CHANGING OF THE GUARD IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES
The Role of Leadership Development

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Change is underfoot in community colleges. Community colleges are relative newcomers to the mix of higher education institutions, yet currently represent 45% of all colleges and universities and educate almost half of American college students (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2005). A portrait of current community college presidents shows that 45% are over 61 years old (American Council on Education [ACE], 2007) and a 2001 report indicated that 80% of sitting presidents are expected to retire in the next 10 years (Shults, 2001). The need exists to train replacements for these retiring leaders. The potential need for filling hundreds of presidential openings raises concern regarding succession planning but also provides a context for viewing the possibilities available with the shifting of community college leadership. Undeniably, community colleges are seen as more women friendly and have the largest number of women at their helm, with women presidents filling 29% of the positions. Likewise, community colleges provide more opportunities for minorities to reach the presidential office, with 14% representing presidents of color. Presidential and other leadership openings may provide even more opportunities for women and leaders of color to advance.

In addition, community colleges are at the nexus of change. Pressing issues include changing student demographics, heightening needs for remedial education, technology demands on budgeting and programming decisions, faculty turnover, and shifts in programming emphasis, including the
introduction of the community college baccalaureate. Paralleling these trends on community college campuses are advances in leadership theory that demand different thinking about development of current and potential community college leaders. Traditional development practices no longer meet the demands required of new leaders and must be revised.

In this chapter, potential leaders will obtain an overview of current leadership development opportunities in the community college sector. In addition, I offer advice for rethinking current programs and creating new ones to better align leadership research with training opportunities. This chapter begins with a portrait of community college leadership development historically. Next, the chapter provides a review of current leadership development options. These options include not only university-based programming but also professional organization leadership development institutes. Readers in charge of creating and delivering training and those seeking training can gain information regarding the various learning options available. Those in charge of training can learn new ideas, addressing some of the critiques of current program offerings. Finally, I outline important issues to consider in planning the future of community college leadership development. Viewing the chapter information from the vantage point of a user of development services and a provider of training allows for a more complete analysis, ultimately providing a blueprint for better programming.

Shifting Portrait of Community College Leaders

In 1960 there were 590 2-year colleges; the number of these institutions grew to 1,683 in 2004—an increase of 185% (NCES, 2005). Comparatively, 4-year institutions grew by less than half this rate (NCES, 2005). Coupled with this expansive growth in the community college sector was a need to lead these institutions. Early leaders often came from the public school sector since many of the early 2-year colleges were extensions of the public school system. The explosive growth of community colleges in the 1960s showcased a time of development of formal programs to educate those in higher education administration (Goodchild, 1991). University-based programs specifically targeting community college leadership development emerged. In 1968 the W. K. Kellogg Foundation funded the American Association of Junior Colleges Clearinghouse on Community Services (Shaw, 1969); one of the functions of the forum was to provide short-term institutes on community service
leadership, conferences, and workshops. The foundation also supported graduate-level community college leadership programs in the 1960s and 1970s, some of these programs still exist today albeit with several iterations since their inception (Amey, 2006). A few years ago the Kellogg Foundation provided support for the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Leading Forward initiative (Ottenritter, 2004). The purpose of this initiative was to conduct research, including summits, to address the leadership issues facing community colleges. Development opportunities and training for community college leaders, however, have changed little over the past 40 years.

Almost half of all community colleges are publicly controlled with an overall student enrollment average of 10,957, whereas privately controlled 2-year colleges almost equal in number have an average of only 705 students (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). Sixty-four percent of these public institutions are located in rural areas (average number of students 5,812), whereas 23% are in suburban locations (average number of students 15,528), and 14% are in urban centers (average number of students 28,401; Hardy & Katsinas). These contextual differences underscore that one form of development does not fit all community college needs.

The range of public community colleges includes some 553 presidents leading rural institutions, 195 at the helm of suburban institutions, and 112 leading in urban settings for a total of 860 public 2-year college presidents. These leaders have primarily ascended to their positions via previous presidencies (26%), from chief academic affairs officer posts (34%) or from senior executive positions (28%; ACE, 2007). With almost 90% of community college presidents coming from the senior ranks of leadership, it is important to understand the impact of the career pathway on the creation of learning opportunities for future leader development.

Recent changes in the Carnegie Classification System (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2007) resulted in a more detailed format of differentiation among community colleges. Community colleges now have distinct categories based on location (rural, suburban, urban) and size (small, medium, large), as well as control (public or private; Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching). The ability to disaggregate information on 2-year colleges underscores the impact of institutional contexts on leading and hence what is required to develop leaders for various types of institutions. The needs and demands of a large urban-based 2-year
college are markedly different from those of a small rural campus, resulting in a differing array of strengths and experiences required in leaders for working in each location. Thus, the development of leaders for the various institutional types may need to focus on different approaches and targeted recruitment efforts (Leist, 2007). These basic facts and trends are presented to help the reader understand the leadership development needs within this unique sector.

