

SELECTION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS: EXPLORING BOARD
MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING

A Dissertation by

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MEMBERS' UNDERSTANDING

The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content, and recommends that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Educational Leadership.

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Diane who supported me through the challenges of completing a doctorate degree; to my daughters, Christian and Blair who encouraged me and forgave me for missing special family time; and to my mother, Laura and my father, Ralph who never gave up on me and made sacrifices for my future. To Herb, Lesta, and Pat, thank you for your emotional and computer support. While I cannot repay you for your sacrifices, please know that I will forward your support and encouragement to others in need.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My name might be listed as the author on the title page; however it would have little meaning without the support of the dissertation committee members. My initial intent was to use dialogue and relationships as a means to a doctoral degree, but in retrospect, my quest for a doctoral degree was the means for dialogue and relationships. Mara Alagic, my dissertation chair, provided time, guidance, care, and encouragement through my moments of challenge. Mara set a high bar of expectations and demanded more of me than I thought was possible. Jo Bennett was supportive and insightful which helped me steer clear of unforeseen pitfalls. Steve Farmer offered a valuable perspective of common sense and helped me keep the main thing the main thing. Sherry Goodvin was a friend to me through my research and helped me realize that “it is what it is”. Glyn Rimmington encouraged me to reflect through the work and filter out the superfluous “noise” and get to the point. I know I still have a long way to go.

I also wish to thank other contributors to this research. They provided information that I hope will help future community college board members in their leadership. My mother once told me that, “life is made of memories and in the end...that is enough.” This leg of my journey has provided many valuable memories. I am grateful.

ABSTRACT

The selection of a community college president is a responsibility for the governing Board of Trustees. This qualitative study sought board members' understanding about (1) their institution's identity utilizing the organizational identity theory and (2) the critical elements of the match between their understanding of the community college and the desired characteristics of the selected presidential candidate. Mission statements, vision statements, and presidential position descriptions which described responsibilities and qualifications were collected from both rural and urban community colleges across the nation and were analyzed and compared with board members' interview data. Board members suggested that communication skills and the ability to develop relationships were vital to the president for effective leadership in collaborative efforts with businesses and the community. These efforts would support the community colleges' core attribute of student access to a post-secondary education in preparation for the workforce or baccalaureate degree. Both urban and rural participants understood the community colleges' role in the community as a conduit for economic development by establishing partnerships with local businesses. Data also reflected the utilization of community colleges for self-preservation of rural communities or culture and tradition.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to explore the understanding of community college board members, their concerns, and how they used their understanding to select the community college president. The president is responsible for the effective and efficient operations of the community college, providing a culture of learning for its students, and garnering public and financial support for the community college when confronted with multidirectional challenges. (Vaughan, 2006). The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges ("The Leadership Imperative," 2006) released a report stating that the president oversees the maintenance of the institution's image. These complex challenges have grown for the institution's president (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997), however, "issues that upcoming community college leaders will have to address will be different and more complex than those faced by community college leaders in the past" (Hockaday & Puyear, 2000, p. 1).

Research Problem

There is a widely accepted belief that potential applicants who seek the presidency of a community college should be selected based on qualifications such as experience (Beehler, 1993; McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers, 1999; Moore, 1973; Wallin, 2002). Fiedler (1996) stated, "[p]ractically all public and private organizations operate on the strong belief that it is better to hire intelligent, creative, and experienced managers than those who are dull, not creative, and inexperienced," (p. 245). However, the selected presidential candidate may not be the effective leader as was once believed by the members of the Board of Trustees or governing board (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; March & Weiner, 2003).

As an illustration, suppose a community college board does not have a clear understanding of the organization's culture. They may find it difficult to come to a consensus for a presidential candidate, but by majority vote hires a presidential candidate with fund raising experience rather than leadership experience within a collegial culture. Such a president might prove ineffective and have difficulty adjusting to the context of the local community college culture (Neumann, 1995) if the leadership style is autocratic. This simple disconnect is an illustration of broader educational implications. The governing board is ultimately responsible for the community college and should enable the new president to act effectively (Vaughan, 2006) and fulfill the board's obligation to its constituents. This may lead us to raise questions about board members' understanding of the community college and their selection of a presidential candidate. Is the successful candidate selected because of intelligence, character, level of education, or prior experience? Is the candidate chosen because of apparent charisma or vision? Perhaps the candidate is chosen because of a board's expectation to satisfy the needs of the community college within a particular context such as a recession.

These questions arise because of the needs of diverse constituencies. Bailey and Morrest (2004) suggest the community college is responsible to students interested in transferring to baccalaureate-granting institutions, terminal degrees, contract education, developmental education, continuing education, and much more. This is occurring in an environment of declining state budget allocations and general economic downturn (Hurley, McBain, Harnisch, & Russell, 2009; Katsinas, Priest, Palmer, & Tollefson, 2004). Even the most informed community college governing board is challenged to select the „right' presidential candidate. However, many

governing boards are without an appropriate background. Moore (1973) suggested, “the board of trustees is, perhaps, the most uninformed and incompetent component in a community college structure,” (p. 171). To exacerbate the problem, trustees hesitate to divulge their lack of knowledge and acquiesce without questions or suggestions (Lorsch, 1989). For instance, members of the board may not fully understand the community college they represent and thereupon, select a candidate who might be unprepared for the needs of the institution. A retired community college president was once asked about future community college leaders. The president stated,

...colleges have not been particularly effective in knowing what type of leader they need and then in selecting this leader...how the ‚right‘ president is selected for the ‚right‘ college demands that the college’s board and leaders understand their college and its culture so they can make the best ‘fit’. [I]f a college’s leadership does not understand itself, it will not understand how to make an intelligent choice of its president (Kempner, 2003, p. 378).

To a lesser extent, the presidential candidate may be selected from an applicant pool lacking in qualified aspirants (Shults, 2001; Vaughan, 2008; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). Or, the board might be convinced to select a candidate based upon connections with people who would be willing to contribute large sums of needed funding to the community college. This research provides insight into community college board members’ understanding of their institutions and the challenges they have when it comes time to select their president.

Purpose of the Study

Leadership is as vital for a community college as it is for any other institution (Levin, 1998; Robles, 1998; Vaughan, 2006; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). A community college can languish under ineffective leadership, which can contribute to low employee morale, high turnover, the depletion of financial reserves, lack of vision, poor public relations, reduced enrollments, and diminished quality of education. Consequently, the selection of an effective president is critical for the community college board (Vaughan, 2008).

The community college presidential selection process is overseen by the board of trustees, however, “[t]he board must have a clear understanding of the institution, the challenges it faces, and the leadership qualities required of the next president at this point in the institution’s history” (“The Leadership Imperative,” 2006, p. 27). Governing boards are incapable of properly selecting a potential president unless they can articulate effective leadership for the institution’s cultural context, understand how the president will be culturally accountable, and know presidential motives for the particular community college (Kempner, 2003).

While there seems to be no universal model for the search process, studies have provided a general overview of the processes in practice (Birnbaum, 1988; Bromert, 1984b; Kauffman, 1974). Although minor variations exist for each community college, the hiring process begins when the governing board is made aware of an impending presidential vacancy. Since the board is responsible for filling the position, the process usually begins by taking stock of the institution’s identity and context to comprehend how current issues affect the community college. A screening process is initiated to narrow the pool of applicants. The board then

normally interviews candidates and attempts to find the best match between candidates with the needs of the college. The desired candidate is then selected based on the majority vote of the board. The purpose of this study is to attempt to clarify trustees' constructions of the organizational identity of their own community colleges and selection of a president.

Conceptual Model of the Research

The board of trustees (Figure 1) governs the community college (A) and has an understanding of the organizational identity (B). The presidential candidate also has an understanding of the organizational identity (C) and reports to the board (D). The board selects a presidential candidate (E) based upon their understanding of the match between the community college needs (F) and the candidate's qualifications (G). This study explored board members' understanding of the community college, presidential candidates' qualifications, and how they matched the two.

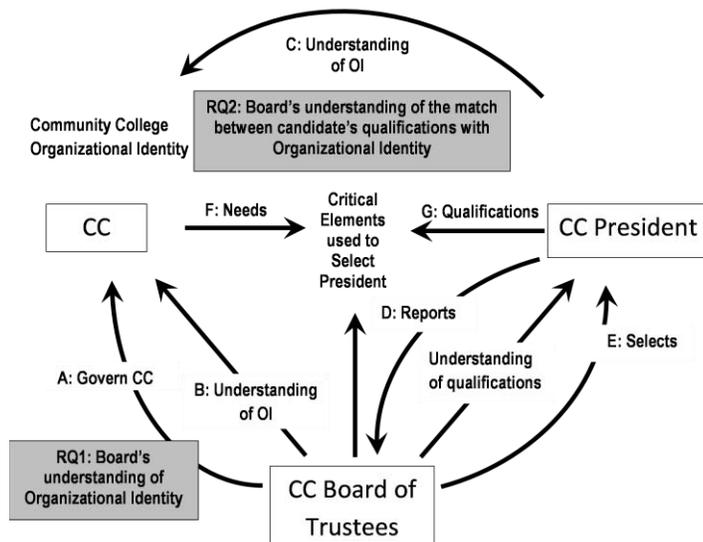


Figure 1. Research conceptual model.

Research Questions

Two research questions guide this study:

What is the community college board of trustees' understanding of the institution's organizational identity?

What are the critical elements of the match between the organizational identity and the characteristics of the selected president?

Theory of Organizational Identity

To be more effective in their governing role, members of the community college board need to understand the organization (Kempner, 2003; "The Leadership Imperative," 2006; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997) . Because of the evolving nature of the greater community college, the demands placed upon community colleges have derived diverse groups. Today, when new board members begin working on the community college's governing board, they do not oversee an institution whose sole mission is to accommodate transfer students. They oversee a community college with an expanded mission, hence the term *comprehensive* (Bailey & Morest, 2004) community college. This comprehensive community college ideology creates institutional identity confusion.

The quintessence of an entity, *identity* derives from the individual or a collection of individuals (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). For it is the natural endeavor of the individual or group of individuals to answer the questions "Who am I?," or "Who are we?," respectively to seek our essence (Morris & Pai, 1994). An individual or organized group of individuals can successfully interrelate with others when they examine these questions. (Albert, et al., 2000).

