

### *Background of the Study*

According to Amey and VanDerLinden (2002), community college education in the United States will be facing a leadership crisis. Community College presidents are retiring at a consistent rate, with four-fifths of incumbent community college presidents planning to retire by 2011. This retirement rate is posing a problem for community colleges that are searching for a sufficient number of leaders to fill existing and future leadership positions. Labor market trends and growth indicate that the community college sector lacks replacements for these anticipated openings. Data also suggest (Carol, 2004) that the internal hire continues to be the most common means of appointing higher administration. This may make succession planning a needed component for developing a new generation of leaders at all administrative levels in community colleges, making the “grow your own leaders” a popular concept.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Many institutions are recognizing the need for leadership development programs by developing a cadre of educational leaders with the knowledge and skills necessary to lead change and improve the quality of higher education (Hackaday & Puyear, 2000). Hackaday and Puyear also predict that retirements and turnover may dramatically increase the need for experienced leadership with many of the 1,200 United States community college presidents seeking to retire by the year 2011. Institutional needs and problems, such as diminishing resources, increased competition for student enrollments, aging faculty members, decreasing student skills in contrast to increasing required job skills, and the ever-increasing changes related to ever changing technology are areas that may need to be addressed by today’s community college leaders.

Community colleges across the nation are seeking opportunities to meet the need for leadership

development. Many are offering in-house programs aimed at encouraging those with leadership abilities. Community colleges are looking to internal personnel to step forward to perpetuate and expand a mission that addresses the aforementioned needs and issues (American Association of Community Colleges, 2005).

### *Need and Significance of the Study*

Several factors driving the need for cultivating leadership in community colleges were based on the pending retirements of many current presidents. According to a 2004 study by the American Association of Community Colleges, there will be a significant number of retirements among the community college presidents. Leaders in community college education have realized that without planning and training, a major source of potential future leaders for community colleges will be lost (Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000). While some are preparing for senior community college administration positions through the traditional educational paths, this number is not consistent with labor market trends and sector growth. Cultivating leaders, succession planning, and leadership development have become topics for considerable discussion. This is somewhat in contrast to previous times of leadership transition, when generational change occurred without much planning (Amey, VanDerLinden, and Brown, 2002).

Based on this need, this study incorporated a leadership needs assessment to examine the leadership culture at State Fair Community College (SFCC). The Organizational Description Questionnaire (ODQ), developed by Bass and Avolio (1992), report provided the college a qualitative and quantitative look at the organization's cultural style. The SFCC organizational Leadership Needs Assessment Survey (LNAS) analyzed the need and determined the support to

develop and implement a local leadership development program plan. Bass and Avolio (1992)

state that an organization with transformational culture generally has a sense of purpose and feeling of family. Leaders within such a culture act as mentors and coaches to their followers, as well as being positive role models themselves. Employees of transformational cultures go beyond their self-interests and strive toward organizational goals. According to the AACC (2004), if community colleges like SFCC seek to obtain the talent, skill, and leadership at all levels of the organization, then the college must invest the resources necessary to cultivate effective community college leadership needed in today's educational environment.

#### *An Effective Community College Leader*

Before conducting an analysis on leadership or the need for leadership training at a particular institution, the definition and identified traits of an effective community college leader should be determined. This may define the gap in community college leadership that the institution is striving to meet. It requires a great deal of knowledge and skills including understanding the increased reliance on information and classroom technology, the critical issues of knowledge management, virtual learning, state and federal regulations, partnerships, and many other components (Carol, 2004). An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004).

Effective community college leaders should equitably and ethically sustain people, processes, and information. They should also sustain physical and financial assets in order to

fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004). According to the AACC, an effective community college leader must:

- 1) Ensure accountability in reporting; support operational decisions by managing information resources and ensuring the integrity and integration of reporting systems and databases.
- 2) Develop and manage resource assessment, planning, budgeting, and acquisitions; ensure the allocation process is consistent with the college master plan and local, state, and national policies.
- 3) Take an entrepreneurial stance in seeking ethical alternative funding sources; implement financial strategies to support programs, services, staff, and facilities.
- 4) Implement a human resource system that includes recruitment, hiring, reward, and performance management systems that foster the professional development and advancement of all staff.
- 5) Employ organizational, time management, planning, and delegation skills; and manage conflict and change in ways that contribute to the long-term viability of the organization (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004).

In 1984 at the National Association of Community Leadership Organization conference, Gardner (1984, as cited in Sullivan, 2001) suggested the following regarding effective leadership:

The most effective leadership in the future will be provided by an individual, or better yet a loosely linked group of individuals, who have: 1) the patience to

work in the context of complexity and pluralism; 2) the intellectual clarity to conceptualize a workable consensus; 3) the flexibility to reserve their conception; 4) the integrity to win the trust of contending forces; and 5) the persuasiveness to mobilize a constituency of willing allies in pursuit of goals that are tolerable to all. All of these qualities need not reside in one person; they may be shared in different degrees by the members of the group (p. 566).