To best appreciate the current state of development training and its influence on careers, it is important to consider the roots of research regarding community college leadership and the influences of shifts in leadership theory over time. Twombly (1995) reviewed four eras of community college leadership that complement the historical organizational development of generations of community colleges outlined by Tillery and Deegan (1985). She charted the following: 1900–1930s when the "great man" theory dominated; the 1940s–1950s in which leaders sought to become independent from secondary schools and forge an identity of their own; 1960s–1970s in which the present-day version of the community college was born with strong, dominant leadership that was necessary during those pioneering days; and the 1980s–1990s where attention to resource issues was more necessary (Twombly), and models from business began to be used that emphasized efficiency and strategic planning (Rowley & Sherman, 2001). The most recent decade of community college leadership may be categorized by adaptive leadership, with a focus on leaders as learners (Amey, 2005; Heifetz, 1998; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006).

The context for the leaders of community colleges throughout the eras was influenced by popular leadership theories of the day. Bensimon, Neumann, and Birnbaum (1989) completed a comprehensive exploration of the theories and models of leadership within higher education. These authors classified the theories into the following six categories: trait theories, power and influence theories, behavioral theories, contingency theories, cultural and symbolic theories, and cognitive theories. Even though these classifications parallel the eras of community college leadership, it does not imply that the leadership theories pertain solely to each of the five eras noted above. Rather, many of the leadership approaches are still in place today in leadership development practices.

Preparation of the leaders of the future requires consideration of advances in leadership research. Kezar et al. (2006) expanded Bensimon et al.'s
(1989) topography to include the latest theories on leadership. Some of their examples of revolutionary concepts extend previous leadership theories and apply new paradigms. The authors included in their emerging list of new leadership concepts “ethics and spirituality, collaboration and partnering, empowerment, social change, emotions, globalization, entrepreneurialism, and accountability” (Kezar et al., p. 71). Underlying several of these concepts is the ability to deal with change (Linsky & Heifetz, 2002) and the capacity to operate from a multiple frame perspective that emphasizes the relationships inherent in the politics of leading and the managing of meaning to aid in sense making for the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2006; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Eddy, 2003; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Weick, 1995). Better understanding how community college leaders learn can help in the development of future leaders and provide individuals with an enhanced understanding of their own leadership.

Leadership Development Programming

In recognition of the anticipated turnover in community college leaders, the AACC established its Leading Forward initiative to help plan for the expected leadership demands (Ottenritter, 2004). The AACC established a set of competencies to allow for conversation about desirable traits and requirements necessary to lead the modern-day 2-year college (AACC, 2005). While this cataloging harkens to Vaughan’s (1986) earlier work on traits required for the successful president, the current listing moves beyond a mere checklist of required attributes and provides a more holistic approach to leadership. In fact, a key assumption underlying the created competencies listing is that leadership can be learned and that a variety of means can be used during the development process, which is assumed to be a lifelong endeavor. The six leadership competencies developed by AACC include organizational strategies, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism (AACC, 2005). Each factor contains a listing of potential illustrations of acquisition of these competencies—in effect offering potential leaders with a template to judge how they could acquire these attributes and noting areas of skill and experiential deficiency. The efforts of the AACC, however, represent a passive approach to changing practice in the development of future leaders. Those responsible for community college leadership development can become more proactive and use the AACC competencies as a road map to design programs.
Since community college leaders emerge via a variety of routes (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2002), it is important to view leadership development holistically. Indeed, 38% of current community college presidents have never been a faculty member and 67% have been employed outside of higher education for some portion of their careers (ACE, 2007). Thus, to fully understand the development process, it is critical to consider the community college context as one that provides leadership development through on-the-job training via experiential learning and is influenced by more than an academic culture.

Beyond this experience-based time, formal leadership development programs exist. These programs, however, are primarily geared toward identified presidential aspirants versus the development of leaders throughout the institution. Hull and Keim (2007) reported on the type of development opportunities sitting community college presidents engaged in or had plans for participation. Three specific programs are reviewed here: the AACC Presidents Academy and Future Leaders Academy, the Chair Academy, and the League for Innovation in the Community College’s development training. The Chair Academy, while targeting incoming department chairs, may be the only training leaders at smaller or resource-pressed institutions ever receive. Finally, doctoral programs with a focus on community college administration provide another formalized way to educate future leaders. Hull and Keim found that the Chair Academy had the highest levels of participation by current presidents at 23.8%, with the AACC training following at 19.9%, and the training offered by the League at 14%. Individuals may have participated in more than one form of training, thus potentially overstating the total level of training by leaders. A full 69% of the study’s respondents, however, felt that more development was needed but cited budgetary constraints as a limiting factor for increased involvement in these institutes by their campus members.

In general, the current major development programs in place for aspiring and new community college leaders come up short. The majority of the agendas of these developmental opportunities focus on skill acquisition, which although an important consideration for leaders, does not prepare individuals for the larger demands of becoming visionary leaders of these complex organizations. The demand for community colleges to be responsive institutions and all things for community members is no longer tenable.
Thus, leaders need to make tough, ethical choices regarding access, programming, faculty assignments, and resource decisions while still supporting the mission of their cultural-bound institutions.

