adaptation. Ultimately, the norm is that communication processes encourage creativity and contribute mightily to successful strategic planning. As initiatives are identified that need to be included in the planning process, constant feedback loops that occur throughout the process influence the success or failure of the initiative. Trust at the helm and positive communication channels foster innovation, and the atmosphere can only be positively affected.

Another component of transformational leadership is a climate of respect and collaboration - what Cameron (2008) refers to as a positive climate. Conceptually, the college is a living system, where the collective efforts of individuals are maximized in a team effort. A transformational leader understands the organizational landscape within the college and disburses rewards appropriate to the exerted efforts. Snyder and Lopez (2007) say that the concept of hope is what allows the populace to work in a collective effort to find the greater good. A transformational climate encourages action, collaboration, and trust by providing mentoring, effective listening, and individual consideration. Bennis (2003) refers to a climate in which individuals are able to uniquely express themselves with purpose and self-confidence as giving individuals "voice" (p. xxi). Ultimately, though, an intellectually stimulating climate and positive communication coexist (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989). And a transformational environment is conducive to strategic planning, since the organization as a whole is encouraged to think freely and creatively and to share in the decisions that shape the stated initiatives.

The final transformational component refers to the relationships between individuals within the organization. Kouzes and Posner (2007) refer to this transformational trait as "encouraging the heart" (p. 21). Healthy relationships depend on the ability of the persons involved to be able to relate effectively with one another. Collins (2001), author of *Good to Great*, refers to the concept of talent management as "They first got the right people on the bus (and the *wrong* people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it" (p. 41). Similar to identifying personal strengths, this

concept calls for greater scrutiny of all applicants on the basis of relational talent, rather than simply on credentials. Transformational leaders discover the personal strengths of individual followers and seek ways to allow them to exercise those strengths through collaborative activities. This concept relates to Bandura's (1997) notion of efficacy, which is the capacity of persons to believe they can make a difference when they seeking solutions to problems.

Positive relationships allow creativity to flow. Successful leaders recognize that decisions will impact those most closely associated with the situation, and thus allow them critical voices in the decision-making process. This participation in decision-making reinforces the self-efficacy of each person involved (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). By recognizing contributions and celebrating victories, leaders who are attuned to their followers can craft a team spirit that allows each person to feel powerful and important within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989).

Though it is clear that community college presidents must be transformational leaders, such leaders can often be found at all organizational levels within the college. However, it is critical to note that leaders require followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche, et al., 1989; Yammarino, 1994). The necessity of the follower suggests that leadership is situational and requires a transformational leader to move on occasion from the role of leader to follower, depending on the situation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989; Spaid & Parsons, 1999; Yammarino, 1994). Many mid-level administrators, for example, exhibit transformational leadership qualities and abilities that extend down to their followers or up to their supervisors. Likewise, some transformational leaders

influence co-workers horizontally in other departments (Bennis, 2003; Yammarino, 1994).

Transformational presidents capitalize on this transitive leader/follower dynamic by linking capable mid-level administrators from differing departments in projects that allow them to exercise their leadership and followership abilities (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Pfeiffer, 2008; Roueche et al., 1989; Spaid & Parsons, 1999). Not only does this linking allow budding leaders to learn more about areas of the college with which they may not be familiar, but it also allows mid-level administrators to gain experience and practice that may prepare them for future higher-level leadership positions (Pfeiffer, 2008; Roueche et al., 1989). Above all, it helps to build ownership throughout the organization to uphold the mission and values of the college as a whole. There are two leadership approaches particularly focused on fostering deep relationship development, which leads to a greater sense of trust within the organization: Helgesen's Web of Inclusion and Greenleaf's Servant Leadership model (Helgesen, 1995; Greenleaf, 2002).

Web of Inclusion

Transformational leadership often thrives in a decentralized leadership model such as the Web of Inclusion described by Helgesen, (1995), and Lorenzo & DeMarte (2002). This model fosters decision making that emanates from the ground up or from the center out, with responsibility filtering through the rank and file, not centered at the top. Named after the pattern of a spider web, where the spider (leader) sits in the center of the web (the organization), with each tendril (employee or department) interconnecting with

the tendril next to it. Each entity is as important as the next to the integrity of the web. Helgesen's model is deliberately flat and circular. This type of organization must focus on nurturing relationships and purposeful sharing of information in order to accomplish tasks (Helgesen, 1995; Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002).

Leaders in circular organizations, as in the Web of Inclusion, emphasize accessibility and the equality of every person within the organization. Decision-making in circular organizations must be transparent and constantly inclusive so that each person understands the logic behind every decision. Helgesen believes that the Web of Inclusion is particularly applicable in today's world because of the instantaneous information exchange made possible by technology.

In this model, the leader values relationships above all else and strives to bring agents on the periphery closer to the middle by sharing information. Information should flow to whoever can use it, and no one person should be in a position to dictate or authorize the use of tools to accomplish a task. Likewise, continuous improvement is always the goal, so mistakes are seen as tools for learning, not evidence of failure. When the organizational norm disburses responsibility and recognition equally, the focus becomes *what* needs to be done, not *who* needs to do it. This type of model allows the expectation that those within the organization maintain a sense of ownership and facilitate the changes necessary to constantly improve the organization (Helgesen, 1995). In the web model of leadership, the focus is on constantly improving the organization by empowering all the members equally. The primary focus is the constant improvement of the organization, which in turn has a positive effect on the individuals within the system. This type of model is especially helpful for strategic planning initiatives, as the success of

a single department may be closely determined by the information coming from another department. Open sharing allows for strategic planning initiatives to have support across divisions. The model assumes that all stakeholders will have a voice in the planning process, and that each will understand how his or her part of the plan relates to other sections.

Servant Leadership

Another model which fosters relationship development is the Servant Leadership model, which was developed by Robert Greenleaf, who was an AT&T executive during the 1950's-70's (Farnsworth, 2007; Greenleaf, 2002). Greenleaf began contemplating the Servant Leadership concepts while reading Hermann Hesse's *Journey to the East* in which the central character, Leo, is a servant who accompanies a group of people on a journey. Midway through, Leo disappears and the group begins to fall apart. Later on, the narrator reveals that Leo was actually the Leader of the Order that sponsored the trip and had held the group together through his service to it. Greenleaf saw this story as representative of the nature of good leaders and particularly of servant leaders. "Leo was actually the leader all the time, but was servant first because that was what he was, deep down inside" (Greenleaf, 2002, p. 21). Greenleaf firmly believes that effective leadership begins with the natural inclination to serve first.

The concepts of serving and leading are largely intuitive concepts. Leadership and service coincide when the leader seeks first to listen and understand situations and people within the organization. Ideally, the collective vision of the organization is built around

empathy and acceptance that encourages trust, respect, mutual growth and fulfillment for the persons touched by the organization (Farnsworth, 2007; Greenleaf, 2002).

In the community college context, the focus of the leadership should be for every person who comes into contact with the college (community members, parents, students, faculty, staff, and administration) to grow as a result of being served (Farnsworth, 2007). This differs from the Web of Inclusion in that the Web focuses on the continuous improvement of the organization, by empowering the rank and file throughout the organization. While Servant Leadership, on the other hand, focuses on serving all stakeholders first so they can grow and learn how to continue the momentum of serving and, in the end, improving the organization. It is important to note, however, that Greenleaf (2002) and Helgesen (1995) held in common the belief that all stakeholders needed free and open voice in the decision-making process. Therefore, it is conceivable that both approaches could co-exist in the same organization.

These approaches to decentralized leadership are not the panacea for leadership’s future. As power transitions between leaders and between leaders and followers, anxiety can be felt by the populace within the college if not recognized, understood, and effectively managed (Helgesen, 1995; Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002). This anxiety can be tolerable only if it is recognized as inevitable and is shared among the leadership group accountable for the welfare of the organization (Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002). This sharing among upper administration can only occur if there is a truly shared vision, where every entity within the college works toward the same goal. Shared vision can only occur if there is genuine trust in the transformational leader (Roueche et al., 1989). Roueche et

al. (1989) is responsible for the seminal work on transformation leadership in community colleges, and will be frequently referenced as it is, in part, the basis for this study.

Shared Vision

Roueche et al.(1989) examined how effective presidents create shared vision by examining the leadership style of presidents recommended by their peers as being transformational leaders. The study focused on CEO time utilization, choice of persons involved in their leadership team, and educational philosophy as determined by written response to open-ended questions, which allowed for reflective contemplation. The researchers also conducted an in-depth interview with the studied CEOs. Both survey questions and interview questions targeted specific behaviors of the CEO in different scenario settings. The researchers delineated five themes common among the transformational leaders: vision, influence orientation, people orientation, motivational orientation, and values orientation. In shared vision, the theme of vision pertains to future thinking with a positive attitude toward change. In this context, vision is similar to the concept of optimism found in Positive Psychology. With both vision and optimism, transformational leaders do not fear change; rather they embrace it as a mechanism for growth (Roueche et al., 1989; Seligman, 2002). Transformational leaders understand that appropriate risks are involved in transformation. They demonstrate and articulate these risks to the stakeholders of the college (Roueche et al., 1989). Transformational leaders are mission-oriented and embrace a shared vision throughout the college as a means for unified change. Roueche et al. (1989) found that while the vision may be shared with other leaders within the college, the primary responsibility of charting the course of the

college rests with the CEO. When the CEO fosters the development of vision, the rest of the organization feels optimism.

The Roueche et al. study identified one leadership characteristic that is perhaps the most personal: the *values orientation* of the CEO. This theme constitutes the moral fiber of the transformational leader and includes personal characteristics such as commitment, quality, integrity, trust, respect through modeling, and ethical behavior that uplifts the leader in the mind of followers. Greenleaf (1977) discussed the same characteristics in Servant Leadership and believed that when internal teams are expected to function with the same characteristics, teams perform more effectively than they would otherwise. Pfeiffer (2008) also found values to be an integral component in her study, which tracked the socio-cultural influences on leadership development of community college presidents. Repeatedly, she found highly effective presidents are prepared to articulate their values systems and explain how they played a key role in their development of an authentic leader. The importance of personal values is found in earlier research on Authentic Leadership by Luthans and Avolio (2003).

In addition to values orientation, transformational leadership often thrives in a decentralized leadership model as evidenced by the Web of Inclusion (Helgesen, 1995; Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002). Transformational leaders display openness, trust, and a respect for others (Roueche et al., 1989). Openness and trust create a friendly environment for decentralized leadership because the environment is viewed as egalitarian (Helgesen, 1995; Lorenzo & DeMarte, 2002). Transformational leadership and Servant Leadership posit that additional emphasis must be put on conflict resolution and facilitating personal and organizational learning (Greenleaf, 1977; Lorenzo &

DeMarte, 2002). Trust, in essence, makes it possible for an organization with decentralized leadership to function (Farnsworth, 2007; Greenleaf, 1977; Helgesen, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989). Without trust, vision cannot survive. Trust is the basis for organizational identity and purpose. Once the organizational identity is articulated, the transformational leader can then gain trust of the followers while he/she positions the college within the community. Only through consistency and constancy of vision throughout the college can trust be maintained (Roueche et al., 1989). The development of trust is largely relational, and can only exist when relationships between persons are mutual, respectful, and trustworthy (Helgesen, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2007). An environment of trust was implicit in the high-hope companies examined by Snyder and Lopez (2007). Further discussion of high-hope and virtuous companies will occur later in this chapter.

Transformational leaders bring together unrelated or semi-related departments within the college and allow them the opportunity to practice collaboration and leadership on issues that infiltrate all levels of the community college. Linking departments creates an opportunity for relationships to begin to develop for mutual understanding of purposes and responsibilities while working toward a common task (Helgesen, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Pfeiffer, 2008; Roueche et al., 1989). It also leads to a cross-fertilization of ideas that can generate new, creative solutions. Leadership development begins and is fostered at all levels of the institution (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). By providing opportunities to talented individuals within the college, expertise can grow and develop, enabling a steady supply of candidates as positions become open. These candidates will have community college experience and expertise that can be applied to new positions

within the college and continue initiatives already set in motion, or the candidates can move to other institutions and fertilize them with visionary ideas (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). The fluid nature of the community college allows for nimble response to internal and external forces by enabling well prepared faculty and staff to address change as it emerges (Roueche et al., 1989). Nurturing of personnel in order to create opportunities for professional and personal growth is a consistent goal of Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977).

Value of Vision

Vision is the ability to articulate the potential of what can be and represents the hallmark of a transformational leader. The successful leader is able to transform the beliefs of others into a commitment to a shared vision (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989). Collaboration of vision requires a healthy relationship between the leader and followers, where the ability to change the commonly held values and behaviors of followers results in the focus of the entire college on a common vision for the institution (Roueche et al., 1989). Bryson (1995) emphasizes that this vision rarely appears in the beginning of strategic planning. More often, development of a vision results from strategic planning. The synergistic result of broad strategic planning, analysis of data, and appropriate annual assessment and program planning supports the strategic plan. In order for the college to function in harmony, the president and followers must agree upon and have a common understanding of the purpose or mission of the college they serve (Roueche et al., 1989). Kouzes and Posner (2007) advocate an appeal to common values, often effectively communicated with enthusiasm and excitement to animate the vision.

Vision development requires the engagement of imagination and communication of people from multiple areas of the institution during the strategic planning phase. Leaders and followers must work in concert in order to create the type of environment and product that is envisioned by the leader (Pfeiffer, 2008; Roueche et al., 1989). Leaders must have a relationship with the followers that are comprised of the many elements of Transformational, Servant, and Authentic Leadership that will allow them to understand the prevailing values system of the process (Greenleaf, 1977; Kousez & Posner, 2007; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Though community college constituents work cooperatively, Roueche et al. (1989) warns that change within a college may be met with fear. Resistance must be met with effective communication and consistent input from all areas of the college (Roueche et al., 1989).

In addition to consistent and effective communication, vision development also requires a collective effort between the trustees, faculty, administration, students and community representatives to assess the strengths, weaknesses and future opportunities and challenges. Bryson (1995) asserts that gathering stakeholder input is an ethical responsibility, since only by gathering the data will the college take truly ethical action. Bryson (1995) defines a stakeholder as “any person, group or organization that can place a claim on an organization’s attention, resources or output or is affected by that output” (p.27). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a, 2005b) consider a stakeholder to be anyone who is interested, has influence, has information (or access to information) about, may be impacted by, and/or who has an investment in the college. They further assert that the key to successful organizations is satisfying stakeholders. Gathering external stakeholder input provides valuable information, but also helps build relationships with those persons

who have a vested interest in the college (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b).

An honest and balanced exercise of gathering external stakeholder input includes a series of steps to provide an optimum educational experience to its constituents (Roueche et al., 1989). This optimum product, however, is not a direct descendent of the process. In order for the optimum product to come to fruition, the honest and balanced gathering of input must be integrated into the culture of the institution. Gathering is not enough. Just as creating an educational experience without the stakeholder input would likely miss the mark. Both process and product must be in balance with one another. Lofty aspirations without an adequate plan will be doomed to failure and will destroy any hope of a shared vision. According to President A. Robert DeHart, DeAnza College, California (cited in Roueche et al. 1989), college plans must have reality filtered into the product. In the end, the college needs a shared vision that is realistic and detailed enough to operationalize the strategic plan. The process used to achieve shared vision is also a part of strategic planning.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning originated in the mid 1960’s as an attempt to bring structure to the planning, programming, and budgeting processes. Over time, the term “strategic planning” has been used to describe everything from promoting vague ideals to actually planning action in advance (Mintzberg, 1994). When done with care, though, strategic planning can help an institution articulate its vision and priorities so that all members

within the organization can identify and work toward the same goals (Allison & Kaye, 2005).

Three significant benefits to strategic planning are:

1. Promotion of strategic thought and action, which leads to more systematic information gathering and greater attention to the various interests groups, the direction of the college, and the establishment of priorities (Bryson, 1995).
2. Improved decision making as a result of systematic data gathering and analysis (Bryson, 1995).
3. Enhanced organizational responsiveness and improved performance from all participants. Organizations that engage in strategic planning will begin to address issues that surround organizational structure and communication. Internal pressures will emerge as the organization responds to a rapidly changing circumstance (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995).

In order to work toward realizing these benefits, the process of formal vision development starts with the strategic planning process, which Bryson (1995) defines as "a disciplined effort to produce fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization is, what it does, and why it does it" (p.5). Mintzberg (1994) defines planning as “a formalized procedure to produce an articulated result in the form of an integrated system of decisions” (p. 12). In order to gain the maximum benefit, strategic planning requires broad-spectrum information-gathering, exploration of alternatives and consideration of future implications. If done with care, the process can facilitate communication and bring together groups that do not usually work in concert. Integrated communication can provide insights for all participating groups which, in turn, will help

focus efforts congruent with the college's mission (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995). Effective strategic planning accommodates differing values and interests, while promoting analysis in the decision-making and implementation stages. In short, strategic planning is representative of an imagination for the organization (Bryson, 1995). The end result of the strategic planning, gathering, and synthesizing will be an articulated vision that resonates with the stakeholders of the college because they were involved in its development.

The resulting vision of the strategic plan gives the institution necessary direction for movement. It does not imply that the task at hand has been completed. Leaders must remember that strategic planning differs from organizational strategy. Colleges should constantly be open to strategic opportunities as they present themselves. Adhering too closely to the initiatives in the strategic plan could cause a college to be blind to information, opportunity, or timely insight from stakeholders. Being open to potential innovation is critical to the transformative process (Bryson, 1995; Mintzberg, 1994).

Bryson (1995) outlines a ten step process for developing a successful strategic plan:

1. Initiate and agree upon a strategic planning process;
2. Identify organizational mandates;
3. Clarify organizational mission and values;
4. Assess the external/internal environments to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats;
5. Identify the strategic issues facing the organization;
6. Formulate strategies to manage these issues;

7. Review and adopt the strategic plan or plans;
8. Establish an effective organizational vision;
9. Develop an effective implementation process;
10. Reassess strategies and the strategic planning process (p. 23).

Following Bryson's process should lead to a series of formative actions and evaluations within each step, not just a list of summative results. The resulting growth in the organization will emerge as the process is in play. The time commitment involved will depend on the organization. Colleges with high partisan interests may require a longer time frame to process each of the above steps, as partisan interests may not have sufficient agreement during the phases to allow movement to the next phase (Bryson, 1995). The only true requirement for this process is that there must be a dominant coalition that is willing to sponsor and push the initiative through the system. Networks and coalitions formed for the purpose of strategic planning will accomplish more together than the individual members could accomplish alone.

Support for the strategic planning process across campuses is essential, beginning with the Board of Trustees, and filtering down the rank and file. Understanding the importance of the strategic plan, and having widespread agreement on the vision and mission allows the college community to create departmental plans in support of the overarching strategic initiatives. Often, leadership can gain support for strategic planning by demonstrating how the strategic plan impacts individual departments and vice versa (Burnstad & Fugate, 1995).

The transformational leader needs to understand his or her personal strengths and weaknesses, as well as those of everyone on the team as they relate to the process. This

understanding is critical for developing a team that has the strength of character and insight that can invigorate leadership and increase the potential for the process to be fulfilled (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995; Mintzberg, 1994; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Strategic planning depends on the functionality of teams that have been comprised of members across the college. Using coalitions to carefully tailor the strategies will ensure acceptance and implementation by the rest of the college. Teams also build a sense of community that is a product of the relationship, mutual empowerment and common purpose of the college (Bryson, 1995).

In order for teams to function effectively for any purpose, there first must be a climate of interdependence and cooperation within the college. Leadership of the college should facilitate relationships across the campus and foster interdependence and provide training, as necessary (Burnstad & Fugate, 1995; Haire & Russell, 1995; Kousez & Posner, 2007). Topics on which training may be necessary are:

- how to articulate visions, goals and strategies
- how to educate constituents about consensus building
- the value and expectations of teamwork
- information sharing
- shared decision making (Twombly and Amey, 1994).

Standardization of process is also necessary so that each team creates a product that is blended, limited in scope, allows for expectation setting, ensures that each team is responsible for achieving their goals and receives appropriate support from the administration (Burnstad & Fugate, 1995; Haire & Russell, 1995; Twombly and Amey, 1994). Communicating the time commitment and the expected completion date is also

important so that teams can function accordingly (Allison & Kaye, 2005). All of these components work together to build a shared vision through transformational leadership that requires the leader to choose a diverse strategic planning team that is devoted to the concept of moving the college forward (Bryson, 1995; Roueche et al., 1989).

Thus far, the literature makes a compelling case that community colleges need transformational leaders now, more than ever before. Complexities caused by open access, exceedingly heterogeneous enrollment demographics, technology growth, and an unstable economy drive this demand, and successful planning requires more than ever the inclusion of stakeholders from all sectors of the college community.

Appreciative Inquiry

This study employs Appreciative Inquiry (AI) which is a process that uses the concepts of Positive Psychology to investigate and explore the successful aspects of a given topic. It can be used by transformational leaders to identify the positive attributes of an organization that can then be used in strategic planning. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a, 2005b) describe it as a method used to identify the causes of success as opposed to the causes of failure. AI is most basically differentiated from problem-solving by viewing the organization as a mystery to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved (Ludema, Whitney, Mohr & Griffin, 2003).

Appreciative Inquiry offers a strengths-based approach to organizational development and can be used as a planning or visioning methodology. AI differs from other methodologies because it offers an alternative from a deficit-based change model to one that promotes growth and is life-centric. Traditional planning techniques look at identifying inadequacies and seek solutions to 'fix' the problems (Cooperrider & Whitney,

2005a, 2005b). This requires that organizations look backward to recreate problems in order to understand the root cause, which often creates defensiveness among departments and rarely results in new vision.

With Appreciative Inquiry (AI), the basic assumption is that every organization was created as a solution to a challenge or need of society, and therefore, has a unique purpose (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). Simply, AI examines the positive energy that is created when living systems function at their very best and assumes that every living system has a positive core of strengths (often unnoticed and underutilized). When this core is realized and tapped, the positive energy is transformational both personally and organizationally (Ludema et al., 2003). Cooperrider and Skerka (as cited in Ludema et al., 2003) refer to this energy as inspiring and liberating for organizations. Cooperrider and Whitney (1999, 2005a) believe that if this positive core is linked with a change agenda, unrealized results are suddenly and democratically mobilized.

AI operates from the assumption that organizations move toward that which they study (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b; Ludema et al., 2003). Therefore, if a college used AI to discover what they do best and conduct their planning processes with the positive attributes of their institution in mind, they would build a strategic plan on the basis of their strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b; Ludema et al., 2003). Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a) have identified three tenets central to AI: the anticipatory principle, simultaneity and the positive principle.

The anticipatory principle says that positive images of the future guide our positive movements. Refocusing the anticipatory reality on a positive future is probably the most important aspect of any change process as this will impact daily language

choices and morale as those within the college begins to feel positive about their organization and their future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b).

Simultaneity conveys that inquiry and change are not separate entities; rather, they happen simultaneously. So, during the input stages of the strategic planning process, the simple act of asking questions brings about change. Therefore, crafting the questions in an appreciative manner becomes vitally important to the quest (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). The quest goes from "am I asking questions that will lead to the right answers" to "what effect will my questions have on the participants as they process the answers" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a).

Another pillar of AI is the positive principle, which states that building and maintaining sustainable momentum requires positive affect and social bonding (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b). Feelings like hope, excitement, inspiration, caring, and sense of purpose, which are central to the positive principle, create a sense of community. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a) found that the more positive questions were asked, the more successful and long lasting the change.

AI realizes that organizations are comprised of groups of people, and that relationships develop when people interact. Furthermore, relationships thrive in an appreciative environment (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). To foster relationships, Appreciative Inquiry follows a distinctive cycle described as the "4-D Cycle," which begins by involving all stakeholders through a broad set of interviews with deep dialogue about institutional strengths, resources, and capabilities. The dialogue can take place as an informal conversation or as a formal stakeholder meeting. Either way, the process moves through activities focused on bold possibilities and dreams for the future.

Participants are asked to discuss and craft propositions that will guide the collective future.

The AI process is useful in transforming organizations into more effective and responsive entities for stakeholders. By focusing on the steps of the 4-D process, organizations can appreciate moving beyond strengthening for today and beginning to innovate to meet the future needs of their stakeholders. The "4-D Cycle" includes stages of Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999, 2005a, 2005b; Ludema et. al., 2003).

- The Discovery phase requires that the organization look at the factors and forces in play that have allowed the organization to be the most effective, most alive and most successful at their positive core (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b).
- The purpose of the Dream phase is to engage the whole system in imagining what the organization would look like if it functioned fully on its strengths (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a; Ludema et al., 2003). As the people within the organization begin articulating and bonding over stories of how they function at their best, and what they, collectively, would like to aspire to be in the future, all possibilities for change come to life (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). After the focus is set during the Dream stage of Appreciative Inquiry, Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a) have yet to find an organization that did not want to move further and design something new and necessary for their organization.
- During the Design phase, people are invited to challenge the current design of their organization. They are encouraged to wonder beyond the data with the essential question being, "What would our organization look like if it were

designed in every way possible to maximize the qualities of the positive core and enable the accelerated realization of our dreams" (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, p. 29)?

- In the Destiny phase "giving away" the process to others and allowing the transformation to emerge from a grass roots level is urged, which then begins to look less like a packaged process and more like an inspired movement. The organizations who have previously experienced this phenomenon say that it is virtually unstoppable once it gets started. The Destiny phase requires network structures that liberate and connect people to empower one another through cooperation and co-creation. Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a) attribute this democratic mobilization to the focus on the positive core and the conscious act of letting go of negative history.

There are at least two instances of using the 4-D cycle of AI as a technique outside of strategic planning, which have implications for this study. In one case, two leading appreciative inquiry consultants, Diana Whitney and Amanda Trosten-Bloom, used the AI technique to understand why Appreciative Inquiry was so successful in creating and sustaining change in organizations (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). Likewise, Debra Yoder used appreciative inquiry to understand the relationship between emotional intelligence and leadership capabilities in a community college that had been noted for its strong leadership abilities (Yoder, 2003). In both cases, the investigators were able to identify essential conditions for the success of their topics (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a; Yoder, 2003).

While investigating Appreciative Inquiry, Whitney and Trosten-Bloom identified six conditions that are created by the AI process that liberated personal and organizational power (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a):

1. The freedom to be known in a relationship, which is a condition much like Helgesen's Web of Inclusion, in that humans form identity from their relationships. Worksites that depersonalized the work role mask an employee's personal growth. AI builds interpersonal relationships, and by nature of the process, levels the power structure so that everyone is valued and heard (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). This is much like Helgesen's theory that focuses on allowing multi-level relationships that increase the communication and decision making within organizations (Helgesen, 1995).
2. The freedom to be heard. AI creates a mechanism that asks the unconditionally positive question, and then gives a time and space for every person to answer with sincere curiosity, empathy and compassion (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). By using the AI interviews, all who might feel ignored or without a voice are invited to express themselves. Their ideas are considered just as important as the highest ranking person in the organization. This process builds relationships across all functions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a).
3. The opportunity to dream in community, which means that AI allows for people to safely voice their greatest aspirations for their organization. This collective vocalization of dreams creates dialogue between one another, and just as the means and ends of AI come together, the collective dreams create ideas and intentions that unfold.

4. The ability to contribute. AI creates an expectation where everyone in the organization is allowed to contribute, and at the very least, AI creates that opportunity for contributing. Cooperrider & Whitney (2005a) recognize that freedom of choice liberates power, but also leads to commitment and a hunger for learning. When people make a choice and commit to working on a project, they will do whatever they must to learn how to complete the task. AI allows for the opportunity to make the choice to contribute, which for some is the first step (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a).
5. The ability to act with support, which is the greatest example of interdependence. When people realize that large numbers of co-workers care about their work and are anxious to cooperate, it makes a safe environment to experiment, innovate and learn. The support provided by the entire system creates an environment that entices people to take on challenges. Collective cooperation often brings out the best of all parties involved (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a).
6. The permission to be positive. Modern day organizations do not foster environments that encourage joy, fun, or positivity, which results in possible collective currents of negativity. AI asks for the positive, and encourages people to be proud of the work they do and of their organizations. According to Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a), the effect of AI actually changes the discourse from negative to positive.

These six conditions are unleashed during one 4-D cycle, which creates a surge of power and energy that, once liberated, cannot be contained. The positive energy is self-perpetuating (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a) and pervades the college. The process of

Appreciative Inquiry grew from concepts found in Positive Psychology, and emerged through an evolutionary process that included positive organizational scholarship, the search for Authentic Leadership, and the conditions that create virtuous organizational behavior.

The quest of the researcher is to find examples of transformational leadership and discover if one or more of the concepts in Positive Organizational Scholarship exist in community colleges that have successful, inclusive planning processes. Positive Organizational Scholarship will be covered in greater detail later in the chapter, but first the foundational concepts of Positive Psychology must be understood in order to grasp how organizations can grow into a virtuous state with authentic leaders.

Positive Psychology

Positive Psychology is defined by Snyder and Lopez (2007, p.3) as "the scientific and applied approach to uncovering people's strengths and promoting their positive functioning." More to the point, Positive Psychology studies the things that make life worthwhile. Instead of studying psychological weaknesses to explain human behavior, positive psychologists explore human strengths and virtues as a mechanism to help people live more meaningful lives (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). The researcher intends to use a Positive Psychology approach by using AI and the 4-D cycle of AI to find the elements of functional planning that work well by investigating individual colleges that are well-known for the exemplary planning practices of their leaders.

The application of Positive Psychology changes the lens through which the researcher will examine the community colleges. Instead of looking for ways in which strategic planning processes go awry, the researcher will look at the ways community

colleges have excelled at strategic planning and building a shared vision. In essence, the strengths of the colleges will be identified.

The use of strengths in this study will focus on the ability of the subjects to articulate basic tenets that are central to a strengths-based organization (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). First, do they know what is expected of them at work, and do they have the materials and equipment they need to correctly do their work? Next, do they have the opportunity to function in a way that exploits their best traits? If so, do they receive recognition for good work and have a supervisor or someone at work that encourages their development? And last, does the strengths-based organization strive to make certain that its employees are able to answer these questions in the affirmative?

A leading contributor to strengths research was Donald Clifton, who based his work on the quest to study what was right rather than what was wrong with people. He was one of the first psychologists to focus on the positive side of human nature instead of human weaknesses. With this premise in mind, he began to operationalize the concept of talent (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Hodges & Clifton (2004) define talent as “naturally occurring patterns of thoughts, feelings or behaviors that can be productively applied” (p. 257). Clifton saw strengths as extensions of talent and defined them as the “near perfect performance in a specific task” (Snyder & Lopez, 2007, p.54).

Clifton created the Clifton Strengthsfinder, which is trademarked by the Gallup Organization, to identify individual strengths. Strengthsfinder is an online assessment tool that measures talents via 180 item pairs (Lopez, Hodges & Harter, 2005). The assessment requires approximately 30 minutes. Upon completion, it identifies the

respondent's top five signature strengths out of thirty-four possible themes (Lopez et al., 2005).

The Gallup Organization has evidence that workers in jobs that allow them to exercise their strengths are higher functioning and more satisfied in their positions than workers who are not able to exercise their strengths (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Snyder & Lopez, 2007). The researcher plans to use Strengthsfinder to gauge whether the subjects involved in strategic planning processes have complementary strengths that allow them to function at their best.

Positive Psychology capital has four variables: efficacy, hope, optimism and resiliency. Snyder and Lopez (2007) believe that hope is the central ingredient that makes the other concepts work in concert. Hope is related to optimism and self-efficacy. To understand the relationship between hope and effective community college planning, one must first understand the relationship between hope and goal setting.

Central to the concept of hope is the belief that as one sets goals, the existing hierarchy can be used to find routes to accomplish those goals. Hope Theory allows for an adaptive work environment, where goals are clarified, broken down into sub-goals that are easier to attain, and then achieved using the necessary social networks, from the most basic goals to the more complex (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Hope Theory is illustrated when more than one person achieves success through combined goal planning and persistence (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). Snyder and Feldman (2000) have expanded this research into a concept called "collective hope," which relates to goal-directed thinking within groups of people. This application of Hope Theory, combined with high-hope companies, has direct implications for the strategic planning processes that regularly

occur in community colleges. When a transformational leader creates a strategic plan that helps to craft a vision, and the individual departments support the vision through goal-directed thinking (as in annual planning and assessment), collective hope builds throughout the college.

Snyder and Lopez (2007) cite characteristics of companies where high-hope levels existed and were achieved. The findings are similar to those reported by Roueche et al. (1989) for colleges with shared vision: open communication between employees (or faculty and staff) and management (or administration); a clear mission statement shared throughout the organization; decision-making and feedback allowed and encouraged, and pervasive accountability throughout the organization. In high-hope companies, employees sense a level playing field, where advancement was measured according to effort expended, where decisions were given to the persons doing the particular work, and where a sense of responsibility and pride existed for a job well-done (Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Employees in high-hope companies were conscientious and helpful, both to their customers and each other. They did not blame administration, customers, or each other when problems arose, but instead tried to find ways to help one another find solutions. They exhibited goal-setting behavior, sought and found multiple avenues to achieve those goals, and were self-motivated to accomplish that which they set out to achieve (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). The product of the union of Positive Psychology and the study of organizational behavior is known as Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS). POS is pertinent to this study because the researcher found the theories to be a useful base from which to investigate the colleges in the study.

Positive Organizational Scholarship

Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS) is derived from Positive Psychology and, similar to its namesake, seeks to study the positive attributes of functional organizations. It differs from traditional organizational study in that POS seeks to identify the circumstances that optimize the human condition. POS encompasses leadership, followership, overall organizational behavior, and the combined interaction of human beings involved in the organization. POS seeks to understand the positive states that exist in an organization, for example, resiliency and meaningfulness (Cameron et al., 2003). It uses established organizational theory to identify, study, and eventually predict positive organizational states, which are processes and relationships that have been heretofore ignored. The intention of the scholarship is to balance research, teaching, and practice so that the practices enhance one another (Cameron et al., 2003).

POS focuses on the concepts of organizational excellence, thriving, flourishing, abundance, resilience, and virtuousness. Cameron et al. (2003) share the view expressed by Plato & Aristotle that virtue results from desires and actions that bring about social good. In modern vernacular, virtuousness is integrity, decency and honesty. In organizations, this is seen as collective hope, gratitude, forgiveness, compassion, and resilience, all of which are components studied in Positive Psychology (Cameron et al., 2003).