Board member's dialogue and personal contemplation help members comprehend the institution's identity, a factor that underpins their selection of the community college president.

Previous research has raised awareness about institutional identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985). Their research identified three questions members need to consider when they reflect upon their organization. Modified to the context of this research, who are we as a community college? What is our purpose as a community college? What do we want to be as a community college? Albert and Whetten designed a construct to inform research regarding these questions. They defined *organizational identity* as "central and enduring attributes of an organization that distinguish it from other [similar] organizations," (1985).

A *central* attribute is deemed a core element of an organization (Whetten, 2006). While there may not be a universal criterion for a central attribute, Albert and Whetten (1985) suggest that individuals such as members of the community college board could judge some central characteristic. For example, the central attribute for a community college could be to provide students an affordable, post-secondary education.

An organization's *enduring* attribute could be understood as some constant. The mission statement, which clarifies the purpose of the institution is generally a short statement with broad implications, which affords adaptability over time while simultaneously sustaining a rather consistent central focus (Margolis & Hansen, 2002). Margolis and Hansen also suggest that if an alteration does not change members' understanding of the organization's purpose, the organizational identity endures. In the case of this research, generally the institutional mission does not change at the time of filling the presidential vacancy. It endures.

For an organization to be *distinguished* is an assertion of separation from other organizations. A community college might distinguish itself in its ability to offer a particular program of study other community colleges do not offer. Distinguishing elements are clear-cut, generally accepted standards. To distinguish itself, a community college needs a central and enduring element (Albert & Whetten, 1985). In other words, an institution is identified by its commitment to some long-term aspect. These organizational central elements are attributed to culture, which includes values, beliefs, and assumptions (Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Schein, 2004). Mission statements reflect enduring values, espoused beliefs, and assumptions considered vital by the organization's leadership (Swales & Rogers, 1995). Governing board members must understand that mission statements and other charter documents impinge upon an organization's identity and image. These provide the foundation for the establishment and maintenance of the organization's mission or core attributes (Margolis & Hansen, 2002); indeed, central values are often included in an organization's mission statement (Fritz, Arnett, & Conkel, 1999; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). For instance, central value for a university could be research and a central value for a community college could be teaching, either of which could be included in the mission statement.

Aust (2004) postulated that values or pertinent parts of central attributes should be communicated. The essence of an organization is its values (Kabanoff & Holt, 1996; Kabanoff, Waldersee, & Cohen, 1995; McDonald & Gandz, 1992). Organizational members become agents for the organization's identity to those outside of the institution. These expanded ideas are

consistent and within the domain of the central and distinguishing attributes established in Albert and Whetten's original theory.

An individual, or in the case of this study, board members must have an understanding of the organization's identity (Albert, et al., 2000). This study is based upon a constructionist epistemology since the focus is on "organizational identity," which is socially constructed by constituents (Margolis & Hansen, 2002). The relevant meaning of the organization's identity is based on dialogue and some agreement from within the collective membership (Scott & Lane, 2000). Members of the board more fully enable the president to fulfill the community college mission when they become cognizant of the organizational identity (Bailey & Morest, 2004).

Organizational image and reputation. Organizational identity should not be confused with organizational image since *identity* is claimed by insiders and *image* refers to how outsiders and insiders, both individually and as a collective, perceive the organization (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Price, Gioia, & Corley, 2008). This organizational image concept is based on the premise of social constructionism whereby synthesized images occur through dialogue and contemplation (Gioia, et al., 2000). Insiders, or organizational members are conscientious of *image* since the, "image preserves the continuity of their self-concept, provides distinctiveness, and enhances self-esteem," (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994, p. 2). However, control over image is elusive because of what Price, Gioia, and Corley calls "scattered images," (2008, p. 173). To target diverse constituents with intended messages, a community college finds it more difficult to control various interpretations. Nevertheless, the community college president and administration endeavor to maintain offerings to fulfill assertions of organizational identity, or its

mission (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). An organization attempts to accomplish some semblance of congruency through a self-management process, which is partially maintained by constituent feedback called reputation (Whetten & Mackey, 2002). A community college reputation is socially constructed as evaluations are founded on common identity assertions, which could be considered central to the organization.

Margolis and Hansen (2002) expanded Albert and Whetten's seminal work of organizational identity with core attributes or organizational purpose and application attributes. Application attributes are made up of priorities, practices, and projections. Priorities are the provided services, which represent core attributes. Practices are internal operations that support the provided services. Projections are the images offered to the public.

Before serving on a community college board, an individual has a conception of the institutional image and is generally aware of the community college's reputation. This affects the way in which a potential board member develops an organizational image. However, the individual's image of the community college might be incongruent with the organizational identity as perceived by the collective board. For instance, a new board member may be concerned with an athletic program, whereas the board considers the athletic program in addition to other issues such as finance, community relations, or accreditation. Consequently, inconsistencies of image of the newly elected board member with the current board may be altered initially through board protocol training and ultimately, experience (Golden-Biddle & Rao, 1997). Board protocol is a process that broadens the understanding of new board members with the board, organization, and constituencies through shared ideas with current board

members, board members from other community colleges, and associations. This understanding enables board members to make better informed decisions.

Importance of organizational identity understanding. Coherent strategy affords a sense of identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). This distinguishes an institution through a sense of purpose and fosters a culture of organizational commitment (Cole & Bruch, 2006). Board consensus, or the extent to which identity is shared, is a consequence of a strong sense of identity. Conversely, a weak sense of identity is reflective of a fragmented board and reduces organizational commitment (Fiol, 2001). A weak board could moderate consensus and adversely affect the selection of a president for instance if assertions were true about a board's lack of vision.

Research Significance

The successful democratization of America, supported by community college education, was publicly recognized by presidents Truman (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958), Johnson (Vaughan, 2006), Clinton (Clinton, 1998), Bush (Evelyn, 2004), and Obama (Lewin, 2009). "Community colleges remain the single most important resource for economic and social gain through education," (Eaton, 1994, pp. 6-7). These responsibilities arrive at the greater community college door in various forms as constituents cross the threshold with many needs.

Paradoxically, during times of economic downturns, the number of demands upon community colleges increases as funding decreases. The responsibility to moderate the concerns of the constituents and potential financial pitfalls rests upon the shoulders of the community college president (Beehler, 1993). The president lends an ear to the voices and articulates the educational needs of students, internal needs of employees, and external needs of the community.

Of all of the constituent groups, a relationship between the community college president and board of trustees is needed for the effective operation of the institution ("The Leadership Imperative," 2006). This relationship is a tenuous bridge, which connects the external community with the internal workings of the institution. If the president and the governing board founder in their leadership collaboration, the institution could be jeopardized. The research is especially pertinent today as 84 percent (Figure 2) of the community college presidents are of age to vacate their positions, (Weisman & Vaughan, 2006) which could be a precursor to a shortage in the number of qualified presidential candidates. Perhaps, because of this study, more can be learned about board members' understanding of the application and implications of organizational identity.

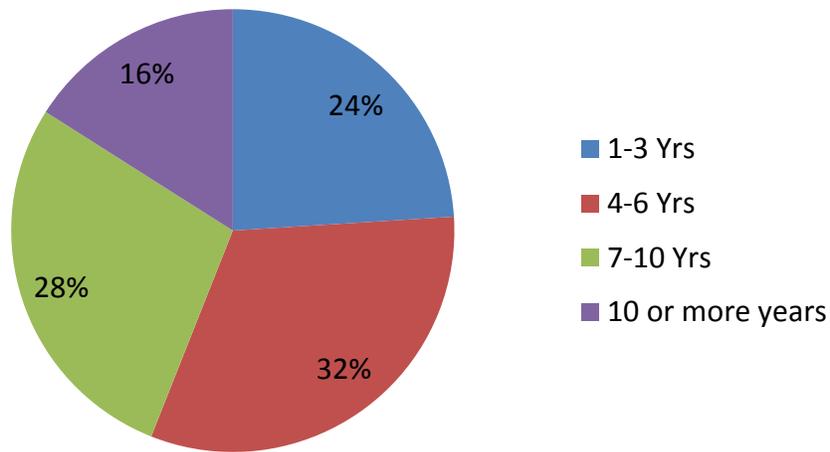


Figure 2. Time frame in which presidents plan to retire: 2006.

The review of the literature is intended to identify the evolution and current context of the community college. In addition, governance issues are included to provide a clearer picture of the challenges, which governing boards face. The literature review includes perceived contributions and critiques by various researchers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The organizational identity of the community college has evolved with various constituent demands. This literature review encompasses the evolution of the community college, which begins with a community college description and fiscal challenges (Hurley, et al., 2009). The governing board is ultimately responsible for the fiscal condition and general welfare of the institution (Boggs, 2003). As such, the board should understand the organizational mechanisms and how it fulfills its mission. Once understood, the board is in a better position to select an appropriate president when the vacancy arises. The literature review continues to explore the role of the community college president, which encompasses the president's relationship with the board of trustees, a reflection of governance structures. There have been selection criteria used (Plinske & Packard, 2010) by governing boards to select new presidents, aspects of which are included in the final element of the literature review.

What Are Community Colleges?

Community colleges are regionally accredited institutions that provide a repertoire of higher educational services to students with diverse needs. They not only confer associate degrees (some states allow community colleges to confer bachelor's degrees), they afford a

number of programs for students who want to transfer to four-year colleges and universities, vocational/technical training, development education, continuing education, and community development (Bragg, 2001). Leadership has found it a challenge to provide multiple programs, especially in times of financial duress.

The lack of financial stability has been a concern for community college governing boards for several years (Hurley, et al., 2009; "State funding for community colleges: A 50-state survey," 2000). This should not be a surprise as competition for state funding is intense. In most states, expenditures for higher education have been considered discretionary and, consequently, funded after entitlement programs like Medicaid were paid (Katsinas, et al., 2004).