#### *Traits of an Effective Community College Leader*

In 2000, Hackaday and Puyear wrote a white paper titled “Community College Leadership in the New Millennium.” This literature identified nine traits of effective community college leaders: vision, integrity, confidence, courage, technical knowledge, ability to collaborate, persistence, good judgment, and a desire to lead. This paper was developed to propose that national, state, and local community college organizations take steps to identify, train, and mentor prospective leaders for community colleges.

Leadership development participants of one program titled the Leadership Institute for a New Century (Ebbers et al., 2000) spent considerable time and energy observing the roles, functions, and different leadership styles of institutional leaders to gain a thorough understanding of today’s community college leadership needs. The participants studied examples of desired leadership traits and characteristics which included intelligence, extroversion, self-assurance, empathy, confidence, courage, fairness, respect for the opinions of others, and sensitivity of information (Ebbers et al., 2000). Roueche, Baker and Rose (1989) stated that one of the most identifiable traits of a leader comes from studying the characteristics, behaviors, and situational factors of leaders. These leaders include practicing community college leaders and how they

respond to tasks and react to elements such as the organizational structure, the culture of the environment, rules and regulations, resources, and follower sentiments.

*Leading Forward*, a two-year planning grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation was established to gather input from individuals already working on community college leadership programs. Participants from the *Leading Forward* summit identified key leadership skills that included everything from communications skills to wrestling and translating knowledge into action.

#### *Need for Community College Leadership Development Programs*

Creating leadership development programs or academies is a systematic process whereby professional and personal development is blended with a strategic plan to ensure that the organization is prepared to fill the position that becomes vacant, with the right person who possesses the right skills and attributes, at the right time (Carol, 2004).

Successful colleges of the future will be the ones that today are cultivating new generations of leaders at all administrative levels (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). Community colleges must invite the emerging leaders to become engaged by inviting them to participate in leadership capacity such as working on a task force or managing a process that requires working with people. It is becoming increasingly important for community colleges to form a supportive environment and encourage participation such as that of a leadership development academy or program.

A common place to seek appealing candidates is from within the organization. Collin's (2003) *Good to Great* analyzed the corporate sector's CEOs and executive leaders of Fortune 500 companies in which a definition of a "level five leader" was introduced. A Level Five leader

is an individual who blends extreme personal humility with intense professional will. Level Five leaders are a study in duality: Modest and willfully-shy and fearless. Notably, the book says ten of eleven good to great chief executive officers came from inside the company, whereas the comparison companies tried outside CEOs six times more often. A key point for consideration is not just in assembling the right team; rather it's that the "who" questions come before the "what" decisions, strategy, tactics, and so forth (Collins, 2003, p. 14). The data suggest that the internal hire continues to be the most common means of appointing most high-ranking community college administrators, if one understands the internal labor pool must consist of personnel who have been at the same institution for ten years or more. At the same time, the American Council on Education (ACE, n.d.) suggests that most academic administrators are thrust into leadership positions with little preparation. Short of on-the-job training, trial and error experience, and a few summer workshops and seminars, most are not adequately prepared for the demands and the responsibilities of leadership positions in higher education. Spangler (1999) states higher education's promotional path from classroom to administration is evidence of the lack of training and experiences prior to on-the-job experience and/or leadership development programs. It is observed, especially within the larger community college districts and documented in literature, that those moving into mid-level management positions and even managers and administrators moving to higher positions, generally do so without formal training to assist them.

Filan (1999) believes that unlike the private sector, which devotes a considerable percentage of its training funds to mid-level managers, community and technical colleges provide minimal or no training funds to their mid-level leaders. Filan goes on to state that the time is near when a significant number of current leaders will be leaving their ranks due to

retirement. Immediate action needs to be taken by colleges to identify and develop future leaders. Filan recommends community and technical colleges need to look at how they are going to “grow” their future successors internally.

Community colleges appear to be investigating administrative leadership in new ways. But much work remains to be done in generating candidate pools for senior positions, in equipping younger generations of administrators with the skills and experience that will help them win promotions, and ensuring the quality and promotion into the most senior positions (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). Community college prospective leaders are encouraged to become actively involved in creating a personalized professional development plan with their supervisor. Prospective leaders are urged to investigate and pursue advanced degrees and attend leadership institutes, seminars and programs. They are also encouraged to stay actively involved in their own campus by seeking other additional leadership responsibilities as team leaders, project directors, and committee chairs (Ebbers et al., 2000). In addition, community colleges need to consider being more proactive in developing their own leaders by offering local programs that employees can attend. Many are interested in the “grow your own” programs in which community colleges have created leadership friendly environments and where leadership development is woven into the tapestry of the college culture (Bragg, 2004).

#### *Components of a Community College Leadership Development Program*

The leadership task force from the *Leading Forward* Summit identified the characteristics and professional skills that all leaders of community colleges should have and that should be addressed in professional development programs. The components identified for community college leaders are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

*Competencies Established for Community College Leaders*

Organizational Strategy	An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.
Resource Management	An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, process, and information as well as physical and financial assets that fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.
Communication	An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community, to promote the success of all students, and to sustain the community college mission.
Collaboration	An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college mission.
Professionalism	An effective community college leader works ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improves self and surroundings, demonstrate accountability to and for the institution, and ensure the long-term viability of the college and the community.

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