According to Positive Psychology, intricate organizational structure is of no value if there is no positive human impact. According to Cameron et al. (2003) virtuousness is not measured in the presence or absence, but rather on a continuum. It is impacted by the individual or collective willingness to allow or disallow virtuous deeds. Three attributes

are associated with virtuosity: human impact, moral goodness, and social betterment (Cameron et al., 2003).

Virtuous organizational behavior exists when employees experience full relationships, meaningful work, learning, and personal and professional development. Moral goodness is characterized by noble and honorable behavior. Social betterment is the social value that extends beyond the self to benefit others, whether there is a reward or not for those practicing virtuous behavior. Virtuousness is its own reward, and is not oriented toward recognition, benefit or advantage. It refers to behaviors that are beneficial to others (Cameron et al., 2003).

A virtuous organizational atmosphere cannot exist without the sanction and support of the leadership of the organization. One subset of POS useful to this study is that of Authentic Leadership, which studies the positive aspects of leadership within virtuous organizations.

Authentic Leadership

Luthans and Avolio (2003) define Authentic Leadership as "a process that draws from Positive Psychology capacities that results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates when fostering positive self-development" (p. 243). Within the Positive Psychology framework, Authentic Leadership includes traits that enhance leadership: self-direction, trustworthiness and consistency. Authentic Leadership is necessary for a rapidly changing environment, where ambiguities create a vulnerable work environment (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Uncertain conditions can make organizations vulnerable to charismatic, but ruthless,

leaders. Situations such as these call for true, Authentic Leadership that can transform and further develop leaders within their organization (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Until Luthans & Avolio (2003), Authentic Leadership had been studied only in fragmented doses under concepts such as positive leadership (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans 2002), transformational leadership (Avolio, 1999), and moral/ethical leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bass & Steidlemeier, 1998; Bennis, 2003; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Burns, 1978; Campbell, 2002; Pfeiffer, 2008; Roueche et al, 1989; Turner, Barling, Epitropaki, Butcher, Miller, 2002). Luthans & Avolio (2003) used the previous segmented theoretical basis to create a larger, more encompassing field of Authentic Leadership, which allows for the confluence and integration of these same theories and studies. The broader framework explains what is necessary for organizations to survive and thrive in the fast-paced, technologically-driven new millennium.

An organization's survival is due to a combination of factors. First, information is more available than ever before. Technological advances have created a world where everything a leader does and says must be considered public. Leaders must be beyond reproach in their conduct and decision-making and be optimistic about the future. They must model the self-regulating behavior they expect from the people within their organization. This modeling by an authentic leader will help to develop the same transparent, self-regulating behavior throughout the organization. Luthans and Avolio (2003) refer to this development as "cascading from the very top down to the newest employee" (p. 244), and it can happen only if the behavior is first modeled at the top and the expectation flows throughout. Luthans and Avolio (2003) urge readers to look beyond the limits of change and charisma, and think of the authentic leader as being able to

connect and lead in every circumstance, depending on what is necessary for the situation at hand. They assert that authentic leaders are directed by a strong moral/ethical compass.

Unlike previous theories that suggest leaders are born with certain traits, Authentic Leadership maintains that leadership opportunities occur over a lifetime, and that all people may have the “trigger” experiences that motivate them into a leadership role. Moving beyond self-interest to seek solutions for the collective good is what sets Authentic Leadership apart from other types of leadership theories. Today’s world is so complex that the collective good is not always easy to ascertain. Therefore, the authentic leader should make a priority of building the organizational mission and values from a strengths stance in order to procreate a collective identification throughout the institution (Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Luthans and Avolio (2003) identify six characteristics within Authentic Leadership. Authentic leaders look for and build strengths within their organization so that each person is able to contribute positively to the institution. This positive contribution is guided by the set of values regarding what is right for their constituents.

1. Authentic leaders live their values. By understanding themselves and their own core values, they are consistent in decision-making and narrow the gap between what they believe and how they act.
2. Authentic leaders understand their own vulnerabilities and openly discuss these with their associates so as to make certain that they are making decisions consistent with the values of the institution. By being transparent and open regarding personal vulnerabilities, the leader turns potential weaknesses into strengths.

3. Authentic leaders lead by example, often leading from the front where there is the most risk. They model confidence, hope, optimism and resiliency, which inspire those who follow.
4. Authentic leaders believe that developing the leadership skills of their associates is as important as the daily tasks they complete each day.
5. Because authentic leaders have taken the time to understand themselves and their moral compass, they can take alternative viewpoints of a dilemma and seek alternative ways of approaching a solution without being perceived as shifting with popular opinion.
6. Considering these characteristics, it is evident that work environments that support the identification of personal strengths and self-reflection so as to gain a deeper self-understanding will build greater leadership capacities for those who work in that environment (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The importance of the organizational context to leadership development cannot be understated.

Considerations in Light of the Literature Review

This literature review prompted a number of questions not asked prior to undertaking the review, many of which remained unanswered. For example, leadership is obviously key to strategic planning, but the researcher began to wonder to what extent. Mid-level participation must occur in order to operationalize any plan. However, what depth of participation do mid-level administrators have and how does communication flow between those who develop the plan and the rest of the college that implements the plan? Team members must be chosen to assist in the development of the plan, but how are they chosen, and what enticement exists that makes this process functional? On a

more global level, the researcher began to wonder if the Transformational Leader was the driving force, or was it the culture of the college, or was it the personalities of one or more of the people within the college that made the difference. The following methodology chapter will explain in detail how the researcher approached finding some of the answers to these questions.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Much has been written about strategic planning and the benefits of gathering input from the organization's constituents. Not well-researched was how to craft the development of a shared vision within organizations using strategic planning, consistent internal assessment, and transformational leadership. Not all colleges are successful in their attempts to engage these elements in concert. The purpose of this study was to determine what leadership and team dynamics contribute to the successful implementation of a strategic plan and the development of broad stakeholder involvement in the planning process.

Chapter Three presents the design and methods that were used in this study. The subtopics included in order are: research design, sampling and participants, selection of cases, pilot research, case descriptions, data collection strategies and procedures, data analysis, limitations and summary.

Research Design

Choosing Qualitative Methods

The researcher conducted four focus groups at three colleges to determine what accounted for these colleges' transformational nature. As she conducted a review of the literature, she was further intrigued to learn to what degree the following three variables could be sourced for the transformation. Was it the leadership that was primary to the success of the colleges? Was it the unique culture of the college as a whole? Or was it the personal characteristics of the individuals in their positions that were most influential to the college's successful planning and vision development?

In order to obtain a measure of contributing factors influencing functional strategic planning, the researcher had to rely on descriptions and documents provided by people involved in the process. This included conducting interviews and reviewing documents relating to the planning process with a systematic analysis of these descriptive elements. To fully understand the depths of planning phenomena, the researcher used qualitative methodologies.

Qualitative methods are intended to produce rich, descriptive and authentic findings without using statistical procedures (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher chose to utilize an instrumental multiple case study method and grounded theory tools, with colleges identified as successful and inclusive planners serving as the focus of the cases. In this situation, the researcher wanted to learn about the steps these colleges took to create a shared vision through strategic planning, as well as the roles that faculty, staff, students, and other community members played in the process. Successful planning and shared vision would imply not only widespread participation in the plan creation, but also that stakeholders had an investment in the outcome of the plan and the future of the college. Qualitative methods allowed the researcher to obtain intricate details about phenomena that are difficult to extract through conventional statistical methods: feelings, thought processes, relationships, communication patterns and clarity, personal experiences and personal investment. The experiences of the planning participants are as important as the process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Sampling and Participants

Purposeful sampling was used with a focus on maximum variation (Merriam, 1998; Marshall, 1996). Schatzman and Strauss (1973), as reported by Coyne (1997),

explain that purposeful sampling was a logical way to gather information-rich cases from subjects displaying specific characteristics from which the researcher can learn useful and important information about the research topic. Focus group interviews were chosen as one method to gather data because the researcher was interested in the experience of the focus group members during the solicitation of information and the development of the strategic plan. In this study, the four focus groups provided the data sets for each college, as each homogeneous focus group described their specific experience and interpretation of the planning processes at their college (Marshall, 1996).

In this case study research, sampling proceeded on two levels: sampling of cases and sampling within cases. The researcher chose to use a multi-case design with embedded units of analysis. First, the method used to identify the samples for the cases was discussed.

Selection of Cases

The researcher targeted colleges who participate in the Achieving the Dream Initiative (ATD), which is a multi-year, grant-funded program through the Lumina Foundation and other granting agencies. ATD colleges serve historically disadvantaged populations and have a history of close ties to their communities (Achieving the Dream, 2005). The researcher relied on recommendations from Achieving the Dream coaches, who are nationally-known former CEO's with extensive community college leadership and management experience. Once an Achieving the Dream college has been involved in the initiative for a long enough period to have a "data record of performance," it is re-evaluated and can be awarded "Leader College" status. Those selected as Leader

Colleges have demonstrated at least three successive years of improvement in student performance based on a set of key indicators.

The researcher requested nominations from the ATD coaches of Leader Colleges that exhibited exemplary community engagement and utilized this input in their planning process. To enhance representativeness of the findings, the researcher chose schools from different accreditation regions which also guaranteed different geographic regions. The purpose was to increase generalizability. Different accrediting regions would eliminate any bias that might be present if they were all accredited by the same accrediting body with the same measurement criteria (Leeper, 2009). Initially, the researcher found four prospective colleges who fit the criteria. In the process of reaching out to the colleges, the President of one college recommended another non-ATD college that had a well-published and successful use of Strengthsquest and Appreciative Inquiry. To guard against bias, the researcher sought to include this non-ATD school to compare and contrast the findings thus enhancing the transferability of findings (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2014).

The researcher initiated the Institutional Review Board process with her institution, The University of Missouri at St. Louis, with the intention of visiting four community colleges, administering Strengthsfinder, and completing four focus groups of 8-10 members per community college.

Choosing cases dissimilar in location, size and accreditation agencies made the replicated findings more compelling and robust (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014; Yin, 2009). Four colleges were chosen because the researcher felt that would provide enough data to analyze and derive categories, whereas five or more would likely generate

redundant data. A sub-case was embedded within each case and was studied to get a better picture of the phenomenon being studied at that one institution (Yin, 2009). Case studies, overall, are used to gain the perspective of the participants. The embedded cases yielded valuable data on the varying perspectives of groups within the larger case. Even though the sub-group of all the case studies was comprised of similar constituents, the similar groups were not contrasted against one another. That is to say that faculty from College A were not compared and contrasted with faculty from College B. This would be contrary to the concept of multi-case design and would actually make this a single case study, as the experience of each college would not be unique and studied as its own microcosm (Yin, 2009).

Case Studies

Stake (2006) makes a particular distinction that case studies investigate "cases," not the function of the cases. Only by thoroughly understanding each individual community college in its own environment can the researcher truly begin to understand what is common among them (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2009), which includes a thorough analysis of the social dynamics and systemic functioning within their historical, cultural and physical contexts. The common characteristic or condition that links multiple cases together created a target collection, also referred to as the “quintain.” “Quintain” is the term used to describe how the case exists in its context and how it can be generalized across many case studies (Casey & Houghton, 2010; Stake, 2006).

Multiple case study research examines several cases in order to understand abstract concepts, theory or processes common to each case (Stake, 2005). Once the case studies were completed, the researcher conducted a cross-case analysis to draw further

conclusions regarding successful planning processes that include stakeholder input. Multiple cases allowed the researcher to have more precise findings that have greater validity and stability. Multiple cases also enhance the trustworthiness of findings (Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2009).

With the case study design outlined, the data sources and collection strategies were next considered. Because the study dealt with current events, it included more than interviews of persons involved in the planning process. The researcher used all correspondence with each college prior to and during the data collection stage as data to be studied as well as documents that related to strategic planning and the involvement of the college with its community. Examples of archival data included organization charts that outline stakeholder input in the process, committee or council organization and the design of the committee members, website archives of planning/assessment documents, examples of different iterations of the strategic plan during its development, reaffirmation reports to the accrediting bodies that outlined examples of transparency, planning, communication and assessment progress, etc.

Yin (2009) notes that the case study method is similar to case histories, but includes two sources of evidence that cannot occur if the event is past tense: direct observation and interviews of the persons involved in the events. The case study allowed the investigator to deal with a full variety of contemporary evidence such as interviews, artifacts, and observations in addition to the conventional historical study (Yin, 2009). Evidence varied according to the community colleges involved in the study.

Data Collection Strategies and Procedures

Data collection was primarily done via focus group interviews, but the researcher also gathered as much archival documentation as possible while on site and afterward via email. Because the researcher was seeking information about the microcosm that was each institution, the choice of focus groups from each institution was key to understanding the sociological dynamics within each college (Bender & Ewbank, 1994; Berg, 2007; Bogdan & Biklan, 2003, Krueger & Casey, 2009). When groups interact during a focus group interview, there is a synergistic group effect that occurs where members have the opportunity to respond to and play off of comments made by other members (Bender & Ewbank, 1994; Berg, 2007). The degree of information gleaned in this manner was richer information than what could have been taken from individuals in lone interview sessions (Berg, 2007). This became clear during the interviews, when one person would look around the group and seek consensus by asking, “Don’t you think that’s true?” or would append information to provide a more complete explanation to the question.

Focus group interviews were particularly useful in gathering experiential data that was critical to the research topic. In this case, the groups served different purposes within the college environment and provided very different perspectives on the planning process and shared vision. Cross-case analysis allowed the researcher to make comparisons among the groups within each college, and then compare that data across the other colleges.

Either focus group interviews or individual interviews could have been used to collect these data, but the researcher selected focus group interviews because of the

dynamic interplay of relationships during the group interviews, which provided richer and more complete discovery (Krueger & Casey, 2009; Stake, 2005). Focus groups need to have a degree of homogeneity so that the focused discussion can fully explore the experience of that particular sub-group of the college (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Bogdan and Biklan (2003), however, warn that within the homogeneity, there needs to be a degree of diversity to avoid singular thinking and to expand the variety of experiences within the sub-group. For this reason, the researcher asked that the college representative to make every effort to recruit a cross-section of participants so that, for instance, all faculty were not from one discipline, all staff were not from one service area and so forth. The researcher's intention was to secure broad perspective within each of the four participant groups. As noted earlier, the college representatives were able to organize the participants and were successful in getting a cross-section of the groups requested, despite the low numbers.

The researcher made arrangements to bring a retired educator who was willing to travel with her and act as scribe. With a standard scribe, the researcher only had to explain confidentiality and scribing techniques one time, and the rest of the groups were consistently scribed and organized.

Prior to each visit, the campus champion and the researcher connected via telephone or email to confirm starting times, locations and numbers of participants. They also discussed any additional archival documentation that might be helpful to verify content that came from multiple sources (Bogdan & Biklan, 2003). Yin (2009), for example, stresses the importance of multiple sources of evidence to corroborate the

emerging theory. Multiple sources ensures that the research is more robust and the findings more reliable.

The researcher traveled to each community college to conduct the focus group interviews and gather additional data. At the start of each focus group interview, the researcher asked the participants to sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A) which detailed the purpose of the study, the procedures used, the researcher, contact information and instructions for withdrawal (Berg, 2007). Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The researcher retained a copy of the informed consent and kept copies in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's office, along with copies of the focus group interview transcripts and audio files, to ensure the confidentiality of each participant.

Additional Sources of Data

Because the study dealt with current events, it included more than interviews of persons involved in the planning process. The researcher used all correspondence with each college prior to and during the data collection stage as data to be studied as well as documents that related to strategic planning and the involvement of the college with its community. Examples of archival data were mentioned earlier. The researcher found herself returning to these documents repeatedly during the analysis to confirm an assumption or verify coding or an assumption that would be investigated further.

Yin (2009) noted that the case study method is similar to case histories, but includes two sources of evidence that cannot occur if the event is past tense: direct observation and interviews of the persons involved in the events. The case study allowed the investigator to deal with a full variety of contemporary evidence such as interviews,

artifacts, and observations in addition to the conventional historical study (Yin, 2009). Evidence varied according to the community colleges involved in the study.

Yin (2009) claims that the case study works best when the investigation seeks to answer open ended questions so that the "operational links needing to be traced over time can occur" (p. 9). When organizing the study, the following four questions directed this study and guided both the methodology employed and the theoretical framework underpinning this inquiry:

1. How is positive leadership exhibited within organizations where effective stakeholder engagement occurs in the planning process?
2. What are the positive qualitative elements inherent in functional community college planning where effective community engagement has been employed?
3. How are colleges successful at gathering stakeholder input during strategic planning that leads to shared vision?
4. How are community college stakeholders allowed to participate in the planning process relative to their strengths?

Even with identified research questions, Stake (2006) advises researchers to seek balance and allow new issues to emerge as necessary. Grounded theory techniques allowed for additional guiding questions to be added as the study progresses so that the study drove the research, not the other way around. New questions were added to assist the researcher in identifying and clarifying categories across the different cases to aid in theory development (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). By using community colleges as the unit of analysis and researching each college individually, their data collectively delimited the scope of the study, thus making it a bounded system (Merriam, 1998).

Pilot Research

The researcher contacted an ATD community college near her home to conduct a pilot study. After speaking with the president, the researcher sent an abstract of the study, along with copies of the Institutional Review Board permission form for the president's review. Upon the president's approval, dates were decided for the pilot study, and all facility arrangements were organized by the president. In order to get the online Strengthsfinder codes to the appropriate person, the researcher purchased the codes and emailed the spreadsheet with codes to the president's designee who then distributed the codes. The designee also provided to participants an email from the researcher which thanked them for participating in the research, as well as a short synopsis of the study and questions that would be asked.

On the day of the first focus group, the researcher arrived early, was introduced to the scribe that was provided by the president, and organized the room. The researcher provided water and juice for the meeting. The scribe was an employee of the college and was therefore familiar with all of the participants. The researcher showed the scribe an example of what she would need to do and how to position herself in the room so she could see who said what phrase. Initially, the scribe thought a laptop would be cleaner, but since the discussion sometimes went faster, she found that writing the name and first few words of the statement was sufficient.

Because the president arranged for the focus groups to be conducted in the college's Board Room, the acoustics were outstanding. Even with near-perfect acoustics, the researcher realized she could benefit from an external microphone to catch the softer voice tones. As an emergency precaution, the researcher did a back-up recording using

her iPhone. All of the recordings were later dubbed to her laptop and removed from the iPhone and the digital recorder. The recordings were then archived on a CD and removed from the laptop. Recordings and archival materials were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the researcher's office.

Conducting the pilot study was very valuable in that it helped clarify the types of archival data the researcher needed to request, as well as facility requirements and electronic taping needs. The researcher realized she was very fortunate to have the president at the pilot college organize her visit, and did not expect that would not continue to be possible. Because of this, she suggested to the subsequent presidents that she work with a designee, who she refers to as the "campus champion". Once the interviews were completed, the researcher transcribed the recordings and conducted an analysis of the data. She found that Strengthsfinder, while interesting, did not add appreciably to the findings. Because of the cost and logistical detail necessary to administer the instrument, in consultation with her dissertation chair, the researcher decided to eliminate it from the actual study. With the pilot complete, the researcher was ready to proceed with the four case colleges.

Case Descriptions

While the initial plan was to conduct research at four institutions, the researcher was only able to secure permission for and work out data collection logistics with three schools. Ultimately, the researcher, in conference with her dissertation committee chair, decided that three colleges with twelve total focus groups would satisfy the academic rigor for the study. In consultation with the campus champion at the three colleges, the community focus group proved to be a problematic. Because of this, the researcher

decided to keep the community notion, but asked that this group be students. This seemed to be much simpler to organize for the colleges and still represented the community/stakeholder viewpoint. The four focus groups were the leadership team, faculty, staff and students. She also made arrangements to bring a retired educator as a scribe, because she was not certain the colleges would be willing or able to provide one for her.

Because the researcher lives in the Midwest, she looked for ATD colleges in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and Higher Learning Commission (HLC) regions that were within a reasonable driving distance. The first two schools chosen were not far from one another and were demographically and geographically different from one another.

College A, which was in the SACS region, was located in a smaller metropolitan area with approximately 37,400 citizens and a county population of 93,400 people (US Census Bureau, 2013). The median income for the region was $42,300 with a poverty rate of around 20% (US Census Bureau, 2013).

College B was in the HLC region, and was located in a small rural town of 11,500 people in a county of only 18,777 people (US Census Bureau, 2013). The median income for citizens in College B’s district was only $18,777 with a 40% poverty rate (US Census Bureau, 2013).

College C was the only non-ATD college and was in the Middle States Association for Colleges and Schools region. College C was very different from the other two colleges. It was bigger than the other two colleges and was nestled closest to a small city with a population of 14,800 and a county population of 103,617 (US Census Bureau,

2013). College C's geographical location allowed it to draw from the surrounding region which was dense with towns of substantial size. College C was also very close to an Ivy League university, as well as three other universities, which accounts for the drastically higher median income of $60,000 (US Census Bureau, 2013). College C's region also had the lowest poverty rate (9%) of all three colleges (US Census Bureau, 2013). An explanation of how College C could have the largest median income and still have the lowest poverty rate is in chapter four.

Recruiting Participants

The researcher requested four focus groups at each college composed of 7-10 persons each, and explained that participants should be chosen by campus champion. She asked that the four focus groups be somewhat homogeneous in nature with members in each of these four groups: administration/planning team, faculty, staff, and students. Focus groups need to have a degree of homogeneity so that the focused discussion can fully explore the experience of that particular sub-group of the college (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Bogdan and Biklan (2003), however, warn that within the homogeneity, there needs to be a degree of diversity to avoid singular thinking and to expand the variety of experiences within the sub-group. For this reason, the researcher asked that the campus champion make every effort to recruit a cross-section of participants so that, for instance, all faculty were not from one discipline, all staff were not from one service area and so forth. The researcher's intention was to secure broad perspective within each of the four participant groups.

The research plan was implemented, except for two issues that happened while the researcher was on site: (a) College B requested participation from all four segments of

the college, but only one student showed up for the student focus group. While the researcher and scribe did speak with the student, who was a nursing student, they did not conduct a focus group interview because she could not stay; (b) while the participating colleges requested adequate numbers of people for each group, because of the two hour time requirement as well as their own job responsibilities, the numbers in each focus group were less than the requested seven. Because the colleges went through the trouble to organize the focus groups, and the researcher and scribe had to travel several hours to get to the colleges, the researcher decided to continue with the focus groups, even though they were low in attendance. As it turned out, the people who did attend were from all areas of the college and were very knowledgeable and answered the questions in great detail.

Table 3

Regional Demographics for Sample Colleges

	College A	College B	College C
Regional Accrediting Body	SACS	HLC	Middle States
Population City	37,400	11,500	14,800
Population county	93,400	18,777	103,617
Median Income	$42,300	$22,807	$60,000
Poverty rate	20%	40%	9%
Nearest higher education opportunities	University in same town	Nearest university is 50+ miles away	Three universities within 20 mile radius

Note: Information from the US Census Bureau (2013)

Diagnosis of Personal Strengths with Strengthsfinder

Initially, the researcher intended to use Strengthsfinder prior to the interview with the strategic planning team. The researcher was going to ask that the strategic planning team focus group participants take the Strengthsfinder at their own convenience but by a preset deadline. The Strenthsfinder is available online and the cost of the assessment would have been incurred by the researcher (Strengthsquest, n.d.). After the pilot, however, the researcher could not see the instrument adding appreciably to the research.

After visiting College C, where Strengthsfinder was used extensively throughout the college (faculty, staff and students), the researcher saw clearly how a widespread use of the Strengthsfinder adds to the function of the college. The key, however, was the integrated use of the instrument in the daily lives of the college personnel and students. The online resource platform for Strengthsfinder is called Strengthsquest. The Gallup Corporation, makers of Strengthsfinder and Strengthsquest, encourage self-reflection as a tool to integrate the understanding of one's own strengths. Using Strengthsfinder and discussing it within the confines of a 2-hour focus group would limit the reflective process necessary for the participants to understand and discuss at any depth.

The intention of using this instrument was to gauge how well the employee performed his or her role in the development of the strategic plan and if it fit with their naturally occurring talents/strengths (Rath, 2007). According to the literature, strengths-based leadership allows a person to identify and operate from a strengths perspective, meaning that a person is able to do what he or she does best each and every day (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Hodges & Clifton, 2004, Snyder & Lopez, 2007). By understanding a person's strengths, work teams can be crafted so that the members are

able to operate using their strengths. At College C, the use of Strengthsquest was displayed in the ability of the subjects to articulate basic tenets that are central to a strengths-based organization: first, that they knew what was expected of them and they have the necessary materials and equipment to do their work; and second, that their position allowed them the opportunity to function in such a way that they exploit their strengths. Third, in a strengths-based institution, if the first two tenets are true, the next question is if they are recognized for their good work and does the leadership (direct supervisor or other mentor) encourage the development of their personal strengths (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999)?

As stated earlier, the researcher did not use Strengthsfinder with Colleges A and B. The impact of Strengthsfinder was very apparent in College C, where an extensive and integrated use of the instrument over time had permeated all areas of the college. The Provost at College C estimates that at least 79% of the faculty and staff have taken Strengthsfinder and had integrated the findings in their everyday work life. All students at College C take Strengthsfinder when they attend New Student Orientation and their top 5 strengths are reviewed and examined the entire time they attend College C.

Interview Strategies

The researcher conducted the pilot study at an ATD community college with a reputation for positive and constructive planning processes. Her experience with was scrutinized and adjusted to maximize the effectiveness of the actual study. For instance, some of the phrasing of questions in the pilot was awkward and further explanation was required. Therefore, the researcher adjusted the phrasing of the questions as needed, which made the focus group interviews in the case studies run much smoother. As the

researcher was asking questions to find commonality among the colleges regarding their positive planning experiences, she found contradictory information as well. This data was used to shape subsequent focus group interviews. Just as multiple case studies are used to find replicated data, the contrasting data that emerges was found to be just as critical to the development of the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Yin, 2009).

The question revision after the pilot group was critical and slightly altered the focus from strategic planning to shared vision. Initially, the first question was: "Think back to your experience with strategic planning at this college, and what is it about this institution that makes it 'special' when it comes to strategic planning?" It was clear during the first interview (Faculty) that linking "strategic planning" with the "specialness" of the college was confusing to the participants. The researcher quickly altered the question to be "What makes College X special?" Simplifying the question allowed the focus groups to begin the interviews with positive responses and with a degree of confidence that that helped foster discussion. Similarly, other questions were altered. Following are the original planned questions, and then the restatement of the questions that were consistent across all focus groups.

Key Question: How successful is this college in establishing a common vision that is embraced by all members of the college? (Focus on college priorities)

Restated question: "If you could say College X has a "shared vision" in a word or two, what would you say that is"?

Key Question: How has the leadership at [community college] supported/ contributed to the process of creating a vision that is shared among the faculty, staff, students and community? (Focus on leadership priorities)

Restated Question: What has the leadership at College X done to nurture development of shared vision?

Key Question: What individual or team characteristics must be present in order to collect and process stakeholder input? Structure of the team? How well does this process work? (Focus on personal priorities)

Restated Question: "As College X builds your teams, committees, councils, etc. is there a purposeful effort on when that happens? Is it crafted, or strictly voluntary"?

Ending Question: If you had a chance to give advice to other colleges regarding their planning process, what would it be? (This question was not revised)

The researcher followed Krueger and Casey's (2009) direction for creating a questioning route which included an opening question, introductory question, transitional questions, key questions and ending questions. The opening question was only intended to make participants feel comfortable and require everyone to speak. Typically, this type of opening question is not analyzed. The introductory question raised the broad topic so participants could begin to think about their experience with the topic. In this case, the researcher first asked the participants what made their institution special, which gave them an opportunity to speak affirmatively about the topic. The researcher was hoping that by taking a positive step first, the rest of the questions would flow easily, which was mostly her experience. Transitional questions moved the participants through to the topical key questions by encouraging more depth and detail than with the introductory question (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The researcher implemented the use of probes, prompts, and purposeful silence to encourage more detailed responses from the participants (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Only one focus group had a participant that went

off-topic several times. In this case, the researcher allowed the participant to finish speaking before redirecting the discussion to the topic being investigated.

Finally, the ending question brought closure to the focus group interview and enabled the participants to reflect on previous comments and provide their final comments on the topic. The researcher chose to use the "all things considered" ending question (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The "all things considered" question allowed the participants to state their final position and identified the focus group participants' most important topics. The researcher asked the groups if they had any advice they would give another college about creating a shared vision, what that would be. Every group had items that were important to them that they wanted to make certain to be included.

The researcher used a planned approach with the first round of focus group interviews. The researcher used the improved list of guiding questions that lead each group through a discussion of their experience with planning processes and shared vision at their college (Merriam, 1998). The researcher and the scribe audiotaped the sessions, taking notes of critical information as it occurred, which allowed for documentation of body language and the social dynamics which occurred within the groups (Berg, 2007; Bogdan & Biklan, 2003; Merriam, 1998). Session notes and impressions were then immediately recorded in a data collection log to be integrated with the verbatim transcripts of the focus groups.

The focus group verbatim transcripts, data collection log, and artifacts located on site were used for triangulation purposes. The multivariate data types were transcribed and cataloged in preparation for analysis. The researcher created a data collection log to catalog and manage the volume of data, as well as to analyze it systematically.

Grounded Theory

Colleges are dynamic organizations and, as such, each has unique strategic planning processes. Prior to the study, the researcher had not found existing formal data from which to create theory. Because of this, the researcher used grounded theory methodology to better understand the experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this research, the researcher did not intend to create theory, rather was using the techniques to develop taxonomy of characteristics of successful colleges.

Grounded theory is a methodology that builds a theory from raw data by utilizing intuitive concepts ordered over time into a pattern that make logical sense to the researcher. This methodology required examination of the interplay of the data, to determine relationships between concepts, which eventually build into a theory. Whether substantive (very specific to time and circumstance) or formal (less specific to group or place), grounded theory was derived by constantly "comparing concepts and their relationships against data during the research act to determine how well they stand up to scrutiny" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p.24).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) describe grounded theory as both science and art. It was scientific because of the rigor that demands theory to be grounded in raw data, yet creative by allowing researchers to name categories and consider alternative meanings of data by going back and forth and around a subject to get a new perspective. Grounded theory allowed the researcher the flexibility to identify concepts as they developed, and also to relate them to build a theory directly from the data. This type of analysis created a theory that was more realistic than theories derived from a series of speculations (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

This study focused on the analysis of college leadership, college climate, and personal attributes that feed into exemplary strategic planning processes and a shared vision. The researcher observed the canons of good scientific research: significance, theory-observation compatibility, generalizability, consistency, reproducibility, precision, and verification.

Using the Grounded theory technique of constant comparison ensured that scientific rigor was maintained during data analysis (Merriam, 1998). The technique (that will be described in more detail below) was intended to uncover relevant processes, conditions and their consequences, and was interactive enough to capture when and how the subjects alter behavior (Merriam, 1998). Grounded theory techniques allowed for some flexibility, although there was a fine line between following the criteria and incorrectly using the techniques. Corbin & Strauss (1990) list eleven canons and procedures of grounded theory research:

1. Sampling in grounded theory proceeds on theoretical grounds.
2. Data collection and analysis are interrelated processes.
3. Analysis makes use of constant comparisons.
4. Patterns and variations must be accounted for.
5. Concepts are the basic units of analysis.
6. Categories must be developed and related.
7. Hypotheses about relationships among categories should be developed and verified as much as possible during the research process.
8. Broader structural conditions must be analyzed, however microscopic the research.

9. Process must be built into the theory.
10. Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory.
11. Grounded theorists need not work alone.

Although the Canons of grounded theory are listed in order above, Corbin and Strauss (1990) stress that grounded theory techniques are not linear, but should be seen as flexible in order to maximize their effectiveness. For this reason, they are described in the order in which they were used for this study.

Sampling Proceeds on Theoretical Grounds

Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain theoretical sampling as "…the basis of emerging concepts, with the aim being to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary" (p. 71). Corbin and Strauss (1990) state that theoretical sampling relates to the representativeness of concepts and not populations. Grounded theory uses comparative analysis to compare phenomena against each other in order to classify them. Theoretical comparisons require consideration of the properties and dimensions of each incident, which lead to the creation of groups or classifications (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Making comparisons (using either obvious or purposely extreme comparisons) helped keep the researcher from becoming stuck in the process of describing cases to more abstract thinking (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Objectivity was crucial, and theoretical comparison helped the researcher conduct a thorough examination of data prior to naming or classifying them (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data Collection and Analysis as Interrelated Processes

"If one does not alternately collect and analyze data, there will be gaps in the theory, because analysis does direct what one focuses upon during interviews and observations" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 13). The researcher began with guiding questions, but used responses to shape future questions used with future focus groups. Even as the research progressed to future sites, findings from the previous college guided questions and analysis.

Grounded theory research was built on discovery; therefore, the researcher considered everything to be potential data, including communication with the colleges. The researcher kept a field guide to document the research process, so as to capture all forms of data. All data was archived in the data collection log, including the verbatim transcripts of the focus group interviews (Berg, 2007; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Merriam, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The researcher began inductive content analysis with the first round of data, conducting line-by-line analysis of the data as they related to the research questions (Berg, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In this study, the researcher began with no preconceived notions as to data sources. In qualitative research, data could unexpectedly come from a variety of sources, and was not limited to planned interviews and observations. Potential sources could include significant documents, correspondence, videotapes, newspapers, letters, books, etc. Virtually anything that may lend a clue in the study could be considered viable data and be treated the same as data derived from interviews or observations (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Prior, 2003; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this study, much of the data was in electronic format and was either available on the college's website or was sent via

email. Examples of archival data received by the researcher include organizational charts, year-end reports, assessment reports, strategic planning documents and results of retention interventions that support the strategic plan, copies of the committee structure, the ATD committee structure, and documents used in accreditation reaffirmations. The visits to the colleges garnered additional experiential data which was likewise cataloged and used.

