THE NEED TO RE-ENVISION COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.

John Quincy Adams

Higher education leadership is a popular topic for research and discussion and has inspired numerous books and articles over the years. An electronic search on the phrase community college leadership alone yields close to 3,000 hits. Heightened interest in the subject has been spurred recently by predictions that as many as 84% of community college presidents will retire over the next 10 years (Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). These pending retirements, as well as severe cuts in state funding and other external pressures, mean that community colleges currently face leadership changes and challenges not seen since the massive expansion of 2-year colleges in the 1960s.

As community colleges prepare for a mass changing of the leadership guard, several questions emerge. Who will make up the next generation of community college leaders? What new ideas and experiences will they bring with them? How can community colleges prepare for new leaders who may break with traditional, male-dominated leadership models? What sort of training and leadership development programs should be put in place to prepare future community college leaders? The current period of transition provides an opportune time to re-envision community college leadership.

Given these changes and challenges, today’s community college leaders, including presidents, chief academic officers, vice presidents, deans, and
Community College Leadership

chairs, as well as those seeking such positions, continuously seek guidance on how to improve their leadership skills and effectiveness. Some borrow from industry and attempt to apply business-based theories to a collegiate setting, but for various reasons, these efforts are not always successful (Birnbaum, 2000). Within the community college sector, several sources of support for leaders have emerged. In 2005, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) released *Competencies for Community College Leaders*. This monograph was the result of a 2-year effort to provide a set of competencies that can guide future leaders. In particular, the AACC hoped that emerging leaders would use the framework to measure their development and prepare for high-level leadership positions in community colleges.

In addition, many professional organizations, state associations, and individual colleges have created formal leadership development programs. Some of these specifically target the AACC’s leadership competencies, whereas others focus on developing leaders to meet the contextual needs of their college (Eddy, 2009; Jeandron, 2006). Although developing leaders by measuring specific competencies and emphasizing the importance of context and culture in leadership development are not mutually exclusive, the two approaches are based on differing conceptions of what a leader is and should be, and perhaps on competing ideas of who should be recruited to campus leadership positions. The emphasis on competencies underscores a set of skills acquired irrespective of the particular needs of a community college. For instance, the specific traits of communication and resource management focus on becoming adept at the process of relationships and the balancing of competing needs for resource allocation. Attention to contextual needs, on the other hand, focuses on the specific culture, history, and challenges facing a particular college. The unique constellation of an individual campus’s situation means that communication and resource managements operate within contextual boundaries. It is important for leaders to understand their college’s situation to best meet challenges.

This book is based on the premise that leadership is not composed of a prescribed list of traits or skills. Rather, leadership is multidimensional, with the various dimensions existing on continua that reflect the evolution of a leader’s understanding of what it means to lead, as well as his or her ability to respond to leadership opportunities in new ways. Key to a multidimensional understanding of leadership is recognition of the fact that all leaders rely to some extent on their core beliefs and underlying schemas (i.e., ways of understanding the world) in making leadership decisions. However, leaders also possess a variety of other leadership dimensions, which interact in ways
that are obscured or oversimplified by traditional, two-dimensional theories and models of leadership. Intended as a foundation to the ideas presented throughout the book, this chapter describes the challenges of community college leadership, briefly details the evolution of leadership philosophies, and provides background information on the nine case studies from which empirical data were drawn. The chapter concludes with an overview of the rest of the book.

Challenges of Community College Leadership

Scholars and policy makers often talk about the community college’s historic tripartite mission of transfer education, vocational training, and community service. Yet this idea often oversimplifies the many functions of community colleges. True, the colleges serve as points of access to higher education and lower-cost paths to a bachelor’s degree for students who cannot or choose not to matriculate directly at 4-year universities. And yes, community colleges offer vocational training and apprenticeship programs that lead to direct employment, as well as courses that fulfill local community desires and needs. However, in recent years community colleges have also become the primary institutions responsible for providing remedial education to students who are unprepared for college-level work. In addition, they increasingly offer contract training for employees of local businesses, as well as a wide range of adult learning programs. Furthermore, because of their literal and figurative locations between high schools and 4-year universities, community colleges have become the nexus of educational partnerships forming what policy makers envision as seamless educational pathways from kindergarten through the baccalaureate (Amey, Eddy, Campbell, & Watson, 2008; Cherry Commission, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Even with serving all of these functions, many community colleges have sought to confer applied bachelor’s degrees in areas such as teacher education, nursing, and technology (Floyd, Skolnik, & Walker, 2005; Townsend & Ignash, 2003).