In considering the training of community colleges leaders, it is important to keep in mind that a key platform for community colleges is diversity—of students, faculty, and leaders. As noted, community colleges have more diverse presidential leadership, in part because of the unique training opportunities that focus on aspiring women leaders and leaders of color. However, even these gains have slowed in recent times. A comparison of women leading community colleges between 2006 and 2001 shows only a 2% gain, whereas for the same time period leaders of color acquired a mere 1% more presidential positions. Thus, developing a diverse cadre to lead community colleges still requires attention given the stagnant growth in recent years of the number of women and leaders of color obtaining presidencies.

AACC
The AACC formed its Leading Forward initiative as a result of a 2001 mission review and its concern regarding the pending shortage of leaders. Leadership development was specifically added as a strategic action area and goal. One manifestation of this shift resulted in a series of summits to determine ways to improve the leadership pipeline and to develop consensus over critical leadership attributes (Ottenritter, 2004). These sessions provided the basis for the development of the leadership competencies listed on page 189.

AACC offers several opportunities for skills acquisition for those interested in seeking a presidency, those in the early days of being the chief executive officer, and those seeking continuing professional development. Several of these initiatives are outlined in the following paragraphs. (See the AACC Web site under events for upcoming workshop offerings, http://www.aacc.nche.edu).

A preconference workshop at the annual AACC conference provides particular focus on new presidents. The one-and-a-half-day seminar, The New CEO Institute: Hit the Ground Leading, includes seasoned and new leaders’ reviewing issues pertinent during those first years on the job. Common topics include working with the board of trustees, figuring out the culture of the institution, technology issues, and recounting lessons learned by more seasoned presidents. Hearing about working with people within the
existing culture of an institution is a critical step in providing the type of leadership training required for the future. However, since this topic is covered in only a portion of the short time individuals have during the workshop, just a brief exposure to cultural theories and their application are offered.

A number of networking opportunities are built into the group’s time. Other shorter preconference workshops target those aspiring to a presidency. Topics of recent sessions covered interviewing simulations for the potential applications, and panel discussions covering insights for those contemplating an upward move. The focus on the skills required to navigate the job interview may allow individuals to be successful in obtaining a position, but time is not devoted to the larger issues of how to function within the position. Individuals new to the job often must wait until they are in a position to attend training, leaving them to fend for themselves through their early days in a presidency.

The AACC Presidents Academy is open to CEOs from member institutions. The membership-only requirement for attending may limit participation of newly minted presidents whose institutions do not belong to AACC or are from resource-poor colleges. Sessions are held in the summer over a 5-day period. Typically these sessions include sharing of best practices on issues critical to presidents. Topics may include navigation with the board of trustees, the role of the spouse, communication tips, managing conflict, politics, and mechanisms to maintain balance. Key to these learning opportunities is the chance to put theory and lessons to practice through the use of case studies and exercises. This is particularly important for more recent presidents as they do not always have direct experience with the situation being reviewed, and the case examples allow them to contextualize the information.

Similar in format to the Presidents Academy is the Future Leaders Institute. This 5-day leadership seminar spotlights midlevel community college leaders contemplating a move up the career ladder. Generally, participants are those currently in deans’ positions or higher. While topics similar to those found in the Presidents Academy are covered, the institute also includes assessment of leadership styles and reflection on guiding ethics and approaches to change. Many of the sessions focus on issues central to relationship building and working with a variety of people. These topics represent moves in the right direction for leadership development with their focus on ethics, people, and change. In general, however, these sessions are still
taught using a classical paradigm with a focus on a positivist perspective, which assumes that knowledge is based on scientific tests and that a truth may be discovered, versus using an interpretative symbolic lens, which assumes social construction of reality, or a postmodern perspective, that rejects a single representation of issues and critiques assumed structures (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2006). The latter approaches call for the creation of multiple interpretations that value a variety of institutional voices. A reliance on a classical paradigm limits the ability of leaders to understand the broader cultures in operation at the college and, as a result, detaches leaders from the diverse populations they serve and lead.

The Chair Academy

The Chair Academy started at the Maricopa Community Colleges in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1992. The impetus for this professional development program evolved from the lack of training available for first-line leaders at a community college, namely department chairs. Faculty members promoted to lead the department generally do so without the benefit of any formal training or exposure to leadership theory or practice. The creation of the Chair Academy sought to remedy this situation by focusing on those mid-level leaders new to the position. Often, these first-time leaders may not have intentions of seeking any further promotions (Wolverton & Gonzales, 2000), thus, this training may be the only formal development they receive. Almost two-thirds of current presidents got their start as faculty members, generally following a traditional pathway to their presidency including the requisite stop at department chair. A key element in the formation of the program was to focus on tying in experiential learning and application of learned leadership concepts to practice. For some, this training is their first exposure to a systemic study of leadership. Additionally, the potential for participants to gain credits from attendance at the academy meets the needs of midlevel administrators also seeking advanced credentials through doctoral programs.