Initially, the application of codes consisted of handwritten notes on the physical transcripts to serve as “hunches” for follow-up. As analysis progressed and these notes became plentiful, the researcher realized the process was becoming chaotic. In an effort to maintain organization, the researcher used an Excel spreadsheet to include the numbered line(s) in the transcript that contained the phrase or statement, the actual phrase from the transcript and the codes. While coding the first transcript, the researcher realized a phrase might have more than one code and put them together in a cell. She quickly realized she could not sort the codes, and felt that combining them was confusing, so she revised the spreadsheet and found that, in general, she only needed space for three codes/concepts She organized the codes in columns alphabetically (A-G, H-O, P-Z).

After completing the first transcript, she reviewed the research questions and realized her questions were focused on the type of attribute, either leadership, college, or personal. She returned to the first focus group and added a column to designate whether the statement described the leadership, the college’s own culture, or a personal attribute of a college employee. Some statements contained more than one code, but at least every statement had at least one code. The researcher was hoping the column would add insight to whether the successful planning and shared vision was a result of the leadership, or if

the college had a culture that supported the steps necessary to achieve such, or if the college was fortunate enough to have personnel who were gifted in the area of strategic planning and so the college benefitted. This organization proved to be helpful later in the analysis portion, when the researcher cross-referenced and analyzed the colleges in the study.

During the analysis phase, the researcher treated each college as its own individual case. Each focus group interview was coded individually. Once completed, the researcher combined the focus groups interview codes and began the in-depth analysis of each college. Because there were four data perspectives (leadership, faculty, staff and students), as well as three types of code priorities (L-leadership, C-college, P-personal), the researcher ended up creating a chart that listed the categories by overall frequency, and by each individual priority (L, C, P). Presenting the categories from the perspective of the leadership, college or personal priorities added another layer of depth to the analysis, which was necessary because community colleges are so complex. To try to distill any of a college's priorities into one listing would likely have resulted in findings that lacked appropriate depth.

Analysis Makes Use of Constant Comparison

As stated previously, once the first transcript was produced, the researcher constantly compared data for similarity and differences in order to generate codes (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Concepts were compared to other concepts, concepts to categories, and categories to other categories under the different conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As the analysis continued with subsequent transcripts, coding was compared reflexively back with the initial transcripts. The process was similar to a *swirl*,

where the researcher evaluated the statement for a code, but once sorted, might have to go back to the transcript to evaluate further to see if it fit with another code to create a concept.

A master list of codes was maintained throughout the coding process to lend consistency in nomenclature. During this process, the researcher strived to identify richer categories that emerged from the data, not from *a priori* categories that were named by the focus group participants (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Constant comparison allowed the opportunity to see variation in the data that might allow greater specificity and eventually to a thicker description in the developing concepts and categories (Miles et al., 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Patterns and Variations Must be Accounted For

When codes come together and form patterns in the data, it was incumbent upon the researcher to investigate the similarities and differences between multiple patterns. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that properties are “the general or specific characteristics or attributes of a category” and dimensions “represent the locations of a property along a continuum or range” (p. 117). Patterns form when the properties cluster together. Miles et al. (2014) refer to this as “clustering” of data and it was one tactic that was used to begin to move from concrete data to generating the more abstract categories representative of data categories.

The researcher sorted data in the hope of finding patterns or regularity and to lend credibility to newly formulating assumptions (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Miles et al., 2014). Each focus group helped the researcher to view the statement through that group’s perspective, which helped in assigning codes. Once assigned, the researcher aggregated

them to look for patterns that could further lend description to uncover the different properties and the dimensions of those concepts. Organizing the data so that broader, more abstract descriptions were attached to each piece of data allowed for the researcher to rate the frequency, urgency, and the type of priority it addressed (college, personal or leadership).

Concepts are the Basic Unit of Analysis

As the data were collected, the researcher immediately began applying open coding techniques to identify concepts to phenomena that share a similar meaning. Strauss and Corbin (1998) define open coding as,

> The interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically (…) In open coding, events/actions/interactions are compared with others for similarities and differences. They are also given conceptual labels. In this way conceptually similar events/actions/interactions are grouped together to form categories and subcategories. (p. 12)

It was important that the researcher was cognizant that the meaning was what the participant intended and interpretation was not colored by the researcher's own previous experience (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Because the researcher conducted focus group interviews and gathered documents, much of the data was presented in the form of descriptive explanations. As Corbin & Strauss (1990) stress, data should not be taken on face value as concepts. Concepts result from an analytic account of the phenomenon. As the process continued, the researcher found numerous and abstract concepts that stood alone (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

As data was gathered, concepts became obvious to the researcher as repeatedly present or conspicuously absent (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). After the first transcript was analyzed, the researcher keenly examined subsequent data to validate the generated concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). To add consistency to phrasing, the researcher kept a list of used codes, so that spelling, spacing, or tense did not create additional codes, for instance "buy in" versus "Buy-In" versus "buyin". Additionally, the researcher was careful to not limit herself only to this list, and added new codes as necessary. Berg (2007) likens this phase to a funnel, with initial open coding being wide-open and plentiful. Saturation in this phase of open coding occurs with repetition of concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1998) advise that this technique was useful after several concepts have been developed and the researcher intends to elaborate on existing meanings.

As concepts emerged, axial coding techniques were used to break down the data into small parts, discriminating between differences and similarities (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This helped the researcher organize the data in order to determine the relationships of the dimensions and properties of the subcategories to their categories. The recursive nature of grounded theory required that the researcher move in and out of open and axial coding on the way to identifying categories and subcategories. The researcher found herself returning to the transcripts once the codes were sorted, so she could gain context for the statements, codes, and emerging concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that the researcher's own questioning of the data allowed for a systematic examination that would identify relationships among the concepts. This initial process of questioning stimulated the researcher's mind to think more theoretically and less realistically and

allowed for a wider range of potential conceptual meanings. Because the focus groups functioned as a microcosm of the institution, the group dynamics inherent in the interview netted data on how the college operated as a whole.

Categories Must be Developed and Related

In grounded theory, categories and their relationships are the decisive building blocks of the theory and everything the researcher did in open and axial coding had the goal of developing categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). She began to look for similarities and differences among the concepts. The concepts were compared against themselves in order to construe a commonality, which became the category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At each stage of analysis, patterns were crucial to the decision-making process.

Grouping and categorizing enabled the researcher to reduce the number of units that were created and tracked. Keeping categories to a manageable number helped the researcher clearly communicate the findings (Merriam, 1998). With the categories sorted and their frequency captured, the researcher was able to see the differences among similar categories. Further examination of the categories allowed identification of characteristics or attributes that further describe the phenomenon (Miles et al., 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was accomplished via axial coding, where "(c)ategories are related to their subcategories, and the relationships tested against data" (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.13).

During the axial coding process, the researcher re-organized the categories around the research questions and aggregated by priority (L, C, P) in order to find patterns and relationships among the data (Miles et al., 2014; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This was completed by printing out the sorted Excel spreadsheets, cutting them with scissors, and reassembling them with tape. While this may seem antiquated and arduous, the

similarities began to become more apparent as the assembly progressed. This allowed the researcher to see large batches of data that verified or negated budding hypotheses or hunches and helped to keep the researcher honest with her analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

When comparing the properties against one another, dimensions become apparent (Merriam, 1998, Strauss & Corbin, 1998). According to Merriam (1998), “Hypotheses are the suggested link between categories and properties” (p. 190). A dimension is the continuum or range on which a property can be located, thus providing more precision about specific properties. Over time, the analysis of categories to their properties, as well as the patterns found among the dimensions will begin to form the basis for theory (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Hypotheses About Relationships Among Categories

Hypotheses about relationships among categories were developed and verified as much as possible during the research process. Analyzing relationships among categories was the second key function of axial coding. All of the recursive comparing of concepts and categories gave rise to assumptions to be investigated. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that the attempts to understand the relationships between categories and their subcategories reveal actions/interactions or consequences and create “hunches” to be followed up on. Understanding the conditions under which the phenomenon occurs, the “what, why, where, and how” were noted, and then compared with subsequent occurrences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These “hunches” or assumptions, born out of the analysis of the relationships among the categories, were the beginning stages of hypothesis building (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Because hypotheses were abstractions made from real data, it was important to investigate each instance as they are found and compare them to one another (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In some cases, it seemed that the instances contradicted the hypotheses, but Strauss and Corbin (1998) warned the researcher not to be hasty with dismissing a hunch, as the contradiction may point more to extreme dimensions of the same phenomenon.

Broader Structural Conditions Must be Analyzed, However Microscopic the Research

Corbin and Strauss (1990) suggest beginning with broader conditions and progressively narrowing in on the concept in order to show specific linkages. In this study, the researcher began with a broad analysis of the data, but progressively reviewed the context of the respondents in light of differing lenses that may have influenced the responses of the focus group members. This analysis included reviewing the codes in terms of the context in which they were experienced. Strauss and Corbin (1998) warned that only by understanding the conditions in which the phenomenon exists can the researcher gain insight as to the complexity of the phenomenon. By the end of the study, the researcher adequately defined the conditions present that enable community colleges to be exemplary planners with a shared vision.

Process Must be Built into Theory

Corbin and Strauss (1990) noted different uses of the concept of process. In one sense, the researcher processed the data, as in breaking down the data into stages or phases to understand the phenomenon better. Process also meant the timeframe and environment in which the action/interaction took place which led to specific actions or

interaction that created specific consequences (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). At all times, the researcher utilized process in both meanings: intrinsically as the steps of breaking down the data and analysis were performed, but also in reviewing the environmental stressors on the phenomenon that might have influenced the outcome. The researcher tried as often as possible during the focus group interviews to identify the context in which a topic occurred. When requesting archival data, context was also discussed with the campus champions.

Writing Theoretical Memos is an Integral Part of Doing Grounded Theory

The researcher began memo writing from the first e-mail communication and throughout the transcript analysis to track the questions, ideas, and the rationale behind the construction of specific categories, finally leading to the development of theory. Theoretical memos were notes regarding the researchers' own thoughts as they analyzed the data, merged codes to concepts and concepts to categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Memos captured great amounts of detail that might have been lost if not written down as the process took place. How theoretical memos were captured and stored was the purview of the researcher, but was in a form that could be easily retrieved for sorting and cross-referencing (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The use of memo writing was continued throughout the study and was stored with the transcripts and Excel spreadsheets for ease of retrieval and updating.

Grounded Theorists Need Not Work Alone

The nature of grounded theory was to examine data for relationships between concepts. Corbin and Strauss (1990) stress the usefulness of collaboration during the analysis stages. Opening up the initial analysis to the scrutiny of peers typically nets

additional relationships not uncovered by the researcher alone. The researcher utilized two colleagues trained in qualitative methods to verify her coding and relationship documentation throughout the analysis phase.

Quality Standards

The researcher maintained high standards for this study. Miles et al. (2014) provided quality standards that should be considered during a qualitative research study. Following the list will be a short discussion of how the researcher considered the standards during the study.

1. Objectivity/Confirmability
2. Reliability/Dependability/Auditability
3. Internal Validity/Credibility/Authenticity
4. External Validity/Transferability/Fittingness
5. Utilization/Application/Action Research

The researcher adhered to the highest quality standards of qualitative research as follows.

Objectivity/confirmability. The researcher had documented the planned activities and actual processes followed throughout this chapter. Her memos, notes, email, transcripts were all stored in a locked cabinet for reference if necessary. The resulting analysis and conclusions came directly from the descriptive data that was gathered. Understanding that her own experiences could create unperceived bias, the researcher shared the process and the writing with a colleague who was knowledgeable in qualitative methods (Miles et al., 2014), which allowed for a wider breadth of perspective than if she worked alone.

Reliability/dependability/auditability. The case studies were conducted nearly back-to-back, so the data gathering would be as consistent as possible (Miles et al., 2014). The questions were painstakingly considered and, after the pilot study, some were rewritten to achieve greater clarity

The researcher entered into the research with no preconceived notions as to what she would find. The researcher understood that researcher bias could be a problem, so to combat that, she had a colleague with strong skills in qualitative research and analysis periodically cross-check her coding and analysis. This helped to guard against bias and provided feedback on the validity of the coding process. Lincoln and Guba (1985) forewarn that because the researcher was the primary research instrument, there was a potential for human bias to occur and thus making frequent quality checks becomes particularly important. Multiple case studies do, however, temper the likelihood of researcher bias which might initially surface in the selection of a single institution (Miles et al., 2014)

Internal validity/credibility/authenticity. This standard called for a persuasively written account that provided a deep understanding of the study's findings, with context-rich and meaningful descriptions (Miles et al., 2014). The analysis portion was written in the very words of the focus group participants in order to enhance the authenticity. The use of thick descriptions provided enough information to the readers that they could determine its applicability to their circumstance (Miles et al., 2014).

In addition to the focus group interviews, the researcher used archival data found on site and the colleges' own websites to triangulate her findings. When an inconsistency occurred, or a "hunch" arose in the analysis phase, the researcher went on a search to

confirm from another source, such as the colleges' website, news accounts, or reports to third parties, such as ATD. Triangulation helped the researcher fine tune the analysis and served to clear discrepancies as they arose (Miles et al., 2014).

After the initial data gathering and coding, the researcher returned to the campus champions to verify or gain additional comment or data-checking with the colleges. The feedback helped to eliminate any misunderstanding that was beginning to surface and helped the researcher to stay focused. Likewise, any negative information was investigated and accounted for during the analysis phase. When this occurred, the researcher performed a data check with the campus champion for clarification (Miles et al., 2014).

External validity/ transferability/fittingness. The future usefulness of the study was always in the forefront of the researcher's thinking. Whether or not the findings could be useful to another college as they attempt to create a strategic plan that will support a shared vision was always a question in the researcher's mind. In reflection, the study was conducted on three diverse colleges from diverse regions which allowed for comparison data (Miles et al., 2014).

The coding process allowed for not only the examination of the qualitative elements, but also whether the phenomena were leadership, college, or personal priorities. Having a sort of two tiered coding process allowed for emerging categories to develop.

Utilization/application/action research. The purpose of the study was to identify the positive elements of colleges known to be exemplary planners who have articulated a shared vision. The researcher's own hope was for the findings to shed light

on how transformational theory, servant leadership theory, and others play out in reality. The payoff for the researcher and audience was ideally to have findings that were positive with a tangible representation of good leadership that can be replicated. At the least, the researcher intended to give the reader hope.

Limitations

The study was limited by the fact that so little *a priori* information exists on the topic. In fact, the dearth of information was the rationale and justification for the study and demonstrates the need for further research. The topics of transformational change, shared vision, strategic planning, and stakeholder input are well documented in and of themselves. However, no literature was found to link the topics as they relate to community colleges and strategic planning. The minute amount of literature on the topic left the researcher to make assumptions that beg to be further validated in future studies. Testing these assumptions was one purpose of this research. Inevitably, this study had an exploratory character, which might be considered a limitation.

The fact that the population were be found within the Achieving the Dream program was by happenstance. Achieving the Dream (ATD) colleges were given coaches from ATD who mentor the college through the data gathering and analysis process. The degree to which the colleges took advantage of the coaches and created systems that were built from an analysis of data depended on the college and its devotion to the project. This type of analysis was rigorous and time-consuming. The ability of the average community college to engage in this type of analysis was questionable. Therefore, choosing purely ATD colleges limited the transferability of findings as these colleges had outside mentoring and support that may skew the findings. Yet, this might have been a

critical ingredient in conducting successful strategic planning and was included in this analysis. That said, integrating a non-ATD college hopefully mitigated these limitations.

Community colleges, as a whole, are required by regional accreditation to conduct planning and assessment, but the processes used are not prescribed at all. Evaluation of the strategic planning process allowed the individual colleges to manage the process in ways that were conducive for their institutions. This variability was a potential limitation. The Positive Psychology approach most certainly allows for a culmination of best practices that have been successful by each college, but the strategic planning processes themselves were varied and unequal.

Even though the researcher had contacted the colleges with sufficient lead time and had worked out the logistics well in advance, the community colleges were still not able to secure the minimum seven people for each focus group. Each college champion mentioned that 7-10 people would be challenging to gather, but each college invited more than 10 people to each focus group interview. Knowing that this interview was voluntary and not tied to job security or furthering their own growth at their college, the researcher was pleased to have the numbers of participants she did. Lower numbers than the goal was a limitation; however, the experience and knowledge shared by the participants was sufficiently rich.

The researcher is a human with her own experiences. She has worked in the student services areas her entire career, with an interest in strategic planning and student development. Her perspective was not that of faculty, but more as an administrator. While she could relate to the students, leadership team and staff focus groups, she could not to faculty, as she had never been a faculty member. Her experience and knowledge as

a researcher was also a limitation. Having worked for twenty-seven years in a single college had not prepared the researcher well on the topic of assessment and strategic planning, as the leadership, college climate and social dynamics may not be typical of other colleges. It was imperative, therefore, that she take extra precautions to not reflexively assign meaning to a word or incident. What may have seemed obvious to the researcher may not necessarily have been what the respondent meant to convey.

Summary

It was the hope of the researcher that this study's outcome would begin to establish a description of the climate necessary to conduct effective strategic planning and establish a consistent shared vision within the community college. Using a Positive Psychology approach was intended to capitalize on the positive qualitative elements, and not be hijacked by negative influences. In reality, seeing a physical display of functional leadership helped the researcher evaluate her own leadership style with considerations on how to change to do things in a more purposeful manner (Miles et al., 2014).

Chapter 3 has outlined the methods by which strategic planning has been examined using a multiple case study design strategy. It was hoped that the positive components practiced at each college would become evident, enabling greater understanding of the process. The result of the analysis of the study is presented in upcoming chapters.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Strategic planning processes are as varied as the colleges that create them (Bryson, 1995). Though the main steps might be defined, actual implementation is dependent on the internal structure and leadership within colleges. The purpose of this study was to determine what leadership, college, and personal dynamics contribute to the development and successful implementation of a shared vision with a strategic plan created with broad stakeholder involvement. This study investigated three community colleges - two of which are Leader Colleges in the Achieving the Dream Program (ATD) - to assess how internal dynamics affect the effectiveness of the planning process.

Each institution differs drastically from the others in terms of student demographics and persistence rates, yet all had reputations as effective strategic planners. Following is a table that provides an institutional profile on each college. By choosing such different institutions, the researcher was striving to identify the commonalities of such diverse institutions known to be exemplary planners and which have successfully cultivated a shared vision. These variations will be discussed in detail in the narrative about each case.

It should be noted that FTE, or full-time equivalent is a measure used by the National Center for Education Statistics and is based on fall student headcounts that are reported by each college. FTE uses a formula to combine full-time and part-time students in order to obtain an estimate of the full-time equivalent. In addition to IPEDS reporting, institutions also use the number for budgeting and allocation purposes (IPEDS Data Center, 2015).

Table 4

Case Study Colleges' Institutional Profile

	College A	College B	College C
Students eligible for any grant/scholarship	45%	50%	80%
Institutional grant/scholarship	7%	14%	5%
Institutional Grant Average Amount	$994	$1903	$2055
Headcount	5358	4066	9373
FTE (Full-time equivalent)	2629	1151	3884
Race	63% White 25% African American 6% Hispanic	48% White 49% African American 2% Hispanic	73% White 8% African American 7% Hispanic 6% unknown 2% Resident Alien
Age distribution	24 and under: 67% 25 and older: 33%	24 and under: 79% 25 and older: 21%	24 and under: 82% 25 and older: 18%
First to second yr retention rates	FT: 50% PT: 38%	FT: 56% PT: 22%	Ft: 53% PT: 33%
Graduation Rate (six semesters)	Women: 30% Men: 17% Overall 23%	Women: 27% Men: 19% Overall: 25%	Women: 29% Men: 15% Overall: 22%
Transfer rate	8%	14%	23%
FTv.PT Faculty	92v. 80	70 v. 24	69 v. 280

Note: From College Profile Information IPEDS Data Center (2015)

In order to become an ATD school (Achieving the Dream, 2005), community colleges must provide evidence that they have strong ties with their communities (stakeholder input), and that they have internal mechanisms (assessment) that use data to inform decision-making (evaluation). External stakeholder input ensures that the colleges make decisions that are relevant to the communities in which they exist. Internal

engagement with student success goals ensures that faculty and staff support an agenda that places improves student outcomes as a priority.

The prospect of transformational change for ATD schools is focused on four areas: institutional change, which challenges the college to create basic and pervasive change in all facets of the institution, based on data; policy change, which seeks to examine and evaluate college policies through assessment of data that are gathered and examined in order to draw conclusions about the effects of those policies; public engagement, with an expectation that colleges already have a measure in place in order to become an ATD school; and knowledge development, which is derived from data-driven instructional and student support services (Achieving the Dream, 2005).

Using a Positive Psychology lens, the researcher sought to identify the positive qualitative elements of strategic planning that result in a unified shared vision during and after a strategic planning process. By focusing on the positive, the researcher was able to gain insight as to the elements that worked well within the colleges. Snyder and Lopez (2007) wrote of "Positive Schooling" which has a foundation of care, trust and respect for students. In Positive Schooling, teachers develop goals for students and work to engender learning so they can work toward those goals. The development of caring relationships that occurred when teachers/students spend time together out of the classroom is significant. Likewise, the ways in which college personnel created and maintained relationships with one another as they went about their professional lives were also important, since this engaged culture facilitated the creation of the strategic plan and the shared vision.

Guiding questions for this research were:

1. How is positive leadership exhibited within organizations where effective stakeholder engagement occurs in the planning process?
2. What are the positive qualitative elements inherent in functional community college planning where effective community engagement has been employed?
3. How are colleges successful at gathering stakeholder input during strategic planning that leads to shared vision?
4. How are community college stakeholders allowed to participate in the planning process relative to their strengths?

In order to obtain a measure of contributing factors that positively influenced the functional strategic planning of the studied colleges, the researcher relied on descriptions and documents provided by the people involved in the process. These included focus group interviews and documents relating to the planning process with a systematic analysis of these descriptive elements. To fully understand the depths of the planning phenomenon, the researcher used qualitative methodologies, which produced rich, descriptive and authentic evidence (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Specifically, using the tools of grounded theory was the preferred methodology, with community colleges identified as individual cases (Stake, 2005).

By considering each community college as its own case, the researcher was able to thoroughly understand each environment singularly. Multiple case study research allowed the researcher to understand abstract elements specific to each case (Stake, 2005), and to then conduct a cross-case analysis to draw further conclusions about

commonalities in the planning processes, stakeholder input, and the development of a shared vision.

Because community colleges are social institutions, focus group interviews were used to investigate to what extent these social institutions are governed by their context. Because this research involves multiple case analyses, it was necessary to examine each case within its context, so as to not misunderstand the meaning (Miles et al., 2014). Stake (2006) and Yin (2009) suggest that only by understanding the individual cases can one begin to understand what is common among them, a primary aim of this research. For this reason, this chapter will be organized by community college with a profile of each institutional setting to provide context for the focus group interviews and observations. With this in mind, data that were gathered on the days the researcher was on campus for the interviews are reviewed in this chapter. In addition to conducting focus group interviews, the researcher gathered archival materials, such as the strategic plan, documents used to produce and/or update the strategic plan, copies of the organizational chart and committee structure, news articles, public relations items, Achieving the Dream documents, personal conversations with the faculty, staff and/or community, and website information were used to triangulate findings.

Chapter Four presents a brief history and discussion of each college with the findings that emerged. Miles et al. (2014) note that clumping data by frequency is one way a researcher can present data. In this research, frequency helped to identify a hierarchy of details for presentation. The researcher was interested in finding in which priority the categories were derived. How and in which priority did the categories emerge? Was it the leadership, the college culture or the personal priority? Following

each college is a chart that combines the priority and frequency found in the focus group transcripts. Following the chart, the researcher will discuss the findings for each college. Note: the columns do not add up to the overall frequency. This is because each priority (L, C, or P) could be applied to one code or many. The codes (L, C, or P) followed the original coding scheme used throughout the open and axial coding. Chapter four will conclude with presentation of emergent categories.

Case Studies

College A

Chartered in 1927, making it one of the earliest community colleges still functioning as a two-year degree-granting institution, College A is a member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Like other "junior colleges" founded at the time, College A experienced steady growth at its temporary site through the end of WWII, when it was clear that the influx of returning soldiers would necessitate an expansion. In the 1950's, the community supported a bond referendum, which allowed College A to move to a permanent location with room for expansion as necessary.

College A is located in a small metropolitan city of 37,400 people, with an added county population of 93,400 people (US Census Bureau, 2015). The median income for the region is $42,300 with a 20% poverty rate. Tuition and fees at College A are set at $115 per credit hour. The nearest university to this community college is located less than ten miles away and has a reciprocal relationship with the college so students can transfer seamlessly. According to the IPEDS Data Center (2015), College A's student population is mostly White (63%) with 25% African American and 6% Hispanic populations. Most (67%) students are less than 24 years old. Forty-five percent of College A's total student

population receives some form of grant or scholarship (IPEDS Data Center, 2015). Seven percent of the student population is awarded an institutional grant or scholarship, with the average amount $994. First-to-second year retention is 50% for full-time students and 38% for part-time students (IPEDS Data Center, 2015). While women at College A tend to graduate at a greater rate than men (30% versus17%), College A boasts a graduation rate within six semesters for all students of 23% (IPEDS Data Center, 2015), which is greater than the 20% national rate over the same time period (IPEDS Data Center, 2015). Eight percent of graduates transfer to a university, while a significantly greater percentage transfer prior to graduation. Bucking a nationwide trend toward hiring more contingent faculty, College A employs 92 full-time faculty members and only 80 part-time faculty.

College A has 24 buildings on campus which basically house different disciplines or functions (Business and Computer Technology building, Social Sciences building, Library, etc.). The college sits on 90 acres of land and is surrounded by a residential area. College A owns one off-campus center that provides training to a nearby Army depot and the contractors who work there. Seventeen associate degrees and 38 certificates of varying lengths and academic/employment concentrations are offered at College A.

Perhaps the most compelling aspect of College A's history occurred six-years prior to the focus group interviews. According to the leadership team focus group interviews, the college had three presidents in three-and-a-half years, and the two prior presidencies were fraught with controversy and apparent mismanagement. College A survived a financial crisis that was a combined result of poor decision making, declining enrollment, and decreased state funding, which resulted in the college having only a

three-month fund reserve going into an academic year, with doubts as to whether or not payroll demands could be met. The college experienced two consecutive years of financial audit exceptions, with one year having 80 findings.

These findings put the college on warning status with the SACS accrediting body, which sparked a US Department of Education audit and the specter of a negative effect on Title IV (federal student aid) funding for the college. The financial crisis even led to a reduction in force (RIF) in some departments. Members of the board of trustees were accused in the local press of questionable and unethical behavior. At the same time, the local university expanded to offer more programs, which lured potential student enrollment away from College A. The revelation that an investment banker had embezzled retirement funds from the college's employees and retirees only added to the crisis and damaged local perception. As one member of the leadership focus group indicated, it was "a perfect storm" (line 476). A search of local news articles supported the assertions of the focus groups and painted a picture of widespread leadership incompetence. In the end, a board of trustees' election resulted in the removal of troublesome board members and the president resigned under pressure.

Because most of the problems at College A were financial in nature, the board eventually hired a president who had experience as both a licensed Certified Public Accountant and senior educational leader. The leadership team focus group interview frankly credits the newest president (hired in 2012) for bringing much-needed integrity to the college. The new president was once a student at College A and looked internally for dedicated people who would make the difficult decisions necessary to save the college. His choices to fill the leadership positions came mostly from the faculty ranks. In fact,

the participants in the leadership team focus group interview were all formerly faculty at one point. Two persons on the leadership team who were not former faculty were unable to participate in the focus group. They were, however, former secondary school administrators and were well-respected in the community.

Case A Findings

The researcher found eleven positive collegiate elements that aided in the creation of a shared vision at College A. Table 5 shows the categories and subcategories that emerged from the data.

Table 5

College A: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing a Shared Vision

Categories	Subcategories
Student Centeredness	Accessibility, Customer Service, Student Centeredness, Student Engagement/Purpose, Student Success
Adaptability	Appreciation, Approachable, Positive Attributes, Fiscal Responsibility, Institutional Research, Staff Attributes, Transformational Change
Trust	Assessment, Respect, Accountability,
Stakeholder Input/Community Connection	Responsive, Community Connectedness, Stakeholder Feedback
Transparency	Rules for the Team, Courage, Functional Teamwork, Transparency,
Communication/Inclusion	Communication and Feedback, Communication Flow/Sharing, Purposeful Communication
Learning Centeredness	Instructional Difficulty, Instructional Delivery
Team-Building/Teamwork	Strengths-based Team-building, Purposeful Teambuilding, Teamwork, Professional Development, Support,
Positive change	Buy-In, Celebrate Achievements, Forward Movement, Positive Planning and Movement
Loyalty	Resiliency, Willing, Positive Regard
Servant Leadership	Leader Qualities

Throughout the coding process, the researcher coded whether the data was a leadership, college culture or a personal priority. Table 6 shows the categories in order of their frequency and priority.

Table 6

College and Frequency of Priorities

Overall Frequency		College Frequency		Leadership Frequency		Personal Frequency	
Loyalty	183	Loyalty	75	Servant leadership	53	Loyalty	61
Communication	118	Community connected	63	Loyalty	47	Learning centeredness	46
Learning centeredness	99	Communication	59	Communication	37	Student centeredness	31
Servant leadership	99	Student centeredness	56	Transparency	25	Adaptability	25
Student centeredness	98	Learning centeredness	43	Trust	19	Communication	22
Community connected	89	Trust	37	Community connected	15	Servant leadership	21
Trust	73	Adaptability	31	Adaptability	14	Trust	17
Adaptability	70	Teamwork	25	Teamwork	14	Community connected	11
Transparency	50	Servant Leadership	25	Positive change	12	Transparency	10
Teamwork	44	Positive change	18	Student centeredness	11	Positive change	6
Positive change	36	Transparency	15	Learning centeredness	10	Teamwork	5

Loyalty

Through the focus group interviews, the researcher learned that Loyalty was the most frequently mentioned category at College A. Repeatedly, the focus group participants, regardless of group, indicated the critical need for capable leaders to step up. One of the subcategories of Loyalty was willingness. An example of willingness came from a faculty member in the faculty focus group, who said, "Experienced faculty stepped up when they were needed" (line 13). The staff focus group spoke to the importance of this team's long history with the college by saying, "They've actually been in the trenches. They're not just talking heads. They've actually been in the trenches doing this stuff and they know what it takes to get it done" (lines 398-399).

Another subcategory is positive regard. An example of positive regard is a statement from a staff member, who said, "When you create an environment that is conducive to growth, it's a win-win all the way around" (lines 352-253). Even a student from the student focus group interview spoke about to the positive regard they have for the college faculty and staff by saying, "You don't have to be a teacher, and you're busy here. Everybody does multiple things. It's dedication and love for this college" (lines 413-414). A member of the leadership team spoke to the resiliency subcategory most eloquently by saying,

> We confronted those issues that we were faced with. And that so many people who came from all different areas across this institution but represented the heart of who we were, stepped up and said, 'We've got to step up and do something about this'. We're not going to wait until someone says, 'They should do

> something'. It's WE should do something"! And people took on different leadership roles. (lines 52-58)

The loyalty priority was both a college and personal priority, as well as being prevalent throughout all four focus groups. In the case of College A, loyalty has a special meaning because of the most recent history. Repeatedly, the researcher heard focus group participants say how "special" College A was and often heard the lengths to which the faculty and staff went to help the college recover. When the focus groups were asked what made College A special, all four groups unanimously identified the faculty. The member of the leadership team referred to the faculty as "first-class, world-class faculty" and said that their commitment to student success is what made their college special (line 8). The staff focus group participant responded with "willing faculty that cares about the students" (lines 11 & 14). One faculty member attributed success to an "experienced and dedicated faculty that had been there a very, very long time" (line 7). Finally, a student focus group member said "I love the faculty. They are always there for us and they always want to help" (line 6).

Many people chose to be loyal to the institution and stayed to help shepherd it back to a stronger state. When asked what the leadership had done to help nurture the shared vision, focus groups were quick to share their experience. A staff participant said,

> I'm anxious to answer. I think the leadership, for sure. Jim and his vision for the college and seeing him getting out there and not only talking about it, but walking it out in the community, especially with the tax annex, you know. He worked as hard as anyone (lines 118-120) and you want to be a part of that (line 122) and you don't want to sit on the sidelines (line 123).

Communication

Communication was the second most frequently mentioned category. College A's leadership focus group interview discussed a time when they were not well-informed on things and they vowed not to do that to their constituents. An example of the subcategory of communication and feedback came from one member of the leadership team explained, "There are lots of meeting of the various stakeholders to clearly communicate this is what is being considered, to gather their input and feedback, to make people feel like they have a voice, that they are being heard" (lines 159-161). A staff person shared his opinion on how the subcategory of communication flow and sharing affects the culture at College A by saying, "They (administration) take great lengths to make sure that we know everything we need to know. And that also snowballs down to the students, and it brings a better environment all the way around for everybody" (lines 369-371). A faculty member explained the value of the subcategory of purposeful communication by saying, "We have an administration that doesn't stand back and not say you're doing a good job. They are very forthright in giving a pat on the back and encouragement and telling us that we are valuable. That's good to hear" (lines 61-63).

The leadership team noted that the organizational structure at College A was somewhat flat which helped to disseminate necessary information to the whole college quickly and efficiently. The extensive communication at College A was explained by the faculty in terms of the buildings on campus that house specific programs. The significance of the buildings is analogous to potential silos, where work happens within a silo and little interaction happens between silos. However, that is clearly not the case at College A. In fact, there is an intentional effort to prevent the silo mentality from

happening. When speaking with the faculty, one person explained that the president's vision is like the buildings on campus:

> (I)t's sort of like the president's vision is about the buildings – we want somebody from every building to be on those committees. So that when they go back to those folks, they can share the vision. Because we don't want anybody to be able to come and say, 'I didn't know we were doing that.' (lines 361-364)

The value of widespread communication is further validated by the organizational chart, which has several directors and division chairs on the same level, and faculty and staff who report directly to deans or directors. At no point are there more than three levels of hierarchy to get to the president. This flat organizational system is reminiscent of Helgesen's Web of Inclusion, where the flat communication structure and egalitarian expectations encourage everyone to take responsibility for furthering the cause of the college.