The central challenge of community college leadership is thus balancing these multiple missions and functions in a way that best meets the demands of the community, the state, and the nation. In doing so, leaders must be responsive to changing regional needs and business demands, as well as student aspirations and limitations. Gumport (2003) frames this balancing act as a continuous struggle by community college leaders (as well as those at
other public institutions of higher education) to straddle an industry logic that puts a premium on economic priorities and a social logic that prioritizes meeting students’ educational needs. This balance is clearly a difficult task, and some believe that it may be impossible to give equal weight to each mission. Boggs (as cited in Evelyn, 2004) argues that community college leaders must navigate internal and external demands and prioritize some institutional goals over others. Such leadership decisions necessarily mean that certain college functions go unfilled. However, by connecting college priorities to community needs and enacting specific strategies to fulfill institutional objectives, leaders can help campus constituents make meaning of their roles at the institution as they focus on improving college outcomes (Eddy, 2003; Neumann, 1995).

The ways in which community colleges are funded provide another leadership challenge. Historically, local taxes were the primary source of revenue to the colleges, which meant that leaders often prioritized regional needs and demands in order to secure a steady stream of funds. However, since the early 1960s state apportionments have outpaced local contributions; in 2000 the states provided 45% of public community college revenues, compared to 20% from local sources (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). This dependence on state apportionments not only complicates the ways in which college leaders make decisions about institutional priorities, but also means that cutbacks in state funding have disproportionately affected 2-year colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 1980, 1995, 2007). In an attempt to stabilize revenues, community colleges have increasingly sought investments from business and industry, particularly in vocational programs. However, most community colleges derive less than 10% of their income from private sources, and thus contributions from local businesses go only so far in easing the institutions’ financial woes. Moreover, some argue that greater collaboration with business and industry puts pressure on college leaders to prioritize narrowly tailored vocational courses and workforce development programs over transfer education. Needless to say, dependence on state apportionments, variable funding streams, and variable expectations from businesses and local communities complicate planning and make budgeting difficult.

Student demographics at 2-year colleges also pose a leadership challenge. The average community college student differs greatly from the traditional 4-year university student. Perhaps most important, community college students are older; the average age of a community college student is 27, compared to an average age of 24 at 4-year institutions (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Community college students are in various life stages and
often must balance multiple work, school, and family responsibilities. The mission of community colleges as institutions of second chances and open access creates additional challenges for community college leaders. Public community colleges enroll a full 45% of students in the lowest household income quartile (Bailey, Jenkins, & Leinbach, 2005). Low-income students are constantly pressed by financial concerns, which often results in their placing a premium on work over class attendance. Thus, community college leaders must consider providing flexible scheduling, accelerated degree programs, alternative content delivery options, on-campus child care, and financial support systems to help bridge the funding gap for students.

The vast number of community college students requiring remedial coursework also presents a challenge to community college leaders. Nationwide, 44% of first-time community college students enroll in at least one developmental course (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Moreover, the percentage of public 4-year institutions that provide remedial education dropped from 85% in 1994 to 76% in 2007, thus pushing a greater number of students who are unprepared for college-level work to community colleges (U.S. Department of Education, 2007). Successfully moving students through remedial courses and into transfer and vocational programs presents a significant pressure for community college leaders, as does the growing percentage of operating budgets necessarily devoted to remediation.

Clearly, community college leadership requires a delicate balancing act. Today’s leaders must navigate multiple demands from college and community constituents, uncertain funding streams, challenging and changing student demographics, and increased demands for accountability. Furthermore, an increasing number of community college presidents face these challenges on their own, as a vast number of faculty retirements and a greater reliance on part-time faculty diminishes collegial governance. Contemporary community college leaders thus require skill sets and life experiences that differ from those needed in the past and that allow them to successfully navigate 21st-century challenges.

Traditional Thoughts on Leadership

Leadership theories have become more complex as the contexts in which leadership occurs has evolved. At the inception of the industrial revolution, when researchers were grappling with understanding organizational and corporate structures, classical leadership theory centered on the concept of a
“great man” who could rely on his inherent talents and skills to direct others in newly formed organizations (Heifetz, 1994). As leadership philosophies were expanded beyond large industrial models, the limitations of a one-size-fits-all mode of leading gave way to a more humanistic approach to leadership in which relationships between leaders and followers were acknowledged and valued (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Stogdill & Coons, 1957).