Diverse community college program needs require financial stability. About half of all post-secondary students are educated in community colleges ("State funding for community colleges: A 50-state survey," 2000). The National Council of State Directors of community colleges' survey in 2004 stated rural community colleges operate at greater risks of insolvency because of their inability to satisfy state budget shortages through local mill levies (Katsinas, et al., 2004). State budget constraints currently present a two-fold challenge for community college leadership. First, severe financial shortages force the community college leadership to bolster financial support from external sources to maintain the status quo. Second, because of current state financial cutbacks state legislatures demand accountability from community college leadership to prove community colleges are a vital part of the state's higher educational system. The financial demand placed on community college leadership encumbers stress in all aspects of

the community college, which further exacerbated in an economic recession (Hurley, et al., 2009).

In December 2010, the U. S. Department of Labor (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*, 2010) released a report, which stated the national unemployment rate was 9.4%. During a recession, states receive fewer tax revenues as unemployed workers pay less tax; subsequently, states have reduced revenue to reallocate to state government agencies like community colleges. In addition, many unemployed workers enroll in colleges to retrain for other job opportunities. Community colleges require additional revenues to educate more students. Consequently, there are fewer dollars to educate a greater number of students. The Dowd and Grant (2006) study determined 38% of a student's community college education is funded by the state while the student's tuition and fees pays 20% of the cost. As a result, difficult choices must be made. While community colleges continue to struggle in a tenuous economic environment, they have always maintained relevance throughout a century of challenges.

The Community Colleges: Past and Present

Albeit the obvious financial shortages are critical, the challenges faced by community colleges extend beyond fiscal needs. There have been other educational issues: mission, leadership, and priorities. Many community college officials believed there has been a moral sense of urgency to serve the needs of the disadvantaged and disenfranchised (McClenney, 2009). Governing boards continue to address many community college issues that have accumulated over time (Gumport, 2003). Much of this responsibility is reflected in mission statement expansions as governing boards and presidents try to provide a quality educational

environment conducive to the needs of an ever-changing constituency. Through time, demands placed on community colleges have forced community college leadership to expand the mission.

Community colleges, originally founded as junior colleges, were established to provide high school graduates the opportunity to complete their freshman and sophomore years of college before transferring to a four-year college. Supporters of these institutions believed community colleges availed higher education to more students (Bailey & Morest, 2004). Eaton (1994) acknowledged community colleges were an “extraordinary,” (p. 5) opportunity to reasonably finance a higher education, which could not be matched by any other institution of higher learning.

Nevertheless, federal initiatives like the Truman Commission and GI Bill created a shift in the community college focus following World War II (Gumport, 2003). In 1946, President Truman established a commission to review higher education in America. In the report, *Higher Education for American Democracy*, the Truman commission recommended all citizens be provided an opportunity to attain a higher education (Brubacher & Rudy, 1958). The Truman Commission report helped nudge community college leadership to include vocational-technical education, improve, and expand higher education to the masses. In addition, the GI Bill funded 51%, or nearly eight million veterans who returned from World War II (Mettler, 2002) to a college education. These were some of the external forces that encouraged community colleges to increase programs to communities in need. Therefore, *access* became, and continues to claim the attention of community college leadership.

Recommendations from the Truman Commission enabled community colleges to expand their mission beyond the original core competency as a transfer institution to universities and colleges. This expansion came at a cost—an opportunity cost whereby resources shifted to other educational areas and; therefore, wholly unavailable for transfer students’ education. There continues to be a belief that to be the most effective and efficient in operations, an institution must focus on core competencies (Collis, 2004). In the case of community colleges, core competencies were believed to be any activity that best served transfer students. If community college leadership chose to divide its resources and time between serving transfer students and terminal degree students e.g. nursing or welding, then the institution could not be as effective and efficient. Therefore, the opportunity for the terminal degree student came at a cost to the transfer student as the institution’s focus and subsequent resources were divided (Collis, 2004).

In addition, presidential support for educational equity occurred under various federal initiatives, which enabled community colleges to expand. President Johnson signed the Higher Education Act of 1965 and professed, “...[this] means that a high school senior anywhere in this great land of ours can apply to any college or any university in any of the 50 states and not be turned away because his family is poor” (Public papers of the presidents of the United States: Lyndon B. Johnson, 1966). In July of 2009, President Obama spoke of support for the importance of community colleges in our nation’s effort to educate Americans (Lewin, 2009).

More recently, however, this additional financial support has proven insufficient for many academically qualified students who sought college degrees. In 2002, the Advisory Committee on Financial Assistance released a report stating

[D]ue to record-high financial barriers, nearly one-half of all college-qualified, low-and moderate-income high school graduates—over 400,000 students fully prepared to attend a four-year college—will be unable to do so, and 170,000 of these students will attend no college at all. Over this decade, 4.4 million of these high school graduates will not attend four-year colleges and 2 million will attend no college at all. (Ficklen & Stone, 2002, p. Executive Summary)

Because community colleges educate at reduced costs, they provide greater financial access for students who might not otherwise be able to afford a higher education degree. Figure 3 discloses the differences in tuition, fees, room and board comparing two year and four-year institutions (*Digest of Education Statistics*, 2006). The National Center for Education Statistics who provided the chart data suggested caution when the reader interprets the community college data, as the number of survey responses was low.

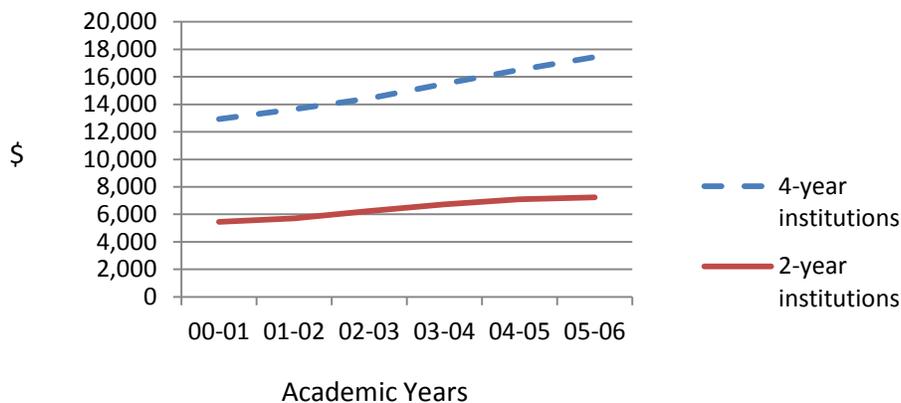


Figure 3. Mean public and private undergraduate tuition and fees and room and board rates charged for full-time students in degree-granting institutions, 2000-2006.

Community colleges have now evolved into institutions of equity and access. In sum, [o]pen access and equity mean that men and women from all ethnic, social, and economic backgrounds can afford to attend the community college and that no one is discriminated against in any academic program or service offered by the college (Vaughan, 2006, p. 4).

An institution of equity and access has little relevance if it lacks programs. A community college based solely on a transfer program is a community college with diminished access (Vaughan, 2006) since many students do not satisfy the academic standards necessary for a transfer program. As a result, a community college provides comprehensive programming, which ultimately expands its mission.

Activities now include developmental education, adult basic education, English as a second language, education and training for welfare recipients and others facing serious barriers to employment, customized training for specific companies, preparation of students for industry certification exams, non-credit instruction in a bewildering plethora of areas (including purely avocational interests), small business development, and even economic forecasting. (Bailey & Morest, 2004, p. 2)

Vocational-technical education. The initial mission modification for community colleges occurred about 50 years ago when community college leadership introduced a two-year vocational-technical degree, which was considered a terminal degree. The vocational-technical degree was defined to include “occupational, career, or technical studies,” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 22). Vocational-technical degrees were made available in greater numbers to students (Bragg, 2001). Student requests for vocational-technical degrees demanded much of the attention

of community college leadership and Clowes and Levin (1989) suggested career education should be the sole core function for most community colleges rather than as a transfer institution.

In contrast, the introduction of vocational-technical degrees did not appear as part of higher education without concern. An emphasis on vocational training in education destabilized academic programs, which sustained transfer student numbers (Dougherty, 1994). An occupational education would limit one's prospect for success as students of vocational programs graduate with a lowered socioeconomic status occupation (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Some researchers (Dougherty, 1994; Eaton, 1994) believe such integration attenuates the purpose of a transfer institution while others (Bailey & Averianova, 1998; Perin, 1998) welcome it as the best way to support diverse learners.

Contract education/workforce development/continuing education. Community college leadership evolution continues to alter the mission. In lieu of a defense-related economy, community colleges were expected to educate the masses for industries such as computer technologies (Gumport, 2003). Subsequently, community colleges now perform a "critical function by serving as a link between the education and the employment sectors," (Shaw & Rab, 2003, p. 173). Over 90 percent of community colleges are involved in workforce development (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999). Community colleges receive state funds for these students/trainees. In addition, some community colleges have provided economic development advice to small businesses (1999).

Community colleges provide lifelong learning opportunities (Vaughan, 2006). Displaced workers enroll in courses to upgrade their skills to increase their future earnings and skills, which

make them more marketable to new employers (Jacobson, Lalonde, & Sullivan, 2005; Marcotte, Bailey, Borkoski, & Kienzl, 2005). There is a significant difference in increased earnings for students who complete their associate degree compared to their peers with a high school diploma (Grubb, 1993; McConnell & Brue, 2008). Data from the U. S. Bureau of Census ("U. S. Bureau of Census Median earnings: 2007," 2009) identified individual earnings data for 2007 (Figure 4) which depicted a graduating community college student median income at a 41% increase over the median income of a student with a high school degree.