Learning Centeredness

Learning Centeredness ranked third overall and was second in terms of personal priorities, but ranked fifth and last for college and leadership respectively. Learning Centeredness in the coding process really related more to the classroom experience and how the faculty and staff relate to students as a whole. One of the subcategories for Learning Centeredness was Instructional Difficulty. One of the students at College A explained his experience with a history instructor by saying, "He says, 'By the way, our tests are essay'. And I'm not talking about a paragraph. He wanted us to really develop the topic. You'll learn things you never wanted to know" (lines 144-146).

Another subcategory of Learning Centeredness was Instructional Delivery which was illustrated by another College A student, as he explained how their faculty strive to meet the different learning styles of their students. He said, "Like not every teacher teaches algebra the same way. Or chemistry. So there's always someone who can help you out" (lines 136-138).

Because of their association with ATD, the faculty participated in professional development to enhance teaching strategies. A leadership team member specifically discussed across-the-curriculum active and cooperative learning initiatives they feel have really transformed learning (lines 18-20). The ATD influence was further acknowledged as the leadership team shared comments made by faculty who stated that active and cooperative learning strategies were no longer limited to the classroom. A faculty member commented that they see the same type of communication and interaction improvement across the college. They say the ATD influence has changed the culture of how people interact at the institution (lines 24-26).

Servant Leadership

Overwhelmingly, the four focus groups ranked the president, but also the leadership team as having the qualities of Servant Leadership. One subcategory of Servant Leadership at College A was simply Leader Qualities. Farnsworth (2007) and Greenleaf (2002) explain Servant Leadership as one that exhibits empathy and acceptance that encourages trust, respect, mutual growth and fulfillment for the persons touched by the organization. This is very much what happened when the current College A president was hired. He began asking questions and truly listened to the stakeholders of

the college. From the faculty down to the students, the president's honor and integrity were considered above reproach.

A notable consistency between all four focus groups was the fact that every single person involved referred to the president by his first name. Not a single person referred to the president as "President Johnson" (a pseudonym). They called him by his first name, "Jim" (also a pseudonym). When questioned about the informality, a member of the leadership team explained, "That's what everybody calls him" (line 643) while another added, "He's not a formal kind of person" (line 644). One faculty member relayed a story of the president randomly stopping by her classroom one day and inviting students to come up to his office or call anytime. After he left, the instructor told the students that he really meant for them to stop by anytime and give him feedback or ideas on ways to better serve students. She said, "I've been here through four administrations and you could call the president right now. But with previous presidents, there have been layers of bureaucracy. And we didn't have that access" (lines 289-293). Informal communication and welcome access to the president was a significant thread found throughout the four focus groups at College A.

Anecdotal evidence during the focus group interviews included stories of how the president shares his cell phone number freely and welcomes questions as well as suggestions. He regularly participates in social media so he can stay informed on the public opinion of the college, and quickly responds when he finds negative publicity. Likewise, he hosts a weekly radio show, where he fields questions about the college, as well as maintains his own blog, where he shares progress on new initiatives at the college.

One of the tenets of Servant Leadership is that leaders have a deep seated need to serve a higher purpose. When the focus groups were asked what College A's common vision might be in a word or two, the responses mirrored the Servant Leadership mindset of the current president. One leadership team participant said, "To improve lives" (line 123) and another said, "Create an educated community" (line 124). A staff member said, "Student achievement" (line 29). A student said it was the faculty "Commitment" (line 36), while a faculty member said, "We care about our students" (line 24). Eventually, the focus groups all agreed it was student success.

The faculty view on shared vision was attributed to the president's leadership team. A member of the faculty described the relationship between the president and his team like this:

> (The) president's leadership team is a cohesive group in there, and that keeps him really informed of everything that is going on. But, he lets us know that we are capable of doing our job and doing what we are supposed to for the students. You know, and I think he trusts us and what we are doing. (lines 279-281)

The faculty were very complimentary of the president, but it was clear the president's leadership style empowered them. A faculty member commented, "He makes every person feel like the job that they are doing is the most important job on this campus, or a very intricate piece to the whole thing. It's every individual person and what every individual does" (lines 296-298). It was clear by some comments that this president expects accountability to accompany trust. One faculty member admitted such by saying, "Which, if you're not doing your job, can be bad" (line 299), "but that's good, too, for the rest of us" (line 301).

The change in College A over the past six years has been truly transformational. The only focus group to use the actual phrase "transformational leadership" was the leadership team, but the staff group described it eloquently when they spoke about the tax annexation hearings and vote and the role the new president played in the turnaround process. The staff referenced the president's prolific and compelling messages during the tax annexation hearings and how enticing it was to support the tax annexation. He said,

> If you had any feelings in your heart, you don't want to sit on the sidelines. You say, 'Hey, let's roll up our sleeves and let's do what we can and give it all we got.' And we saw that with him. Not only did he speak it, he showed us by example, and that's his leadership style: Servant Leadership. I've seen it time and time again. (lines 122-125)

Student Centeredness

Student Centeredness was fifth overall, but ranked third in terms of personal, fourth in the college and tenth in leadership. Similar to the Learning Centeredness category, being Student Centeredness really was a personal priority that faculty and staff either exhibited or not. One of the subcategories of Student Centeredness is Accessibility. One comment from a student at College A explained his classroom experience with faculty. He said, "I love the faculty. The faculty are always there for us…I can always go up and talk to them in their office after class. The faculty here are just great" (lines 6-8).

Student Success was another subcategory of Student Centeredness. When asked what a shared vision might be for College A, all four focus groups said it was Student Success. One faculty member explained,

> I see a focus on the student as our customer and their success is our number one thing. Our whole goal is to get them to their destination; their end destination; whether that be a one-semester certificate, or 60 credits for an associate degree and ready to go to another school. (lines 273-275)

Another subcategory was student engagement and purpose. College A had to eliminate many of the extracurricular programs because of financial constraints. As the budget allowed, they began to add clubs and organizations back into the student life portion of the college. Engaging the student body as a stakeholder has been important to College A. An example of this engagement was explained by one of the students, who explained how the leadership approached the Student Government Association to decide how to spend the student fee that was being collected. He said, “We actually had to make up (time) to get stuff done. We were on the committee when they were trying to decide what to do with the student fee” (lines 537-538).

Understanding that retention starts the minute a student walks into the door, the subcategory of Customer Service was discussed in the staff focus group. A staff person explained College A’s philosophy on customer service by saying, “First thing is, it’s about customer service, you all. I mean from the first day they come in the door, remember, there’s four other doors they could be walking in. So, that experience needs to be as positive an experience as possible” (lines 313-315).

Community Connected

Being Community Connected ensures the college is being responsive to its community. This category occurred seventh in overall frequency, but second as a college

priority. The idiom “many hands make light work” fits in this circumstance as the college’s connection to its community provides valuable direction.

One of the first initiatives the new president undertook was to expand the taxing district for the college. According to the leadership team focus group interview, “We had a taxing district that was sixteen – sixteen – that’s two digits – square miles when our service area was over 1800 square miles” (lines 527-528). All four focus group interviews referenced the tax referendum and the lengths to which the president and the leadership team went to educate the proposed district on the benefits. The student focus group noted,

> (The) community is dedicated to the college as well. We had this whole election thing about raising taxes so that College A could stay open, and they voted to raise their own taxes to pay so this school could stay open, (lines 125-127)

In the end, the referendum passed with over 56% voter approval, which brought a much-needed revenue stream into the college. By the time the focus group interviews had taken place, the president had been in office for two years. A member of the leadership team reflected on the amount of change, stating, “It’s daunting to know how much we’ve done in the last two years” (line 666). The most important thing, however, as explained by a member of the leadership team was, “Listen to the community, listen to the faculty, and listen to the students. LISTEN” (line 367).

The tax annexation is a prime example of the interrelation between the college and community. When the president began the annexation process, he reached out to the community for support. A faculty member shared her perspective on the community’s opinion of College A by saying, “I think the tax annexation thing…I think that’s when

the community really stepped up and realized what things would be like without us" (lines 158-159).

Trust

Trust was seventh in overall frequency, but sixth in the College priority, fifth in Leadership and seventh in Personal. Considering the college's recent history, it makes sense that Trust would rank higher in terms of Leadership than any other priority. The void the current president filled required that he rebuild some relationships and that required rebuilding trust.

The Strategic Plan at College A is the guiding document for the college. As a member of the leadership team said, "Any time he (the president) has an opportunity to give a presentation to a civic club or anything like that, he goes over our strategic goals with them so they know, too. And they can hold us accountable" (lines 448-450). And that accountability is measured by the widespread assessment that occurs at College A. As one of the members of the leadership team shared,

> We have a willingness to consider evidence about what's working and what's not. What needs to be done? There's a willingness to consider both that qualitative, compassionate side, and there's an insistence that we also need to be looking at quantitative types of data measures to have more evidence-based decisions, as to should we really do this or not? Is this really the direction? There is a combination of both things going on there. It's not all just the facts and here's the data or all just by the gut: 'I just feel it'. I think there's a good balance there. (lines 112-119)

Another subcategory of Trust was Respect. The faculty group discussed the supportive nature of the leadership. One faculty member explained how the faculty are

treated by the president. He said, “He lets us know that we are capable of doing our job and doing what we are supposed to for the students. You know, and I think he trusts us and what we are doing” (lines 279-280). Immediately following that statement, another faculty member said, “Yes, and (he is) respectful” (line 281), meaning the president both respects and trusts the faculty to do what needs to be done in the classroom.

This leadership team understood the value of maintaining a healthy relationship with the district, and shared how the college was a good steward of tax dollars. A member of the leadership team explained how they began to rebuild the message to the community by saying,

> One of the biggest charges I have is building community trust and buy-in for our institution. Especially, over the course of the last several years, we’ve had a lot to overcome. You know, even at one point, the community questioned at one point if we would even exist in the next year. And so, we’ve had to let the community know, not only have we been here since 1927, but that we are still relevant and we still intend to stay and you can trust us to provide a first class education. And, um, that plays into our strategic plan in the community trust and support. Which you know, leads to donors to financially supporting us as well. Which we desperately need. (lines 226-234)

Adaptability

Although Adaptability was eighth in overall frequency, it was seventh in College and Leadership and fourth in Personal priorities. When looking at the transcript notes that connect with this category, adaptability really related to the people who had to develop and implement processes in order to help the college move forward. Throughout the

interviews, the researcher heard repeatedly how members of the college assumed more responsibility in order to help the college succeed. One faculty member described the dedication of the faculty by saying, “Experienced faculty stepped up when they were needed” (line 13). At times, that meant that job duties were expanded temporarily or permanently in order to quickly make things happen. Subcategories for Adaptability are Appreciation and Approachability. A faculty member said, “We have an administration now that is very appreciative... it really does feel good when you are appreciated” (lines 74-76).

A student in the student focus group interview explained the approachability of the faculty and staff at College A by saying, “People always say who he (Dean of Students) is, and he’s’ real approachable, and people know they can go to him for anything. And they do. Students go to him all-the-time” (lines 498-499). The adaptability of the faculty was seen as a positive attribute and was explained by a staff member, who said,

> I’ve seen a lot of changes in the faculty. They do care about the students. We know the culture has changed with the students over the years. We talked about that earlier, and it’s the willingness to say, ‘Okay, this is what we have. Let’s see how we can make this work.’ (lines 23-26)

Adaptability at College A has been driven to a degree by the use of data that is compiled by Institutional Research. A staff person explained how the college has adapted to the use of data to make decisions, “I think the willingness to change to implement and entertain new ideas and to see what works. And if it works, let’s look at putting it into action” (lines 19-20). The staff member made special mention of the importance of

diversity, but was quick to explain that diversity was not limited to ethnicity or race, but also representation from other departments and disciplines. He explained, “When people bring their talents and experience to the table, the committee can work from those strengths” (lines 235-236). A member of the leadership focus group explained the transformative shift in the classroom as she explained the ATD professional development activities. She said, “With the faculty, you have across the curriculum active and cooperative learning initiatives that have really transformed learning” (lines 18-20).

Transparency

Transparency was ninth overall, eleventh for the College priority, ninth for Personal priority but fourth for the Leadership priority. College A has diligently worked to bring itself back to solvency, as evidenced by a 2014 college audit completed with no negative findings (“Sound Administrative Practices,” 2014). It further indicated a fiscal gain in excess of $100,000 when they projected a $1.7 million shortfall. The president gave complete credit for the reversal to his leadership team and the rest of the college for implementing internal accounting controls, fiscal restraint, applying for and receiving grant funding, and community support through fund-raising and donations. A local, well-known millionaire who attended the college also contributed a $5 million matching gift to the college. The president’s open praise of the college’s rank and file further exemplifies his leadership approach, which is one of total inclusion.

Part of the credit for the tone and tenor of meetings on campus is given to the president’s rules for behavior on his team. Early in his tenure, the president shared rules for the expected behavior of his leadership team, and these rules have trickled down into the rest of the college. One of the rules is, “Be nice or go home” (line 442), and another

was, "Let's debate with vigor, but at the end, let's come to a consensus and when we leave, we'll leave united" (lines 425-426). A member of the leadership team explained how the current administration views the value of communication by saying,

> Another characteristic that I think is important, is true of this administration, and perhaps not of others, is a high degree of transparency in communication. There are lots of meetings of the various stakeholders to clearly communicate this is what is being considered. To gather their input and feedback and to make people feel like they have a voice. That they are being heard. (lines 157-161)

The loyalty of the faculty, staff, and students toward the college leadership existed mainly because the leadership had purposely taken a transparent stance on the state of the college. During the focus groups, none of the interviewees hesitated to share the previously dire state of the college and the current relatively stable and positive state.

Teamwork

Teamwork was tenth overall. It ranked eighth for both College and Leadership priority and eleventh for the personal priority. College A was not a self-professed strengths-based college nor did they openly use Appreciative Inquiry. They did, however, intuitively use some of the inherent strengths concepts. There is little doubt that College A had to build teams quickly in order to implement strategies that would begin to turn the college around financially. The higher ranking of Teamwork for the College and Leadership priorities can be explained by the overall need to build cross-functional teams in order to implement strategies and evaluate their success.

When considering strengths-based teambuilding at College A, when the researcher asked specifically about the composition of standing college committees, the

SACS accreditation committees, and the ATD committees, the leadership team explained they had made purposeful decisions regarding the composition of committees and leadership. The personal strengths of each committee member were considered, as well as the goal to achieve equal representation from across the campus or across disciplines. This inclusive strategy acted as a natural way for internal stakeholders to be in the communication and decision-making loop. Another example of purposeful teambuilding was when the new president was hired. According to a member of the leadership team, “He cleaned (the) house when he got here (laughing)” (line 191).

The high level of support from the administration is appreciated by the faculty as they noted how willing the administration is to encourage faculty for a job well done and share their appreciation (lines 61-63). The faculty agreed that it “really does feel good when you are appreciated” (line 76). Another faculty member noted her appreciation of the administration for bringing professional development opportunities to the college by sharing new research about teaching methods (lines 42-44).

Positive Change

Positive Change was the last category in terms of frequency. It is likely that the concepts overlap with other categories, such as Appreciation and Servant Leadership. Positive Change was tenth for the College and Personal priorities and ninth for the Leadership priority. During the focus group interviews, the participants mentioned several times how the President and his team created opportunities to celebrate the hard work completed by the college. After registration, the leadership hosted a picnic for the staff who worked long hours getting students enrolled. As milestones were reached or elements of the strategic plan were achieved, the president publicly announced progress

and gave credit to the hard work of the college. This is an example of an overlap with the Appreciation category. This genuine recognition has helped to create buy-in from the rank and file of the college and gives them energy to continue to work toward achieving the next goal.

The staff expressed their appreciation for Positive change as they explained the end result of productive, honest communication that runs both up and down the chain of command. Inclusive communication ensures that staff members have everything they need to serve students effectively, and the positive results impact the students by creating a better learning environment. The resulting trust cascades down. As one staff member put it, “It goes both ways. It’s great” (lines 369-371). This intentional, inclusive communication was palpable across the college. The students mentioned having meetings with the president, so the president can gauge what is important to the students. As a result, they feel as if, “He really does listen to the students” (line 106). This is another example of an overlap between Student Centeredness and Servant Leadership.

The modeling of positive leadership by the president and his team has resulted in many college personnel openly supporting his initiatives. Throughout this process, the college faculty and staff were given the opportunity to experience the reward of being part of a team. The staff focus group admitted that the college sees “…increased production when people come together and work as a team” (lines 128-129).

Even though College A does not use Strengthsfinder as a tool to identify the personal strengths of its employees, the staff spoke to the innate use of considering employees’ strengths and assembling teams carefully to achieve optimal results. A member of the staff focus group said, “We put our strengths together so we brought a

stronger product” (lines 240-241). By combining efforts, a staff member said it makes them “…put away pride and it becomes interdependence instead of independence” (lines 244-245). One staff person admitted learning just by observing the president and how he has built a culture that is conducive to success and is a “morale booster” (line 250).

The staff and student focus groups spoke about times when the college united to accomplish a task. For instance, every spring the student government hosts a weeklong “spring fling” and hosts different campus-engaging activities every day, culminating with an outdoor celebration that includes food, games and fun. The staff as well as faculty, volunteer their time to help with spring fling. College A’s connection with the community is displayed by the volunteerism of faculty and staff for community events ranging from pancake breakfasts to marathons. College A strives to introduce the concept of service learning to their students by serving as role models.

When asked if there was a piece of advice the focus groups would like to share with another community college, the prominent responses included being honest, listening to others, and communicating effectively. The thread of accomplishing transparent communication was reiterated in every group. The staff perspective on communication was to be open and try to understand differing viewpoints. The reality that bad communication causes mistrust, just as good communication creates trust, was emphasized multiple times (366-371). The faculty and leadership team both stressed the need to form and maintain healthy community relationships and to feed those relationships. The community is the taxing district for the community college, after all, and should therefore be well informed about the college.

College B

College B is a small college located along the lower Mississippi Delta in the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) accreditation region. College B was chartered in 1965 with humble beginnings in a Naval Reserve building and 250 students. In 1968, permanent buildings were completed, and over time, buildings were added to satisfy the growing demand of students and programs.

Enrollment at College B had sufficiently increased over the years so that two campus locations were added to meet the community need. One campus, formerly a National Guard Armory, is 53 miles west of the main campus. They have three classrooms, a computer lab, office space and hands on training lab and offer a variety of career-technical courses, as well as general education courses. Another campus is 68 miles, also west of the main campus and offers programs for an emerging workforce in advanced manufacturing, computer sciences and renewable energy, as well as general education courses. The two extended campuses are 27 miles from each other.

College B is located in a city of 11,500 people, with a county population of only 18,777 (US Census Bureau, 2013). The region is very rural with mostly an agricultural economic base. The town once hosted four union batteries during the Civil War with a significant battle that could have turned the tide for the Confederate army, had they won. During the battle, African American and White soldiers fought side by side. After the war, however, the two groups returned to their respective sides of town and the racial divide has grown wider with time.

The population of the region increased as rail service was built in the early 1900's and the city became a terminal point. As the popularity of railroad travel waned, the

population of the area began to decrease, as did the small manufacturing that existed at the time. The city that hosts College B has many old, antebellum-style homes that date back to the mid-19th century - many of which are in disrepair. The region has a rich musical heritage that is celebrated with a summer music festival attended by tens of thousands of people who come to listen to the Mississippi blues. But while the region is rich with cultural, musical and historical significance, it does not have a strong economy. A once-thriving downtown now displays several blocks of closed storefronts. Civil War historical sites are well maintained, as are a few of the older homes, but the city is largely populated by lower-income residents with few new prospects of gainful employment.

The existence of College B in this region is critical to the educational and fiscal welfare of its citizens. While College A recently recovered from a serious fiscal crisis created by a past administration of mismanagement, College B has been consistently well-managed, but suffers the effects of chronic regional economic decay. College B is the smallest of the three colleges in this study, with a headcount of 4,066 and full-time equivalent of a little more than 25% at 1,151. Of the students enrolled, 70% are traditional age students (24 and younger). The median income for the area is only $22,807 with a 40% poverty rate (US Census Bureau, 2013). When looking at college-specific data, 50% of the student body is eligible for a grant or scholarship. Of the three colleges in this study, College B has the greatest percentage of students both receiving institution-based scholarships or grants (14%) and for a larger average amount ($1,903). College B also has a greater minority population (48%) than the other colleges (IPEDS Data Center, 2015).

Even with the smaller size and lower socioeconomic status, College B has higher first-to-second year retention rates than the other two colleges in this study, with 56% of first-year students returning. The overall graduation rate for College B is 25%, which is also higher than the other two colleges in this study. Comparatively fewer faculty are adjunct at College B, with 70 full time faculty and just 24 adjunct faculty. College B offers 13 degree programs and 31 certificate programs (IPEDS Data Center, 2015).

College B Findings

The researcher found eight positive collegiate elements that aided in the creation of a shared vision at College B. Table 7 shows the categories and subcategories that emerged from the data.

Table 7

College B: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing a Shared Vision

Category	Subcategories
Team building	Relationships, Respectful, Engagement, Expected to participate, Staff attributes, Collegiate purpose, Instructional support innovation
Loyalty	Caring, Commitment, Compassion/concern for students, Pride/positive regard, Retention
Servant leadership	Strengths-based leadership, Lead by example, Forward movement, Fiscal responsibility, Strategic decisions, Alignment of intention/purpose, Know faculty and staff well, Faculty adaptability
Stakeholder-input/community connection	Community engagement, Community support, Accessibility, Stakeholder input, Safe haven, History
Accountability/trust	Faced the brutal facts, Assessment, Demographics, Need for quality IR, Responsive, Data-driven results, Incentive, Positive forward planning
Communication/inclusion	Connectedness between divisions, Open Communication, Perspective from all areas, Appreciation of the college, Appreciation of faculty and staff, Pride/positive regard, Cooperation, United in efforts, Willing, Inclusion, Flat communication and feedback, Transparency
Student centeredness	Impactful, Service-learning, Learning centeredness, Learning through differences, Life skills learning,
Adaptability	College-wide Adaptability, Change, Flexibility, Progressive instruction

College B has two additional campus locations that are about an hour drive from the main campus. The other locations host a director, some student services, and academic program offerings. During the college visit, one focus group interview had a participant call in rather than drive back and forth which would ultimately take longer than the focus group interview. The conference call did not seem to inhibit the inquiry process. Table 8 shows the categories by the college priority and sorted from most frequent to least frequent.

Table 8

College B Frequency of Priorities

Overall Frequency		College Frequency		Leadership Frequency		Personal Frequency	
Communication	179	Communication	95	Servant leadership	51	Communication	34
Loyalty	112	Trust and accountability	79	Communication	50	Loyalty	27
Servant leadership	99	Community connection	69	Loyalty	27	Student centeredness	15
Trust and accountability	05	Loyalty	59	Teambuilding	25	Servant leadership	9
Community connection	92	Teambuilding	55	Community connection	19	Community connection	4
Teambuilding	78	Student centeredness	43	Student centeredness	18	Teambuilding	2
Student centeredness	76	Servant leadership	39	Adaptability	18	Trust and accountability	1
Adaptability	50	Adaptability	31	Trust and accountability	15	Adaptability	1

Communication

With three locations to juggle, it is no wonder that the most frequently mentioned category for College B was Communication. It was also ranked first for the College and Personal priorities. At College B, the Communication category really represented more inclusion and an integrated perspective. The leadership at College B practice inclusive communication by intentionally rotating meeting sites so that all the campus locations host meetings. They often will have meetings via conference call or by distance learning so that the personnel can participate without losing time in transit.

The two satellite campuses not only deliver instruction, but also offer financial aid, student services, library services and business office services at their sites, as well as house their own hierarchy of accountability. College B's upper administration, however, is located solely on the main campus. The need to have the three campuses working together is crucial for success. All three focus group interviews admitted that the three campuses were different in many ways. An example is the formality of addressing the personnel as explained by a member of the leadership focus group:

> ….Campus X is one of the campuses where most people …they call each instructor by their first name. And, you know, I was at a meeting not too long ago and they asked me what I thought of it and I said, that's a campus thing. (365-367)

Regular meetings are held by conference call, if the remote campus personnel cannot come to the main campus. They also cycle their cabinet meetings to each campus, as well as the college council meetings that meet quarterly (two will be held off campus, two will be held at main campus). A member of the leadership focus group explained, "We have

about a third of (Cabinet meetings) on another campus. And usually we have about four college council meetings. So, one or two of those are on another campus" (lines 639-642). Meetings that need to be referenced later or that have critical information are recorded and become available as a podcast, as explained one staff member:

> And one of things that they mentioned in Higher Learning meeting, which I really love, was they record the meetings and they are posted as a podcast so that if you weren't there, you can still play the entire meeting and really get a better feel than what you would get in minutes. And so it's posted immediately after the meeting where minutes are sometimes are delayed. I thought it was a great idea. (lines 683-687)

Sensitivity to the challenges of having multiple campuses and the need to intentionally include everyone in important decisions filtered throughout the college.

One subcategory of Communication is Perspective from all areas. An example of how College B considered varying perspectives was when they conducted initial data gathering for the College's strategic plan. In order to maintain consistency, the administration has had to be very intentional about including everyone in vital discussions. The leadership group discussed the steps to bring the college community together to conduct a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). Faculty and staff were very forthcoming in their responses, as explained one person in the leadership focus group,

> I think that people were brutally honest because there was a culture of safety that people knew that they could be honest and say what was on their heart for the good of the institution without fear of punitive retaliation. And I think that's

> extremely important because if you don't have that, open communication, then it hinders, you know, what the outcome is. And I think that comes from administration down. And I really believe if that wasn't there, that the strategic plan wouldn't have been this honest. (lines 84-89)

One of the leadership team members explained how the initial strategic initiatives were made relevant to the individual departments across campus. She explained the steps by saying,

> There were meetings around the academics and I think different areas aligned their conversations within either that structure or within our mission and vision framework. And that I think as a result, that allowed people to see it. I think we were able to make it relevant by doing that. (lines 453-456)

College B is not a large college and has a rather flat organization which allows for communication and feedback to occur quickly which helps foster a sense of transparency. The flat organizational structure ensures that there are few people to navigate to get to the decision makers. College B is able to achieve a connectedness between divisions because the leadership intentionally involves everyone who will be impacted by a decision to be a part of the discussion. College B readily admits they are least successful when they involve fewer people. Likewise, the ability to be honest and speak freely without fear was repeated in the staff focus group, when a staff person said, "And I think having those…that culture of free conversation is really important" (line 455).

Cross-divisional connections are necessary in order to deliver quality instruction with necessary support services. When people they are a partner and that their voice is

heard, they begin to feel included which helps to foster the pride and positive regard that was so evident at College B. A staff person explained how they work cooperatively,

> We have this patchwork of activities that are funded and this patchwork of things that are funded by passion. Because of the empowered leadership, because of the passion of the people who work on this campus, we are able to look at our… limited resources, and use them as effectively as possible. (lines 236-230)

The leadership models cross-divisional cooperation. One person on the leadership team explained that everyone in the college is expected to pitch in and help when needed. She explained, “And I think from my perspective, I always think you don’t ask somebody else to do something you’re not willing to do yourself (lines 426-428). She went on to list the different people on the leadership and staff who teach classes in addition to their regular non-faculty positions on campus.

All three focus groups at College B thought the transparent communication experienced was notable. The researcher also found that reportedly high level of communication and transparency was evident on the college’s website, as well. For example, nearly all requested archival documentation for this study was already on the website. The obligation to communicate within the college, as well as with the community, came up in the interviews several times. A person on the leadership team admitted, “The data holds us accountable to the community” (line 140). She also thought it showed the taxpayers that the college is a good steward of the public funding. She said, “I think that’s important that we’re transparent to the people we serve’ (line 143). Because of the widespread transparency, she said, “We’re respected in the community. People regard it as an important piece of the community” (line 29).

Loyalty

The second most frequently referenced category was Loyalty. Nearly everyone who works at College B lives in the district. The region is mostly rural, and the faculty and staff mentioned several times that they know their students and their students' families. Therefore, the faculty and staff are keenly aware of the socio-economic challenges that face some of their students. In addition to giving of themselves at the college, many faculty and staff also participate in local organizations to help support their community.

College B's version of Loyalty was as much to the community and the students as it was to the institution. The focus group participants spoke as if they realized that without the community, the college would not be necessary. Therefore, the level of caring, compassion and positive regard for their external stakeholders was evident. One staff person explained, "When I think of what College B is, I think of family. I guess because …it's strength and a weakness. I think we baby our students because we want to help them so much" (lines 10-11). The faculty understand the varied needs of their students. One faculty member commented, "We have to meet the need that the student has at that time" (line 61). The shared vision of student success permeates faculty and staff alike. One staff member explained, "We're moving towards that goal of trying to make sure our students are successful. We're giving them the resources… to start out. And the people who care enough to help them and support them to their goal" (lines 232-234).

Loyalty was first in the personal category. Throughout the focus group interviews, the participants spoke of the "special" nature of College B; of it being safe and common

ground for citizens of the district. They also acknowledged that this college was the only hope for a better life for many in their district. The loyalty to the college as well as the district was very much a personal priority.

Loyalty was third for Leadership and fourth in the College priority. The leadership at College B has been long-term and consistent. The President and his team were spoken of in the highest regard. The faculty and staff believed that the college leadership was authentic and were loyal to that leadership. Likewise, the focus group participants understood the unique and important role the college plays in the future of the district, and are therefore loyal to the institution as a whole, and the community.

Servant Leadership

The third most frequently referenced category is Servant Leadership. The President of College B had a long history with the college. He was hired as an English instructor in 1980 and rose through the ranks from Associate Dean to Dean to Vice-President of Instruction and eventually president in 2003. The focus group described the president with a great deal of respect. It was obvious to the researcher that the president knew his faculty and staff well and made decisions in consideration of the individual strengths of the person. College B is not a self-professed strengths-based college, however, the techniques used to create work teams are very much intuitively strengths-based. College B is in transition with retirements in key positions. A staff person explained that the leadership made staffing decisions by, “Trying to find the right person for the right place and then we try them in some facet of the operation” (lines 192-193),

meaning they hire with an eye to whether or not the person will fit in the college culture, and then try to find a place for them in the operation that will suit their strengths. .

The participants, across every focus group interview, expressed the utmost respect for the leadership team. Focus group participants frankly explained examples of how the president and his team strategically make decisions and that the leadership never expected their college personnel to do something they were not willing to do themselves. They shared examples that clearly displayed the times when the leadership team served the college in order to empower them to move the college forward. A faculty member explained how an influential leadership team member leads by example. She said,

> The thing that I think that Dr. Jones (pseudonym) has done fairly well and what made me think about my previous answer was the fact that whenever we had a handout that she gave us, it had all that stuff on it. You know, she would put the mission, the vision, the Achieving The Dream standards would be on it. She was very intentional about putting those things in front of us in the documents that we were reviewing and to guide those conversations. (lines 480-485)

Servant Leadership was first in frequency in the Leadership priority. The example set by the President flowed throughout the college. The adaptability of the faculty and staff to meet the needs of the students was discussed several times. The current leadership was once faculty/staff who were adaptable and tried to make sure to meet the needs of the college and students. A member of the leadership team explained the investment of the faculty/staff at College B to the institution, students and community by saying,

> Here people do stay and I imagine other colleges might be similar to us in that respect. But people stay here a long time, they start out in the classroom and

> really it's who's willing to do the work. And those people that are willing to go out and dig the ditches on the side in addition to teaching their classes are the ones that move ahead. A lot of them do get professional development on the side or enter formal programs that make them better qualified for advancement. But I think a lot of it is the leadership skills they develop within the institution by doing things. Like working in groups or you were doing lots of the alignment and you've been on a million committees and done (many things)…like two self-studies. (lines 440-448)

College B is far from affluent, but has managed to leverage resources and combine efforts so that everyone gets served. A faculty member explained the mindset of College B and their willingness to partner with one another. She said, "And we also don't have unlimited funds, you know to put these programs together. So, I mean, you have personnel that pour blood, sweat and tears into the things they do and with very little funding lines" (152-154). Using assessment to drive the strategic decisions has helped College B realize positive results. One of the faculty members explained, "It's helped us place our goals and actually work toward those goals" (225-226). The use of data helped improve academic programs, also. As another faculty member explained, "It wasn't necessarily that it was broken but that we can make it better" (lines 170-171).

Understanding the impact the college has on the community prompted one staff member to share his perspective. He said, "I would definitely say that… the biggest thing I see as a middle level administrator now is that there is a lot of potential" (lines 26-27). He went on to explain that the college could, "Pull together so many elements within our

communities and we really could take a leadership role in edifying these communities" (lines 28-30).

Trust and Accountability

The fourth overall category was Trust and Accountability. This category was second for the college priority. College B's work with ATD set the stage for part of the significance of this category as the college has been part of the program since 2007. Much of the early work of ATD centered around the collection and analysis of data in order to create and implement interventions. This long-term and systemic investigation no doubt has influenced the sense of accountability and trust for the college as a whole. Several times during the interviews, a statement would be made and the respondents would tell us, "The data told us it was true."

Most recently, College B has had to "face the brutal facts." One of the leadership team members explained how they began to realize a changing landscape and its potential implications. She explained,

> A sense of urgency was created for us, I think. You know, we saw our student numbers declining. We realized that many of the students we were getting were not testing into the college level classes, that they were needing developmental classes (lines 159-161). Everyone (the public school system and the college system) realized we were all in this together and we had to do something. (line 165)

In the Leadership priority, Trust and Accountability was last but was offset by Servant Leadership as first in frequency. The bookend positions of the two categories were significant to how the leadership shepherded the college. The president modeled

Servant Leadership for the rest of the college. He served the college and the community and ultimately trusted the rest of the college to do their jobs in support of student success. Through assessment and analysis, the college progressively made data-driven improvements that not only support student success but also the strategic planning initiatives. It was not always easy, as one of the faculty members looked back on their initial meetings with the ATD liaisons. She said,

> When we joined ATD, we weren't negative, but they asked us how we were in something and we'd say, 'terrible'. They would ask, 'Well, how do you do that'? And we would answer, 'We really don't do that so well'. They said they'd never had a team that thought they did everything poorly ….but it was like, it's time to wake up. (lines 170-173.