As different types of people began to enter the leadership ranks—women and minorities, for example—leadership theorists began to consider how the culture of an organization affects the ways leaders lead. Critical to this expanded understanding of leadership were the ways in which leaders helped followers make meaning of culture and changes (Smircich & Morgan, 1982; Weick, 1995). This perspective emphasized how leaders learn to lead (Amey, 2005; Davis, 2003) and highlighted how leaders’ underlying mental maps influence their actions (Senge, 1990). Recently, higher education scholars have called for a different way of thinking about leadership that calls attention to ethics, globalization, and accountability (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

Although philosophies of leadership have evolved and become more nuanced in response to changing organizational structures and the addition of female and non-White leaders, a reliance on trait-based and hierarchical models of leadership remains. Recent research on emerging conceptions of leadership at community colleges underscores this reliance (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). Nonetheless, some leaders—in both industry and institutions of higher education—are beginning to demonstrate different conceptions of leadership that focus on collaborative relationships, team building, and shared governance. As community colleges face replacing their leadership ranks, search committees should identify the specific needs of their campus to obtain the best fit. Those desiring a more collaborative leader can focus on questioning potential applicants about specific instances that portray the candidates’ leadership approach. These types of conversations are telling because past behavior and experiences predict what to expect when the leader arrives on campus.

The ways in which individuals construct their own understanding of leadership (Amey, 1992, 2005) may help further expand philosophies of leadership and may put into practice new conceptions of leadership that are not oriented toward individual leaders. This book uses this broader philosophy of leadership as its starting point and relies on the voices and experiences of current community college leaders to untangle some of the complexity surrounding concepts of leadership.
The Need to Re-envision Community College Leadership

Case Studies and Methods

To understand better the challenges of leadership in the field, a variety of community colleges were studied and supplemental individual interviews conducted. These case studies serve as examples of leadership in action and offer individuals an opportunity to see how others dealt with common campus issues, including missteps and learning from these mistakes. Aspiring leaders can learn from these examples and contemplate how they would have responded under similar circumstances. Likewise, students in graduate programs can analyze these cases using the theories they acquire in their classes and what they bring to their understanding from their own practice.

Colleges were selected based on change efforts underway on campus and the presence of a new president—one who had been on campus less than 5 years. Additional minority presidents were interviewed to provide a broader appreciation of issues emanating because of race and color. All of the names used in this text for individuals and colleges are pseudonyms. The logic for the selection criteria was twofold. First, new leaders bring to campus fresh ideas and practices. Observation and study of these early initiatives can provide insight into the influence of leadership development on actions and campus reactions to shifts in leadership. Second, change, by its very nature, destabilizes the existing equilibrium of the culture. How campus members react to these changes and, in turn, how the new president considers this feedback can provide examples for best practices and critical elements leading to success. Campus selection also included a variety of regional locations throughout the United States. The range of locales included rural, suburban, and urban colleges, as well as colleges of various sizes. A detailed outline of the methodology underpinning the information reported here is located in Appendix A.

The following is a brief overview of all the case sites included in this study. The cases presented embody a good cross section of institutions that readers may encounter or lead. Appendix B contains expanded versions of the case studies for the sites; each case includes a series of questions at the end for use in reflection regarding how to handle the given situations and prompts for tactics to frame understanding of the complex scenarios facing the case study presidents. These questions provide an opportunity for readers to reflect on their responses to the same challenges the site presidents faced. Additionally, each case intersects with the six competencies put forth by the AACC as important for leadership development and provides a mechanism for contemplating possible solutions and actions.
Technology Community College

Technology Community College (TCC), located in the Northeast, is a residential 2-year technical college that serves as the de facto community college for the region. The main campus is in a rural part of the state, and there is a branch campus 35 miles away. Because TCC draws students from a broad swath of the state, the student body is more diverse than either the faculty or the local population. TCC has received national recognition for its use of technology.

Before taking the helm at TCC, President Chris Jones was president of a 2-year college in the Midwest. Before that, Jones taught in and led a community college manufacturing engineering technologies department, as well as a computer-aided design department. He also brought to TCC experience as a business consultant, designer, small-business owner, and Vietnam veteran. Jones’s main focus since arriving at TCC was the initiation of ThinkPad University at the college, a college program in which each entering student was required to purchase a ThinkPad computer for use in his or her college program. Financial aid was available to underwrite the costs for the computers; because the students owned the computers, they kept their laptops after graduation or transfer from the college.