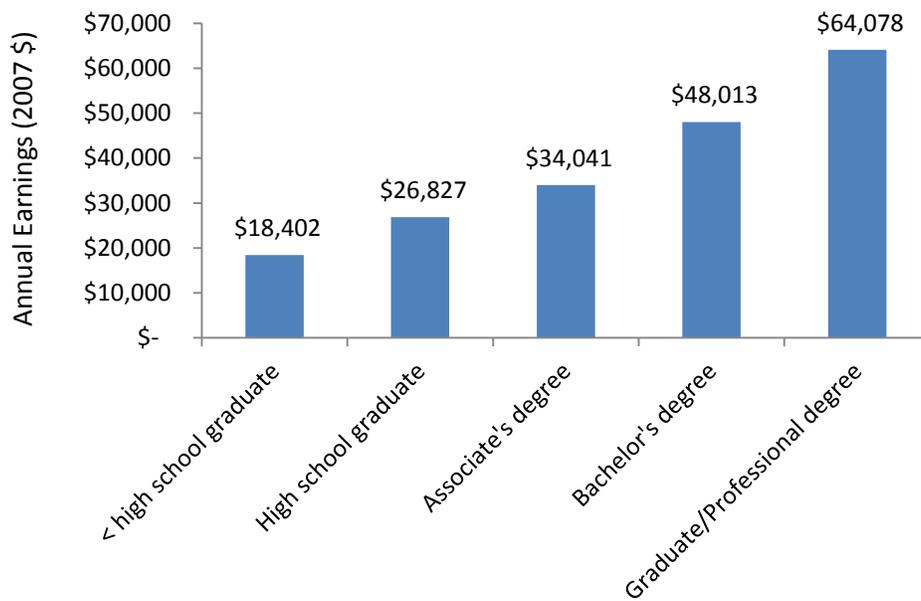


Figure 4. Median educational levels and individual annual earnings, ("U. S. Bureau of Census Median earnings: 2007," 2009).

Developmental education. In the decade of the sixties, community colleges instigated policies of access without qualification called open-access, which led to greater enrollment

diversity. Many of these students were economically disadvantaged and in need of academic development to be more successful with the rigors of higher education (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Marcotte, et al., 2005). Community college officials developed so-called developmental courses to help these students be successful in their further studies (Gumport, 2003).

The rates of students who attend community colleges with developmental needs has steadily increased to the current rate of 60% (McClenney, 2009). Students who enroll in at least three developmental courses have reduced persistent or dropout rates because of the increase in the amount of time and money it takes to complete the degree (Ashburn, 2009). To the contrary, studies show students who successfully complete their developmental course during the first semester are more likely to stay on track to graduate over any other student demographic, including students who never took a developmental course (Blum, 2007). Whether a student takes one or more developmental courses, the education is delivered at an additional cost.

Bruce Vandal (Killough, 2009), the Postsecondary and Workforce Development Institute director from the Education Commission of the States exclaimed about developmental education in higher education, "[i]t is often seen as a redundancy, a failure in the system. And they [Congress] hate investing money in a failure" (p. 1). Underprepared college students find it more costly to complete their educational goals (Hurley, et al., 2009). In addition, Bell, education program-director for the National Conference of State Legislatures stated developmental education has become a financial drain on state budgets (Killough, 2009).

The number of programs placed increasing demands on community colleges and has expanded their core competencies. Researchers perceive these increasing demands both

positively (Boggs, 2004; Vaughan, 2006) and negatively (Breneman & Nelson, 1981; Brint, 2003; Dougherty, 1994; Dougherty & Bakia, 1999; Eaton, 1994). Detractors condemn the expanded community college mission philosophy.

Community College Detractors

As community college leadership moved forward with the aforementioned list of increasing demands, this subsequently caught the attention of detractors (Brint, 2003; Dougherty, 1994; Eaton, 1994; Gumpert, 2003). They had ideological issues with community colleges offering higher education, which were perceived insufficient in their preparation of transfer students who sought baccalaureate degrees. community colleges incurred self-inflicted injuries when they provided a compromised education, (Eaton, 1994) which weakened its role (Gumpert, 2003). Some researchers and economists believed a restricted institutional mission (Dougherty & Bakia, 1999) would have relieved institutional financial burdens (Breneman & Nelson, 1981). What was once considered an avenue for students who began their quest for a baccalaureate degree, later required community college leadership to come to the aid of their transferring students through the establishment of articulation agreements with baccalaureate degree granting higher education institutions (Bender, 1990). In addition, legislatures from 30 states passed articulation laws forcing seamless transition between their own state community colleges and universities (Education Commission of the States, 2008).

Community colleges became complex institutions that served a host of constituencies with many types of programs and activities. Gaskin (2000) described this phenomenon as mission accretion, or the ever-expanding mission. In contrast, Clowes and Levine called this

phenomenon “mission erosion,” (Clowes & Levin, 1989, p. 2) as a way to describe the drifting of the community colleges away from their core competencies.

In summary, community college leadership endeavored to keep up with the demands of a rapidly changing marketplace (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2003). Legislators and employers looked to community colleges to train the workforce and companies sought instruction in specific skills to increase their employees’ production. Policy makers looked to community colleges to provide developmental education (Ignash, 1997) for underprepared students. Students of all ages assumed community colleges would offer low-cost courses to learn basic skills or for transfer. How could community college leadership have effectively lead with so many institutional demands? To oversee an organization designed to resolve these issues, structures have been put in place to support institutional effectiveness.

Community College Governance

Community colleges are governed by a board of trustees who are locally elected, locally appointed, or state appointed (Vaughan, 2006). Community college boards of trustees in most states are elected from a local group of constituents. Interested individuals campaign in their sponsored communities to be elected as a member of the board. Locally elected trustees are generally responsive to local needs; however, an individual can easily be influenced by a particular agenda especially in rural community college settings. (Vaughan, 2006)

Some states appoint members to the board of trustees from the service area of the community college. Service area appointees do not campaign in local elections and are allowed more time to devote to community college issues. However, the appointee may retain a sense of

allegiance to the appointer rather than the community college. Finally, a few states utilize appointed, state-level boards to oversee the community college system statewide. Critics suggest that this erodes local control of a community college, which has been understood to serve local needs. This, however, reduces the chance for duplication of services and thereby reduces needed tax dollars (Vaughan, 2006).

Formal organizational structures. Organizational identity is reflected in various aspects of higher educational institutions including formal structures. The term governance refers to the process of how decisions are made (Vaughan, 2006). There are those who believe community colleges have formal structures in place and are considered bureaucratic in their governance (Bensiman, 1984; Reyes & Twombly, 1986; Robles, 1998). Robles (1998) referred to this model as managerial governance. As an example, faculty rarely participate in resource distribution or the employment and evaluation of fellow colleagues (Reyes & Twombly, 1986). Since community colleges arose out of the local, comprehensive high school, the governance model persisted (Bensiman, 1984). Figure 5 illustrates a conceptual model of a Midwestern community college based on my experiential understanding of the organizational structure.

A bureaucratic model pertains to a hierarchical structure with a delineated system of authority and emulates a pyramid with each leadership level designated with particular privileges, authority, and responsibility. The top level has the greatest amount of organizational authority and responsibility while the bottom level is held by the community college faculty who have the less institutional authority and responsibility (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Therefore, the implementation of policy is strictly adhered to for standard operating guidelines, especially

during times of economic recession (Ayers, 2009). These guidelines incorporate the “tradition of administrative dominance of the decision-making processes and structures....” (Bensiman, 1984, p. 57). The community college official who implements board policy is the president. The president or chief executive officer is responsible for internal governance (Romano, 1987) or operations (Vaughan, 2006) of the community college. In addition to the president in the formal structure of the institution are the vice president, deans, department chairs, members of the faculty, staff, and of course, students.

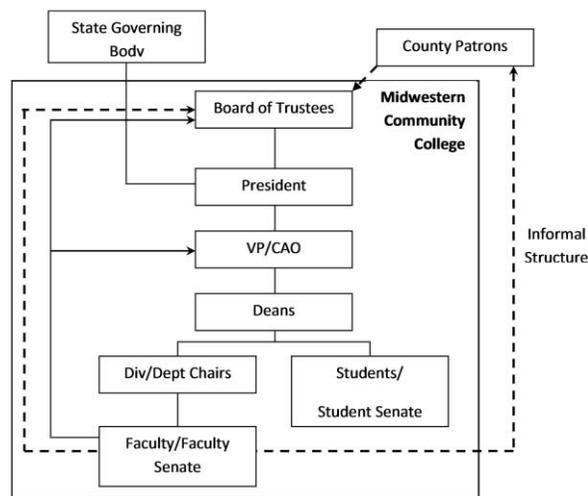


Figure 5. Conceptual model example of a community college governance structure.

Others believe community colleges are collegial rather than bureaucratic organizations (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Most community colleges facilitate faculty senates and unions (Eaton, 2007). Many decisions are informed through various internal committees comprised of faculty and staff and external committees who act in advisory capacities for various programs offered by

a community college. However, "shared governance in the community college may not be advancement in joint decision making but instead an increase in faculty work and responsibility for the management of the institution," (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006).

Community colleges have been given increased demands to connect with communities and businesses, institute more research practices, boost economies, and educate a comprehensive student population with reduced funds and greater legal restrictions (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). This requires decisions in a timely manner (Birnbaum, 1988; Kezar & Eckel, 2004). These challenges have been compounded by a demand for accountability, rivalry with online and for-profit educational institutions, and a tenuous collegial decision system further weakened by full-time faculty retirements filled with adjunct faculty (Kezar, 2000). Collegial decision structures have been criticized for their unwieldy and slow responses to an educational market, which constantly changes. In order to respond more quickly and compensate for reduced participation, some institutions have adopted an expanded system of bureaucracy (Rhoades, 1995).

Effective governance for a community college occurs through collaborative efforts between the governing board and the president (Deas, 1994). The roles of the governing board and president are restricted whereby neither should venture into the other's area of responsibility. The governing board should not involve itself in the operations of the community college (Vaughan, 2006). The governing board maintains the uppermost bureaucratic position and therefore, employs, evaluates, and terminates the president. There are, however, other forces, which influence organizational identity and affect governance and are considered informal structures.

Informal organizational structures. The formal structure, which is part of the institutional culture cannot function properly without informal structures in place as these include norms, which are used to interpret formal processes (Stamper, Liu, Hafkamp, & Ades, 2000). Consequently, a formal hierarchical structure cannot solely govern an institution (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). In other words, communication and action do not always flow along strict boundaries of the hierarchy. The, "...informal culture...provide[s] the norms that govern how far it is reasonable to depart from the norms specific to the organization and also how other people will react to those departures," (p. 2).

The community college oversight process is no exception and is swayed by forces outside of established formal boundaries. This influence is both internal and external to the community college. Examples of internal influences include "committees...informal groups and leaders...history and culture" (Vaughan, 2006, p. 22). Leadership can get a reasonable account of the community college's environment through casual dialogue with faculty, students, colleagues, and members of the community in informal settings such as a hallway, student union, or in civic meetings within the community (Myran, Baker III, Simone, & Zeiss, 2003).