Trust and accountability was seventh as a personal priority. Statements that supported the personal priority of Trust and Accountability involved assessment and responsiveness to student needs and working toward data-driven results. When College B began the painful process of gathering data, one faculty member said, "It was very painful when you think you're doing something and others see it differently" (lines 168-169). She went on to explain,

> It was a painful process when we first started gathering all this data. And, (it was painful) being very honest with ourselves as a faculty and staff about what was going on and what the data was showing (lines 121-123). And ultimately, we all kind of ended up on the same page. Even though we may have started, you know, at very different ends of the spectrum, it all boiled down to student success. (lines 99-100)

Putting the data into perspective and joining forces to creating interventions required cross-divisional partnerships. One staff person explained that the process was not automatic, but required time, energy and cooperation. He said, “You got to take time to stop, think, talk through some issues and be strategic about how you proceed” (lines 89-90). The leadership team at College B has tried to maximize the impact by aligning objectives, so committee work can serve more than one purpose. Widespread faculty involvement in the goals and objectives has helped College B stay focused. When asked about their committee structure, a member of the leadership team explained,

> The strategic planning and higher learning commission people are different….some of them are the same. ATD is a specific group because it is tied to developmental education and First Gateway Focus. STEM is yet another group. The Dev Ed teachers - but some of the College Algebra or science teachers are involved with that. So, there are enough things going on out there that in some area of focus, no matter what the focus of the grant is, you’re going to have a lot of faculty involved. (lines 562-568)

A staff member explained the process they use when planning. She said, “You have to have some kind of data to show that this was a service that would be positive for our students and we needed this” (lines 105-106). In the end, the staff member admits that on a personal level, the use of data has been useful. At College B, the data provided a higher purpose. She said, “They didn’t just get through all this data and set it on a shelf. They actually try to see what we can take from this to make it better for our students” (lines 107-109).

Community Connected

All three focus groups mentioned the historical significance of College B's impact on the district. As described earlier, the community that houses College B has an antebellum feel with a division being originally along racial lines but more recently along socio-economic lines. From the beginning, College B sought to break down the barriers that divided the populace and invited everyone to the college. Fifth in frequency was Community Connected. It was third for the College priority and fifth for both Leadership and Personal priorities.

Facility usage for community meetings is one way the college supports its district. When asked how a connection is made, a staff member simply said, "The way it works most places is they pick up the phone and call the one person they know that works at the college (lines 341-342). Another staff member agreed and said, "I know that sounds very informal but that's how a lot of things happen in our small community. You know, whoever they know at the college, they call" (lines 344-345). They continued, "That person, if they can handle what the request is, they will. If they can't, they usually find someone who can. They move up the chain of command, you know" (347-349).

The college also supports the volunteerism of the college employees into the community. The campus champion told the researcher that the President believes in the time investment of civic engagement, and has given permission for faculty and staff to participate in community boards and councils, even if means they need to take time out during the day to attend a meeting. One staff person explained that, "We also have an advisory board to pinpoint that. But, you know, with the example that you gave like the Boys and Girls club, a lot of times it's people involved who contact the college" (lines

349-351). A staff member continued, “We have so many people here that actually are involved on other committees and a lot of volunteer work. We’ve got this big thing about volunteering (lines 366-367). (The community) will call the college to say that they need people to do certain things and everyone works well together” (lines 369-370).

Service Learning opportunities for the students to volunteer in the community are another way in which College B is community connected. As a member of the faculty explained,

> One component of that strategic plan is community. And I’ve heard several faculty from different divisions say they’re building in community service as a part of that course experience. And I think that’s really important and I think that’s good that the faculty are involving students in that so that hopefully they will stay in this community and help build the community. (lines 386-390)

Because of the historically significant artifacts of the region, College B has been a partner in preserving as much local history as is possible. The College Foundation was bequeathed a dilapidated but impressive 1896 mansion which has been completely restored through the joint efforts of the college and community. It now serves as a tourist destination as well as a site for meetings and retreats. When co-sponsoring an event on campus, a staff member explained, “We don’t charge anything for (the use of the building) so, generally they will put our name and their name together on the promotional materials. You know, it’s kind of like a partnership. But we do that in everything” (lines 375-377). Other examples of how the college maintains its community connection occurs every October, when the town hosts its annual Blues Festival. The Blues Festival is huge and hosts Delta Blues with big name headliners, multiple stages and food and craft

vendors. The focus group participants discussed the Blues Festival and all the many ways in which the college supports the community event.

Teambuilding

The sixth most frequently noted category was that of Teambuilding. Teambuilding was fourth for the Leadership category, fifth for the College priority and sixth for the Personal priority. The fourth place ranking for leadership is due in part to the Servant Leadership-like attitude of respectful engagement of all people. An example of respectful engagement occurred when the leadership realized their African American male population had a strikingly higher attrition rate than other demographics on campus. A staff member explained, “But there wasn’t a solution for that. The staff came together and they are working on that solution and they are doing a really good job” (lines 126-128). The African American Mentoring group has seen promising results because of the collective efforts of a team.

Through the focus groups, the researcher learned that the president and his leadership team truly know their college culture and the different personalities involved. When building teams, councils or committees, the president is often involved and will craft a team based on the unique abilities of the people involved. Committees are a mixed blessing to faculty and staff. A staff person explained her experience by saying,

> They started asking people to serve on the committees or you’re appointed. You know, they will say “invite you to the meeting”. And they keep inviting so you begin to feel obligated. But I do think that they are trying to reach every division and have representation from all of the divisions. (lines 247-250)

If a committee or council needs additional participation, it was common for the president or one of his designees to request a specific person who could be beneficial to the cause. Volunteers with an interest in a particular committee or council were always welcome, but overall structure and participation was very thoughtfully created.

When projects require large numbers of teams or members, as in the organization of Student Orientation, College B's culture has an expectation that everyone has a role. A staff person explained how this happens:

> I think they get involved with student orientation in a way that is, you know, amazing. And I think also with our special events activities. I mean, you know, when we have like Spring Fling, a lot of the people that will be out there will be our staff members. They do all sorts of things for the students. And the truth is, in terms of connection to the student, I never know who that's going to be. It might be a faculty member or an advisor, it might be a maintenance person that that person sees every day and is comfortable with. And so it's important for everybody to feel included. On that one day during Orientation, we all have our shirts on, we're all standing there... And I think we do all feel connected, I think, in a way that everybody's important to our students. (lines 351-359)

A member of the leadership team said, "We always do decision-making by teams" (line 137). The staff focus group said, "It's not a few people making the decisions that we need to do this and we need to do this. It's the people who can see if it's working that have an input" (lines 22-23). Another staff person agreed and said,

> It's better than just a handful of people making all of the decisions. That's the way I feel. I like it better when more people have input instead of just a few.

> And it's gotten to the point now that they use a committee to make decisions, rather than just a few people. Now, the recommendations may not go through different channels. But at least at one point in time, they are consulted. (lines 264-269)

The same approach to decision-making occurs in curricular matters, as well. When looking at academic program completion and placement, the faculty often use a team approach to look at the student data. The relationships among the faculty and leaders involved in the analysis are crucial to the success of the end product. One of the faculty explained the benefits by saying, "We used this data, we made this change and now we have a better result because of it. And so, I mean, you know, you can track that progress and it really does make a big difference" (lines 235-237).

Many on the leadership team were former faculty. In some ways, they still consider themselves part of the faculty, but with administrative responsibilities. The leadership at College B believes in providing as much instructional support for innovation as possible. One person on the leadership team said,

> We do have leadership responsibilities but we also value what it means to be a teacher. And so we haven't removed our self from that. So it's in our face every day. You know, just like it is to the faculty and I think that lets the faculty respect us for that. I really do and I think because they know we're in the trenches with them that they look to us for leadership. You know, how can I…how can I make this class better or there's more of a sense of collegiality that we are all in it together. (lines 430-435)

Student Centeredness

Student Centeredness is the seventh most frequently noted category overall. Student Centeredness is third for the personal priority and sixth for both college and leadership. Even though the staff group agreed that the common vision for College B was "student success" (line 58), the amount of personal investment that the faculty and staff put into creating a Student Centeredness learning environment was admirable. Being Student Centeredness was not exclusively limited to the classroom and instruction.

Because the region in which College B is located is rural and without available mass transit for the citizens, many of the students are not exposed to people who are different than themselves. The staff focus group interview discussed the value of learning through differences. A very simplistic example a staff person shared was in terms of the multiple campuses. He said, "We are a three campus college and there's diversity coming to the campuses and I'm not just thinking of race" (line 82). He continued, "Each little community has their own personality and their own agenda and their own power structure and everything else" (lines 83-84). In his opinion, the faculty/staff and students benefited when the campuses interacted.

The faculty focus group spoke frankly on the need to teach basic life skills to some of the students in their classes. Habits that work contrary to student success were innate to some of College B's students. Creating opportunities to teach life skills, employability skills, and basic elements of self-responsibility were discussed at length by the faculty focus group. A faculty member asked her colleagues, "How many of our students (that) we deal with (need help with) life skills? (group in unison: yes) Teaching them how to be a better person" (149-150). She continued to explain, "I've had students

that come to class in their pajamas and their ‘out-do’s’. You know, you don’t do that” (lines 157-158). Another faculty member spoke of the need to teach everyday work ethic. He explained how he sometimes has to teach his students how to plan ahead. As if he were talking to a student, he said, “Yes, if you are going to work you have to do x, y and z. And this is ….the thing you’re gonna have to get better at” (lines 181-182).

In order to be successful, students need to stay in school. The staff focus group interview discussed retention techniques that support the learning environment in the classroom. One new initiative at College B was an African American Male Mentoring program. The program was fairly new, but they were seeing promising initial results.

College B staff felt very confident in the knowledge that they impact the lives of their students. The staff discussed the definition of a student, because College B is a community college which has a wide breadth of services to the community, a staff member explained, “As a community college, our definition of what a student is includes all different types of students” (lines 65-66). He went on to explain that some students are here voluntarily, and other students are not. Another staff person explained, “Students are referred from our department…from human services for certain activities” (lines 67-68) which may make them less than cooperative. One thing for certain, according to the staff focus group, is that the student is the main priority at College B. A staff member explained, “And I do think that we listen to our students as far as what they need and what they want” (line 29). An example of being Student Centeredness came from a faculty member who remembered reading student evaluations after Student Orientation. She said, “There were comments and things that they put where they said that everybody

was so friendly, people came out of their offices. It was like that whole day was about me" (lines 73-75). This feedback was exactly what College B was striving to see.

As stated earlier, the Servant Leadership style that is modeled by the President flows down throughout College B. One example of that is the intention shift to a more Learning Centeredness stance. Learning Centeredness was one of the subcategories of Student Centeredness. A member of the leadership team explained, "We changed our vision, values and mission statement about three years ago, but it's really at the forefront of all we do" (lines 44-45). One of College B's value statements is that they value students. The leadership team member continued, "that it was all about student integration and it was all about the interaction" (lines 52-53). A faculty member supported this and said, "It's almost a personal issue that we want them to be productive in our community" (lines 40-41).

Adaptability

Adaptability was the eighth concept in terms of frequency. Adaptability ranked eighth for the College and Personal and seventh for the leadership priority. College B understands the need for improvement, and seems to be on board with collecting and analyzing data and then making necessary changes to support student success. When serving students and constantly assessing and analyzing results, colleges need to be adaptable to implement their interventions. College B's focus group interviews emphasized that they make changes based on data; that data drives change at their institution; and that decreases in funding and enrollment have created an environment where colleges must seek outside funding and that adds another layer of accountability.

Overall, College B exhibited an obligation to be of service to their community, and the service attitude seemed to trickle down from the president to the members of the focus groups. Understanding the student body and making the commitment to work with them in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom on life skills, service learning, and mentoring exemplifies College B. The focus group participants coined it as “the school that brings hope.”

A very simple example college-wide adaptability was the adoption of a four-day class schedule. Being intrigued, the researcher asked to learn more about it. A staff member said, “I think that works great for the meetings and everything. That way they (faculty) don’t have to try to work around their class schedules and everything. I think that works very well” (lines 320-322). Another example of flexibility and change was the number of councils and committees. A staff member said, “But it’s much better now that we did away with some of the extra teams that …. And the teams are smaller. Because the work gets done” (lines 270-280). The leadership team gave an example of the degree of flexibility and cross-divisional cooperation when they discussed the budget for Student Orientation. There was no actual budget set aside for the activity, but the college felt it was important. Because of this, they pooled their resources from many budgets, and were able to fund it. A member of the leadership confirmed by saying, “And people are receptive. There’s no budget for Student Orientation and yet how much you spend?….($15,000)” (lines 599-600).

Within the classroom, adaptability in the form of progressive instruction occurs. A faculty member explained how she justifies all the work that goes into Program Reviews and all the assessment activities they do in the classroom. She said,

> You remember what they (the student) did to get there. And I think it does make a difference to me. And I think that's what makes it why we go to things and why we do and why we keep changing curriculum. That's why we keep doing assessments and why we keep doing all these things is because we know that ultimately it has, that's our end result is to see that. (lines 132-136)

Being able to share ideas from conferences has been beneficial to College B, also. A member of the leadership team said, "I think that partly benefits having the same people involved in so many different things. Because you may be going to a conference for some other purpose but then you can say, hey, we can bring this in or this in" (lines 556-558). The fact that College B is an ATD college, plus has the benefit of several other grants that allow additional professional development opportunities makes them more prone to being adaptable. A staff member explained his interpretation of the change culture at College B and his understanding of why it exists. He said,

> That I think it is important is the ability to work across different groups and divisions and campuses. And not that other schools haven't gotten along or done it well, they just haven't had to do it as much. And with all the different grants that we have and all the different students success pieces that we put in, you have to cross those…the groups have to work together because it's all going towards that similar goal. And so it's not just having everybody involved working in their own department, it involves…..everybody involved together. (lines 573-578)

College C

College C began when two neighboring counties in the upper New England portion of the United States were considering higher education options and decided to

partner to sponsor a new community college. College C opened in a renovated high school in 1968 with 133 students and eventually moved to permanent facilities in 1974 with expectations to serve over 1,000 students.

College C is located in a rural, yet populated, area in the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools accreditation region. The college is nestled between two cities that have a total population of 33,911 and a combined county population of 152,593 citizens. The region has four major universities within a 20-mile radius - one of which is an Ivy League institution enrolling over 21,000 students. The average household income in College C's service area is $60,000 with only a 9% poverty rate.

College C's regional demographics show a higher standard of living than both College A or B, but 80% of their students are still eligible for federal needs-based student financial aid. This seemed strange to the researcher, so she returned to the Dean of Organizational Success and Learning, (who also functioned as the campus champion at College C) to clarify. She explained that the county that houses the college also houses the Ivy League university. Excluding the city that houses the community college and the Ivy League university, the rural parts of that county and the all of the sister county that supports College C are much less affluent. College C is also part of a state-wide system that allows students to attend any community college in the state for the same tuition rate. For this reason, they recruit students from all over the state to attend their community college. She also explained that just over half of their enrollment is from the two hosting counties, and the rest of their enrollment is from the contiguous counties and rest of the state (personal communication with a college official, 2015). Only 5% of the student

body at College C gets campus-based financial aid, but the average amount of the awards is higher ($2055) than of the other two schools.

College C has 9,373 students with an FTE of 3,884. Most of its student body is white (73%), followed by African Americans (8%) and Hispanics (7%). Most of the students who attend College C are traditional students (82%). Their first-to-second year retention rate is 53%, which is very similar to the other two colleges in the study. Likewise, the graduation rates of all three colleges hover in the 20% range, with College C at 22%.

The full-time: part-time faculty ratio is drastically different than the other two colleges, though, as College C has sixty-nine full-time faculty and two hundred and eighty part-time faculty, due in part to the luxury of having four major universities in the immediate area, which creates a ready pool of adjunct instructors. When asked how the college went about fostering some kind of institutional loyalty with such a high number of adjunct instructors, the Dean of Institutional Success and Learning explained strategies the college has employed to help foster that connection to the institution. These included:

- Shared office space and additional private space in which adjuncts can meet with students; they provide clerical support;
- An adjunct pool with a dedicated coordinator in the Teaching and Learning Center to work specifically with these faculty members;
- Two designated seats on the Career Technology Center board;
- Two designated seats on the college’s staff governance body (Forum);

- A formal invitation to participate in all faculty meetings and college-wide meetings and staff retreat days;
- Support for an inclusion in professional development opportunities including the payment of registration fees for all interested adjuncts to attend the college sponsored regional teaching conference;
- Tuition waiver for classes taught at the college and a formal compensated mentoring program.

The Dean also said that about half of the tenure-track faculty were hired from the adjunct pool. The investment in the adjunct faculty was similar to the investment in the full-time faculty and staff.

Over time, College C has embraced new and innovative changes that were not common for community colleges at the time. For example, they were one of the first community colleges in their state to have on-campus housing for students. They added two extension centers in neighboring towns to house specific programs. One of the extension centers houses a Farm-to-Bistro program, where Sustainable Agriculture and Culinary Arts partner to offer a program that provides hands-on experience in every aspect of the food-production system. The college has a sustainable organic farm on its premises and a bistro in the college’s off-campus culinary center that is equipped with learning labs. The labs are used for workforce training and are taught by professionals who have studied worldwide. The facilities not only house the bistro, but also have space for public or private events. The other extension center offers traditional career technical courses, as well as general education coursework.

College C has a very well-developed Global Initiatives program that works with more than fifty countries around the globe. The program began when a faculty member was contacted by Disney World in Florida to start a partnership to host international students working at Epcot Center while also being in the US to go to college. The one contact grew into a full-fledged exchange program that not only brings students from other countries to College C to study, but also has fully articulated associate degrees that allow a student to return to their home country and still complete an associate degree with College C. The Summer Intensive English Institute is another unique program, which allows professional adults from other countries to travel to College C during the summer to participate in targeted language training, as well as to gain professional development and develop cultural awareness.

Not only does College C actively welcome students from other countries to its campus, but it also hosts faculty-led trips abroad. The trips are usually short-term and educationally oriented to allow students to gain college credit for the experience. For instance, a frequently offered trip to Ireland focused on history and literature, and an interested student could gain a total of six credit hours. Trips abroad vary in terms of countries and topics covered, but according to College C’s website, a total of five trips abroad are offered during a typical spring semester.

College C is a self-professed strengths-based college. The researcher chose this college as a contrasting institution as it was highly recommended as an institution with long-term use of Strengthsfinder and Strengthsquest and experience with Appreciative Inquiry, as well as exemplary planning processes.

The college leaders shared with the researcher that the president and vice-president learned of Strengthsquest in separate meetings about ten years ago, and they came back to the cabinet excited to explain this new tool. When they realized they were both speaking about the same thing, their excitement was of equal value. They knew this was something they needed to investigate. About 70-75% of entering freshmen take Strengthsfinder as part of the Strengthsquest program. Strengthsfinder is the assessment tool and Strengthsquest is the online presence, created by the Gallup Corporation. Strengthsquest houses the descriptive elements and exercises available to learn and maximize personal strengths. All faculty and staff are encouraged to take the Strengthsfinder, as well, but it is not mandatory.

College C Findings

The researcher found eight positive collegiate elements that aided in the creation of a shared vision at College C. Table 9 shows categories and subcategories that emerged from the data.

Table 9

College C: Positive Collegiate Elements That Aid in Developing a Shared Vision

Category	Subcategories
Servant leadership	Strengths-based leadership, Caring culture, Valued, Respected, Empowerment, Supportive leadership, Fiscal responsibility
Student-centeredness	Student engagement, Student success, Opportunities for students, Learning through differences, Communication between students
Communication	Open communication, Collegial, Purposeful communication and feedback
Teamwork	Collaboration, Flat organization, United in Efforts, Investment in Faculty/Staff, Incentive for Faculty/Staff professional Development
Community connectedness	Listening to Stakeholders, Connected via Relationships, Celebrate Achievements,
Trust/accountability	Trust Building, Assessment, Transparency
Adaptability	Flexibility, Positive Attributes of Flexibility, Progressive Improvement
Loyalty	Maintain the Culture, Buy-in/Like-Minded, Commitment, College Environment, Appreciation of the College,

As with Colleges A and B, the researcher used a frequency count to identify the most referenced topics and to give a structure to the presentation. Table 10 shows the categories by the college priorities of College, Leadership, and Personal categories.

Table 10

College C Frequency of Priorities

Overall Frequency		College Frequency		Leadership Frequency		Personal Frequency	
Loyalty	448	Loyalty	245	Loyalty	125	Loyalty	78
Servant leadership	266	Teamwork	127	Servant leadership	122	Servant leadership	43
Teamwork	188	Servant leadership	122	Adaptability	58	Teamwork	20
Community connectedness	165	Community connectedness	116	Trust and accountability	53	Student centeredness	14
Adaptability	142	Student centeredness	82	Communication	49	Community connectedness	14
Student centeredness	134	Adaptability	75	Community connectedness	45	Communication	13
Trust and accountability	134	Trust and accountability	74	Teamwork	41	Adaptability	8
Communication	128	Communication	66	Student centeredness	34	Trust and accountability	5

Loyalty

The most frequently mentioned category for College C was Loyalty. All of the focus group interviews mentioned the unique culture and environment that exists at College C. A member of the leadership team stated, “The stability of the employment within the college is very important” (lines 383-384). He added, “For those who have been here long-term, really have a pretty clear sense of the culture and a buy in to the

culture" (lines 420-421). The leadership team spent a good amount of their focus group interview time explaining the importance they place on the college's culture. Hiring decisions are made with the college culture in mind. One of the faculty members explained her perception of the process:

> I think we put a lot of effort into finding good people and identifying them and all that…but I have to think other schools do that too, so I'm not really sure whether we attract great people or if people self-select out of here if they don't fit into this culture. (lines 189-191)

When asked how Strengthsquest/Strengthsfinder came to be at College C, the faculty focus group clearly gave the president and his leadership team the entire credit for the process. He understood the value of professional development and realized that if he and his leadership team wanted to truly have a strengths-based institution, they would need continuing professional development. Therefore, he contracted with the Gallup Corporation to have trainers visit the college. The faculty member explained,

> After he formed that new six team/two vice presidents organization, I think he recognized that…that there really needed to be some assistance is making sure that the gears were well-oiled and worked well together and I know that she's been here a lot and worked with individual people as well as groups, teams, and the whole group. (lines 678-682)

College C's leadership believes that every single employee should feel valued and should have the opportunity to have input into any decision they choose. Likewise, they believe that every person associated with the college should have the opportunity to develop their individual talents, and that includes all students as well as faculty, staff, and

leadership. An example of this individualized attention was mentioned by a staff person, who said, “We have a culture of taking those strengths and really fitting people to the right seat on the bus and it’s created a common language among all of us as faculty and staff and it helps us to work better together” (lines 12-14). When asked what happens if a person is not involved with Strengthsquest, a leadership team member said, “my reaction was, ‘Well, isn’t everybody’? That we have that expectation that everybody is involved. And when they’re not, we’re looking to help them be a part of that” (lines 425-426).

The collegiate commitment to Strengthsquest and Appreciative Inquiry in ingrained across the board. The common vision of student success (line 252). is possible because, although College C is the largest in the study, it is not as large as some community colleges. The small size helps to ensure there is individual attention given to a person’s strengths, that the students feel they are important to the college and that the college is there to help them embrace their individual talents and be successful. The leadership and staff focus groups doubted that such an atmosphere would be possible if it were not for the buy in of the whole college, which created a sort of strengths passion that permeates the college. College C understands, however, that they did not arrive at this culture overnight. The faculty and staff groups readily shared that the leadership has a faithful following throughout the college. Other colleges who want to have a similar culture need to understand that such a culture does not happen overnight. As a staff person at College C explained, “it takes a while to develop that culture and you get to the point and I think many community colleges (throw ideas away before they can ripen and become viable) (lines 516-518).

Loyalty to the college and the leadership was very evident during the focus group interviews. The internal constituents felt as if the college invested in them, therefore, they became invested in the college. Staff felt valued and as though their voices were heard, faculty felt appreciated for the classroom instruction and their investment in their students, and the leadership appreciated the collegiality across the college. Although the leadership has no plans to retire as of the focus group interviews, many of the upper administration have many years in higher education, and retirement in the near future is possible. The leadership, faculty and staff focus groups voiced their fears that new administration would not value the strengths-based culture that exists. A member of the faculty said,

> I hope that whoever is making those decisions, at all different levels, really thinks about the culture of this college and what works so well and making sure that we bring in people who will carry that forth into the next generation, because it would be horrible if we got, you know, some of the kinds of people that you have talked about at other places...it would…this place would be…just grind to a halt, I think, because people would be just horrified and not know how to deal with it. (lines 569-573)

Servant Leadership

The second most frequently referenced category was Servant Leadership, which was second for both the Leadership and Personal priority and third for the College priority. The president’s leadership style as well as the college’s culture was reflected in this category. The fact that the president knew each employee by name and brought birthday cards to their office to have a short 5-minute chat and wish the employee a

happy birthday and thank them for a job well done was repeated several times throughout the focus group interviews. The approachability of the president and his leadership team was mentioned several times during the interviews. One of the faculty members explained,

> The other thing is that we do…our president is Mike (pseudonym), he's not Dr. Smith (pseudonym), he's not Mr. Smith (pseudonym)…he's Mike. And we go to his home, we've both been to his home, he's met your daughter, he's met mine. We are…we are quite an open organization and that's evident even in the events that we do because that brings…brings our stakeholders closer to us and it provides them the comfort and security to be open with us. (lines 410-414)

Everyone used first names. Never did the researcher hear someone address one of the leadership team as "Dr." or "Mr." or "Ms". Everyone used first names which eliminated the invisible walls of propriety at College C. Likewise, the president is, as one faculty member said, "Completely 110% invested in this college and that's...I think that's really had a tremendous impact on our growth" (lines 73-75).

The president makes a point of serving the college and its employees. He and his leadership team were respectful to one another as well as the other faculty and staff, and they shared their appreciation of the college family. An example of this is the Welcome Back meetings that are held prior to the start of a new semester. One of the faculty members explained how the president conducts the meeting. She said,

> Mike gives an update or the provost can do that sometimes. You know, they welcome all the new staff people…have them get up and introduce themselves and it's so…we're a small enough place that stuff like that can happen and still

> be…you know, like…do I know absolutely everyone that works on this campus? No…but pretty darn close. (lines 594-597)

Likewise, the faculty and staff emulate that behavior in service to the students. Developing relationships is encouraged at College C, both among staff and faculty to students, as well as student to student. College C takes great lengths to make students feel welcome from the moment they enter the building. A staff person explained her perception of the culture:

> I would echo is that the culture is…it's like an envelope so to speak…You will touch part of it—of that strengths-based culture—if you walk in these halls long enough. Day one I was introduced to strengths and I think a number of our employees are, as well as our students now, and it has created that opportunity for students to recognize the commonality with someone that may be either their advisor or a coach or friend or another student in class. (lines 20-24)

The leadership at College C went to great lengths to show their appreciation of the faculty and staff. A staff member explained the role Institutional Research plays in maintaining the work environment. She said, "I think that helps us all, and I mean, IR collects data on our faculty/staff survey every year. One of the questions on there is about how do you feel comfortable in your office environment" (lines 284-286). Staff felt trusted, valued and that they were given opportunities to grow and be innovative at their job. Pains were taken at College C to create a safe, caring environment for everyone. Just as Strengthsquest emphasized the importance of self-reflection to growth, the college also uses self-reflection in the form of data to continue to improve. The college utilized tools such as Appreciative Inquiry, Strengthsquest, surveys of student engagement, Jim

Collin's (2001) work as well as other data gathering instruments to gather and synthesize data in order to make empowering decisions.

Economically, College C had to make difficult budgetary decisions, also. In the spirit of Servant Leadership, though, they looked at where their strengths lie as a college and then made strategic decisions about how to financially support areas. One of the staff persons explained:

> The college makes the effort to invest in each and every one of us and they do it through not cutting our professional development when they could be and choosing, very deliberately, who they want to invest in, and I feel very, very valued. I feel valued that I had access to our president, our deans…that this is an open-door place and everybody has a say and it's all important. It doesn't matter where you are within this organization. That you have a say. (lines 560-565)

Ultimately, the college chose to financially support professional development for their faculty and staff and to continue to support services to students. As people retired, the college strategically decided whether or not to refill positions. Using the strengths model, the college did not have to undergo reductions in force.

Teamwork

The third most frequent category was Teamwork. It was second for the College priority, third for Personal and seventh for Leadership. Collaboration was widespread at College C. Finding the "right person" for open positions required cross-departmental hiring committees. One of the staff members explained, "We really need input from a bunch of people and a bunch of perspectives when we're adding somebody to this team" (lines 202-204). As stated before, the culture at College C is very open and collaborative,

so interdisciplinary and cross-functional committees are very common. Decisions are made with lots of feedback from many sources, and overall the leadership was very transparent. A staff person explained, “One of the things that is very distinctive about the college that we do have a sense of trust and as much transparency as is possible so people at least have the opportunity to be well informed (lines 21-23). Collaboration was similar to the subcategory of United in Efforts, except the latter was more about overall college principles, such as collegiality at all levels, and being guided by an appreciative and strengths-based philosophy, high amounts of communication, and student success.

College C was by design a very flat organization. There were few layers of bureaucracy at College C, so access to leaders involved fewer people to navigate. A faculty member explained her experience:

> I’m thinking how much things have evolved in just the four years that I’ve been here. And I think it’s largely due to that collaborative piece. I think the way I’ve heard a lot of people describe College C is a pretty flat organization (lines 275-277). That collaboration is almost ingrained…I mean…it may be unique to my position, but I’m serving on multiple different groups to get those touch points with student life, with enrollment services, with the faculty and with leadership council. (lines 281-283)

For this reason, communication flowed easily and people felt informed which encouraged trust and transparency. From the Personal priority viewpoint, Teamwork encouraged conversations to grow into ideas that were implemented. Faculty and staff were encouraged to reach outside their positions to try new things which created a great deal of institutional learning.

Both personally and as a college, connections were seen as important and similar to family, where a distinct culture of respectful collaboration existed that may be unparalleled at most other institutions. It was noted that the amount of collaboration that existed at College C was slow but very effective in bringing people together.

Councils and committees use the appreciative process and copious amounts of data. Decision-making at College C was done via conversations about data that was gathered all over campus. The high degree of involvement in the data gathering and analysis helped gain stakeholder input in decisions.

Community Connectedness

Community Connected was fourth in terms of overall frequency as well as for the College priority. It was fifth in the Personal priority and sixth for Leadership priority. Perhaps the most prevalent thread throughout this category was the college-wide belief in their responsibility to their taxing district. A faculty member gave several examples: “People view this as a community place and a lot of people come here” (lines 432). “I come on Wednesday nights and then my daughter swims in the pool and it’s families with their kids” (lines 433-434). “We allow senior audits so senior citizens can come and take a class for free if there’s space. And, we get really nice attendance at a lot of our athletic events because we have great facilities” (lines 435-437). It was clear that College C sought to involve as much of the community in the college as possible.

Not only were many people on community boards and involved in volunteerism throughout their district, but they also sought to build relationships with community entities in order to enhance the student experience at College C. One example of purposely linking the community to the student was inviting community businesses to

New Student Orientation so the students will know of services outside of the college. A staff person explained:

> In orientation, we have a campus and community resource fair. We encourage local banks and insurance agencies and businesses to come on campus and put their name out there for our new students so that they become engaged in the local community, even if they're not from here. (lines 439-442)

The college creates community education courses to serve the district residents, and develops relationships with neighboring universities to ease the transfer process for students as just a few of the examples of being community connected that were gleaned from the focus group interviews.

Community feedback was welcomed and encouraged throughout the year. During the college foundation's capital campaign, they realized the number of satisfied community members by the number of loyal donors. Likewise, the college sought opportunities to listen to community stakeholders. This may have been in the form of a conversation at a local board meeting or feedback from students in a student organization. A staff member described an innovative community partnership:

> A new venture that we're kind of in a soft-launch space for is with our career-coach program that we're using. You know, that's giving each academic degree area the opportunity to enlist… our partners (to help be a career coach). In terms of…if you're an accounting major, these are some of the accounting firms in this hundred mile radius. (lines 445-448)

In the spirit of positive, strengths-based and appreciative leadership, College C looked for opportunities to celebrate achievements. Creating an appreciative environment

where it is acceptable to congratulate one another or give recognition for a job well done requires time to develop. The faculty explained, “There’s a lot of little things that happen on this campus in terms of recognition, you know, that wouldn’t fly ever at another campus” (lines 566-567). And “when people win awards, it goes out and then there’s like eight to ten responses that say, ‘Congratulations’, like, immediately following that” (lines 568-569). Eventually, the appreciative culture became second nature to the faculty and staff.

The faculty and leadership focus groups mentioned the desire to see succession planning to maintain the culture as the current leadership considers retirement. A member of the leadership team explained:

> We’re concerned about what the succession will be over the next several years. Again, the president is in his later 60’s and there are those of us who sit around the provosts council table who are moving on in our careers as well, and I think one of the real challenges is that we all be succeeded by people who can live comfortably in the culture that we have. It would be a disaster if you had a new president who dismantled it. (lines 557-563)

Adaptability

The fifth most frequent category was Adaptability which was third for the leadership, sixth for the College and seventh for the Personal priority. The president’s signature strength is Activator. According to Rath (2007), Activators are not able to “not act” on something; they are impatient for action and realize that only through action will performance take place. The researcher heard several times during the interviews, when someone would comment about the president’s signature strengths: “That’s Mike with his

activator" (line 167). This may explain why Adaptability was highest in the Leadership priority, but it also could be that the culture is such that action is a natural consequence of careful and constant data gathering and analysis. A faculty member gave an example by saying, "Part of the reason we can do that (move quickly and nimbly) is because we do use data. I don't want to over-emphasize that, but we look at what works and what doesn't work, all the time" (lines 113-114).

The Provost, during the leadership team focus group meeting noted that there was a purposeful shift from academic delivery to academic success programming. This shift was aided by the use of Strengthsquest and other tools. He continued to say that the flat organizational structure allowed for the college to be more "fleet-footed" with implementation of new initiatives. A staff member mentioned another shift in delivery by saying, "We in multi-cultural services at one point in time had a large focus on programming. We've shifted that to be more student success… academically supportive to students with our peer mentor program" (lines 317-319).