The structure of the program begins with a 5-day initial session and is capped a year later with another 5-day session. The first week of training involves the creation of an individual professional development plan, allowing each person an opportunity to tailor his or her practicum experience and mentoring relationship to best suit the person’s needs. Seminar topics include the complex role of the organizational leader, leading and managing
effective work teams, strategic planning and scenario thinking, managing conflict productively and engaging in crucial conversations, and leading and learning. Incorporated into the week are a series of leadership assessments in which surveys are administered and tallied that place individuals in particular leadership quadrants. The use of instruments to access leadership styles may be limiting because of an inherent assumption that there is a “correct” style one should aspire to. The shortcomings of these assessment instruments, however, may be partially overcome with the focus on understanding the complexity of leadership and the links between leading and learning. Given that this training is often the first opportunity for individuals to study leadership and obtain exposure to critical thinking on current theories, it can provide a critical linchpin in addressing changes in leadership development in community colleges.

The first 5-day session of the academy focuses on assessing skills and developing individual plans to address any deficits apparent from participant results of these leadership surveys. In the interim between the first 5-day seminar and the second, a year-long practicum allows participants an opportunity to put to practice the lessons learned. Participants work on their individualized learning plan with the oversight of an assigned mentor. The use of leadership survey instruments allows participants to assess their initial profile and then to evaluate their growth at the conclusion of the year-long program. The assumption inherent in this training approach is that deficits are evident and can be “fixed” through work by the participants. This philosophical approach may result in dissuading some potential leaders as they do not conform to expected patterns of the type of leadership supported by the assessment instruments, which in some cases continue to support dated concepts of what it means to lead.

Mentors are available for support and guidance, and an electronic system connects participants not only to mentors but to one another as well. Reflective journaling allows participants an opportunity to document their growth over the year but also instills the practice of reflection as a leadership skill (Amey, 2005). This aspect of the program supports important qualities needed in leaders of the future, in particular since it allows a focus for the participants on developing their own ethical lens of leading and provides a means to better understand the organizational cultures in which they will lead. The Chair Academy provides students with a way to obtain up to nine
graduate credits to apply to a degree program. This feature allows participants to augment graduate work with a concentration in leadership studies and provides an incentive for others to begin a graduate program.

The leadership academies are hosted at various locations across the United States and to a limited extent internationally. The availability of multiple hosting locales increases the access to development opportunities for individuals from smaller colleges or from institutions with more limited resources. Since the position of department chair is often the first step in a career path toward a presidency, training at this midcareer level allows for a wider participation of aspiring and potential leaders for the future. The feature of increased access, in terms of training offerings and in members’ doing frontline leadership, underscores the importance of the Chair Academy in addressing training demands. Rethinking how best to leverage these positive aspects of training to include expanded definitions of leadership, work on self-assessment for ethical development, and opportunities for increasing cultural competency would aid participants as they prepare for leading the community colleges of the future.

League for Innovation in the Community College

The League for Innovation in the Community College—hereafter referred to as the League—was founded in 1968 to provide guidance to the fast-growing community college sector. In particular, at its inception the League developed templates for curriculum and instruction for emerging graduate programs focused on community college leadership development. It also created a 400-page manual to help guide founding colleges with operational procedures (League, 2007). One of the purposes of the League is to develop leaders for community colleges; several programs support this goal.

The Executive Leadership Institute focuses on preparing senior-level administrators for advancement to a presidency. Key elements in this program include review of the application process and tips for interviewing. An assessment is provided to help participants determine which type of institution and presidential role is the best fit for them. Important aspects of the job are reviewed, including working with the board, fund-raising, and determining leadership preferences—both as the internal leader and the representative for the college—dealing and planning for strategic change, and review of national trends. A mock interview is also provided. Legal and ethical concerns are also covered. As with the AACC training, much of the focus of the
League training is on skills to obtain a presidency and tools to determine a match between the aspiring president and an institution. The League boasts that since 1988, 43% of its participants have been successful in obtaining a presidential position.

As evidenced in other leadership development trainings, the focus on learning about yourself as a leader and a learner are important foundational steps for an individual but may not provide enough background regarding the larger issues of leadership theory required in working within complex 2-year college systems. For instance, even though it is important to know how you might fit in an institution, more central is knowing how to work within the cultures of the institution. The ability to align with the existing campus culture (Kezar et al., 2006) and to aid in meaning making for others (Eddy, 2003; Weick, 1995) can enhance success.

The League’s specialized program, Expanding Leadership Diversity in the Community College, helps prepare midlevel administrators from urban institutions for promotion to upper-level positions. It is important to focus on increasing diversity in the leadership ranks because community colleges provide the most diverse student body of all institutional types (37% of community college students are students of color compared to only 27% at 4-year public universities; NCES, 2005). The intentions of this program focus on increasing the number of leaders of color at community colleges, which is critical given that the number of leaders of color at 2-year colleges increased by only 5% in 20 years. Although the program ended in 1999, the training format it offered to up-and-coming minority administrators and urban educators followed an outline similar to that of the Executive Leadership Institute. Participants were paired with a mentor, underwent leadership assessments, developed an individualized development plan, and attended skills-based seminars. Additionally, participants worked on a community issues project using a problem-based learning strategy. Participants wrote a report on how they would address one of the critical issues identified and how they would do so in a collaborative fashion. Finally, an internship experience allowed participants an opportunity to experience a different institutional context and to practice some of the skills they were acquiring in the program. In the absence of this program, current minority leaders are encouraged to apply to the Executive Leadership Institute. The demise of this specialized program, however, does not negate the problem of the lack of minority leaders in community colleges.
The League, in partnership with the American Association of Women in Community Colleges and the Maricopa Community Colleges, also sponsors the National Institute for Leadership Development for women leaders. This program has prepared over 4,000 women for leadership positions in community colleges (League, 2007). What is not known, however, is why fewer women have acquired larger percentages of community college presidencies in the last decade. Is the lack of larger representation by women at the helm of 2-year colleges because of the glass ceiling or because of women’s opting out in the pipeline? Either reason requires further investigation to better understand how to work on equity in leadership.