Board of Trustees

Community colleges are governed through the external control of the board of trustees. Members of the board are members of the laity as they generally lack the special skills necessary to govern the community college. The lay trustee members are legally responsible for the institution and ultimately accountable to the public for their own actions. Consequently, lay

control means that “the President shall be elected by the Board of Regents [trustees], be responsible to it, and serve at the pleasure of the Board,” (Kauffman, 1980, p. 1).

Chait, Holland, and Taylor (1993) interviewed over 108 board members to glean information about the composition and effectiveness of governing boards. Their findings suggested a positive correlation between effective boards and the performance of the community college. To be more specific, Chait, et al., (1993) identified six board characteristics. These characteristics and descriptions are listed in Table 1.

TABLE 1
COMMUNITY COLLEGE BOARD CHARACTERISTICS

Competence	Description
Context	The board understands and considers organizational the culture and norms.
Education	The board keeps trustees informed about the institution, the profession, roles, responsibilities, and performance.
Interpersonal	The board develops trustees as a group, attends to the board’s collective welfare, and fosters a sense of cohesiveness.
Analytical	The board recognizes complexities and subtleties in the issues it faces and integrates multiple perspectives and synthesizes appropriate responses.
Political	The board recognizes the need to develop and maintain healthy relationships among key constituencies.
Strategic	The board helps envision and develop a strategic approach to the organization’s future.

(Chait, et al., 1993, pp. 2-3)

The development of these six competencies assists effective institutional governance. However, the board does not operate in isolation. One responsibility for the governing board is to try to clarify the role of the community college president in order to have reasonable institutional expectations (Vaughan, 2006). Reviewed literature helped clarify the role of the community college president.

The Role of the community college President

There has been a number of studies about the leadership role and qualifications of a community college president (Bass, 1997; Beehler, 1993; Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002; Goff, 2002; Hammons & Keller, 1990; Hockaday & Puyear, 2000; Leist, 2005; McFarlin, et al., 1999; Pierce & Pedersen, 1997; Plinske, 2008; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997; Turner, 2005; Wallin, 2002). Table 2 is a summary of selected community college presidential qualifications per different study (as noted in the table). All of the studies include data gathered from community college presidents except Leist (2005). The Leist study included board members' understanding from Illinois community colleges.

TABLE 2

SELECTED COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Qualifications	Hammons & Keller (1990)	Beehler (1993)	Townsend, Bassoppo-Moyo (1997)	Pierce & Pedersen (1997)	McFarlin, Crittenden, & Ebbers (1999)	Hockaday & Puyear (2000)	Brown, Martinez, & Daniel (2002)	Wallin (2002)	Leist (2005)	Turner (2005)	Plinske (2008)
Good communicator	*				*		*	*	*	*	*
Leadership		*			*	*			*	*	
Interpersonal skills	*	*					*				*
Good judgment	*			*						*	
Vision						*	*		*		
Build relationships					*			*	*		
Commit to Mission	*						*				*
Consensus-builder						*	*			*	
Technology experience			*		*	*				*	
Decision maker	*									*	
Delegate	*									*	
Flexible			*	*							
Personnel experience	*	*									
Finance experience		*							*		
Political Relationships		*							*		
Integrity						*					*
Level of education					*						*
Strategically influence										*	
Team builder										*	
Diversity			*								
Culture of learning										*	
Student centered										*	
Motivator	*										
Approachable			*								
Facilities experience		*									
Working w board		*									
Confident						*					
Fundraising									*		

Presidential roles are a function of institutional context (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990).

For example, in a stable environment, the role of a president was to move the institution's

education forward by idea instigation, to develop institutional support through outside constituencies, to improve infrastructure, and develop future leadership opportunities for employees. In a financially unsound environment, the role of a president was vastly different. The president must improve institutional efficiencies, make decisions based on empirical evidence, focus on needs rather than wants, and organizational management (Neumann & Bensimon, 1990). Kempner's (2003) research identifies other roles.

Kempner (2003) interviewed seven retired community college presidents. All interviewees were white males, which Kempner recognized as a weakness in the study due to a lack of diversity in gender, race, or ethnicity. The retired presidents felt "responsible to their college board," (p. 372). They also conceptualized their roles as "managing cultural conflict," (p. 372) "empowering," (p. 372) others being visionary, "fir[ing] up the organization," act[ing] as a "healer," or "inspirer," (p. 375). The foundation for their various perceived roles was based on student-centeredness. One president spoke about concerns for the "disenfranchised," student while another stated "the only function of an institution is to help people learn, period," (p. 377). These reflect the need for flexibility in leadership (Bergquist & Pawlak, 2007).

Educational institutions are too complex for any one person to lead effectively (Moran, 1993). Therefore, cooperation and collaboration are vital. "Leadership practice emerges in and through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situation," (Spillane, Diamond, & Jita, 2003, p. 12). The establishment of positive relationships is critical to move an institution forward and develop human capital (Shults, 2008). Vaughan and Weisman (1997; Weisman & Vaughan, 2006) completed research about perspectives of community college trustees, which regarded

issues about governing boards. One trustee research participant related a perspective, “an effective board enhances the president’s effectiveness to move the institution in a positive and progressive way,” (p. 42). The presidents in the study all concurred.

The Board of Trustees and President Relationship

Vaughan and Weisman (1997) suggested that “The trustee-president team is of primary importance to the effective functioning of the community college,” (p. 41). This included, but was not limited to policy maker/policy implementer, a fashioned community college’s climate and culture, the mission, and image. To that end, a trustee-president partnership was dependent upon the trust and support from a developed relationship, and upon the realization of one another’s contribution, organizational oversight becomes more effective (Chait, et al., 1993).

In order to develop and maintain a positive relationship, the research of Vaughan and Weisman (1997) reflected the views of their participants. The president and trustees must remain informed and communicate candidly and honestly with one another. Communication in the form of thoughtful feedback from both parties can be used to ameliorate “whatever is necessary,” (p. 55). Finally, both presidents and trustees concurred with one another in that they must remain accessible and responsive in order to provide a foundation for effective communication.

Presidents should foster boards to be engaged in the leadership of the institution rather than acquiesce to the president (Baker & Patton, 1987). Their research indicated that organizations that are more successful were led by engaged boards. Chait, et al. (1993) confirmed the Baker and Patton study and in so doing identified interconnected benefits: “(1) a deeper understanding of the nature of academic leadership; (2) a greater appreciation of the

president's role and circumstances; and (3) a heightened sense of attachment to the college," (p. 117). Consequently, successful boards should work with community college presidents to develop ownership and thus aspire to be educated about their organization and board protocol.

Matching President's Characteristics with the community college's Needs: A Good Fit

In this research, *fit* is meant to describe whether a candidate is best suited for a position. However, the term *fit* is rather vague in its meaning. Tooms and Bogotch (2010) clarify *fit* to synthesize social constructionism, identity theory, and hegemony. Gergen (1985) explicates social constructionism as a process people use to comprehend the world through social criteria. This may be in the form of tolerance, roles, identities, and responsibilities established through board member dialogue intended to establish selection parameters. Specifically, this could be achieved through dialogue by board members in a board meeting for example, to clarify and identify the presidential role and qualifications and how those might address the identity and context of the community college (Bromert, 1984a). Tooms and Bogotch (2010) also suggest an identity theory link to social constructionism based on "words, phrases, or maxims," (p. 108) that generate values. Consequently, board members may value and ultimately select a particular candidate based on the candidate's eloquence, appearance, or some other aspect in the played role. To illustrate, a candidate might meet with the board and articulate financial concerns to prove the ability to raise funds related to experience in a previous community college.

The final piece to *fit* is hegemony and its connection to leaders. Hegemony, as defined by Gramsci (1971) is the social domination of one or more persons over others by coercion and is not only accepted as normal circumstance, but the oppressed are seldom conscious of its

existence. By considering hegemony added to Tooms and Bogotch's *fit*, a presidential candidate might try to appear to the governing board as a role model candidate and use language believed to be representative of a quality candidate. The aspirant would also dress in clothes, which, befit a president. In other words, the candidate would appear and act presidential. The board might select the candidate as one who is the right *fit* or not select the candidate because of a *misfit*.

Vaughan and Weisman (1997) identified board members' understanding about needed presidential candidates' qualities in their research and found that board members were confident in their opinions matching a presidential candidates' characteristics to the needs of the community college. One quality was vision or the idea of where the community college was going and how to get there. Communication was another identified element. For instance, the president must be able to communicate effectively with professionals, politicians, students, faculty, etc. Additionally, the president should be able to articulate the mission to all constituents. Leadership skills were also recognized in the research. One trustee suggested that a president needs integrity to secure trust from all constituents. A few trustees advised the ability for a president to raise funds for the institution. Finally, three out of four trustees surveyed stated they prefer "someone with prior presidential experience," (p. 147).

The Role of Power and Politics in Selecting the community college President

Power and politics are utilized by community college governing boards as they are legally sanctioned with special authority by state statute to enforce decisions as they hire and fire the president. However, endowments of such authority can and oftentimes create a culture for political maneuvering. As such, behavior by an individual or collective can be superficially

trivial and divisive which is sanctioned neither by formal recognition, acknowledged principles, nor qualified expertise (Mintzberg, 1983, p. 172). Institutions are inherently political in order for opinionated people of diversity to organize (Morgan, 2006). Community colleges are no exception; indeed, coordination efforts are critical as they are labor intensive. Members of the governing board have diverse perspectives regarding the organization's identity and subsequent direction of a community college. The level of strength of the organizational identity, too, influences this.

Strength of organizational identity (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Cole & Bruch, 2006; Corley & Gioia, 2004; Gioia & Chittipeddi, 1991) is part of the power and politics of a board. For instance, a board with a strong or shared identity might influence understanding (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Milliken, 1990) and inaction and thus, prevent the recognition of issues such as high institutional turnover. A board might take action and influence an individual board member's selection of a particular presidential candidate. To the contrary, a board with a weak organizational identity creates confusion by college personnel, which could lead to barriers for worker assimilation (Corley & Gioia, 2004), board disagreements regarding the approach to the fulfillment of the mission, or one to question the ability of a board to make a decision. Questions pertinent to the resolution of these issues should occur prior to the selection of the community college president (Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). The ability to make the final decision and resolve these issues is generally affected when one or more coalescing members posture for power.