By design, the leadership at College C is flexible in order to be responsive to the current college influences. Part of the uniqueness of College C is that so much is done "on the fly". The strategic plan is not rigidly defined but is more a list of strategic directions that may shift in according to data-based feedback. A leadership team member explained the president's view on the strategic plan by saying:

> One of the things he (Mike) would be saying is that he feels very strongly that the traditional strategic planning where you create a document that we now are going to live with, and everyone is trying to fit into, that last 2 years, 5 years, 10 years, whatever it is, is just too confining and just too static. (lines 57-60)

Likewise, any kind of dynamic growth or change is made because College C uses data in the decision-making process. One of the leadership team members explained their robust use of data to make decisions and explained their analytics software that makes it possible. She said,

> And we often go dadada and have the answer while the conversation is going on. It's while we are thinking about this, not wait a couple of weeks to get a report and then try to take yourself back into that conversation. It's current (laughing). (lines 168-170)

Student Centeredness

Student Centeredness tied for sixth place with Trust and Accountability. It was fifth as a College priority, eighth as a Leadership priority and fourth as a Personal priority. Student Centeredness was mentioned more often as a Personal priority because the types of data to emerge from the focus group interviews were first hand experiences, which occurred during interactions directly with people. As a staff member said, "There really is a shared belief that we really are all here because of our passion for our students" (lines 43-44). As a College priority, the categories were descriptions of how the college implemented student success initiatives. A staff person said, "It's because of that experience that the students have that is the most important thing that we have to offer that differentiates us" (lines 44-45).

While the leadership no doubt supported all types of Student Centeredness activities, their involvement was most likely in policy development, which would have been mentioned in the College priority. An example of how the leadership supports student success was explained by the Provost. When the researcher entered the college,

the hallway had flags from other countries adorning the entryway. It looked like the United Nations. The Provost explained, "We've got partnerships with more than 65 other institutions around the country, hence around the world. Which generally represents the students on campus in that year" (lines 71-73). The flags were no doubt welcoming to the student, but they held a greater representation. He explained that, "We need to be preparing our students for a global citizenship, or global society as we say in our mission statement" (lines 81-82). What better way to do that but to have students from all over the globe in the classrooms to engage with students from College C's own district.

"Student Success" was unanimously the shared vision at College C. The student group noted the caring personnel and specifically noted one department in the college that has been particularly helpful. One of the students in the student focus group described his experience:

> Here, the teachers and administrators just care about you and are going to develop some type of relationship with you no matter how random you are. The Office of Multicultural Services (OMS) was, by far, the greatest support for my success here. If it wasn't for them, I probably would just be going through the motions right now. (lines 16-21)

One staff focus group participant noted that student success was part of the mission and vision statement for the college, but also that,

> I think every aspect of the college, whether it's the development office or the multi-cultural services or student success and advising, or a faculty member, or you know, buildings and grounds, we're all here to support that common vision, the common goal (of student success). (lines 80-83)

The student success initiatives are the central focus at College C. A faculty focus group participant said, “Another thing that makes us special in more recent years is that student success really is at the heart of everything we do” (lines 243-245). The fact that decisions are made with student success in mind speaks volumes to the ingrained nature of shared vision. She continued by saying, “There are times I’m gonna say, ‘Wait a minute, is that the best decision’? But people are talking about it. It’s a lens” (lines 245-247).

Engaging students on campus was seen as critical to student success at College C. A member of the leadership team said, “That doesn’t mean the student is customer, in the sense you’re going to give them everything they want. But it’s a student development view of student success” (lines 205-205). A leadership team member stated, “College C invested heavily in residence hall staff, athletics and student services, and see student life opportunities as being very significant and an important dimension of what the students do and how they grow” (lines 208-211). A leadership participant told me, “We can cite numerous examples of students who arrived with rather undistinguishing backgrounds and one of the reasons they succeeded so well academically is that they got connected on campus” (lines 211-214).

The faculty focus group explained that College C does not just maintain a “we have always done it that way” attitude. Ideas and processes are continually challenged to see if they impact student success and how. As one faculty member described,

> For a while it was learning centered, right? But then we just kind of changed it to student success. I...this college is not a place where something’s just gonna keep

> existing because it has existed…like things kind of have to prove that they are a tie-in to student success or they won't keep existing. (lines 273-275)

The researcher asked every focus group what they thought the leadership did to foster the strengths culture and student success. As it was explained by one of the vice-presidents and noted previously, Strengthsquest simply gives College C a common vocabulary that can be used to accomplish its vision. The implementation of Appreciative Inquiry and Strengthsquest were simultaneous. As a faculty member said,

> Almost 10 years ago now when we started raising the whole Strengths thing. It was also the same time as Appreciative Inquiry. So I would say building on the positive that we already have is really important to this college. (lines 273-275)

A member of the leadership team continued an description on how College C has successfully integrated several types of strategies to create a culture that is unique yet very functional:

> When (Mike) was creating presentations (that portrayed) us as being a strengths-based institution, and one of the things we talked about, as we think about tools…Strengthsquest is a tool, Appreciative Inquiry is a tool, NCDI is a tool, um, Jim Collin's work, that's all of those pieces and all of them together. It's not just Strengthsquest, or just any one of these things. It's really the integration of all of those things under this deeply felt belief that every student and staff member walks into this institution with the talents they need to succeed. And our job as an institution is to help us all identify what those are, develop them and apply them so they can succeed. And it's the application of that lens and that deep belief. Recognizing that not everybody is going to succeed. And there are lots of reasons

> why that is true. But, we have to start with the belief that they are coming to us with talents. And they are coming to us with raw material that we can help develop. And help them achieve what their goals are. (lines 371-382)

When College C had to face budget reductions, they made a strategic decision to continue to support student success initiatives. As the Provost explained, “We have not cut student support” (lines 220-221). Understanding the community college student body is varied and that students come with all kinds of academic preparation, the provost commented, “Being a community college, you have to address student’s needs where the students are” (lines 239-240). One way College C addresses the individual needs of the students is by the use of Strengthsquest/Strengthsfinder. As he explained, the tool is useful for “understanding, not only for staff members, but also for students, and that helps people interact with others with material, with their learning, and opportunities in a really significant way” (lines 264-266).

Trust and Accountability

The foundation for the student success passion is the extensive culture where faculty and staff feel that they are trusted and valued to do their jobs to the best of their ability. A faculty group member said, “We are given a real good amount of autonomy here” (line 32) and a “tremendous amount of collegiality at all levels” (lines 35-36) that “includes administration all the way to effective teaching faculty and vice versa” (lines 36-37). The faculty felt that this culture might be unique to College C. They stated that the environment exists, “much more so than we hear about in other places” (line 45).

Potentially charged situations are seen as collegial as they explained, “Even our union negotiations over the last several contracts have been stated as being win-win negotiations and have been conducted that way” (lines 40-42). The Provost explained,

> At least for now, and for the foreseeable future, there is stability, and probably a predictability borne of long time relationships that leads us to my point that some things don’t have to be explicitly stated, because you pretty much know what you’re going to get in the institution. (lines 388-391)

Building trust requires listening and inclusion in decisions. One of the leadership team members explained how their college built trust over time. He said, “One of our strengths at the institution is the operational changes and organizational changes that we made in 2008 is having those multiple voices at the table” (lines 392-394). A faculty member supported this claim by saying, “One of the things that is very distinctive about the college is that we do have a sense of trust and as much transparency as is possible so people at least have the opportunity to be well informed” (lines 21-23).

Being well informed might be possible because of the stable, long-term leadership. Like College B, College C’s president had been in place for over 20 years which provided a sense of consistency. Like both College A and B, the overall organizational structure was flat, with no more than three layers of supervision separating most of the college from the president. College C was the only non-ATD school in this study. However, many of College C’s assessment and accountability processes were reminiscent of the ATD colleges visited.

In an effort to maintain healthy teams and team members, College C made the strategic decision to maintain professional development funding in the face of budget

cuts. The staff focus group was careful to recognize the commitment to professional development. One staff member said,

> The college makes the effort to invest in each and every one of us and they do it through not cutting our professional development when they could be and choosing, very deliberately, who they want to invest in, and I feel very, very valued. I feel valued that I had access to our president, our deans…that this is an open-door place and everybody has a say and it's all important. It doesn't matter where you are within this organization. That you have a say. (lines 596-601)

Building teams and allowing faculty and staff to have input on important decisions that affect their work life is important to the faculty and staff at College C. A staff member explained the willingness to include people on committees. She said,

> I think there are lots of little ways that it's very intentional but that doesn't mean that if Julie expressed an interest in serving on first-year experience council, I wouldn't gladly welcome her into the fold, despite any perceived lack of knowledge. (lines 374-376)

Communication

Communication was the eighth category for overall frequency. It was ranked eighth in the College priority, fifth in the leadership priority, and sixth in the personal priority. College C's use of the strengths-based appreciative lens has served to shift perceptions from criticism and negative to productive and positive. The leadership at College C purposely created opportunities for communication to occur, which may be why it was mentioned more frequently in that priority than in College or Personal. Open dialogue and allowing widespread discussion in a collegial atmosphere has allowed

greater freedom to explore solutions to problems. The faculty and staff focus groups described the communication at College C as being purposeful, but the consistent collaboration and resulting communication was so ingrained that it was hardly noticed. Clearly, the prevailing opinion was that collegiality was part of the college's culture.

A faculty member gave an example of how the President at College C fosters collegiality by saying, "every once in a while, you'd just get an invitation to go out to lunch with the president and there would just be some group of people come along" (lines 683-685). The purpose was designed by the president to gather information or create a discussion in order to find ideas or solutions to a problem on campus. But, it happened often enough that it was not viewed with suspicion by the faculty/staff; rather it was seen as being very genuine.

The faculty focus group spoke about collegiality more than the leadership, staff or the student group. Feeling that they had input into the decisions that would affect their classrooms was very important to the faculty at College C. One faculty member said College C had "a tremendous amount of collegiality at all levels" (lines 35-36). She went on to say that the culture was not limited to just faculty. She said, "It includes administration to effective teaching faculty and vice versa…" (lines 36-37). She seemed very proud to note, "Even our union negotiations over the last… several contracts have been stated as being win-win negotiations and have been conducted that way" (lines 40-41).

Collegiality was not limited to small group interactions at College C. When discussing the development of the current strategic plan, one faculty member explained the importance of gathering as much information as possible, and that included both

positive and negative comments. She said, "Free-flowing conversations brought out all the possible things to think about, positively and negatively. We just…do that" (lines 401-402). The researcher reflected that there seemed to be a culture of safety at College C that allowed a degree of honesty. One faculty member confirmed and said, "Most people who work here are not afraid to say what they think…they're not afraid of incrimination or anything like that, which, I think, might be the case in other places" (lines 701-703).

Collaboration was a subcategory of Teamwork. The resulting communication that comes from Collaboration is both Collegial as well as Purposeful (both subcategories of Communication). Collaboration at College C was very evident in the focus groups, as well. A faculty member said, "I see us being much more collaborative" (line 706). A staff member agreed, saying, "That collaboration is almost ingrained (lines 296). The faculty/staff at College C realize this culture is not typical. A faculty member told the researcher that this type of collaboration, "enables a lot of interaction among people of every job and level and I think that's probably pretty unique" (lines 68-69). The collegial collaboration is continuous, not just when the college needs to update the strategic plan. A staff explained, saying, "We are always working on developing, you know, some new ideas and ways we can continually improve by partnering across divisions" (lines 273-274). A faculty member explained how collaboration feels to faculty and staff within the college. She said,

> I think you hit the nail on the head when you say about this collaboration because we seem to include every council, every committee, when it comes to making a big decision and I know sometimes that can make us feel like our tires are blocks and not…not round and that it's going extremely…sometimes painfully slow, but

> it brings everybody together. It provides everybody the same opportunity to become invested. And that ties back to the appreciative process again...and yeah…and that's how you're going to gain stakeholders and gain buy-in. (lines 313-320)

The leadership group agreed that greater representation creates an environment that fosters more thorough decision making. Representation is not limited to faculty or professional staff. As one faculty member told the researcher, "There is a sincerity to why input from…and not even just the faculty but from support staff…support staff have a voice here that I think is unparalleled at other colleges" (lines 56-58). One of the leadership team participants elaborated on the egalitarian view the college held by saying, "It's not a narrow little group that we trust to go out and be part of these conversations" (429-430). When speaking on the college expectation of widespread communication, a staff member said that they thought the reason College C was able to support a shared vision was because, "I think it comes back to a lot to those collaborative pieces" (line 271).

New initiatives can be generated from any location or position at College C. One of the leadership team participants said,

> When new ideas come up, we're able to say, 'This is a good idea', and we'll move forward as a group and we're able to do that which makes it, not only are we learning as individuals, but we're learning as an institution on a regular basis. (lines 51-53)

The leadership team participant went on to explain how ideas become initiatives and initiatives help to carry the college forward, as long as there is communication and

collaboration to keep everyone informed. She explained the college dynamic when collaboration and communication happen in tandem, “We keep growing and changing which makes it a more dynamic and exciting place for everyone. Knowing that if I have a great idea, everything can shift and we can move forward with that idea” (lines 53-55). Another person on the leadership team emphasized the importance of connections to the community in order to maintain stakeholder input. He said, “Everybody’s connection to the community is important, and people can come back, no matter what their position, and make a point that we can then pursue” (lines 489-490). One of the leadership team participants discussed the deeper meaning that comes from Open Communication and Collegiality, “When you talk about communication, people being heard, and new ideas and things, it’s not just ‘she hears my idea and listens to me’ it’s that the institution is very nimble” (lines 49-51), which allows for prompt movement.

The leadership at College C modeled Purposeful Communication and Feedback by including the internal and external stakeholders in the data-gathering stage of the strategic plan. As is true with Servant Leadership, when modeled by the leadership, the rest of the institution follows suit. The pre-semester in-service meetings also follow the same model of inclusion. The faculty discussed how each semester, the faculty meeting has become more of a college-wide in-service that is structured with concurrent sessions so that everyone in the college has an opportunity to share and learn. One of the faculty members described it like this: “We’ll have, like concurrent sessions and it…lately it’s turned into more of a communication type of thing. Like a Showcase” (lines 640-641). New initiatives are given a session to present, as well as long standing college opportunities, such as Strengthsquest.

The leadership understands the importance of gathering stakeholder input in order to set direction. They also realize that sharing the results of efforts is just as crucial to maintaining the buy-in and momentum. The Provost explained the many ways in which he attempts to send messages back out to the college community. He said, “It seems like people read less and less, so I try to do things in fact sheets” (line 128), and “We post things on our website. We do a number of reports every year and post it several places” (lines 126-127). He continued, “I’m always working on ways to put the information out and in digestible format in different ways to get the ideas across” (lines 127-129).

College C realized that the use of strengths would not be a panacea to their problems. They also realized that they would need to find ways to use data to make their decisions, and those decisions would be based on a strengths-based philosophy. Remembering the president’s signature strength of Activator, the Provost explained how they make decisions and implement strategies quickly, “Part of the reason we can do that (move quickly and nimbly) is because we do use data. I don’t want to over-emphasize that, but we look at what works and what doesn’t work, all the time (lines 113-114). He continued, “Seeing a trend here, and analyzing it, and come up with some strategies” (lines 190-191).

The college invested in a data analytics program that interfaces with their mainframe system to give data immediately. This investment allowed them the luxury of minute by minute decisions. The system is also available to many, although voluntarily used by a few. This is fine with the college administration, because they understand that some people have analytic strengths and some have strategic strengths, and some have relationship strengths.

The data analytics program has allowed them to manage a very unstructured strategic plan. As a member of the leadership team explained, "'Mike' (president's pseudonym) would say we don't necessarily have a fully articulated and written strategic plan at any point" (lines 84-85). The reason that is possible is because of the amount of collaboration and communication that flows around the college.

The Open and Purposeful Communication and Feedback and Collegiality combine to help foster a level of trust and transparency that is not common at some colleges. One of the leadership team members described "One of the things that is very distinctive about the college that we do have a sense of trust and as much transparency as is possible so people at least have the opportunity to be well informed" (lines 21-23). The natural positive outcome of this type of environment was explained by another person on the leadership team, "Just to have that conversation, which means you have many fewer times when you ask, 'How did that happen'? And no one knew about it" (lines 402-403). A faculty member's opinion supported this by saying, "We come closer to an ideal of having that respectful collaboration than maybe a lot of other places do" (713-714).

It would not be possible to discuss the communication at College C and not relate it to the overall college culture. While the Purposeful Communication and Feedback was modeled by the leadership, it has become ingrained into the fabric of the college culture. A member of the leadership team explained how Strengthsquest was implemented at College C and the positive results that have resulted over time:

> Strengthsquest created the common language, created the openness, the ability for them to…them, meaning leadership of the college…to reach out to its faculty and staff, make those connections and then we're all invested and continue that

> process with buying into the mission and the vision and the value and wanting to have input about the mission, vision and value and how we can each support it. I really think that they do go together. (lines 467-471)

A staff member agreed with the use of Strengthsquest by saying, "such common language" (line 129).

Committees, councils, and work groups require teamwork in order to be functional. Each focus group interview drew an intricate picture of functional work groups, both for the students as well as the faculty and staff. Because College C is so adept at creating cross-divisional work groups that share information and data freely, the Provost explained that participation in one of the structured standing committee forums suffered from lack of participation. He said, "The problems with the forum make us a victim of some of our own successes. We keep people generally involved and informed" (lines 16-18), so the need to attend a monthly forum to be updated on college affairs is somewhat not necessary.

On a personal level, team development at College C was obviously influenced by strengths, because its use was so prolific. Opportunities for faculty and staff to reflect on their own strengths and learn more about how to do their job better by engaging their strengths are provided by College C. One faculty member explained, "I get a good…good amount of connectivity with talking about strengths and engaging with other faculty to keep those concepts in my mind" (lines 147-148).

The students talked about the composition of the student mentoring team, and how the teams were chosen, based on the participants' personality and strength. One student explained how strengths were used in team development at College C, "I'm in a

purple team …I think we were all based on like our strengths …also because they also talk to you about how your strengths have a lot to do with your personality (lines 381-383). Another student described the value of knowing their strengths by saying, “I think that’s the most important part, too ‘cause they teach you that, like, your strengths are very important towards your role as a leader” (lines 430-431).

Because College C has housing, they use the strengths concepts for resident assistants in team-building exercises, but also to help them learn how to deal with student issues in housing. One student said,

> (As an RA) you never handle a situation alone and you have to know each other. You have to know which strengths that work better with what type of people…If someone’s really, like, depressed, I’m empathetic (that’s my strength) and I can talk to them better than you might be able to talk to them. (lines 394-401)

Clubs and organizations use Strengthsquest to help students understand their strengths so they can use employ them as they work together. As one student explained the use, “Every time there’s a retreat…you have to input your strengths for a badge and then they group you by strengths. Student government really pushes it for all of their activities (lines 414-416). College C uses the clubs and organizations to foster the student success vision, as described by one student, “So once you join one club, you basically know what the other clubs are doing. And that’s what helps student success message get around” (lines 685-686). Communicating the value of Strengths to the future goals of the student is important to College C. A student gave details on their experience, “The clubs help a lot. They help you to learn some skills that you might not learn in class” (lines 698-699).

Many of the statements that support the Communication category also support the Team-building category. The tenets of open communication, active listening, problem solving instead of placing blame all help to foster good communication and thus builds trust across the college. The focus groups discussed the many ways College C's leadership foster these priorities, and they credit much of it to their devotion to being an appreciative, strengths-based institution.

Summary

This chapter began with an introduction of the individual cases studies with a history of each college included in this research study. The actual words of the focus group participants were more descriptive and a far better representation of the focus group interviews than a simple synopsis would have been. This concludes the analysis of the individual cases. By examining the individual cases, the researcher was able to identify processes specific to each college that could to be compared with the other colleges in a cross-case analysis that will be presented in Chapter 5.

Each college created and sustained a shared vision via successful strategic planning on its campuses in ways that were functional for their campus climate and culture. The colleges were drastically different yet all three were very successful. As one focus group member predicted, when a community college took the time to understand their campus culture and sought to build a vision that was congruent with their culture, the chances of sustainability increase.

The researcher analyzed the findings to determine the commonalities among the three colleges. Once that was completed, the researcher returned to the literature to see what connections the current study could make with existing theory. At one point in the

data gathering and analysis, the researcher wondered if the leadership was really so influential, or if it actually was due to the mid-level management. In the end, the researcher found that a solid combination of servant leadership and capable mid-level management was integral to creating a culture of success in the colleges.

The interviews brought out the transformational and Servant Leadership priorities of each President and their leadership team. At each college, not only were the presidents highly revered, but their leadership team also was greatly respected. All three colleges had to make difficult decisions precipitated by a tough economic climate. Despite a decline in funding, all three colleges were able to display data that showed student success was not sacrificed in the budgeting process.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community colleges were created to serve the needs of the communities in which they reside. In order to best serve their constituents, community colleges should have a reciprocal relationship with their public such that communication and services flow freely to and fro. In the process of creating and managing stakeholder input, the college may realize that opportunities for engagement interfere with one another. It is for this reason that a strategic plan, which helps to solidify a common vision shared by all areas of the college, is critical to maintaining focus and purpose.

All community colleges are required to maintain regional accreditation, which necessitates that each college demonstrates a systematic planning process that involves ongoing assessment of institutional objectives and student learning. The strategic plan, when well designed, includes overarching strategic initiatives. In the plans examined in this study, mid-level management's annual departmental goals supported the strategic plan and the assessment of these goals provided a tangible evidence of how the college was meeting the strategic initiatives in the strategic plan. How this was devised, organized, and maintained was strictly the purview of the community college.

When broad stakeholder input was considered in the planning phase of the strategic plan, and the planning team truly evaluated the input, a direction - or vision - was produced. When the faculty and staff accepted the vision as worthwhile and everyone worked in support of that vision, it was said to be a shared vision. Why do some colleges do this well while others struggle? How does a shared vision get created and fostered with adequate buy-in from the college rank-and-file? This research sought to effectively answer those questions. In this chapter, the researcher offers a cross-case

analysis and discusses the study's findings in relation to the literature that was reviewed in Chapter Two. The conclusions reached are outlined in this final section.

Understanding the breadth of methods available to community colleges that can be used to create a strategic plan, the researcher was most interested in how the functional community colleges were successful in engaging their stakeholders in the planning and vision development process. Specifically, the researcher was curious about whether successful planning and vision development could be shown to be direct results of the leadership, the culture of the college, or the individuals in the college. Understanding that it would not be solely attributable to one or the other, the researcher wanted to understand more about how these institutional variables are complementary and interact when strategic planning and vision development works well. Having narrowed the focus, the researcher decided on the following research questions:

1. How is positive leadership exhibited within organizations where effective stakeholder engagement occurs in the planning process?
2. What are the positive qualitative elements inherent in functional community college planning where effective community engagement has been employed?
3. How are colleges successful at gathering stakeholder input during strategic planning that leads to shared vision?
4. How are community college stakeholders allowed to participate in the planning process relative to their strengths?

The researcher realized that the information needed to understand the positive qualitative elements would be largely descriptive. Because of this, qualitative methodology was chosen, specifically grounded theory techniques.

Discussion of Findings

This study confirmed the researcher's initial assumption that strategic planning processes are as different as the colleges in which they exist. The three colleges in this study were very different, and their approaches to strategic planning were likewise very different. Yet all three are effective planners and have demonstrated successful development of a shared vision at their institutions. The primary purpose of this study was to identify positive commonalities that contributed to their success.

To begin to understand the culture at each institution, the researcher used the coded transcripts to conduct a cross-case analysis of the codes relative to the interview questions. What was special about each college? What was their shared vision? How did leadership support the development of the vision? Similarities were found in the cross-case analysis of codes between the colleges. What began as analysis best described as "get acquainted with each college" eventually became a quest to see if findings were consistent across all the colleges.

The researcher found that the positive leadership concepts discussed in Chapter Two were helpful in making connections back to existing research. In the literature, Shared Vision (Rouesche et al., 1989), Transformational Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994), Authentic Leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003), Servant Leadership (Greenleaf, 1977), Strengths- Based Leadership (Clifton & Harter, 2003), Positive Organizational Scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003) and Virtuous Organizations (Cameron et al., 2003) were all theories that resonated with the findings from the research. Four transformational concepts from the literature were found to be present in the successful colleges: the personal integrity of the leader, communication throughout the organization, climate of

respect and collaboration, and appreciative relationships (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989). The researcher found the theoretical leadership concepts overlap in a number of categories and will make them the basis for her discussion.

Eight categories indicating contributing institutional qualities emerged from the analysis of eleven focus group interviews. The categories overlap to some degree, raising a question about the nature of their relationship. Did one category precede another? Or, by contrast, were they co-dependent and strongly influenced by each other? Ultimately, the researcher found that all the categories were equally necessary to effective strategic planning and the development of a shared vision. In general, the qualities of colleges who were able to create and sustain successful shared vision via strategic planning could be described with the following eight categories:

1. Loyalty
2. Communication
3. Servant Leadership
4. Learning/Student Centeredness
5. Community Engagement
6. Trust/Accountability/Transparency
7. Teamwork
8. Adaptability

In the following discussion, each category is presented in light of the priority context within which it was generated: Leadership, College or Personal. As used here, “priority” refers to the how participants valued a given category. Did they view the

category as having principally a leadership value, an institutional (college) value, or a personal value? The researcher also explains how the categories functioned in the three colleges. Additionally, the findings are related back to the research literature. Table 11 shows the categories, subcategories, and properties identified by the data analysis.

Table 11

Cross-case Analysis Categories and Subcategories

Category	Subcategory	Properties
Loyalty	Commitment Compassion/concern for students College Culture	Willing, Resiliency Positive regard, Caring Maintain the Culture
Communication	Open Communication	Communication and Feedback, Purposeful Communication, Connectedness between Divisions
	Inclusion/Transparency	Perspective from all areas, United in Efforts, Cooperation
	Appreciation of the College	Appreciation of Faculty and Staff, Pride
Servant Leadership	Lead by Example	Supportive Leadership, Strengths-Based Leadership, Know Faculty and Staff Well, Faculty Adaptability
	Strategic Decisions	Fiscal Responsibility, Alignment of Intention/Purpose, Forward Movement
	Caring Culture	Valued, Respected, Empowerment
Learning/Student Centeredness	Student Success	Student Engagement/Purpose, Impactful, Learning through Differences, Expected to Participate, Service-Learning
	Student Perspective	Accessibility, Customer Service, Communication between Students
Community Engagement	Stakeholder Input Listening to Stakeholders	Community Support, Responsive Relationships, Celebrate Achievements

Table 11

Cross-case Analysis Categories and Subcategories continued

Category	Subcategory	Properties
Trust/Accountability/ Transparency	Trust Building	Positive Forward Planning, Courage, Responsive, Functional Teamwork, Devotion, Faculty Dedication, Incentive
	Faced the Brutal Facts	Assessment, Need for Quality Institutional Research, Data-Driven Results, Rules for the Team
Teamwork	Purposeful Teambuilding	Strengths-based Team-building, Expected to Participate, Collegiate Purpose
	Professional Development	Investment in Faculty/Staff, Incentive for Professional Development, Instructional Support
	Innovation/ Collaboration	Staff Attributes, Engagement, Flat Organization
Adaptability	Transformational Change	Flexibility, Buy-In
	Appreciation	Approachable, Positive Attributes
	Department Level Improvement	Institutional Research, Progressive Instructional Improvement

Loyalty

Loyalty was exhibited in different ways at each college. At College A, where the crisis of leadership initially threatened the very existence of the college, employees committed themselves to saving the institution, thus exhibiting Loyalty. As the crisis period waned, the Loyalty of employees eventually morphed more into pride in the college for all that it offers to the community and employees shifted their loyalty more toward the leader who guided the college through the crisis. At the other two colleges, Loyalty was more evident as employees focused on maintaining the attributes that already existed and working toward improvement. Ultimately, the employees of all three colleges exhibited Loyalty to their college presidents, to their leadership team, and to their college and the students/community. The outward manifestation of this category is a

concept that was common among all three colleges, where there was an expectation for some type of leadership at all levels throughout the organization. Leaders were found at different levels throughout the institutions, and when given the opportunity to lead a committee, initiative, or project, they were able to exercise their strengths, and in the end the college and community benefitted.

Three subcategories exist within Loyalty: Commitment, Compassion/Concern for Students, and College Culture. The Commitment subcategory spoke to the Leadership priority, where the faculty/staff were willing partners in doing the college's business - that is, business directed by the leadership. Compassion/Concern for Students spoke to the Personal priority because the affect necessary to empathize with, yet challenge, students comes from a very personal place. The College Environment subcategory was obviously more aligned with the College Priority, as each focus group interview had many statements of appreciation about the culture and the need to retain and maintain the "specialness" that was fostered by existing leadership and faculty/staff.

Commitment. The properties of the Commitment sub-category in Loyalty were Willing and Resiliency. Leadership at all three colleges modeled a strong commitment to the college. Likewise, the faculty/staff emulated that behavior. Servant Leadership theory says that when internal teams function with the same characteristics as the leader, they perform more effectively (Greenleaf, 1977). Repeatedly, the focus group participants spoke of all the ways in which the college faculty/staff serve the community, students, and each other. The sheer willingness to give of themselves for the collective good was very apparent at each of the colleges studied.

There was great pride in focus group participants' voices as they talked about their colleges, the president, and the leadership team. Focus groups members at all three colleges held their president and his team in the highest regard. Although none of the focus groups used the actual term "transformational leadership," more than one participant referred to their president as a "servant leader." Rouesche et al. define transformational leadership as the ability to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of others by working with and through them in order to accomplish the mission and purpose of the organization (1989).

Willing. The commitment of the faculty/staff was evident when they discussed the consistency in their belief system with the stated mission of their college. The most obvious example was that the focus group participants at all three colleges were able to vocalize a shared vision. The widespread buy-in and like-minded attitude of the faculty/staff mirrored their leadership's commitments. And faculty/staff were so well versed on the future direction of their respective colleges that they were able to elaborate on them extensively during the interviews.

In order to foster buy-in and like-mindedness among the college rank-and-file, college leaders had to gather and synthesize perspectives from across the college. As a result, faculty and staff felt as if their opinions mattered, that their roles in the success of the college were clear, and that they had a deep understanding of what was necessary to foster student success. Therefore, as each focus group indicated, there was great investment in the college and its direction (Myran et al., 2003; Roueche et al., 1989).

Resiliency. Snyder and Lopez (2007) describe resiliency as a "bouncing back" to a normal state. They explain that a risk or adversity must be present for resilience to be

activated. Focus groups at all three colleges were able to describe challenging circumstances that occurred at their colleges, and how their institutions were able to survive and move forward. A sense of resiliency was prevalent during the faculty, staff and leadership team interviews. Accompanying the resiliency was the willingness to do whatever it would take to keep their college strong and functional.

Compassion/care for students. In the Compassion/Care for Students subcategory, the properties were positive regard and caring. Each college had their own way of showing compassion for their students. College A participants discussed the successful interventions they have implemented and their many efforts to reach students. College B participants spoke compassionately about their efforts as they realized their influence might be the only higher education some of their students ever experience, since College B is the only college in the area. College C participants discussed how attrition was unacceptable and how they try to ingrain retention with every single position on campus.

Positive regard. The focus group participants recognized that the students are the reason for the colleges' existence, so serving students to the best of their ability was very important to them. This was perhaps most clearly exhibited by the participants in the student focus groups who openly shared how well they were treated by the faculty, staff, and leadership team at their college.

Caring. The students spoke of a sense of caring from front-line staff and faculty. Faculty and staff explained the many ways they help students learn life skills, as well as critical job skills in order to become productive citizens. It was this Loyalty to serving the students with care and compassion that emerged from the data.

College culture. Snyder & Lopez (2007) advise those interested in Positive Psychology to consider culture as a major influence in happiness. Culture shapes the understanding of virtues, values and well-being. The importance of the college culture was addressed early in each focus group when the researcher asked, "What makes your college special?" Responses showed a deep understanding of and loyalty to the college and the community that came from colleges engaging their communities in order to craft a shared vision and mold the college culture. The participants in the focus groups realized there was room for improvement, but they recognized the personality of their own college and its value.

Maintain the culture. Myran et al. (2003) explained that organizational culture is key to transformational change and Bass and Avolio (1994) state that change-oriented culture develops only in environments where the leaders empower faculty and staff to respond to new circumstances with innovative solutions that uphold the mission, vision and values of the institution. While the three colleges in the study have very different cultures, employee focus group participants understood their culture and worked within the culture to bring about change.

Communication

All three colleges made an intentional effort to share information, and a very transparent and effective communication process. The communication sharing process was modeled by the leadership at all the colleges, and it was an expectation that all departments do likewise. College C was the only institution that referred to themselves as an appreciative, strengths-based institution.

Communication is critical to the systemic functioning of the college (Cain, 1999). References to communication are prominent in many leadership theories and approaches (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche, et al., 1989). All three colleges noted that their organizational structures were rather flat, meaning that no person had more than three levels to go through to reach the president of the college. As in Helgesen's (1995) Web of Inclusion Theory, communication and responsibility were diffused across the organization.

The Communication category housed three distinct subcategories that related to the specific priorities of the college: Open Communication, Inclusion/Transparency, and Appreciation of the College. Open Communication reflected the College priority, as the communication occurred at all levels at all times. Inclusion/Transparency was very much reflective of the Leadership priority and the ways in which departments collaborate in order to maximize effort toward the shared vision. Largely an affective trait, the properties of Appreciation of the College were very individual in nature - as evidenced by its subcategories, Appreciation of Faculty and Staff and Pride - which spoke to the Personal priority.

Open communication. In the three community colleges studied, the properties for Open Communication included Communication and Feedback, Purposeful Communication, and Connectedness between Divisions. It was not relegated to the leadership alone, nor was it strictly based on the personalities of the people responsible for communicating.

The manifestation of the Communication category was transparent and effective communication, and was found at all three colleges. Again, communication does not infer

time spent at the coffee pot gossiping. Instead, the communication category reflects an intentional effort to share important institutional information and to include the faculty/staff in decisions in order to eliminate unnecessary misunderstandings and time-wasting supposition.