This program focuses on giving participants a better understanding of their identity, their leadership skills acquisition, identification of leadership and community college issues, and the development of personal confidence. The vehicle for application of the training opportunities is the creation of a pragmatic project pertinent to the participant’s home institution. The problem-based focus of the long-term project allows for an opportunity to practice skills introduced during the training session. A mentor is assigned to help oversee the project and to offer advice. Taking an active role in a campus-based project gives the women participating an opportunity to experience the influence of the campus culture on planning and change; however, even though the institute provides great networking exposure, it offers little to create a foundation to think more broadly about current leadership theory. In particular, knowing more about multiframed leadership, using expanded paradigms to better understand multiple voices inherent in organizations, and managing relationships and campus understanding are key to leaders’ success.

**University-Based Programs**

Some of the first university-based programs were supported by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation in the 1960s. Today 70% of current community college presidents have doctorates in education or higher education (ACE, 2007), making university programs an important site for training leaders. Several programs are specifically designed for community college leadership. A study funded by the American Association of Community Colleges sought to investigate how “community college leadership programs are meeting current challenges and how their approaches differ from those of the Kellogg junior college leadership programs of the 1960s” (Amey, 2006, p. 1). Modern-day
program characteristics include the following: “accessible, low cost, high quality, tailored for working professionals, provide mentoring opportunities, and allow for personal reflection and assessment” (p. 1). In general, the impetus for the development of university-based programs takes one of three formats. One model relies on a champion, generally a university faculty member, who sees a need and aids in the development of a program. Another model builds on a nondegree program that evolves into a degree program. Finally, another model showcases a partnership involving university faculty, community college presidents, and state community college association commitment.

The *Breaking Tradition* (Amey, 2006) report investigated six university-based leadership development programs. The site programs often originated as pilots, typically with a champion, either an individual or small group, lobbying for their development. The degree-based programs target mid- to upper-level administrations and use a cohort model for course delivery. A small cadre of faculty were the linchpins in the program operations and thus were the gatekeepers of the curriculum offered. These university-based faculty designed the program curriculum either in consultation with community college leaders or from the program director’s personal experience or interaction with community college leaders in the state (Amey). Three of the programs offer a particular academic focus on diversity that complements the diverse demographics of their location. The other three sites focus attention to increase diversity within their programs and include curricular foci on diversity topics. A clear community college leadership focus was evident.

Because these programs are relatively new, long-term success and placement rates are unknown. A critical issue is the sustainability of the programs, considering the labor-intensive nature of their operations. Larger cohorts, the dependence on interpersonal relationships among key faculty and community college members, and the role of resources are all critical factors in long-term sustainability. Challenges facing program viability are turnovers in university personnel, shifts in community college personnel, and loss of program champions. While the analysis only reported on a small number of university programs, the elements of concern revealed in the study can apply to other programs that offer flexibility for community college administrators seeking an advanced degree.

Not all university programs are as focused on preparing community college leaders as the ones reviewed in Amey’s (2006) research. A review of
higher education doctoral programs in general, however, indicated that most program curricula have changed little over time. Programs that offer a doctorate of education, often those most available at regional institutions and in reach of more community college administrators, have more core required courses and a skills-based focus with topics including organizational theory, history of higher education, higher education law and finance, and policy (Eddy & Rao, 2008).

Despite increased theorizing about leadership and the press of issues on community colleges, little has changed in the ways leaders have been trained over time. Leadership development in community colleges is primarily focused on skills acquisition, interviewing strategies to obtain a presidency, and networking in the profession. Innovative and flexible programming, such as the university-based options highlighted in Amey (2006), may provide a model for program options. The risk inherent in the focus on a champion for the program initiation and design, however, is that training may become too narrowly focused and faculty may burn out.

Planning for the Future

Leadership development for community college leaders needs to address several key issues concurrently. First, traditional training forums with a primary focus on skills acquisition are no longer sufficient to prepare leaders. In addition to the requisite ability to understand college finance, curriculum development, and legal issues, leaders need to appreciate the organizational cultures of their institutions and their role in constructing meaning for campus members. A need exists to develop the cultural competency of community college leaders to allow for intentionality by leaders in putting cultural knowledge into play in leading the institution. How leaders talk about changes facing their campuses provides a key in getting buy in from the various constituencies of the college to requested strategic initiatives (Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996). When leaders understand the culture of the college, they can more readily frame the vision for the future and outline the steps to reach institutional goals.