Hunkering Down Community College

Like TCC, Hunkering Down Community College (HDCC) is a residential 2-year campus located in a rural area of the Northeast. It, too, is the only 2-year college in the region. The campus is situated on 625 acres of land and offers targeted courses tied to the needs of area businesses. HDCC’s premier academic programs include golf management, hospitality, and veterinary technology curricula. President Lynne Pauldine had previously served as vice president of enrollment at a midwestern community college and continues to consult for a national enrollment management firm and teach online courses in strategic planning. She holds a doctorate in higher education administration and a bachelor’s degree in communications. Early in her career, she taught in communication departments at both 2- and 4-year colleges. After taking the reins at HDCC, Pauldine initiated a campuswide program review that resulted in the elimination of 14 academic and vocational programs.

Bifurcated Community College

Bifurcated Community College (BCC) consists of a main campus, two branch campuses, and four outreach centers in the western United States. It
is one of four community colleges in a relatively large state; its service area encompasses 18,000 square miles. In order to increase full-time enrollment, one of the college’s current goals, BCC has targeted outreach to area high schools and instituted bridge and dual-enrollment programs to introduce students to the college. BCC also serves as a cultural resource for the city in which it is located, hosting community theater events and lectures. Tensions exist at the college, with the branch campuses seeking more autonomy, which runs counter to the current push for centralization of functions and standard operating procedures across the campus.

BCC President Karen Fields followed a traditional path of leadership ascension within community colleges. She taught physics at a community college for nearly 20 years and occasionally held administrative leadership positions within the division. She then worked for 4 years as vice president of academic affairs at a college in the East before assuming her first presidency at BCC. One of Fields’s initial goals when arriving on campus was to create a ladder curriculum in which students could easily move from a certificate to an associate degree and ultimately either earn a baccalaureate of technology from BCC or transfer to a university 4-year program.

Strategic Community College

Strategic Community College (SCC) is a Hispanic-serving institution in the Southwest, where most students are the first in their family to attend college. The institution serves a 10,000-square-mile district spanning two counties and has 13 remote sites. The college also has a branch office out of which one of the state’s 4-year public universities offers courses leading to certificates and select bachelor’s and master’s degrees. The college actively engages in strategic planning, annually updating its 5-year plan. Furthermore, administrators and faculty revisit the planning document on a regular basis, carrying printed copies to meetings and working toward attainment of specific performance outcomes.

Before taking over the presidency at SCC, Jon Hammond was president of a midwestern community college, which he led out of bankruptcy and successfully rebuilt. Hammond originally came to the community college sector via the public school system. He began his career as a middle and high school English teacher, eventually securing a full-time faculty position at a 2-year college. His path to the presidency was traditional, progressing from faculty to director to dean, then to vice president and finally to president. Hammond desired to increase academic standards at the college and to shore
up administrative practices. He sought excellence for the college and envisioned the college holding a key role in community development.

**Large and Growing Community College District**

Large and Growing Community College District (LGCCD) is composed of five individual college campuses in the southern United States, each with its own president (individual campuses and presidents are described shortly). At its founding, two colleges had charter status, giving them greater autonomy from state regulations in exchange for a commitment to meeting certain accountability standards. The district is currently expanding to meet community needs, yet faces significant fiscal restraints.

Chancellor Jack Pioneer oversaw the entire district from 1995 to 2007. Pioneer was previously president of a community college outside the district but in the same state. During his tenure, Pioneer expanded the district by establishing two new college campuses; the newest opened in fall 2003. He increased LGCCD’s enrollment from less than 10,000 students in 1995 to 50,000 students in 2008. After his retirement in 2007, Pioneer was replaced by Robert Caplin. Caplin came to the district from out of state and brought with him more than 20 years of experience as a college president in six different states. One of the first acts of the new chancellor was to change the name of the district to help create an updated image that reflected the expansion to five campuses and to focus marketing efforts around a branding for the district that reflected a vision for the future.

**Don’t Make Waves Community College**

Don’t Make Waves Community College (DMWCC), established in 1972, is one of the two charter colleges in LGCCD and enrolls 8,000 students. The challenge for the college was to coordinate curriculum with regional high schools to help connect high school preparation of graduates with college readiness. Additionally, a goal for the college was to smooth out problems created by previous midlevel administrators and to align the organizational structure within the college.