Communication and feedback. A hallmark of communication was the simple act of listening first with the intention of understanding. Gittell (2003) said that communication must be frequent, timely, accurate, and non-combative. Communicating with the taxing district proved critical to College A, for example, in winning the tax annexation vote. As the focus groups explained, the new president actively engaged the community many times in many venues to communicate the need to approve the tax annexation vote. His message was accurate, as he shared all the positive contributions to the community over the many years of its existence. He was non-combative, but explained how the annexation would better serve the students and the community.

The researcher heard more than once that the colleges in the study had collegial atmospheres that allowed for vigorous debate. Cain (1999) explains that a collegial atmosphere is one in which problems are discussed until consensus is reached, where all interested parties have a vested interest and shared responsibility for the outcome. The more people communicated, interacted, and had a voice in the solution, the wider the sense of responsibility for carrying out the decision was distributed. In the colleges studied, the faculty and staff commented on their college leadership's prolific communication and the opportunities for providing feedback. Not only was communication moving between leadership and the faculty/staff, but also among faculty

and staff. In order to create mechanisms to capture those conversations, the colleges engaged in purposeful communication.

Purposeful communication. The researcher learned that purposeful communication and feedback occurred in all three colleges. There was positive regard for and appreciation of both faculty and staff, and all felt united in their efforts toward student success. Vision development requires the imagination and communication of people from multiple areas of the institution during the strategic planning phase. According to Pfeiffer (2008) and Rouesche et al. (1989), leaders and followers must work in concert in order to create the type of environment and outcome that is envisioned. Likewise, resistance must be met with effective communication and consistent input from all areas of the college (Roueche et al., 1989).

Examples of Purposeful Communication were setting up internal teams through committees and councils, conducting the stakeholder input phases of strategic planning, surveys to students and faculty to gauge satisfaction, and advisory committee meetings for the academic programs. Gittell (2003) said that high quality communication and relationships give rise to high quality connections. The colleges in this study actively sought stakeholder input prior to the development of the strategic plan. They also actively gathered data and documented the findings. They used the data gathered via purposeful communication to make decisions. By having an organized structure that allowed for frank discussion and collaboration, the colleges were much less likely to have disengaged faculty/staff.

Connectedness between divisions. Cross-divisional communication and collaboration were prevalent at the three colleges. Cain (1999) refers to the community

college as a system, and as such, the interrelationships of departments create a seamless, functional whole. Breakdown between departments results in a lack or disruption of services, usually to students. In this study, the colleges recognized the need to work together for student success. Feedback on how well this was occurring often came from actively listening to their stakeholders. Further, the participants agreed their leadership did this well. The colleges in this study actively sought internal stakeholder input prior to the development of the strategic plan. Moreover, the colleges routinely sought feedback from the internal and external stakeholders.

Inclusion/transparency. Properties of Inclusion/Transparency were Perspective from All Areas, United in Efforts, and Cooperation. During the focus group interviews, there was never a doubt that the people in the interviews were well-informed about the college, the future direction of the college, and the potential obstacles that might occur.

Perspective from all areas. The process of forming Transparency begins by creating connections. For these colleges, Perspective from all Areas included the college district, as well as the faculty and staff. Engagement with the community early in the strategic planning process ensured that constituent perspectives were appropriately taken into account. Involving stakeholders can be instructive, as the impressions of the planning team might be wrong (Bryson, 1995). As a result, when those perspectives were articulated throughout the process, transparency could not help but occur. Both faculty and staff felt united in their efforts toward student success. The development of a shared vision required the imagination and communication of people from multiple areas of the institution during the strategic planning phase. Bringing together all different perspectives helps the college unite in their efforts toward student success.

United in efforts. Because the leadership at the colleges took the time to foster open communication, the colleges rallied around the shared vision to exceptionally serve students. Kouzes and Posner (2007) say that this type of climate enables others to act. Because the leadership valued stakeholder input and the stakeholders felt heard, they were willing to cooperate and unite around student success.

Cooperation. Without cooperation, necessary services to students would be less than optimal. Pooling of resources on campus allowed for the implementation of orientation sessions at one college. A culture of cooperation internally helped remove the apprehension of working in teams at another college. Finally, cooperation between the community and the college resulted in greater training and employment opportunities for students by including the community businesses in activities on campus at another college. By engaging and understanding the needs, values, and capabilities of the constituent base, the transformational leaders were better able to assess the willingness of potential followers who remained committed as the institution experienced transformational change (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989).

Appreciation of the college. The appreciation was not all from one employee group directed at another. While leadership did realize the efforts of faculty/staff and publicly recognized their role in the success of their institutions, faculty and staff also recognized each other as partners in fostering student success and spoke respectfully of their leadership.

Appreciation of faculty and staff. The students at Colleges A and C (because the student group did not meet at College B) both demonstrated appreciation of their colleges

overall. They agreed that their president and the staff and spoke respectfully of them. The students were more familiar with the faculty, however, due to the time spent with faculty in formal and informal educational settings on campus. The students recognized that student success was the college's vision, and they seemed appreciative.

The faculty and staff also commented on their appreciation for each other as they worked cooperatively toward the vision of student success. The support provided by staff was appreciated by faculty; likewise, the staff appreciated the faculty communicating their needs and identifying problems to be collectively solved.

Pride. Fredrickson (2003) explained how influential positive emotions, such as pride, help to create and fuel upward spirals toward optimal individual and organizational functioning. Positive emotions help broaden perspectives and action. Over time, this building of perspective also develops personal resources of thought/action that can be used later to help the person survive and thrive.

The focus group participants were quick to speak of the elements of their college that they considered to be "special." All three colleges shared pride-laced comments about the world-class, devoted faculty, the caring culture, and the empowering environment of their respective institutions.

Servant Leadership

One of the tenets of Servant Leadership is that leaders have a deep-seated need to serve a higher purpose and are predisposed to lead with the best interests of the organization and its people as the top priority (Greenleaf, 1977). The presidents at the study colleges knew their faculty and staff well. As such, the presidents meaningfully participated in crafting successful committees because of the familiarity. The

predominant description of the presidents was that they were utterly devoted to their institution.

The subcategories for Servant Leadership were Lead by Example, Strategic Decisions, and Caring Culture. The first subcategory of Servant Leadership, Lead by Example, reflected the Leadership priority. This subcategory reflected more of the College priority, as successful implementation required that everyone be involved. Properties of Caring Culture were Valued, Respected, and Empowerment, which most closely reflected the Personal priority.

Lead by example. Supportive and Strengths-based Leadership were similar and came from statements about leadership that were not necessarily limited to the president's office. The relatively flat organizational structure and the expectation that leadership would occur in some form at all levels helped to shape these properties.

Supportive leadership. In all the colleges in the study, the presidents set an example of leadership, respect, and inclusion, and expected the rest of the college to emulate that behavior. The leadership qualities of the presidents ranged from fiscal responsibility, inclusive decision making, familiarity with the faculty/staff, awareness of the structural design of the college, and relationship-building throughout the college. Farnsworth (2007) and Greenleaf (2002) explain Servant Leadership as an approach that exhibits empathy and acceptance, as well as one that encourages trust, respect, mutual growth, and fulfillment for the persons touched by the organization. The researcher learned that all three presidents asked questions and truly listened to the stakeholders of the college. As stated previously, from the perspective of faculty down to the students, the presidents' honor and integrity were considered above reproach.

Supportive Leadership represented the qualities that supported the *ad hoc* leadership throughout the college. One example is that the three presidents chose former faculty for key leadership positions. The faculty/staff at the three colleges thought being former faculty impacted their leadership style by focusing their administrative attention particularly on student learning in and out of the classroom. When meetings were held regarding academics at the colleges, the leadership was able to make the meetings relevant to the classroom experience with student success at the forefront. The realization that the leadership team had once been faculty in the classroom earned credibility in the eyes of the focus group participants. There was a belief that the leadership would not ask the faculty/staff to do something they would not be willing to do themselves, that one person did not dictate direction, that faculty/staff ideas were valued, that decisions were made by team, and that they were "all in this together."

The presidents were described by terms like "committed." Working with them was "stressful, but fun." In two of the colleges, the presidents were relatively informal. In all the colleges, the presidents modeled respectful leadership that flowed throughout the institution. College A's president even came up with a set of "rules to live by" that his leadership team used. Finally, the presidents fostered professional development and upward advancement for the faculty/staff.

Strengths-based leadership. College A and B did not recognize their leadership style as being Strengths-based, but much of how they functioned reflected those values. College C professed and demonstrated Strengths-Based leadership, which was congruent with the literature. The colleges crafted committees based on the personal strengths, which meant the leadership had to have a measure of the strengths of each individual.

Strengths-Based Leadership operates on the principle that everyone comes to the table with all they need to be successful if they are able to work from their strengths (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Research also shows - and the focus group participants confirmed -that employees were happier when they were able to work in positions where they could do what they do best every day (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Snyder & Lopez, 2007).

Know faculty and staff well. While the colleges in the study were of varying size, the presidents at all three institutions were familiar with their faculty/staff. Even the newest president took time to get to know and recognize the faculty/staff of his college. Understanding their role and how they could best serve the students and the college was crucial to the success of the colleges. Repeatedly, the participants of all three colleges mentioned the additional time, effort, and energy they gave to their positions, the students, and the college. If the faculty/staff were not operating from their strengths, they would quickly burn out, and the researcher did not hear language that would suggest the faculty/staff were experiencing fatigue.

Faculty adaptability. Because community college admissions are mostly open access, the student body is likely to be very academically diverse, which can present some challenges. At the three colleges visited, the faculty focus groups took time to explain their use of assessment and the resulting changes in their classroom that enhance student success. The staff and leadership echoed the processes from their viewpoint, and acknowledged the necessary flexibility that influences student success. Cockrel and MacArthur-Blair (2012) discuss the importance of Appreciative Inquiry processes in the

classroom, both as an exercise to reach students, build rapport and develop positive action toward learning. They call this “appreciative pedagogy.”

Strategic Decisions. All three colleges were strategic in the manner in which they approached decision-making. At each college, student success was a primary consideration when making decisions. Fiscal limitations created an environment where the leadership had to examine the most primary needs prior to making funding decisions. All three colleges were able to show a literal thought process behind decisions made. Most decisions were transparent, with the faculty/staff informed of the criteria considered before making the decision. In the cases shared with the researcher, the strategic plan was the guide in the decision-making process, along with assessment data and fiscal considerations.

Fiscal responsibility. Each of the colleges experienced financial stress and declining enrollment prior to the research visit. As a result, the colleges’ leadership made strategic decisions to be fiscally responsibility and forward momentum. Therefore, each college understood the challenges because they used data to drive decision-making. Leadership, for example, studied how declining enrollment, professional retirements, and program reviews might impact their colleges. They used this data strategically to decide what positions to eliminate or add, what services to maintain, initiate or discontinue, and how to manage the budget to achieve fiscal viability. The colleges also had to look for new revenue streams in the form of partnerships, grants, and in the case of College A, tax annexation to expand the district. All of these decisions were made in with input from the rest of the college’s stakeholders. The president and his cabinet might have led the way, but the leaders shared the credit for successful fiscal management with the faculty/staff.

Alignment of intention/purpose. Myran et al. (2003) explain that strategic plans and operational plans are more effective if they are shared among the members of the institution. The colleges in the study aligned their strategic plan with the mission/values/purposes of their institutions. Each college said that it did not want its strategic plan to be on a shelf and pulled out when it needed to be updated. Instead, they wanted it to be a living document that helped them stay on course. College C had strategic initiatives, but did not have a static plan that confined decision-making. In all three cases, the strategic plan was filtered down throughout the college, and the annual goals and objectives for each department related to the plan. Likewise, they crafted their grant programs to dovetail with the plan in order to maximize the effort. Even the committee structure related back to the strategic plan elements. All of this coordination at the colleges helped to gather data and synthesize the data into making decisions that supported student success.

Forward movement. The properties of Strategic Decisions were somewhat linear: when Alignment of Intention/Purpose and Fiscal Responsibility worked together, they created Forward Movement. All three colleges spoke of making data-based decisions that helped them live within their fiscal means. As College C readily admitted, they had “strategic thinking” that took the whole picture into consideration before making decisions. At all three colleges, the strategic plan was used and referenced often to help set the stage for decisions.

Caring culture. This subcategory was more global in nature and reflected more than just how the college treated students. It also related to how the leadership and college affected the individuals who worked within the college. Fredrickson (2003) says

that positive emotions tend to broaden a person's perspectives and actions. Snyder and Lopez (2009) take the concept a little further and explain that positive emotions, over time, will affect the resilience of the student, faculty or staff person.

Valued. When faculty/staff believed they were valued and respected, they felt empowered to make decisions and innovation that would not be possible otherwise. Park & Peterson (2003) noted that virtuous organizations create opportunities for fulfillment which, when cultivated and celebrated, serve as a source of pride for the organization. The focus group participants communicated that simple things, like a safe and friendly environment, helped them feel valued.

Respected. Being treated respectfully by the leadership and peers added to the feeling of being valued. The focus group participants discussed how the college hired new staff and then provided opportunities for them to learn their jobs and grow professionally. As often as possible, the colleges also celebrated their successes. The collegial atmosphere and respectful treatment reinforced one another: respectful treatment reinforced the collegial atmosphere, which fostered respectful treatment.

Empowerment. The respect shown and the feeling of being valued by leadership gave the faculty/staff a sense of autonomy, responsibility, and engendered faculty/staff commitment to student growth. This allowed the faculty/staff to be creative with the resources available and exercise strategic thinking which allowed for quick decision-making.

Learning/Student Centeredness

Creating a Student Centered learning environment requires collaboration from all sectors of the college. Learning/Student Centeredness was partially illustrated by the

colleges' placing great importance on professional development for their faculty/staff. College A explained how professional development for faculty in the areas of active and cooperative learning bled over into the regular day to day operation of the college. College B discussed the retention activities that were implemented alongside the classroom assessment to keep students moving toward completion. College C used the Strengthsfinder and Strengthsquest tools to encourage student awareness and engagement, both in the classroom as well as in extracurricular activities.

Creating a collaborative and collegial culture with students' best interests at heart required that all college personnel relate effectively with one another. The colleges in this study were able to discover the strengths of their personnel and engage them in ways that allow them to foster a student centered learning environment. In some cases, this involved providing training outside the college, and other times, it called for internal professional development.

The Learning/Student Centeredness category has two subcategories: Student Success and Student Perspective. Student Success properties are Student Engagement/Purpose, Impactful, Learning through Differences, Expected to Participate and Service-Learning. Because learning happens mostly in the classroom and student success is impacted by all areas of the college, it reflected the College priority.

The second subcategory of Learning/Student Centeredness was Student Perspective, which was based on impressions students got from interactions with faculty and staff; therefore, this subcategory mirrored the Personal priority. Student Perspective had the properties of Accessibility, Customer Service, and Communication between Students.

Student success. A commitment to student success was central to the vision shared by all of the colleges in the study. Success is the result of much preparation and hard work, both on the part of the student and the college faculty/staff. At the colleges studied, student engagement was a priority, with the institutional critical goal of purposeful and impactful instruction. Understanding the power of active and cooperative learning, all three colleges supported the classroom goal of participation, which allowed students to learn from each other. Finally, a philanthropic giving of oneself was fostered via the service-learning that was available at all three colleges.

Student engagement and purpose. A student-/learning-centered institution is one where both the student and the college share the responsibility for the learning/achievement (Gordon & Habley, 2000). For example, in student-centered advising, the advisor and student share the responsibility for the student's program selection, course registration, and retention. With learning-centered, the instructor and student share the responsibility for learning. The colleges also understood the dynamics of the student engagement in cooperative and active learning.

Impactful. Learning was made possible because of the faculty understanding of learning styles and different delivery methods. In order to achieve student success, colleges must first have cultures that are centered on the student and the process of learning. At College C, this was illustrated by explaining the college's flywheel schematic and the actions that influence the movement of the flywheel (organizational alignment, human and resource development, culture, disciplined organization, strengths-based organization, evidence-based decision making, and learning first).

Learning through differences. All three colleges understood the significance of exposure to new ideas and thinking on student learning. College A's participant's notion of learning from diversity was not limited to student learning, but included faculty/staff learning by working together with people from different departments. College B's participants explained how each town had its own personality, and putting students together from different towns help them function better in the larger world and, likewise, with the faculty/staff. At College C, where the international influence was so pronounced, Learning through Differences took on a whole new tenor, as differences were not limited to those within the native population.

Expected to participate. Faculty and students in the focus groups talked about the expectation that both parties be active participants in the learning process. Having high expectations for the course delivery and the student performance was one topic that was discussed from both perspectives: students expected that the course will be valuable to them, and faculty expected that the students would do the work necessary to learn from the experience. The colleges tried to make coursework more available by distance learning and online. At College C, the expectation was that students would embrace the strengths philosophy and complete exercises that helped them reflect on their own personal strengths and how to maximize them.

Service learning. All of the colleges offered the opportunity for their students to participate in service learning. The faculty involved were passionate about the process and explained how engaging a student in a philanthropic giving of themselves helped to broaden a student's perspective. The service learning also helped students develop

empathy for others and increased the future likelihood they will engage in service to others.

Student perspective. Each college mentioned perceived and measured changes in the student body over time. How students learn, the impact of technology on learning and the classroom and general student satisfaction, for example, were very much concerns of the colleges. Students represent a significant piece of the internal stakeholder base; therefore, understanding their perspective is important for the long-term viability of the community college. Properties of Student Perspective were Accessibility, Customer Service, and Communication between Students.

Accessibility. The personal investment of faculty and staff into creating a student-centered learning environment was admirable. Being student-centered was not exclusively limited to the classroom and instruction. Access to necessary services and college staff and leadership were also important. Student groups at College A and C, for example, knew the president and most of the leadership team. Access to necessary college personnel was important to the students and the colleges knew this; therefore, student services were planned with the student in mind. Staggered advisement, financial aid office appointments to accommodate working students, and intrusive advisement are all examples of engagement that require students to meet with advisors and faculty advisors prior to registration, as well as at designated touch points throughout the semester.

Customer service. College C made a concerted effort to explain their view of the Customer Service as being more of a student development kind of Customer Service.

Only College C had on-campus housing. College A had housing, but the students told the researcher that not many use student housing. Creating active student life is difficult on a commuter campus, because students tend to leave campus as soon as classes are finished. All three colleges tried to provide an array of clubs, activities and opportunities for students to become engaged with faculty, staff, and each other outside of class. Mentoring programs, student government, and on-campus recreation are just a few examples of how they fostered student development. Bok (2006) says that many times, when asked what they remember most about college, students will mention the extracurricular activities as opposed to a classroom activity or lecture, which highlights the importance of linking the classroom and the "extracurricular."

Communication between students. The experience students gained from service projects for their clubs, or attending regional, state or national meetings with academic student organizations helped introduce them to professional experiences they might not otherwise engage in until after graduation. Exposure to professionalism and higher order collaboration was very important to the students in the focus groups. A leadership team member at College C explained the value of cooperative activities that allow students to learn about themselves and their strengths and what they bring to the table in the process of learning course material. Bok (2006) also says that exposure to service learning while in college helps a student be more civically engaged once gainfully employed.

Community Engagement

The community expects their community college to be responsive so the leadership must rely heavily on interaction, transaction, and action, not hierarchy, to meet this expectation (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Spaid & Parsons, 1999). In order to respond in

a timely manner, the community college president must understand and respect the influences of shared governance, local boards of trustees, the leadership structure, and faculty unions and senates (Eaton, 2007). The Community Engagement category is synonymous with developing deep connection with the external community. Community Engagement has two subcategories: Stakeholder Input and Listening to Stakeholders.

Stakeholder Input most closely reflected the Leadership priority, as much of the formal solicitation for input was conducted by the leadership team. Listening to Stakeholders most closely related to the College priority. Trust Building reflected affective and attitudinal factors and was largely related to the Leadership and Personal Perspective.

Stakeholder input. Stakeholder input is defined as the outcome of gathering the impressions of those with a vested interest in the organization, as well as measuring how well the organization is meeting stakeholder needs (Allison & Kaye, 2005; Bryson, 1995; Townsend & Twombly, 2001). Both internal and external stakeholder input was critical to the development and sustainability of the strategic plan and the shared vision.

Community support. Public engagement is necessary in gathering stakeholder input during the strategic planning phases, as well as in maintaining transparency when synthesizing that input into strategic initiatives. The more input and communication that takes place during this process, the greater the internal and external transparency. The college’s strategic plan should delineate and value the internal/external stakeholder relationship. This plan also serves as a guide by which all departments of the college should operate and from which the specific communities should expect to receive service. By listening to the community, the college ensures support in the form of a tax base,

enrollment, internship sites for current students, and employment for current students and graduates.

Responsive. The focus group participants in the study gave many examples of community support - from passing a tax annexation referendum, to hearing input that forced the college to be honest so that long-term results could be achieved, and partnering with real world businesses to create a career coach program to help students transition into employment. The key to the support, though, was undoubtedly the colleges' response to community needs.

Listening to stakeholders. Stakeholder Input is similar, but different than Listening to Stakeholders. With Input, the colleges actively sought out opinions and were able to craft questions for the strategic plan. Listening to Stakeholders was much less formal, but required that there first be an existing relationship where communication can occur. In two colleges, historical events resulted in mistrust. The current presidents understood this and worked to rebuild the trust of the community so that the community at large would have more venues to use to share opinions, needs and support.

Relationships. The focus group participants in the study believed that the purpose of their colleges was to serve the community. Serving and leading were largely intuitive concepts. Leadership and service coincide when the leader seeks first to listen and understand. Ideally, the collective vision of an organization is built around understanding and a dynamic that encourages trust, value, shared growth, and satisfaction for the persons touched by the organization (Farnsworth, 2007; Greenleaf, 2002). In doing so, they developed relationships with their communities. When the focus groups were asked how new initiatives got started at their college, all three colleges said that anyone in the

college could take a request and usher it to a person in power who could take action. The flat organization and prolific communication made it so that everyone's voice had the opportunity to be heard.

Likewise, all three colleges fostered and encouraged every faculty and staff member to serve on community-based organizations in order to build relationships. The input from the community usually came via the relationships. The most passionate statement about listening to stakeholders was shared by a person on College A's leadership team: "Listen to the community, listen to the faculty, and listen to the students. *Listen*" (line 367).

Celebrate achievements. As the colleges experienced success, the focus group participants said that the community was invited to share in the celebration of its achievements. Examples included the tax referendum at College A and widespread email congratulations at College C when a personal achievement is reached by one of the faculty or staff. The focus group participants said that their college expected the faculty/staff to work hard and when they met a goal, the leadership found ways to celebrate that achievement.

Trust/Accountability/Transparency

Elements related to this category, like the Loyalty category, were exhibited differently among the colleges. For example, College A had to rebuild trust after mismanagement brought a storm of public criticism. College B's location in a region with a wide socio-economic schism resulted in the college being a major player in both economic development and instructional delivery. College C took great pains to

communicate often so that the whole institution understood the direction and could work toward that goal.

This category accurately reflects the honorable nature of the three colleges. Even though unpleasant or dysfunctional periods in their histories exist, each college made a commitment to overcome the past, and artfully cultivate a healthy, authentic learning environment. At the time of the study, all three colleges could safely say that their college experienced a high degree of Trust/ Accountability/Transparency.

Trust building. Its properties included Positive Forward Planning, Courage, Responsive, Functional Teamwork, Devotion, Faculty Dedication, and Incentive. Leadership helped to create an atmosphere that was trustworthy, but the individuals within the college had to further demonstrate that trustworthiness with the students and community.

These colleges had a climate of respect and collaboration. In order to deal effectively with the challenges facing the three community colleges, they had to maximize a team effort in order to counteract impending enrollment and funding crises. Snyder and Lopez (2007) say that the concept of hope is what allows a populace to work in a collective effort to find the greater good. Hope can only occur in a climate that encourages action, collaboration, and trust by providing mentoring, effective listening, and individual consideration. Ultimately, an intellectually stimulating climate and positive communication are not mutually exclusive (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989). In order to create a confident and positive environment that promoted Trust/Accountability/

Transparency, the entire organization must think freely and creatively in order to share the decisions that shaped the initiatives.

Positive forward planning. When College A's leadership focus group was asked about the widespread communication to ensure that everyone in the college was informed and understood the initiatives being planned, one of the leadership participants explained, "That's because we were there, and it didn't get done for us" (line 189). Understanding the need to build trust and collegiality among the faculty and staff was primary at these colleges. The faculty and staff felt appreciated, well informed, and like active participants in the process.

Courage. When trust is compromised in a system, it is difficult to regain without courage. College A experienced a breach of trust and had to rebuild it. Reaching out to rebuild trust takes courage on the part of leadership. Even in the rank-and-file of an institution, developing trust or trusting requires a certain leap of faith. Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) describe courage as a willingness to break from expressed norms in a bad situation to do what is right. This certainly captures the situation College A's president and college found themselves in when he came into office. Without his courageous actions, College A might well have been shuttered.

Responsive. Roueche et al. (1989) maintain that the first community college leaders established the colleges in response to the community's requests. When beginning to rebuild trust, it is critical that leadership respond to the needs and feedback of its constituents. Failure to respond appropriately to the community could lead to a "business as usual" perception, which is what might have been the cause of the mistrust originally.

Functional teamwork. Teamwork in community colleges involves cross-functional teams. According to Myran et al. (2003), most problems are cross-functional in nature, so allowing teams to solve problems is faster, more complete (as the people on the team probably understand the problem and potential solutions best anyway), and more beneficial to the team members, as they learn from each other. All the colleges in the study relied heavily on functional teams to process information, solve problems, and move the college forward.

Faculty dedication. There were many examples of faculty dedication during the focus group interviews. College A students talked about the dedication of the faculty, not only in the classroom, but out of the classroom with clubs and organizations and the time faculty spend with students. College B faculty talked about the thrill they get at graduation when they see their students walk across the stage to get their diplomas. College C faculty admitted that their culture was such that they did not see "power grabbing," and that dedication to student success was equally shared among faculty and staff.

Incentive. The desire to serve the students and community is not limited to one group on the college campuses. A staff member at College A told the researcher that if a person worked hard at that college, it would be recognized and rewarded. Recognition that was not based on internal politics helped set the stage for building trust.

Faced the brutal facts. The last subcategory was historical in nature. The properties included Assessment, Need for Quality Institutional Research, Data-Driven Results, and Rules for the Team. At all three colleges, there was a point in time where

they had to take stock in their processes and, take a critical look at their college. The first step was the assessment phase.

Assessment. This property not only reflected the overall inner-workings of the college, but also day-to-day consideration of processes, procedures, and their effectiveness. Honest evaluation of institutional data helps keep an institution honest with itself and its stakeholders. The colleges in the study discussed the widespread use of assessment at their institutions, which is the first step to understanding. And true understanding is critical to building trust.

Need for quality institutional research. All three colleges used data extensively to make decisions. College A's Institutional Research office was relatively new, but leadership told the researcher that the individual departments had done their own data gathering and assessment previously. College B's participants told the researcher that their institutional researcher had recently left the college and they were looking for a replacement. Both the leadership and staff focus group participants noted that not having that position made gathering data more difficult and decisions less confident. College C had a software system that interfaced with their mainframe such that they could access up-to-the-minute data, which made making decisions much easier.

Data-driven results. Strauss and Corbin (1998) explain that data can be seen as sequential, with interactions between the data that demonstrate paths of connectivity that can be used to explain phenomena. The Provost at College C explained the ingrained use of data by saying, "Part of the reason we can (move quickly and nimbly) is because we do use data. I don't want to over-emphasize that, but we look at what works and what doesn't work all the time (lines 113-114).

Teamwork

Developing interdependence is critical to creating a shared vision because altruistic teamwork is needed to work for the common good and not fractured, vested interests (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989).To cultivate various communities of followers within the college and improve cross-divisional cooperation, transformational leaders created a working environment based on common agenda – or shared vision – that was embraceable by the entire college. Three subcategories emerged for Teamwork: Purposeful Teambuilding, Professional Development, and Innovation/Collaboration.

Strengths-based Teambuilding, Expected to Participate, and Collegiate Purpose are the properties of Purposeful Teambuilding. These properties most closely aligned with the Leadership priority because the need to craft and organize functional teams was completed by the leadership teams in the colleges in this study. Leadership, faculty and staff in this study repeatedly expressed the need to constantly improve to meet the needs of the students, thus making this subcategory relate more to the College priority. Innovation/Collaboration was closely aligned with the Personal priority.

Purposeful teambuilding. When teams are built by taking into consideration the strengths, talents, or interests of the prospective committee/team members, the process is considered Purposeful Teambuilding. Gittell (2003) explained that high quality relationships have three commonalities: shared goals, shared knowledge, and mutual respect. The three colleges in the study purposely connected different departments in teams as a means to share knowledge with the added benefit of breaking down potential silos. By understanding individual personal strengths, the knowledge base of the

participants and fostering their desire to participate with respect, a collegial culture is fostered.

Strengths-based teambuilding. Clifton and Harter (2003) explain that organizations are much more than the sum of the faculty/staff. When leadership takes the time to measure and identify the strengths of their employees, it not only provides vital information for the employee begin to see their own potential, but also gives a framework for the institution to use to position people to capitalize on their personal strengths for the good of the college. Additionally, Clifton and Harter (2003) say that when employees are able to use their strengths at work, they create more productive work groups with lower turnover. All the colleges used some form of Strengths-based Teambuilding when they selected committee members, when they formulated cooperative learning groups in the classroom, or when they moved employees around so they could make the best use of their strengths.

Expected to participate. The second property for Purposeful Teambuilding was Expected to Participate. The alignment of collegiate purpose helped to set the stage for the college to unite efforts and invite collective participation. All focus group members shared the projects and tasks that were expected of them, and not once did any of them speak negatively about the process. Instead, the process was seen as being just part of the larger entity that was their college.

Collegiate purpose. The collegiate purpose referred to the work that the teams engaged in: a success agenda that permeated the entire college, great respect for community engagement, and participation in the development of the strategic plan. Conceptually, the college is a living system, where the collective efforts of individuals

are maximized in a team effort (Cain, 1999). A transformational leader understands the organizational landscape within the college and disburses rewards appropriate to exerted effort. By recognizing contributions and celebrating victories, leaders who are attuned to their followers craft a team spirit that allows each person to feel powerful and important within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989).

Professional development. While leadership had to approve professional development, faculty/staff had to desire updated training. Professional Development had to become a very strategic endeavor for the three colleges, as fiscal constraints threatened the ability to provide such for the faculty/staff. Understanding the importance of having the right tools in the classroom and administratively, the colleges did not cut professional development for employees. Rather, they became more strategic about how and what was approved.

Investment of faculty/staff. Committee work could be a great waste of time if the work is not managed. Some standardization is necessary so that teams create a product that is usable and can receive appropriate support from the administration (Burnstad & Fugate, 1995; Haire & Russell, 1995; Twombly & Amey, 1994). According to Cameron et al. (2003) and the tenets of Positive Psychology, intricate organizational structure is of no value if there is no positive human impact. Virtuous organizational theory reflects the investment that faculty and staff had toward their institutions. Virtuousness is not measured in the presence or absence, but rather on a continuum. Three attributes are associated with virtuosity: human impact, moral goodness, and social betterment (Cameron et al., 2003). Virtuous organizational behavior exists when employees

experience full relationships, meaningful work, learning, and personal and professional development.

Incentive for professional development. In an effort to maintain healthy teams and team members, College C made the strategic decision to maintain professional development funding in the face of budget cuts. The staff focus group was careful to recognize the commitment to professional development. Likewise, the other two college focus group participants mentioned the investment their leadership made in their faculty/staff to enhance student success, which ultimately meant using a team approach to creating initiatives for student success.

Instructional support. Students particularly commented on how their college provided support out of classroom. Whether it was time the instructor set aside outside of class to meet with their students or an office that provided supportive services in the form of tutoring or study groups, the colleges in this study had organized instructional support available for students. The organization of these services is what sets them aside from other institutions, because delivery required great amounts of cooperation and collaboration (teamwork) to make it all happen.

Innovation/collaboration. In explaining the value of Virtuous Organizations, Cameron (2003) innovation is enhanced when collaboration is used extensively. Lee, Caza, Edmondson and Thomke (2003) examined "new knowledge creation" and found that understanding the use and value of collaboration can feed innovation. The colleges in the study fostered collaboration as a means to find solutions that effect multiple departments. The properties were Staff Attributes, Engagement, and Flat Organization. Innovation/Collaboration is a product of trust, positive communication, and appreciation

of colleague input (Staff Attributes). Engagement between departments makes opportunities possible that might not be possible otherwise.

Staff attributes. Innovative ideas and collaboration are necessary in transformational organizations. In respectful team environments, the communication process encourages creativity and contributes mightily to successful teamwork. Ultimately, relationships throughout the college are necessary as a means for unified change (Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Roueche et al., 1989). This was especially true at College A, as they experienced fast transformation in a short time period. When a college has an understanding of staff strengths, they can identify the attributes that blend well so that cross-functional teams can be constructed. Once constructed, the campus norms of respectful treatment, widespread communication, and acceptance of creativity include an element of courageous risk-taking, which helps with high functioning teams.

Engagement. The relationship between individuals within the organization is called engagement. Kouzes and Posner (2007) referred to this transformational trait as "encouraging the heart" (p. 21). Healthy relationships depend on the ability of the persons involved to be able to relate effectively with one another. Collins (2001), author of *Good to Great*, referred to the concept of talent management as "They first got the right people on the bus (and the *wrong* people off the bus) and *then* figured out where to drive it" (p. 41). College C offered the best representation of this philosophy, as they sought to keep promising people employed, and encouraged movement around the institution until employees were able to operate from their strengths.

Flat organizations. When an organizational structure is such that the majority of the institution is on the same hierarchical level, it helps to eliminate the illusion that one

position is more important than another. Likewise, it helps spread responsibility across the college and combat a silo mentality by creating positive relationships. Helgesen's Web of Inclusion is one example of a flat organization, but the initial notion that flat organizations help with communication, collaboration, responsibility sharing and engagement across the college is of great importance.