Second, training and development programming needs to recognize the diversity of settings present in the community college sector. Community colleges are not a homogenous group. The colleges themselves range in size from less than 1,000 students to well over 25,000 students, from rural to
suburban to urban locales, from student bodies primarily interested in transfer or vocational training, and from poor to rich districts.

Next, college administrators need to consider how succession planning can aid in preparing campuses for the anticipated changeover in leaders. Planning ahead and providing training along the career pathway creates smoother transitions. Furthermore, advanced planning allows campus members a chance to contemplate advancement opportunities. Oftentimes, individuals do not consider themselves as potential candidates for upper-level positions until someone taps them or suggests the option to them (Eddy, 2007).

Finally, future development training needs to value different means of learning about leading. Preparation as lifelong learners confronts the need of leaders to constantly address the changing pressures facing higher education. Additionally, leadership development needs for the up-and-coming future leaders may differ based on gender, race and ethnicity, or previous community college experience. Specially focused development opportunities exist for some of these subgroups, including women and rural leaders. As previously noted, the League supports a program in conjunction with Maricopa for women leaders—the National Institute for Leadership Development. Other general development programs for women include the Bryn Mawr College Summer Institute for Women in Higher Education Administration, hosted in conjunction with Higher Education Resource Services (HERS), and a management institute at Wellesley College for women administrators and professional faculty, both described in chapter 2 of this volume.

Cultural Competency

Cultural competency for leaders signifies the ability to understand the organization’s culture—what is valued, what the college history is, what the common traditions are (Rhoads & Tierney, 1992). New leaders must spend time understanding the essence of their college and fitting the needs of the college with their own underlying individual leadership preferences. Leaders come to their positions with underlying schemas that dictate how they make sense of new information and how they approach change (Eddy, 2004, 2005). Thus, development training should focus on providing up-and-coming leaders with the ability to recognize how to match the needs of different organizational cultures with appropriately matched actions. The current practice of
having participants in leadership training take a series of assessment instruments that highlight individual leadership orientations addresses part of the need for leaders to identify their personal approach to leadership. The next critical step, however, is understanding how an individual’s leadership preference fits in a variety of different organizational cultures. Case study analysis can provide a first step in acquiring insight into the intersection of individual schemas and different cultural scenarios. Actual visits and exchanges at a variety of campuses provide real examples of this as well.

Berquist and Pawlak (2008) provided a guideline for leaders on six cultures of the academy, including the collegial culture, the managerial culture, the developmental culture, the advocacy culture, the virtual culture, and the tangible culture. New leaders may find they have a preference for operating in a managerial culture based on a hierarchy, but their new institution’s culture is a virtual culture with an emphasis on open and shared systems. The ability to operate using a multiframe perspective (Bolman & Deal, 2006) is critical for leaders in this situation. The ability to understand that the culture of the new institution requires a particular set of actions that differ from the leader’s previous institution is an example of cultural competency. New leaders must first make sense of the situation for themselves, which may involve altering their own schema, before they can help shape meaning for campus members (Eddy, 2005; Weick, 1995).

Community college leaders need to acquire the ability to lead in culturally bound systems while facing pressures that often originate outside their immediate region. The very origins of community colleges are founded on providing for local community needs, which shift over time. Leaders must acquire an appreciation of area needs and an understanding of how the culture of the region and the college affect actions and changes within the college. Thus, while all community colleges may have a similar cultural underpinning for their mission and foci, each is unique and ultimately requires different responses.

Knowledge of the campus culture assumes that the leader can articulate the values and traditions of campus importance. Bolman and Deal (2006) discussed how organizational culture is like a theater. The ability to direct the various actors allows a leader to tell the campus story and to help others see the same meaning in the plot lines. Understanding the culture can help leaders consider how best to address change initiatives and how to make decisions. Cultural competency provides leaders the capacity to assess a situation and determine the best course of action based on institutional needs.
Complementing this ability is the development of communication skills that allow for framing of situations for campus members and the community, which can lead to increased understanding and, ultimately, buy in (Eddy, 2003; Fairhurst & Sarr, 1996; Weick, 1995). The capability to influence the understanding of situations by others allows leaders a means to move forth change initiatives.

Preparing to Lead in Rural and Urban Settings

The new Carnegie classification schema now includes seven different categories, underscoring the need for attention regarding the influence of context on leading. The ends of the continuum of classification are rural and urban community colleges. Suburban 2-year colleges, located squarely in the middle, ultimately provide the normative model and, as such, represent the prototype for what the public envisions when discussing community colleges. Given this orientation, the ends of the continuum are reviewed as they represent a marked duality in the 2-year college system. Rural community colleges make up 60% of all community colleges (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2007), accounting for the majority of all community college presidents. Leaders in rural areas face the challenge of leading a smaller institution with fewer resources and greater economic constraints. The Rural Community College Initiative (RCCI, 2007) works to support rural community college leaders in three areas: civic engagement, educational access, and economic development. Through funding from the Ford Foundation and support from MDC, Inc.; North Central Regional Center for Rural Development; and the Southern Rural Development Center, the RCCI conducted two phases of community college involvement. Two-year colleges located in 10 different states have participated since the program’s inception in the mid-1990s. Several land-grant universities in the participating states partner with the community colleges.