President Brenda Hales initially held a central office position and took over the presidency of DMWCC in 1999, retiring in 2008. Her ascension to the post did not involve a typical search process. Instead, Chancellor Pioneer instituted a position swap, installing Hales as president and moving the former president to a position in central office. Before her work at DMWCC, Hales oversaw curriculum development in the local K–12 school system.
position afforded her visibility throughout the state and allowed her to
develop strong relationships within the community. At DMWCC, Hales
saw herself as a mediator; she understood district operations and worked to
establish methodical and equitable policies and processes at her own campus.
The previous president tended to play favorites among groups of faculty and
staff and around certain issues, so when Hales took over, she worked to
establish a transparent process for decision making. The president who took
over after Hales’s retirement, Lisa Stewart, had been a long-serving member
of the DMWCC team, but had left the district in 2005 to assume a presi-
dency of her own out of state. Of note, Stewart was the lead administrator
working with Hales on the curriculum alignment with the regional high
schools.

Rogue Community College

Rogue Community College (RCC) enrolls 8,000 students and is another of
the five community colleges in the LGCCD. Students at RCC generally
transferred into 4-year degree programs, and the college was viewed as a
feeder school to several public universities in the region. More recent plan-
ning concerned a focus on developing more vocational programs to meet
community needs. James Simon is the second president of RCC, which
opened its doors in 1995. RCC’s previous president had been known for his
innovation, but his practices often ran counter to Chancellor Pioneer’s plans
for the district. The campus soon had a reputation for stretching boundaries
and testing district rules. Although the innovation associated with the
boundary testing was initially viewed positively, as the system matured the
lack of adherence to district rules and regulations was tolerated less, and the
president was encouraged to seek another position. The search committee
for a replacement was looking for a team player, and Simon was hired to
help steer RCC into districtwide compliance.

Simon’s previous experience in a state higher education office in the
eastern United States provided him with a macro view of the district and
RCC’s place within it. When I interviewed Simon in 2003, he had been at
RCC for only a few months. He still serves as the president of RCC. To get
a handle on campus culture, Simon initially met with all faculty and staff to
understand how they perceived issues on campus. His intention was to
develop a policy handbook to codify RCC practices and ensure alignment
with overarching district policies.
Me-Too Community College

Me-Too Community College (MTCC), established in 1982, has more of a homogenous student body and grew rapidly after opening its doors. Corresponding growth of the campus infrastructure was haphazard and cobbled together as pressing space needs demanded. MTCC’s culture conveys an attitude of trying to catch up. Community leaders had initially pushed for the college to be one of the district’s charter colleges. However, charter status and acceptance into the district depended on collaboration with a nearby K–12 school system. The last-minute withdrawal by MTCC’s K–12 partner meant that MTCC was excluded from the district at the time of its founding in 1972. Nonetheless, community leaders continued their quest for membership by supporting a special legislative bill that allowed an exemption from the district’s initial membership requirements. As a result, MTCC was approved to join the district in 1982 and opened its doors 6 years later. Perhaps as a result of the college’s late entry into the LGCCD, interviewees at MTCC noted a continuous lack of resources at the college and a need to fight for equity among the other colleges in the district.

Michael Garvey has been president of MTCC since January 2001. Garvey had previously served 14 years as president of another college in the state and had also filled several interim presidential positions at colleges in the region, including Tradition-Bound Community College (discussed next). Garvey came to MTCC as an interim president in fall 2000, at which time Chancellor Pioneer indicated that if things “worked out” during Garvey’s stint as interim, he could stay on as president. Garvey was named president of MTCC a mere 3 months after taking over as interim. One of Garvey’s key goals was to obtain financial resources for the college. He obtained significant increases in the operating budget and an additional $20 million dedicated to building construction on campus. In his first months on campus, Garvey engaged the campus community in a visioning process to eliminate what he referred to as the “hangdog attitude” he witnessed when arriving at MTCC.

Tradition-Bound Community College

Tradition-Bound Community College (TBCC) is the other charter college in the LGCCD system. It is the most urban of the district’s five community colleges and enrolled 11,000 students in 2008. Before the opening of Cutting Edge Community College, TBCC maintained the largest student enrollment in the district. The history of the college demonstrates its desire
to maintain campus-specific traditions. For example, the college has long provided a community center for the arts. Although TBCC’s enrollment dipped when the district opened new colleges, its commitment to creating and maintaining distinguishing programs, as well as its physical proximity to the district’s urban center, helped ensure a stable enrollment. TBCC is poised to play a larger role in the community as the urban area spreads out to the suburbs.

Shawn Williams, the only president of color in this study, led TBCC for many years but left the college in spring 2007 for another presidency in the Midwest. At that time, John Smith was named interim president and, after a failed presidential search, was promoted to president. Smith has a long history in the district. He was president of DMWCC from 1991 to 1999, then worked for LGCCD’s central office until joining TBCC. Goals for the college were to provide educational opportunities to a growing urban minority population and to provide cultural opportunities for the community.