Individually, board members have little authority when it comes to the imposition of one's will as a board member has only one vote. Consequently, they form coalitions with other board members who have like ambitions (Hoy & Miskel, 2005). This could have an effect on major decisions for the community college such as the selection of the president. Similarly, coalitions form throughout the community college in order to impose their will on the board. However, the board does not normally involve itself in the inner mechanisms of the college. In addition, a *bureaucratic internal coalition* (Hoy & Miskel, 2005, p. 221) makes it difficult for anyone within the organization to communicate with members of the community college board in a formal capacity as the board acknowledges the president keeps the board informed. Therefore, any communication *to* the board normally flows through the president (Vaughan, 2006). The preposition *to* is intentionally used rather than *with* as the board is formally informed by the president. There are times, however, when the president does allow for formal addresses to the board while present via board meeting agenda items.

This *bureaucratic internal coalition*, according to Freire (1983), becomes oppressive in nature in an attempt to keep external constituents silent. Freire continues, “[h]uman existence cannot be silent,” (p. 76). One endeavor to become heard occurs through the establishment of an organizational informal structure. The informal structure of the organization allows for communication to indirectly flow from community college faculty and staff to members of the board. Hoy and Miskel (2005) suggest these external coalitions inevitably work to influence the governing board. Yet, the impact of their power occurs in an unofficial capacity, which is beyond the established decision-making board structure, especially during occasions of presidential

selection. This can create conflict as members of the board could be accused of end runs around the president and thus reduce the effectiveness of the president's authority.

The Selection of the community college President

The selection of a new president is a responsibility of the governing community college board (Smith & Crawford, 1972). The process to hire is one intended to match characteristics of the potential president with the needs of the community college within the current environmental context. Studies (Pierce & Pedersen, 1997; Plinske & Packard, 2010; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997) have identified presidential characteristics, which included energetic, judgment, commitment, dependability, integrity and trust, and people skills. Communication skills such as being a good listener and articulation were also identified as having a high level of importance. Other leadership skills included vision and the ability to be a team player.

The results of the Vaughan and Weisman (1997) research acknowledged elements of the presidential selection process. The trustees are the largest constituency who develop the presidential qualifications. The search committee is another group, which contributes to the process with participation from human resources, community members, and the current president. Upon draft completion, which includes the presidential qualifications, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* is used about 80 percent of the time to announce presidential vacancies. The search committee generally oversees the initial interviews. However, the governing board conducts the final interviews. Leadership selection for other nonprofits is similar.

The search for a community college president is not unlike other nonprofit CEOs in the way of thorough internal assessments of the institution and national searches (McFarlan, 1999).

The internal assessment includes an evaluation of the organization's future needs. This helps the board match organizational requirements with prospective CEOs, (Harris & Helfat, 2007) which is similar to all other organizations (McFarlan, 1999; Southerland & Mackey-Ross, 2006; Vaughan & Weisman, 1997).

There are similarities in the search for a community college president and their for-profit CEO counterparts. The process includes a search committee and, in many cases a search firm. Company officials perform a self-assessment before the location and evaluation of prospective CEOs. After a follow-up with references the board makes a proposal to the prospective CEO (Southerland & Mackey-Ross, 2006).

To summarize the literature review, community colleges have evolved as post-secondary educational institutions designed to educate a diverse constituency. This has caused the community college mission to change. The governing board and community college president must adapt their leadership roles and responsibilities to accommodate diverse students. Boards have sought presidential candidates who must provide a lengthy list of experiences and personal characteristics to fulfill the institutional mission. The methodology utilized for this research sought to clarify board interviewees' understanding of their community college and their rationale for selecting the president.

3. METHODOLOGY

Community colleges have evolved over the course of their 100 years in existence. This process of change challenges individuals and groups alike in their understanding of the community college. The board of trustees is responsible for the community college (Vaughan & Weisman, 1997) and as such, should have a thorough understanding of the organization's identity in order to make purposeful decisions with consensus depicting a strong identity (Cole & Bruch, 2006). The purpose of the community college is expressed as the mission of the community college explicitly stated in the form of a mission statement, which is closely associated with the organizational identity (Fritz, et al., 1999; Gioia, et al., 2000). The organization's identity is affected by its leadership, hence the need for an effective president.

Based upon the work of Pierce and Pedersen (1997), Plinske and Packard (2010), and Weisman and Vaughan (2002), the expected results for this research included board members who desired a president with prior experience, as a visionary, or perhaps learn of other desired qualities. Therefore, what were critical elements board members used to choose a new president? Critical elements refer to attributes deemed essential by board members. Based upon organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Margolis & Hansen, 2002; Whetten, 2006) and its depiction within the mission of the community college, (Fritz, et al., 1999; Gioia, et al., 2000; Swales & Rogers, 1995) what is the governing boards' understanding of the community college and is there a relationship between final board decisions regarding the selection of the presidential candidate and the organizational identity? These are the essence of the research questions.

Researchers use qualitative methods and act as the interpretive instrument through “looking, listening, speaking, and reading,” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These qualitative methods were used to research how board members understood the community college and the relationship to reasons board members used to hire the president. Findings were garnered through inductive reasoning (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) and contributed to the board members’ understanding of the community college prior to the selection of a new president.

Researcher’s Perspective

I have experienced various aspects of the community college. First, I live in a county that supports a community college through state and local property taxes. Mill levies continued to increase thereby placed heavier tax burdens on sponsoring constituents. Second, I received an Associate’s Degree from a community college and therefore experienced a community college as a student. Third, I was a parent of a community college student, which presents yet another perspective. Fourth, I previously served on a community college board as a member and chair. As chair, I oversaw the process of hiring a community college president. I believe the shared experiences with other board members afforded a richer interpretation of the results. Finally, I am a community college instructor, which provided a separate avenue through which interpretation of perspectives were unique. Therefore, I used the experiences and analyzed gathered information and made conscious efforts to interpret and comprehend multiple perspectives that arose from this process (Langellier, 1994; Patton, 1990).

This was both an advantage and disadvantage. The advantage of these experiences allowed for interpretation of the data through the researcher as the interpretive instrument, which provided an understanding, based upon familiarity. The disadvantage of this experience was a myopic interpretation of the data, which blinded me from other interpretive possibilities (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). For this reason, peer readers critically reviewed my interpretation of the results.

Methods

The protocols and instruments used to gather data included individual document reviews, interviews, and follow up questions. The qualitative methods used to gather information enabled a more in depth comprehension of the studied phenomena (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998).

Research Sites and Participants

This research included board members who were recently involved in a community college presidential selection process. These community college board members were elected by local constituents and consisted of six or eleven members who were located in both rural and urban communities. This purposive sampling included interview participants who had an understanding of the organizational identity and the context in which it operated before the selection of a presidential candidate whom they believed was of greatest benefit for the community college. In addition, community colleges were selected based on a span of elapsed time of no more than two years since the president was hired. This could have been enough time passed to have diminished the participants' capacity to recall details.

Interview participants were selected from four Midwestern community colleges, two of which were rural and two were urban. Rural community college participants were from communities of under 10,000 population. The rural community college ethnicities were 88 percent White/Non-Hispanic and 8 percent Black Non-Hispanic. Their urban counterparts were from metropolitan regions with a population of about one million people. The urban community college ethnicities were 81 percent White/Non-Hispanic and 11 percent Black Non-Hispanic. Figure 6 depicts the combined rural and urban community college student enrollment percentages by ethnicity ("StateUniversity.com," 2010).

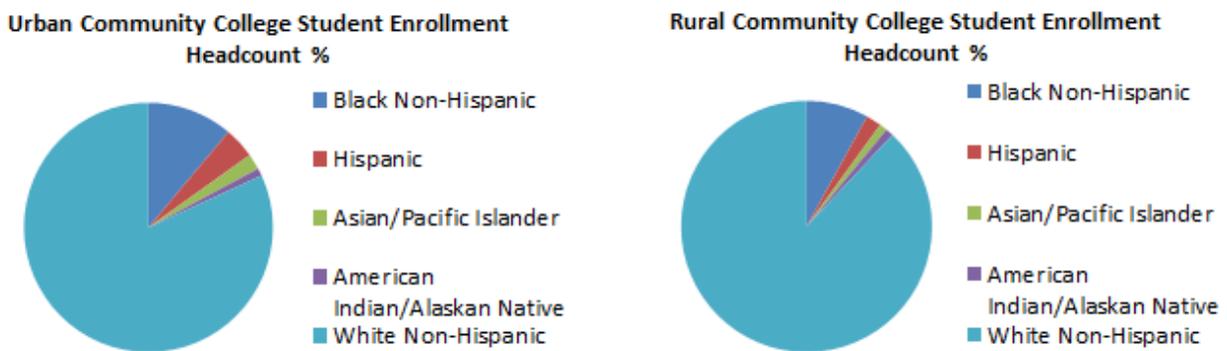


Figure 6. Participating community colleges' student ethnicity by headcount.

Their urban counterparts were from metropolitan regions of about one million population.

Research Documents

Mission and vision statements and position descriptions were collected throughout the nation and analyzed to get a sense of the community college identity and presidential candidates' responsibilities and qualifications. A list of community colleges for this study was selected from

the University of Texas website, <http://www.utexas.edu/world/comcol/state/>. Each state’s higher education association provided the University of Texas with their community colleges’ information. Of the 162 human desource departments contacted by email, 43 responded with position descriptions (Table 3). Coincidentally, other community colleges were simultaneously advertising for presidential positions with The Chronicle and HigherEd.com during this research. There were five additional position descriptions obtained from these sources during the month of September for 48.

TABLE 3
RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS’ DATA

	# of community colleges	Urban	Rural
Initially contacted community college HRs	162		
Responses	43 (26%)		
Obtained from the internet	5		
Total Position Descriptions	48 (30%)	15	33

The documents were divided according to urban and rural classifications established by the United States Census Bureau’s (2010) publication of urban communities. It was based upon the 2000 census and defined as having a population density greater than 1,000 people per square mile. Upon receipt of position description documents from the community colleges’ human

resource departments, a mission statement was secured from their website, however only a portion of the websites posted vision statements. There were 48 mission statements and 23 vision statements collected, Table 4. Presidential position descriptions included two parts, responsibilities, and qualifications.