One example of a partnership to develop community college leadership is the MidSouth Partnership for Rural Community Colleges (MSP), a regionally specific grow-your-own leadership development program that helps community college leaders build sustainable rural communities (Clark & Davis, 2007). The MSP was initiated in 1998 and is an ongoing collaboration of Alcorn State University, Mississippi’s John C. Stennis Institute of Government, and community colleges across the mid-South. This partnership grew
from the RCCI program outlined above, with the distinct goal of building sustainable rural communities while renewing and expanding a diverse cadre of effective community college leaders. Key elements of the MSP leader development process include a week-long retreat with follow-up programming, cross-disciplinary academic degree programs with a rural development emphasis, public policy analysis and doctoral dissertation research by practitioners, and systemic linkage to national rural and educational issues (Clark & Davis).

Similarly, the Expanding Leadership Diversity program offered by the League focused on particular issues facing urban leaders. Particular issues pressing urban areas are the focal point of the in-field experience for participants of this training, which then allows for an opportunity to practice what participants are learning in a real-time manner. Training for diverse leaders to guide urban institutions often focuses on training for leaders of color. The Lakin Institute for Mentored Leadership (sponsored by the National Council on Black American Affairs, an affiliate of the AACC) and the Hispanic Leadership Fellows Program (of the National Community College Hispanic Council) provide training for leaders of color. The Lakin Institute provides training for 25 potential African American community college presidents each year (see http://www.league.org/league/conferences/lakin.htm). “The Hispanic leadership program targets Hispanic vice chancellors, vice presidents, provosts and deans who aspire to a community college presidency” (Hull & Keim, 2007, p. 700). (For more on Lakin, see http://www.ccc.edu/roundtable/index.shtml; for the Hispanic Leadership program, see http://ced.ncsu.edu/ahe/ncchc/)

Additionally, the Institute for Community College Development, housed at Cornell University, provides a rotation of training topics, several of which focus on labor relations issues. Even though union issues cross institutional location borders, the impact of union concerns on urban and suburban community colleges is greater given their number of employees. Access to this form of specialized development aids leader preparation for these larger-sized institutions located in more metropolitan areas.

**Succession Planning**

With almost half of all sitting community college presidents over the age of 60, it is critical to address succession planning. Indeed, the focus of the
AACC Leading Forward Initiative calls attention to the need to prepare leaders for the pending retirements anticipated in community colleges. Since many colleges are regionally bound, grow-your-own programs may be helpful in developing the leaders of the future. In particular for women, VanDerLinden (2003) found that despite the rhetoric of women being willing to move for promotion, those in her study indicated they were place bound and did not have many opportunities to move up within the organization. Arguments for the preparation of rural leaders also emphasize the need to hire leaders familiar with working in a rural culture, making grow-your-own programs popular in these institutions (Leist, 2007). Similarly, arguments for urban areas follow the same logic. The League’s Expanding Leadership Diversity initiative focused on developing a pool of minority community college leaders and urban leaders. The focus on community problem-solving experiences to address critical issues facing the region was particularly useful in giving aspiring leaders an enhanced understanding of what it meant to lead in an urban environment.

Often, taking a position as a department chair is the first step in advancing within the college hierarchy. Thus, it is important to include development opportunities for these emerging leaders. This critical first step into leadership makes the Chair Academy increasingly important; however, the lower participation rates in this training program highlights that many frontline leaders are missing this development opportunity (Hull & Keim, 2007). Creating institutionally or regionally based training for department chairs may provide a viable alternative to the expense of sending new chairs to a nationally situated training site. University-based higher education programs may act as a convener site to provide regionally based training.

If provided with appropriate training, this first administrative position may serve to encourage individuals for future promotional positions because they will feel prepared; contrarily, lack of support may discourage them from seeking further advancement. Another key aspect of this first-line administrative position is encouraging interest and ultimate selection from a wide array of faculty members. As noted, gender parity is lacking in presidential positions, as is diversity in more presidents of color. Active recruitment at the grassroots level of the administrative hierarchy, namely at the chair level, of a diverse pool of applicants begins to address issues farther up the pipeline.

In addition to tapping future leaders for front-line leadership positions, the flattening of the hierarchy places more emphasis on leadership throughout the college. The increased demands of the top leadership position require
an increased reliance on others in the institution to take on leadership roles (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Pushing down leadership functions within the hierarchy requires preparation of leaders along the pathway to take on more leadership functions and in turn to begin honing their leadership skills all along the pipeline. Linked to the demand of responsibility of leading throughout the organization are the larger issues facing community colleges. No longer are the challenges facing the college limited to the attention of top-level administrators. Dealing with issues pressing community colleges regarding diversity, economic development, technology, and changing faculty work roles require versatile and facile leaders throughout the college. Developing leaders along the career pathway allows for increased diversity and exposure for individuals not representing the administrative hegemonic majority—namely white men.

Developing Leaders as Learners

The increased complexity of educational leadership requires leaders to have a learning orientation and a philosophy of continuous improvement regarding their own development (Amey, 2005). Leadership development programmers need to recognize that one-size-fits-all training no longer works. As noted above, leaders require different skills based on the location of their college and the culture of the institution and the area. Thus, an individual may attend a national or state training forum and learn about budgeting or working with community partners, but then this basic knowledge needs to be situated contextually through training and practice on his or her home campus. As adult learners, leaders need to situate what they are learning within their past experiences (Knowles, 1980), which in this case are tied to their home campus.