Cutting Edge Community College

Cutting Edge Community College (CECC) is the newest college in the LGCCD system, although it had operated for several years as a branch campus of Me-Too Community College, enrolling 3,000 students at its center location. CECC was built around the concept of a learning college, with a focus on student-centered education. At the time of my interviews on campus in 2003, CECC had not yet opened its doors, and academic and extracurricular buildings were still under construction. The main administration office was partially completed and gave the impression of a fresh start.

President Jennifer Burke, who had spent 5 years as president of Me-Too Community College, had been charged with opening CECC and was determined to build a college based on best practices in place throughout the district and in the field. Learning from the challenges faced by Rogue Community College in its first few years, Chancellor Pioneer established a rule that at least 50% of CECC hires (in both faculty and staff ranks) must come from inside the district. The intention of this policy was to maintain district culture and not to create an institution with values or practices that would not mesh with those of LGCCD. Seeking an opportunity to be in on the ground floor of a new college, many faculty and staff from the four other colleges in the LGCCD and the district’s central office were eager to transfer to CECC. The college officially opened its doors in fall 2003 and in fall 2008 was enrolling 15,000 students at its main campus and branch campus.
Looking Forward

Community colleges are currently wrestling with challenges resulting from changes in leadership; an inherent need to respond to demands from the state, the local community, and campus constituents; and external pressures such as declines in funding, accreditation requirements, and public demands for accountability. These increasingly complex challenges create a need for skilled professionals to lead these vital institutions. This book aims to help higher education scholars and practitioners better understand and evaluate leadership at community colleges.

Readers may approach this volume in a number of ways. Those hoping to learn more about what it means to lead a community college will find that the book provides an overview of leadership and leadership development that is specific to the community college context. Readers interested in leadership theory in general will find the explication of a multidimensional model of community college leadership in chapter 7 particularly useful. As well, readers interested in specific aspects of community college leadership, such as the influence of gender or the ways in which leaders make meaning of their experiences, may choose to consult the chapters pertaining to those issues. Finally, community college faculty, administrators, and students may find the case studies presented in Appendix B useful in applying theory to practice or as a source for classroom exercises. The case studies are structured as learning tools that can be used in leadership development programs as examples for in-depth analysis. In particular, they provide aspiring leaders with opportunities to move beyond their own leadership experiences and role-play how they would handle different situations. See Appendix B for samples of the various case studies.

Chapter 2 provides a theoretical foundation for this book by reviewing philosophies of leadership and organizational change and presenting a set of propositions that undergird the multidimensional model of leadership proposed at the conclusion of the book. Because research shows that an individual’s cognitive schema informs his or her leadership decisions (Harris, 1994; Neumann, 1995), chapter 3 describes how career pathways and leadership development experiences can shape an individual leader’s schema and discusses the notion of ideals regarding learning to lead. Chapter 4 looks at the ways in which community college presidents frame and manage meaning on their campuses and calls particular attention to the role of communication in this process.
Chapter 5 revisits the American Association of Community Colleges’ (2005) description of competencies necessary for community college leadership, analyzing how these competencies are enacted in different contexts. This chapter focuses specifically on the importance of cultural competency in leadership effectiveness. Because previous studies of community college leaders demonstrate a reliance on White male norms and expectations (Amey & Twombly, 1992; Eddy, 2009), chapter 6 addresses issues of gender and race in community college leadership. Finally, relying on empirical findings from site visits and interviews with community college presidents, chapter 7 highlights issues facing future community college presidents and proposes strategies to aid current and aspiring leaders. This final chapter presents the model for a multidimensional approach to leadership.

Throughout the book, excerpts from interviews with community college leaders illustrate how a multidimensional model of community college leadership can advance thinking about leadership and leadership development. The model is based on five propositions: (1) There is no single or universal model for leadership at community colleges; (2) leaders are multidimensional and multifaceted, relying on different skills and perspectives to address the complexity of their leadership challenges; (3) leaders are guided by their underlying cognitive schemas; (4) some central beliefs guiding leaders are less open than others to change; and (5) leadership development should be based on the tenets of adult learning theory, recognizing leaders as learners. Taken together, these propositions allow for a re-envisioning of community college leadership and ultimately a more nuanced idea regarding who tomorrow’s community college leaders may be, how they can be developed and prepared for leadership roles, and how they will lead complex and challenging institutions.