TABLE 4
DOCUMENTS COLLECTED

Document	# Documents	Urban	Rural
Position Descriptions Collected	47	15	32
Mission Statements Collected	48	15	33
Vision Statements Collected	23	9	14

Document Analysis

Documents relevant to this study were collected, reviewed, and analyzed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Prior, 2003). In addition, documents were both socially created and traded (Miller & Alvarado, 2005). A thematic document analysis (Woodhouse, 2006) was used to analyze documentation by categories and themes, which is later described in the subsequent data analysis section.

Presidential job descriptions were obtained from 48 community college human resource departments and online sources of advertisement such as HigherEdJobs.com and The Chronicle. These documents informed the research of formal expectations by each community college board

of required and preferred qualifications for the job. In addition, community college mission statements were collected from community college websites. Mission statements were an indication of central and enduring values and distinguished the organization from other community colleges (Fritz, et al., 1999; Gioia, et al., 2000). Furthermore, vision statements reflected Albert and Whetten's (1985) suggestion of what the institution should be in the future. A comparison was then completed through this document review and explored how job descriptions were perceived as relevant to the organizational identity viewed through the vision and mission statements of the community colleges.

Semi-structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews provided a consistent interview context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and were comprised of open-ended questions (Appendix A), which elicited research specific information. Since the board of trustees was responsible for the selection of the community college president, they were questioned about their interpretation of their organizational identity, community college mission statement, and reasons they used to select the presidential candidate. If clarification was needed about an interviewee's response, probing questions were asked.

Data Analysis

Vision and mission statements and position descriptions of the four community colleges, which were represented by participating board members, were compared with the same documentation from the greater 48 community colleges. This analysis was an attempt to understand the community colleges' organizational identity and to try to determine if the

documentation from the four community colleges was similar to the documentation of the greater 48 community colleges. Board member interview data was then compared to their own vision and mission statements in an attempt to determine their understanding of their own community colleges. In addition, interview data were compared against position descriptions of the four representative community colleges to determine their understanding of the needs of their community colleges. Finally, interview data were analyzed in an attempt to understand the match between the board members' understanding of the needs of their community colleges and the attributes of their selected presidential candidate.

Dialogue from interviews were transcribed and entered into word processing software. The collection of dialogue illuminated participants' construction of reality (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). These data were disaggregated and sorted into manageable units. Units of data included a word, phrase, sentence, or group of sentences believed to be discrete. These unitized data were exported into Filemaker Pro software for housing and management. Once entered into Filemaker Pro, data were coded. I interpreted the data as part of the analysis since software was not intuitive enough to identify or classify groups of data (Creswell, 2007).

These coded units were analyzed to identify and synthesize common elements into a recognizable category. Finally, patterns of categories were classified into overarching themes as prescribed by Denzin and Lincoln (2005). Generally, category creation was a process of discernment dependent upon the research questions and informed by my position, interviewees' dialogue, and the purpose of the research. Finally, coding enabled confidentiality and anonymity.

Research Quality and Trustworthiness

Research quality was accomplished through internal validity or how congruent the findings were with reality. For example, board members' understanding of their community colleges' organizational identity was compared with the institutions' mission and vision statements. In addition, external validity or the study's generalizability and dependability were accomplished through a description, which used copious data and a multi-site design, consistent with the requirements of a qualitative study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 1995). The utilization of copious data allows readers to decide if the situation is similar to their own. The incorporation of several sites enables the results to be adhibited to a larger set of scenarios. Research quality was achieved through multiple sources of data. The utilization of interviews and archived documents were referred to by Glesne (1999) as the foremost data gathering practices in qualitative research. This study utilized two typologies, gathered documents and interview data. However, Glesne also indicated that interviews from different target audiences (e.g., urban and rural participants) can strengthen reliability (Merriam, 1998).

Consequently, I reviewed relevant community college documents, analyzed interview data, and identified themes and patterns of themes to be more confident in the comprehension of the phenomenon. Member checks, asking research participants if findings were reasonable and peer reviews provided feedback on findings to shore up validity (Merriam, 1998).

The voluntary nature of the study was disclosed to participants, which enabled them to discontinue from any part of the interview. The intent of this research was made in full disclosure to the research participants. Participants were encouraged to be open with their

responses. Their responses will remain confidential. The interview questions were non-threatening. Signatures upon the consent form (Appendix B) were required from the research participants, which they acknowledged and agreed to participation in the research. Any audio recordings were destroyed upon the completion of the study (Merriam, 1998).

Research Delimitations

Delimitations were elements, which limited the extent of this research and were identified here within this proposal. This study included the constructions and decisions only from the perspective of the board of trustees since they were the governing body responsible for presidential selection. I sought their understanding of the community college institution, which formed the foundation for their selection of the president. The research occurred during the 2009-2010 academic year and included Midwest community college boards whose members were locally elected.

Research Limitations

Limitations were the elements that limited the generalizability of the study due to research methods and design. The design of the study called for board members' recollections about thoughts they had two to three years previously. For example, board members were asked about their own thoughts about community college image and identity, or the critical reasons for their decision when they hired the new president. The amount of time passed since those decisions were made could have reduced their ability to accurately remember their thoughts. The participants could have been reluctant to truthfully answer the interview questions due to confidentiality concerns.

Summary of Methodology

Qualitative research was used in an attempt to comprehend the community college board members' understanding of the phenomenon, which matched organizational identity with the selection of the president. Vision and mission statements and position descriptions were collected from 48 community colleges from around the nation. These were compared to four community colleges' documentation in an effort to understand their organizational identity. The same documentation was then compared to board members' understanding of their own community colleges and their reasons for the selected president. Board members were purposively chosen based upon their experience of participation in the employment process of the community college president. The qualitative data was collected and analyzed for categories and themes.

4. FINDINGS

The research findings begin with an explanation of the selected research sites and participants. Community college attributes are briefly discussed. The remainder of the findings was based upon document review, which comprised mission statements, vision statements, and position descriptions. Upon conclusion of the document review, the findings depict interview analysis of board members' comprehension of their community colleges and how their understanding affected their choice of presidential candidate.

Research Sites

There were 14 members, from four separate Midwest community college boards (Table 5), who contributed in the interviews. These were board members who participated in the community college president selection process. Interviews occurred at community colleges in the Midwest because of the ease of access. Contact information was available on the community colleges' websites and Internet White Pages. The 14 board members whom I was able to contact agreed to participate.

Documents were collected from 46 community colleges, which represented 28 states (Figure 7). Human resource departments provided much of the documentation and a few documents were selected from The Chronicle online advertisements.

TABLE 5

PARTICIPATING COMMUNITY COLLEGES' DEMOGRAPHICS

4 community college boards	Male	Female	African American	White
Board Members	24	5	4	25
Participates in the research 14	11	3	2	12



Figure 7. Shaded states represent participating states.

Community colleges' Programs Based on Collected Documents

Participating board interviewees represented both urban and rural community colleges. The headcount for rural community colleges ranged from 154 to about 10,000 students with a mean Full Time Equivalency (FTE) of 2,531. The mean number of tenured faculty was 43 with 39 who sought tenure. The urban community colleges range had a headcount range of about 3,300 to 23,000 students with a mean FTE of about 5,000. There were means of 77 faculty who had tenure and 71 who sought tenure. Both urban and rural community colleges provided one and two-year certificated programs in addition to associate programs (Table 6).

TABLE 6
COMMUNITY COLLEGES' DEMOGRAPHICS, ("BRAINTRACK COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY DIRECTORY," 2010)

n=45	< 1 Yr Certificated Programs	Associate Programs	1-2 Yr Certificated Programs	Headcount (range)	FTE	Tenure	Tenure Seeking
Rural	14	26	11	154-10,000	2,531	43	39
n=31							
Urban	18	42	17	3,300- 23,000	5,011	77	71
n=14							

Mission Statements and Position Descriptions: Document Analysis

Documents relevant to this study were collected, reviewed, and analyzed as evidence of research context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Prior, 2003). A thematic document analysis (Woodhouse, 2006) process was used to categorize the data. This section begins with the process of document collection and classification. The analysis then considers vision statements, mission statements, and concludes with position descriptions.

Vision Statements

The collected 23 vision statements included nine urban community colleges and fourteen rural community colleges. Most of the vision statement data could be grouped into five categories. Both urban and rural emphasized (Figure 8) student support. Vision statements embraced, for instance a, “supportive learning environment,” “lifelong learning,” and “placing students at the forefront of educational excellence”.

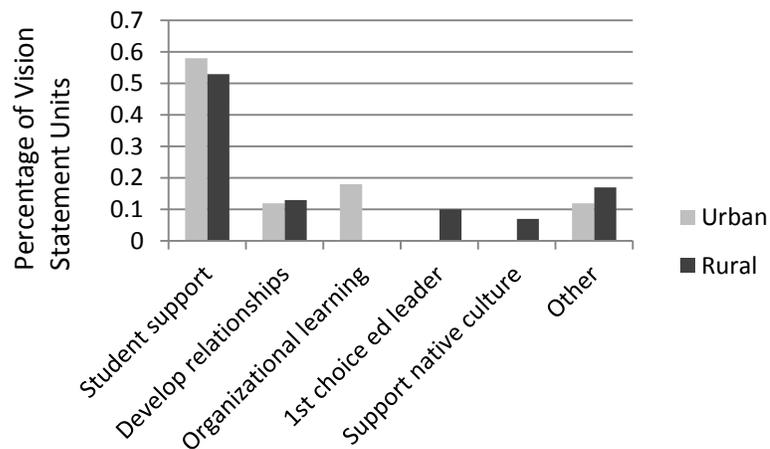


Figure 8. Vision statement categories

Mission Statements

Results from the analyzed mission statements included both urban and rural community colleges. There were many similarities with urban and rural community colleges missions. There were few differences in the two mission statements. These are discussed further below.