Leaders need to understand not only their preferred way of leading but that of others within the organization. Adult learning theory operates for leaders and their staff. Knowles (1980) identified several key characteristics within andragogy—how adults learn. First, adults want to be self-directed in their learning. They also want to tie what they are learning into their bank of experiences. Adults are also motivated internally to learn and are ready to learn required and necessary skills. Finally, adults want to put their newly acquired learning to practice and application. In considering leaders as learners, it is obvious that newly appointed leaders are highly motivated to learn...
how to do the job of leading. Thus, development opportunities should be formatted based on the concepts of adult learning to allow for links to what participants know and opportunities to practice applying the new knowledge.

Davis (2003) identified seven distinct ways of learning for administrators: (a) learning new skills—behavioral learning, (b) learning from presentations—cognitive learning, (c) learning to think—inquiry learning, (d) learning to solve problems and make decisions—using mental models for learning, (e) learning in groups—collaborative learning, (f) improving performance—learning through virtual realities, and (g) learning from experience—holistic learning. The skills focus of current development practices begins to address the issue of acquiring the basic tools to do the job. The mentoring programs and practicum experiences associated with some of the trainings underscores the need for these adult learners to put to practice the new knowledge they are acquiring. What is missing from the current training opportunities is instilling the ideal of continuous learning and use of reflection to provide feedback for leaders to change their practice. Since the majority of community college leaders do not participate in formal national training programs (Hull & Keim, 2007), it is important for campus administrators to consider how they will create learning opportunities for development that address the needs of their participants using a learning orientation. Individuals must also reflect on their preferred modes of learning and in particular identify their basic underlying values and assumptions about leadership since these mental maps may ultimately create limitations for them.

Reflective practice (Amey, 2005; Brookfield, 1994; Cooper, 1994) allows leaders to realize their own orientations to leading and may provide them with heightened awareness of ways to use their skills to their best advantage and how to improve in their weaker areas. Learning to become reflective practitioners requires practice and is an ongoing process. The critical assessment of one’s expertise and limitations requires the ability to question underlying assumptions and beliefs currently in practice (Amey, 2005). Argyris (1976) outlined the process of double-loop learning in which the knowledge gained from questioning these beliefs and assumptions is used to change behaviors. Incorporating reflective practice into development training provides the foundation to making this a lifelong practice and one that will aid leaders in their own learning. Just as in other learning, reflection requires practice
before individuals embrace the concept. A difficulty for leaders today, however, is creating the space required for reflection.

In the shift to thinking of leaders as learners, an outcome should be an expansion of our conception of what defines leaders. As noted, the numbers of women and leaders of color does not have parity in the community college sector. The specialized trainings reviewed in this chapter provide an enhanced focus on preparing a diverse set of leaders for the future. Of more importance, however, is how reflection on leadership begins to expand the notion of what it means to be a leader. Thus, an anticipated outcome of this process is the creation of a wider acceptability of alternative ways of leading. The ability to appreciate a cornucopia of institutional voices enhances the ways problems facing the college are viewed.

Conclusion

The current period of transformation of higher education and the public demand for accountability and the ability to support economic development and growth demands much of future leaders. Central to the success of current and future leaders is leadership development. Previous research on leadership development strategies (Watts & Hammons, 2002) similarly called for a need to address the shortcomings of how community colleges develop leaders. Missing from these calls for change, however, were a focus on the need to develop cultural competency and acknowledgment of the continuum of needs for leaders in different contexts. The plans for the future outlined above contribute to filling this gap in developing leaders for the future by providing tools required to develop these competencies. Acknowledging the range of leaders required to lead today’s community colleges underscores the need for differentiated training opportunities based on regional needs that recognize the role understanding culture adds to the ability of leaders to be successful. Changes in leadership ranks provide a unique opportunity for community college presidents to recraft what it means to be a leader of these transforming institutions. We do not have to settle for what has traditionally comprised the leadership ranks—predominately top-down administration by a group of white men (Amey & Twombly, 1992). Opening up the ranks of leadership to a wider band of leaders can provide different views and perspectives of how we should be leading these organizations. The consideration of individuals for leadership development should not rely on a cookie-cutter
approach in which we attempt to replicate the last set of leaders. Indeed, the times demand a different type of leader, one who has multiple competencies and is invested in reflective, lifelong learning of the job. Development of these current and future leaders is imperative for meeting the demands on community colleges in the new millennium.

The foundation of the community college philosophy is its nimbleness to adapt to change. The current leadership transition is an opportunity for this nimbleness to stand out. During this period of transition, we risk losing some of our institutional history as less-experienced leaders take over. However, the fresh ideas new leaders present are required to meet the building pressures facing colleges. Honoring past practices and preparing for the future presents a tall order in leadership development during this changing of the guard. Preparing aspiring leaders to reach their potential quickly is important in a smooth transition as retiring leaders are replaced.

References