Positive relationships allow creativity to flow. Successful leaders recognize that decisions impact those most closely associated with the situation, and thus allow them critical voices in the decision-making process. This participation in decision-making reinforces the self-efficacy of each person involved (Snyder & Lopez, 2007). College B understood this, and sought to include a wide variety of people in decision-making. By recognizing contributions and celebrating victories, leaders attuned to their followers crafted a team spirit that allowed each person to feel powerful and important within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bennis, 2003; Cameron, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Maxwell, 2002; Rouesche et al., 1989).

Adaptability

A colloquialism used in community colleges is, "The only thing that is constant is change." This was the case with the three colleges in this research, as well. Adaptability allows for ideas to originate anywhere, as long as there is an effective and regular use of data in decision making. In order to move quickly and with purpose, a college must have some ability to adapt with confidence to the ever-changing fiscal and political climate.

Three subcategories emerged for Adaptability: Transformational Change, Appreciation, and Department Level Improvement. All three community colleges in the study had experienced a form of transformation. Two of the institutions were ATD

colleges, which undoubtedly influenced their transformational experience. The third college experienced transformation when it adopted a strengths-based model of management. In all three colleges, leadership realized old approaches were not working. College A was months from closing because of leadership issues; College B realized its student body needed additional academic support to reach completion. College C's leadership embraced the concept of strengths-based leadership and felt the integration of the strengths concepts would make their institution more resilient.

Transformational Change closely related to the Leadership priority, as widespread transformation was purposeful change, not accidental. Appreciation closely reflected the Personal priority. Department Level Improvement closely aligned to the College Priority, as each department had to work collectively to make changes toward transformation.

Transformational change. Transformational leaders do not fear change; rather, they embrace it as a mechanism for growth (Roueche et al., 1989; Seligman, 2002). In all three institutions, the promise of positive transformation inspired hope, which motivated the college and spurred the realization that growth requires change and adaptation. In all cases, a climate of respect and collaboration had to be achieved so that the necessary relationships could flourish and transformation could take place. Cameron (2008) refers to this as a positive climate.

Flexibility. Because of the need to be in tune with the community, along with other elements that impact the day to day function of the college, faculty/staff had to remain somewhat flexible. One of the staff persons at College A explained how they use teams to investigate better ways to impact student success, and when they settle on ideas, they begin the implementation process. When discussing how a community college can

adopt a strengths-based leadership framework, leadership, staff and faculty all agreed that it takes time, and that most colleges would give up before they totally ingrained the appreciative lens. Because of the time necessary, College C had to be flexible and learn as they progressed. Flexibility was important to the colleges, as they felt like they needed to be nimble.

Buy-in. Adaptability requires all the internal stakeholders to agree on the single shared vision and support all the efforts of the institution toward achieving that vision. Buy-In equates to departmental, fiscal and, to some degree, emotional agreement with the leadership's direction. Change is often difficult, so having the amount of dedication necessary to bring the institution to the desired state requires Buy-In from all the stakeholders. Anonymous art on the Berlin Wall reads, "Many small people, who in many small places, do many small things, can alter the face of the world" (personal photograph, 2015). While change at most community colleges will not equal the transformation that occurred when the Berlin Wall was taken down, it illustrates the importance of every individual's effort in achieving success as a team.

Appreciation. This subcategory really speaks to the value placed on the faculty/staff as they endure and foster transformational change within the institution. Emmons (2003) explains that Appreciation in organizations creates a positive core that fosters the mutual value and affirmation necessary for collaboration and social transformation. Appreciation is closely related to gratitude, which can improve individual well-being and lower toxic emotions in the workplace, such as resentment and envy.

Approachable. A positive climate of respect and collaboration provides a venue for relationships to flourish. Approachability was first modeled by the president at

College A. As one faculty member explained, “I think everybody around here, starting with the president who is leading by example, gives out their cell phone (number to students and/or colleagues)” (lines 414-415). Being available to the student body was very important at all the colleges, with College A undoubtedly allowing the most shared access.

Positive attributes. Cameron (2008) said that a positive climate encourages collaboration. Positive relationships, in the form of teamwork and collegiality, allow for adaptation to occur. One tool that could be used to define the goal or future direction is that of anticipatory reality, which Cooperrider and Whitney (2005a, 2005b) explain as the tendency for human beings to project attention to the future in anticipation of upcoming events. Research shows that focusing the anticipatory reality on a positive future is probably the most important aspect of any change process, as this impacts daily language choices and morale as those within the organization began to feel positive about their organization and their future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a, 2005b). A member of the leadership team at College C captured it eloquently:

> It’s really the integration of all of those things under this deeply felt belief that every student and staff member walking into this institution with the talents they need to succeed. And our job as an institution is to help us all identify what those are, develop them, and apply them so they can succeed. (lines 375-378)

College C applied this approach to all their initiatives. They had all the pieces, but how to develop and apply them was the focus of discussion. Using a strengths lens, the institution looked at the potential and recognized that all the elements to succeed existed within the college to make it possible. The concept of simultaneity states that inquiry and

change are not separate entities; rather, they happen simultaneously (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005a). The very process of discussing change, in other words, starts the change.

Department level improvement. Institutional Research and Progressive Instructional Improvement were properties for Department Level Improvement.

Institutional research. In order to achieve transformation, every department on campus must dedicate themselves to change in the direction of the leadership. Incremental change is less disruptive and longer lasting. The researcher found that all three colleges used data to make decisions. Having an Institutional Research office to house the data and to assist the departments in measuring their effectiveness was useful for the colleges. College B leadership readily admitted feeling the loss of their Institutional Researcher and discussed their desire to rehire the position quickly.

Progressive instructional improvement. Myran et al. (2003) explained that organizational culture was key to transformational change. A change-oriented culture developed only in environments where the leaders empowered faculty and staff to respond to new circumstances with innovative solutions that upheld the mission, vision, and values of the institution (Bass & Avolio, 1994). At College A, for example, the integration and use of active and cooperative learning strategies were not limited to the classroom. In the three years since its introduction to College A, cooperative learning strategies have changed the way people interact within the institution. As a member of the leadership focus group explained, “Our professional development meetings are conducted using active and cooperative learning strategies” (lines 27-28). She continued

by saying, “There are people who look for best practices and embrace those; try to be innovative and creative…A lot of people are vested in this institution” (lines 30-32).

All three colleges in this study were able to successfully transform their institutions. In one case, a new leader was the catalyst; in the other two cases, strong stable leadership helped shepherd the college through changes that strengthened the institution. In all three cases, the path to a shared vision was unique to the culture of each college. Having completed the analysis, a return to the original research questions is in order.

The following four questions directed this study and guided both the methodology employed and the theoretical framework:

1. How is positive leadership exhibited within organizations where effective stakeholder engagement occurs in the planning process?
2. What are the positive qualitative elements inherent in functional community college planning where effective community engagement has been employed?
3. How are colleges successful at gathering stakeholder input during strategic planning that leads to shared vision?
4. How are community college stakeholders allowed to participate in the planning process relative to their strengths?

The section that follows addresses these questions more specifically.

Sourcing Transformation at Community Colleges

Having completed the focus group interviews and extensive analysis, the researcher realized that as different as the community colleges in this study were, there are qualities that are consistent across institutions. Open access admissions,

demographics, state and federal funding, and the state of the economy, for example, all impacted the leadership and operation of the community colleges. The researcher was most interested in how the community colleges were successful in engaging their stakeholders in the planning and vision development process.

Initially, the researcher posed four open-ended research questions so as to not constrict her research. Grounded theory techniques were employed so the theory and findings would be informed by the data itself. As she progressed through the analysis, she found that there was not a linear set of traits, qualities, or properties necessary for transformation and/or the successful development of a strategic plan and shared vision. On the contrary, these two desired outcomes required a continuous blend of importance and necessary factors. In short, all the categories appear equal and necessary to gather stakeholder input in the creation of a strategic plan that aids in crafting a shared vision. The categories explained previously show the common qualities present at each of the colleges. Implementation was understandably specific to the institution and in accord with each unique college culture.

The four research questions were decidedly broad, so that the researcher would not artificially limit the findings. Because of the open nature of the questions, the researcher found that a combination of the eight categories was necessary for successful planning and vision development. Even with this knowledge, the researcher was still not satisfied with the resulting categories as telling the whole story. Early in the study, the researcher began to wonder if one priority was stronger or more prevalent than any other. Was leadership the real reason the colleges were successful? Or was it the college's culture that allowed the leadership to thrive? Or, perhaps, was the college very fortunate

to have hired very competent people in key positions, and the personalities of the persons involved carried the process? Following is a synthesis of the findings from the priorities view.

Leadership

In all three institutions, the current leadership was well respected and said to have the highest integrity. All three colleges referred to the presidents as “servant leaders” who had the best interests of the college at heart and worked tirelessly to serve the institution and student. The presidents set the example for behavior and the rest of the college mirrored that standard.

In all three colleges, the faculty, staff and students spoke about feeling “appreciated” or “valued” by the leadership at their college. Rouesche et al. (1989) notes that it is difficult to influence others without being in contact with them; the researcher would go one step further and say that a leader cannot truly appreciate the employees of his institution unless he spends time with them and knows them. The colleges in this study are of varying size, yet the largest institution had a president that intentionally met with each employee on their birthday to wish them a pleasant day.

Farnsworth (2007) provides helpful advice on how community college presidents can engage their colleges and be able to be knowledgeable enough to appreciate them. One piece of advice is to find time to listen, and not just to the leadership team, or the faculty senate, but also to the minute demographic groups in the community. College C’s president, as reported by that institution’s provost, was one of the largest gatherers of community information in the college. He was off-campus much of the time, meeting groups who might be influential politically, but just as likely to meet with a group of

students who hang out at a local coffee establishment. When the researcher was visiting College B, the owner of the Bed and Breakfast spoke of all the connections the president had in the district, and how often he ran across the man in town. They all took time to find ways to connect with the stakeholders of the college.

Learning to listen was another piece of helpful advice, which involved being present (not distracted), showing interest and empathy, and clarifying for a common meaning (Farnsworth, 2007). The presidents in the study had an “open door policy,” meaning they implicitly welcomed visitors to their office. The stories in the focus groups clearly show that the presidents at the colleges in this study not only welcomed interactions, but when people left, they truly felt as if they had been heard. They spoke with a sense of satisfaction that their president really “got” what was going on in their institution.

Farnsworth (2007) also suggested that presidents need to find formalized ways to gather feedback and intelligence from the college community. All three community colleges used different surveys and instruments to gather data that was used to make decisions. College C talked about the many tools they used to gather data and feedback to continually take the pulse of the institution. A transformational president uses all tools necessary to create meaning for the people within the college (Rouesche, et al., 1989). If College C’s president had tried to shortcut any of these pieces of advice (time, listening, understanding), for example, the message would seem less than genuine and the college would feel as though the president was out of touch. Even the newest president in the study had mastered this step.

There was no doubt that the leadership at the colleges began with the president, but the expectation was that the rest of the institution would appropriately engage as a leader, as well. The leadership teams at all the colleges were chosen thoughtfully, and worked in tandem with the president. There was never a doubt about who was "in charge" at the colleges, yet the faculty/staff exhibited just as much respect for the rest of the leadership team as they did for the presidents.

College Culture

Does the college culture influence the leader or does the leader influence the college culture? If the college culture were different, would the leadership be as effective? All three of the colleges were established colleges, and the presidents were not founding presidents, so there had to be an element of congruence between the college culture and the president. Rouesche et al., (1989) says that the influence a president will have on the college will be proportional to how closely the president's vision and goals align with the college and how well the president can implement a strategy within that alignment. In the colleges studied, the selection process netted a good "fit" between president and institution, because all three had been able to create institutional change for their college. Understanding the existing culture is the first step, which goes back to the fundamental leadership concepts.

Presidents have to understand the existing culture in order to work within its boundaries. If the president's values and personality do not mesh with the institution, the leader's efforts will appear inauthentic and hollow. If a college feels their leader is ethical and has taken the time to develop a relationship with the faculty and staff at an institution, then positive energy can be harnessed to create change. College A was a

classic example of this phenomenon. The president was new to the college, but he connected with key personnel who became a part of his leadership team. Together, they developed a plan that was synchronous with the culture. They worked diligently as a college to restore order and stability and have, so far, been successful. One of the College C leadership team focus group members made a statement that summed up the experience eloquently, “They understand their culture and how to operate within that culture” (lines 450-451).

It is important to note that at College A, several prior presidents behaved in ways that were destructive to the college. Yet due to the collective leadership of faculty and staff, the culture proved strong enough to survive these presidencies and return the college to a stable condition under new leadership. This would suggest that a well-established and supported culture can survive poor leadership.

Personal

The last query was whether or not the personal traits of the individuals who work at the college have an appreciable impact on shared vision. Clifton, Anderson, and Shriner (2006) would say that people are happier and more productive if they are able to do what they do best every day. College C spent a great amount of time, money, and effort to selectively hire people for positions where they could exercise their strengths. Their philosophy is that everyone has gifts and talents they bring to the table and everyone has the capacity to do their best job every day. The investment in personnel at College C was commendable.

College A and B had not outwardly ascribed to the strengths philosophy, but they selectively crafted teams based on the potential contribution. The Servant Leadership

modeling by the leadership at all three colleges trickled down to the faculty and staff, as was evidenced by the Student Centeredness category. The willingness to help students learn critical job and life skills so they could be productive citizens was discussed at all three institutions. Volunteerism of faculty and staff with student groups, and just as importantly with community groups on behalf of the college, was widespread at all three colleges. Service to the college as well as the community was a strong theme. Here again, in the case of College A, in the absence of strong leadership, a "shadow" group of strong and committed individuals from all ranks within the college came together to protect the college and its culture from the mistakes of the formal "leaders." Personal characteristics in subordinates trumped formal authority in insuring institutional survival.

All three colleges fielded a leadership team that was able to engage their divisions, implement programs and strategies, and conduct widespread assessment. They accomplished all of this while commanding the utmost respect from their divisions. The common vision of student success was fostered from top to the bottom at each institution.

Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

Is shared vision a result of leadership? Is it attributable to the distinct culture of the college? Or is it due to the personal traits and personalities of the people within the colleges? Does one precede the others? Are they interrelated? Could they exist singularly or is it necessary that they exist in concert? This study supports the assertion that the three need to exist in simultaneity and that the absence of one, while not completely destructive, weakens the institution until balance is restored.

Studying the positive qualitative aspects of the three colleges in the study provided insight as to how exemplary colleges created strategic plans using stakeholder

input and, in the process, crafted a shared vision. The researcher purposely did not seek any negative aspects in the study. Negative comments were shared in the focus groups, and they were investigated. But in the end, because the focus of the study was the positive qualitative elements, the negative aspects were used to compare and contrast in the analysis stages.

The colleges chosen were different in demographics and size, but none was considered large. Would similar leadership be successful in extremely large institutions? This would test the premise that flat organizational structures and web-like communication were optimal. It might be very difficult for very large complex institutions to be organized such that web-like communication was possible. The colleges in this study were from small- to mid-size cities. Urban institutions might have totally different dynamics and findings, resulting from their “big city” feel.

The research at each college was conducted over a two-day period. Lengthier study might net different results. Likewise, focus group participation was low, so greater numbers might net different and/or broader perspectives and ultimately produce different results. The content was so consistent among these three colleges, however, that the researcher felt these findings are a wonderful starting point in filling the void in this area of research.

Summary

In conclusion, the researcher came to understand that the colleges exemplary at strategic planning and able to create a shared vision first understood their institutional culture. Recognizing the institutional strengths and those of the people therein was common among the presidents in this research. Two long-term presidents and one newer

president were able to achieve similar results: creating a shared vision through exemplary strategic planning.

As stated previously, the researcher wondered at the onset of the study if she would find that presidents actually made the difference, or if the colleges were just adept at creating the shared vision. She found that the president was, in fact, the driving force behind the crafting of the vision and planning. But, the rank-and-file of the college was critically important, as they implemented the assessment, interventions, and evaluations that support the strategic direction.

In each case in this study, the presidents were truly servant leaders. Each focus group interviewed mentioned specifically how appreciated they felt by the leadership of the college. In each institution, prolific communication was intentional and critical to success. The focus groups were able to speak intelligently about the direction of the college, how it was decided, and how they proceeded. Feeling valued and included in important decisions led naturally to a state of loyalty. The concept of loyalty differed between the institutions, but the allegiance to the college, the community, the students, and each other was palpable among employees in the three colleges. That is not to say that there were not problems at the colleges studied. However, the overall willingness to devote the additional time and energy to keep the college healthy and serve students was greater than any feelings of frustration.

High degrees of communication created collegiality among the employees such that teamwork came naturally. Faculty and staff worked together to create a student centered learning environment that adapted as necessary to ensured student success. When everyone was equally involved in the work, the need for secrets disappeared. Trust

between the leadership and the rest of the college increased, and everyone understood and accepted that they were all accountable. Using data to make decisions and sharing information such as the fiscal state of the college helped to create a transparency that allowed everyone to know the state of the college. This knowledge reinforced the loyalty that pervaded every college in the study.

The researcher conducted an analysis of the interview questions and found that the findings validated the intent of the research questions. The words varied, but the meaning behind the words matched. The consistency in the findings let the researcher know that the questions were well designed and credible.

To quote higher education visionary John Gardner (1990), “Leaders are almost never as much in charge as they are pictured to be, and followers are never as submissive as one might imagine.” (p. 23). Shifting demographics, decreasing student populations, fluctuating employment trends, and a volatile economy potentially threaten public higher education institutions. Open access community colleges may find themselves particularly vulnerable and financially at risk if they are unable to understand the needs of their stakeholders and respond effectively. Lean, responsive, and student-centered community colleges will continue to require authentic servant leaders who can work within their institutional cultures to find the collaborative means for the good of their communities in order to lead a strong America in a competitive 21st century global economy.

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APPENDIX A

Division of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

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Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activities
Community Engagement and Collegiate Planning

Participant ________________________________ HSC Approval Number 487931-2

Principal Investigator Dedria A. Blakely PI's Phone Number 618-833-7414

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1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Dedria Blakely, Dr. Wolfgang Althof and Dr. Kent Farnsworth. The purpose of this research is to explore the question: How do community colleges successfully engage their communities during the strategic planning process, examine the acquired information so that it influences processes within the college, practice good leadership qualities, create a shared vision and promote transformational change? Your impressions and opinions will guide research for a dissertation for Dedria A. Blakely.

2. a) Your participation will involve participating in a focus group at your community college. The researcher will seek four focus groups to be interviewed: Planning team members, faculty, staff and students/community members.

   Approximately 7-10 persons will be asked to participate in each group, and there will be 4 focus groups per college involved in this research. The research will occur at four colleges studied in this research, making a maximum of 160 participants included in the research.

   Additionally, each Strategic Planning Team focus group participant will be asked to take the "Clifton Strengthsfinder" online at no cost to the participant. Strengthsfinder is taken online at the convenience of the participant prior to the focus group. Access codes and instructions will be provided by the researcher. Because the researcher is interested in whether or not successful planning processes are successful because those who participate are able to operate from a strengths-based perspective, it is hoped that this tool will provide additional information during the focus group

interview. Strengthsfinder will provide each participant with a list of their top 5 signature strengths. Participant access to the STrengthsfinder website will remain active after the research has concluded. The researcher will have access to the codes, but the data will only be used for purposes of this study. The individual responses to the study are only held by Gallup Corporation, and will only be available to the researcher or the participant. Only the top 5 signature strengths are available.

b) Strengthsfinder will require about 40 minutes to take the survey online, and a maximum of two hours for the focus group interview. There will be no payment for participation; however, participants will retain access to their results and the Strengthsfinder website.

3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research; however a small risk is possible if another participant discloses information shared during the interview.

4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation may assist other colleges in developing successful planning strategies that will strengthen their service to their communities.

5. Your participation is voluntary and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time by simply telling the researcher that you choose not to participate. . You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.

6. By agreeing to participate, you understand and agree that your data may be shared with other researchers and educators in the form of presentations and/or publications. In all cases, the identity of your community college will not be revealed as pseudonyms will be used to distinguish between the colleges. Your personal identity will remain confidential. In rare instances, a researcher's study must undergo an audit or program evaluation by an oversight agency (such as the Office for Human Research Protection). That agency would be required to maintain the confidentiality of your data. In addition, all data will be stored on a password-protected computer and/or in a locked office.

7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Dedria A. Blakely (618-833-7414) or the Faculty Advisor, Dr. Wolfgang Althof (314-516-6818). You may also ask questions or state concerns regarding your rights as a research participant to the Office of Research Administration, at 516-5897.

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.

Participant's Signature	Date	Participant's Printed Name
Signature of Investigator or Designee	Date	Investigator/Designee Printed Name

APPENDIX B

Terminology and Relationship Comparison of Transformational Leadership

	Transformational leadership concepts			
Author(s) and date	Personal integrity of the leader	Communication throughout the organization	Climate of respect and collaboration	Relationships
Cameron (2008)	Positive meaning 'A calling'	Positive Appreciative	Positive climate Flourishing Encouraging	Positive Emphasizes strengths Greater creativity Collaboration
Kouzes & Posner (2007)	Model the way Clarify values Set the example	Challenge processes Innovate Recognize good ideas	Enable others to act Foster collaboration and trust	Encourage the heart Recognize contributions Celebrate victories
Rouesche et al. (1989)	Values orientation Leads by example High standards Openness & trust	Motivational orientation Encourage creativity	People oriented Respectful Values others	Influence orientation Responsibility with authority Followers feel powerful
Bass & Avolio (1994)	Idealized influence Admired, trusted Puts others' needs first High ethical/moral standards	Intellectual stimulation Innovative and creative Challenge old assumptions	Individual considerations Effective listening Mentoring	Inspirational motivation Team spirit
Maxwell (2002)	Leadership	Attitude	Equipping	Relationships
Bennis (2003)	Integrity Character Strong moral compass	Adaptive capacity	Emotional intelligence	Exquisitely attuned to followers

Appendix C

Code Book

Category: Loyalty

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Commitment	To give of themselves for the collective good of their college	Willing	Willing	Unwilling	"We have so many people that work and volunteer, this is all volunteering" (line 372)
		Resiliency	Strong	Inflexible	"You come back the next day and get back into it" (line 253).
Compassion/Concern for students	A feeling of wanting to help students succeed	Positive Regard	Compassion	Heartless behavior	"Compassion is a word you used when you were talking about students. They're not the commodity. But you've got to treat them with compassion" (lines 107-109).
		Caring	Concern	Neglect	"We do care about what goes on here. We ultimately care about seeing the students…graduate" (lines 115-119).
College Culture	The time, circumstance and culture that surrounds the college at a given time.	Maintain the Culture	Preserve	Destroy	"While it is time and labor intensive, that process has really contributed to the culture and, hopefully, to students having a positive experience here" (line 388).

Category: Communication

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Open Communication	Communication that is not restricted	Communication and Feedback	Sharing of ideas	Uncommunic ative	“We all kind of ended up on the same page. Even though we may have started at very different ends of the spectrum (lines 99-100).
		Purposeful Communication	Intentional	Ignoring	“We always do decision-making by teams” (line 137).
		Connectedness between Divisions	Collaboration	Division	“Enables a lot of interaction among people of every job and level and I think that’s probably pretty unique” (lines 68-69).
Inclusion/Transparency	Being a part of decisions such that motives are understood	Perspective from all Areas	Ask/Listen	Do not ask or ignore	“We really need input from a bunch of people and a bunch of perspectives when we’re adding somebody to this team” (lines 202-204).
		United in Efforts	Sharing the responsibility	Excluding or blaming	there were meetings around the academics, leadership and I think different areas align their conversations. And that I think that allowed people to see it. (lines 453-456).
		Cooperation	Sharing the workload	Refusing to share	“We have this patchwork of activities that are funded and this patchwork of things that are funded by passion” (lines 226-227).
Appreciation of the College	Acknowledging the strengths and value of the college	Appreciation of Faculty and Staff	Respectful	Devalue	“Show that you value what the talents and the commitment that your employees bring to you. (lines 816-819).
		Pride	Self-respect	Disrespect	“It’s a really nice touch that he seeks out the person and thanks you for the contribution that you make to the college” (lines 124-125).

Category: Servant Leadership

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Lead by Example	Modeling behavior that is to be followed.	Supportive Leadership	Assists	Hinders	“We have a leader and he will compliment you but he keeps pushing for more” (line117).
		Strengths-based Leadership	Lead using strengths	Lead by fiat	“We’re having a lot of strengths-based conversations in our...in our hourly meetings” (lines 162-163).
		Know Faculty and Staff Well	Familiarity	Superficial	“I think it’s like a community in a sense, you know? You know everybody down the hall most of the time because you see them so often” (lines 590-592).
		Faculty Adaptability	Flexible	Rigid	“That’s why we go to things and why we keep changing curriculum, because we know that ultimately that’s our end result (student success) (lines 132-136).
Strategic Decisions	Decisions made by consciously considering data and fiscal concerns first.	Fiscal Responsibility	Thrifty	Wasteful	(because of alignment in grant writing, they were able to afford) “And have given them access to a nationally recognized person” (lines 526-528).
		Alignment of Intention/Purpose	Organized efforts	Disorganized efforts	“I think one way to not to overtax us is that if we have to ATD, we have to QEP, then what we do is make sure that when we do one, we can use that data for other things” (lines 401-411).
		Forward Movement	Positive change	No change	“We don’t have that much of a problem with communication, because everybody is so excited to get to that next step” (lines 390-391).

Category: Servant Leadership *continued*

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Caring Culture	Culture that values students and faculty and staff and makes decisions in the best interests of the stakeholders.	Valued	Important	Meaningless	"Administration: They are very forthright in giving a pat on the back and encouragement and telling us that we are valuable. That's good to hear (lines 69-70).
		Respected	Held in esteem	Disregarded	"We're respected in the community. People regard it as an important piece of the community" (line 29).
		Empowerment	Entrust	Deny	"We are given a real good amount of autonomy here (empowerment)"(line 31).

Category: Learning/Student Centeredness

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Student Success	When students reach their goals, academically, socially or economically	Student Engagement/Purpose	Involved	Not involved	"We've dedicated ourselves to co-curricular learning. We think it's a very important dimension of what the students do and how the students grow" (lines 209-211).
		Impactful	Motivating	Ineffective	"When a potential opportunity comes along, whether it's in a classroom or institution-wide or whatever, those opportunities that we think may be able to push the flywheel in the right direction" (lines 63-65)
		Learning through Differences	Expanding the mind	Static	"(Strengths PD) Some departments do kind of retreats, some haven't. One of the things at this point is that it's just so much a part of who we are, that it's not a …there isn't a structure that people have to fit in" (lines 277-280).
		Expected to Participate	Engage	Watch	"When we had our spring flings, and stuff, it's a college. You know, everybody gets out there and helps. It's not just the students out there working and stuff. It's the faculty and staff; it's everybody out there working" (lines 63-65).
		Service-Learning	Give of oneself	Narrow minded	"She serves on various different volunteer boards and she's bringing that… service-learning perspective back and incorporating that into the kinds of things she's offering here for our students and encouraging them, you know, to learn about civic responsibility" (lines 416-419).

Category: Learning/Student Centeredness *continued*

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Student Perspective	The viewpoint of a student's experience.	Accessibility	Open	Limited	"We have a professor who is working with open source curriculum (we have more than one), but they have really embraced using open source textbooks and helping students have greater and more affordable access to textbooks like that" (lines 12-15).
		Customer Service	Assistance	Ignored	"The student is our customer and their success is our #1 thing. Our whole goal is to get them to their destination; their end destination; whether that be 1 semester certificate, or 60 credits for an associate degree and ready to go to another school" (lines 273-276).
		Communication between Students	Cooperative learning	Alone	"At OMS we talk about that. We're teamed…we're grouped because of our strengths and I just feel like it's used all over campus, like, even, like, clubs and stuff" (lines 411-413).

Category: Community Engagement

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Stakeholder Input	Allowing stakeholders the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings	Community Support	Backing	Opposition	"The community that sees us as a big asset" (lines 46-47).
		Responsive	Conscious	Indifference	
Listening to Stakeholders	Actively listening to stakeholders when they share their opinions, no matter the venue	Relationships	Liaison	Disconnected	"You are always running into people and they…you are College B to themne" (lis 99-100).
		Celebrate Achievements	Success	Unfulfilled	"People bought into this leadership philosophy that, 'hey, you get out there and you do the job, and we're going to celebrate. We're going to reap the benefits of your labor. And we saw that to be true" (lines 162-164).

Category: Trust/Accountability/Transparency

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Trust Building	Behaviors and actions that encourage a feeling of trustworthiness	Positive Forward Planning	Outlining	Lack of planning	"Success or failure of what we do is not measured so much on how well we do, but on how well the thing is still operating 10 years from now. If the SGA is still around after 10 years because of some of the things we were able to do, then that's success" (lines 714-716).
		Courage	Bravery	Fear	"That's a phrase from our president as well. He is not afraid to pick up the stone and see what is crawling underneath it. And, he has taught us to do that, and we do it. And sometimes, it's ugly, and it hurts, but that's what's caused us to really change" (lines 362-365).
		Responsive	Receptive	Indifferent	"A lot of our programs have been at a direct request of what the community needs to fulfill jobs" (lines 141-142).
		Functional Teamwork	Useful	Impractical	"Strengthsquest is a perfect example. We have a culture of taking those strengths and really fitting people to the right seat on the bus and it's created a common language among all of us as faculty and staff and it helps us to work better together" (lines 12-14).
		Devotion	Allegiance	Apathy	"And they do it because they – it's what they enjoy doing" (line 418).
		Faculty Dedication	Faculty allegiance	Faculty apathy	"It's graduation night, it's a Friday night, you know. When you get there and you start looking around at those students, it reminds you of why you do what you do" (lines 127-129).

Category: Trust/Accountability/Transparency *continued*

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
		Incentive	Enticement	Deterrent	"Created a sense of urgency… And that was created for us, I think. You know, we saw our student numbers declining. We realized that many of the students we were getting were not testing into the college level classes, that they were needing developmental classes" (lines 159-161).
Faced the Brutal Facts	A deep introspective look at the reason things happen the way they happen.	Assessment	Appraisal	Guess	"One of the things that was shocking when we started getting all this data, I mean, no one wants to think they are not doing the best job possible. And it isn't so much as not doing the best job possible. It's just so much room for other things" (lines 166-168).
		Need for Quality Institutional Research	Need for data	No need for data	"IR's really great about having that data out there in an easily understandable format even for someone who, you know, might not be as comfortable, you know, number-crunching" (lines 259-261).
		Data-Driven Results	Smart decisions	Guesses	"Given it being kind of a data-y culture around here, I want to know…I want to look at grades and courses and GPAs…and see, you know, what are the trends…what are we finding…how can we use that to work on that…a new initiative we're planning or a product…and if we're making data-driven decisions" (lines 497500).
		Rules for the Team	Guidelines	Anarchy	"One of those rules in there is debate with vigor, let's all get it out. What our points of view are. If we're on different sides, lets debate it with vigor, but at the end, let's come to consensus, and when we leave, we'll leave united" (lines 423-426).

Category: Teamwork

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Purposeful Teambuilding	When teams are built by taking into consideration the strengths, talents or interests of the prospective committee/team members. Strategically formulating the team.	Strengths-based Team-building	Based on strength	Unplanned	"(As an RA) you never handle a situation alone and you have to know each other. Which strengths work better with what type of group of people …we talk about that a lot" (lines 404-411).
		Expected to Participate	Active	Indifferent	"Leadership team got together and a group of people, and asked 'okay, what are the areas we think we need represented on this group and how might that contribute to their goals" And, so, some councils are appointed, but then… request volunteers to join the forum…and you do have to run and be elected, but, it…I think it depends" (lines 349-354).
		Collegiate Purpose	Collegiality	Unsupportive	"(autonomy/collegiality) it includes administration to effective teaching faculty and vice versa…"(lines 36-37).
Professional Development	Training that helps a person or department do their job better. Usually refers to specific training.	Investment in Faculty/Staff	Support	Take-away from	"I think a lot of it is the leadership skills they develop within the institution by doing things. Like working in groups" (lines 440-448).
		Incentive for Professional Development	Encouragement	Deterrent	"(Because of an investment in professional development) The thing that's so phenomenal is that this nationally recognized mathematician …and we are going to be able to bring this guy in this summer ….." (lines 544-5448).
		Instructional Support	Backing instruction	Frustration	"It's a commitment to believing we have to help them gain those skills they need in order to be successful and responsible. You can't just say, "that's what you're supposed to do" (lines 236-238).

Category: Teamwork *continued*

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Innovation/Collaboration	Working together to create or improve a process.	Staff Attributes	Virtues	Disregard	"Our leadership has been very good at---we have a very true leadership team. They're all strategic, they're all thinking…and that's great, but we need somebody to do it" (lines 507-509).
		Engagement	Commitment	Break	"Whenever they plan things, they like to have students there to get their take on it" (line 118).
		Flat Organization	Accessible	Not accessible	"There's not really any point about who has the power, it's just about us getting stuff done" (line 710).

Category: Adaptability

Subcategory	Definition	Properties	Dimension varies from	Dimension varies to	Example
Transformational Change	The ability to influence the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors of others by working with and through them	Flexibility	Resilience	Resistance	"That we are not looking at the data a semester later. We are looking at real time, So, we make interventions and things at the first sign to help this person (lines 145-149).
		Buy-In	Adopt	Refuse	"We have to make sure everybody is at the table" (line 355).
Appreciation	Recognition of value	Approachable	Advance	Distance	"I think everybody around here, starting with the president who is leading by example, gives out your cell phone" (lines 414-415).
		Positive Attributes	Positive traits	Unhelpful	"Almost ten years ago now when we started raising the whole strengths thing, and it was also at the same time as appreciative inquiry, and so I would say building on what is the positive that we already have is really important to this college" (lines 258-260).
Department Level Improvement	When individual departments create annual goals that dovetail with the strategic plan and document successful improvement.	Institutional Research	Data	No data	"In my role in Institutional Research and Effectiveness, a part of connecting that shared vision is improving the availability of data resources" (lines 213-214).
		Progressive Instructional Improvement	Dynamic	Passive	"This math faculty inquiry, the English has been working. Now we are working with the social sciences. So we kind of have these tasks that we work on with that. (lines 338-340).