Serving students. The collected mission statements emphasized the central attribute (Albert & Whetten, 1985) “serving students,” a suggested element of organizational identity in terms of a core attribute (Margolis & Hansen, 2002). To illustrate, mission statements included language such as, “to give our students the foundation and tools for success,” “focus on student achievement,” and “empower students”. Another mission statement highlighted provisions for a learning culture, which could be construed to support students as well. There were phrases like “provide a learner-centered environment,” “promote critical thinking,” and “provide quality educational opportunities”. While these two areas seem to focus on student success, mission statements also highlighted community amelioration.

Community enhancement. Mission statements incorporated a need to support the local communities that they serve, (Figure 9). These phrases included “enhance community development,” “seeks to promote economic growth,” and “respond to community needs”.

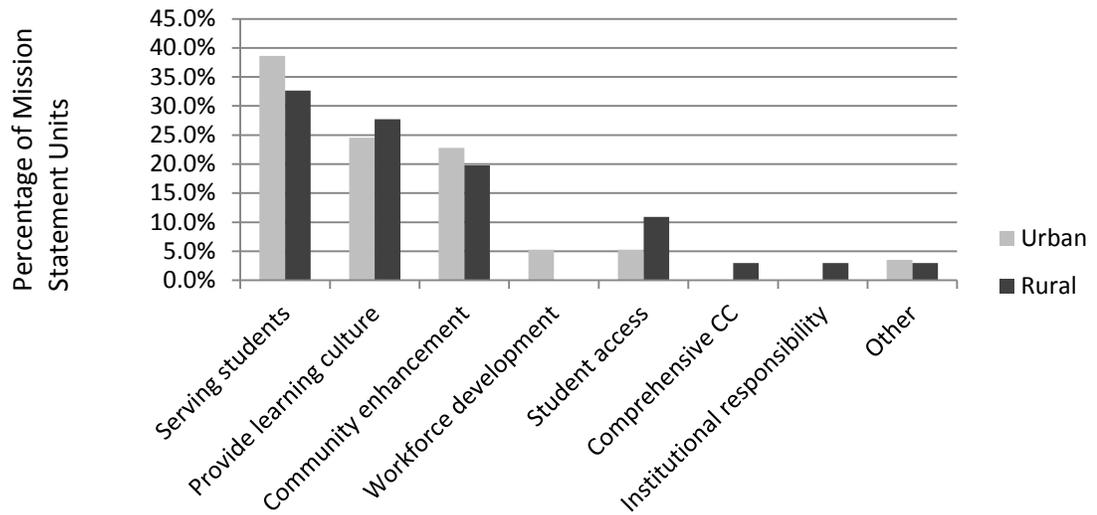


Figure 9: Mission statement categories

There were two community colleges who responded to requests for documentation, which were unique. They represented Native American community colleges. Their mission statements seemed to reflect a focus on cultural self-preservation. “Our mission is to enhance the unique [Native American tribe’s name] by strengthening individuals, families, and communities through holistic, quality higher education services.” Similarly stated, the other community college’s mission statement stated,

[Native American community college name] provides quality post-secondary academic, vocational and technical education in a learning environment that perpetuates and strengthens [Native American tribal name] culture, language, values and traditions. It is dedicated to providing well-educated and trained individuals who meet the human resource needs of [Native American regional name] employers.

Community college organizational identity was reflected partially in their vision and mission statements. These stated purposes provided for a culture of learning, student support, and access to post-secondary education. These statements also illustrated the need to enhance the local community. Position descriptions were also explored to try to understand the mission and position description relationship and presidential responsibilities.

Position Description Responsibilities

There was a relationship between the mission statements and board approved position descriptions. Announced presidential vacancies included position descriptions, which were determined by the boards as the means for the president to fulfill the community college mission. As an example, position descriptions stated the president was “responsible for instruction and student services,” should “support college staff for student success,” and “meet the needs of the changing student”. These seemed to support the community college mission of student service and a culture of learning. In addition to student needs, position description responsibilities paralleled community needs in support of “community development,” and “economic growth”. This support was further delineated in many areas.

President as Chief Executive Officer. Many of the position descriptions stated the president as head of the community college. In many cases the president was referred to as “chief executive officer,” or “chief administrative officer,” responsible for every facet of the institution. The designated capacity enabled the president to develop, implement, and evaluate board-approved policies. This included areas of planning such as the “establishment of annual goals,” “acquisition of external funding,” and “lead strategic planning”. Additionally the president was

responsible for “directing personnel,” “ensuring compliance,” with federal, state, and local rules and regulations, to “maintain and develop facilities,” and “develop the use of institution-wide technology”.

Public relations. One responsibility of the community college president was to “serve as public representative of the college”. The president was expected to “engage the community,” and “form partnerships with community agencies,” such as “community groups,” “community leaders,” “K-12 and four-year institutions,” and “business and industry”. In many instances, public relations responsibilities included the development of relationships and partnerships with these same entities in addition to those outside of the community in terms of “regional development”. These opportunities seemed to be included in position description responsibilities as ways to utilize community college programs to “support workforce development,” which benefitted the community, students, and the institution. The desire to support the community included not only workforce development programs, but the implementation of “a comprehensive program of instruction and services that fulfill[s] the needs of the community,” through “economic development.”

Position descriptions also suggested the president act as the community college liaison and seemingly desire the development of external relationships, as well as internal relationships. The president was expected to provide the board with timely information such as financial status, ramifications of state legislation, institutional policy recommendations, “educational program status,” and “personnel decisions.” In addition, the president was expected to help develop board members improve in their knowledge and competence as to the roles and responsibilities of the

board itself. Another internal constituent with which the president needed to collaborate was the administration. Responsibilities included the development of leadership with administrators by “consulting,” fellow administrators, “designating lines of communication and responsibility,” and “creating a cohesive leadership team”. Many of these internal responsibilities were intended to provide a quality education and service to the students.

Many of the position description responsibilities stated participation and development of ties as an institutional advocate with political groups that included state legislatures, community college associations, and state boards. In some cases, board members desired the president to influence outcomes that would benefit the community college. These benefits might come in the way of financial support.

Financial responsibility. Position descriptions included financial responsibilities (Table 7) and budget management. There were many statements related to finance, which may have resulted because of the timing of this research during the current severe recession. Position descriptions included “be an astute financial planner and manager,” “ensure fiscal stability,” “manage limited financial resources”. Finance also expanded the responsibilities of the president for fundraising with language such as, “be an experienced fundraiser,” “lead fundraising efforts from outside sources,” and “work with the foundation to raise funds”.

TABLE 7

POSITION DESCRIPTION CATEGORIES: PERCENTAGE OF UNITS IDENTIFIED

Category	Urban%	Rural%
Declaration of President as Top Administrator	0.37	0.36
Public Relations	0.27	0.30
Work with Others	0.13	0.12
Finance	0.12	0.09
Students	0.07	0.06
Other	0.04	0.06

In summary, nearly all of the position descriptions designated the selected presidential candidate as head of the community college. This authorized the president to make decisions within the context of institutional culture or financial limitations. Position descriptions stated the need for the president to communicate, “[k]eep the Board of Trustees fully informed of important campus matters,” and “communicate the vision of the [community college]”. Position descriptions also included the need to develop and “maintain strong relationship[s] ,” with various constituents’ leadership such as community groups, community leaders, and business leaders. These two responsibilities were understood in such ways as to help finance the community college, develop institutional personnel, and strengthen the external ties of the

political system. These were considered parts of the support system that helped provide a quality education for students and assisted the institution with community obligations.

Position description qualifications.

Position descriptions also included qualifications (Figure 10), which could be further subdivided into three groups, personal characteristics, experiences, and level of education. Personal characteristics were again divided into two groups, physical and cognitive abilities.

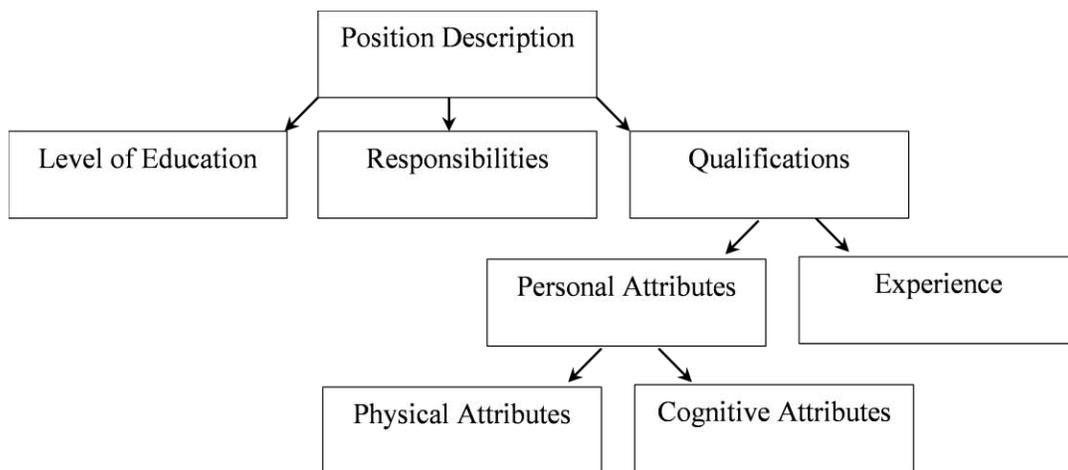


Figure 10. Conceptual model of the position description

Cognitive abilities. Interpersonal skills were emphasized in position description qualifications. These were defined, for example, as accessibility and communication abilities to create trust in an effort to develop relationships and partnerships with others. Other language included “an approachable, collaborative, and participatory team builder,” “strong motivational communication skills,” and “ability to communicate persuasively to its outside constituencies”.

Leadership style was another referenced personal attribute. The leadership style was oftentimes required to be “collaborative,” “shared governance,” or “participatory,” in nature. “Servant leadership,” was also included as well as “transformational leadership”. Position descriptions seemed to encourage a leadership style, which would include input from others in the presidential decision making process.

Position descriptions requested a president who would be culturally sensitive. This was defined as being able to encourage cultural and international diversity and the ability to fit into the local culture. This seemed especially pertinent to boards that governed community colleges located on Native American reservations.

One final attribute was personal integrity (Figure 11). Position descriptions incorporated presidents to be “honest,” and “respectful of others”. Words like “values students,” “ethical,” and “exceptional personal qualities,” and “fairness,” were pervasive in the list of qualifications.

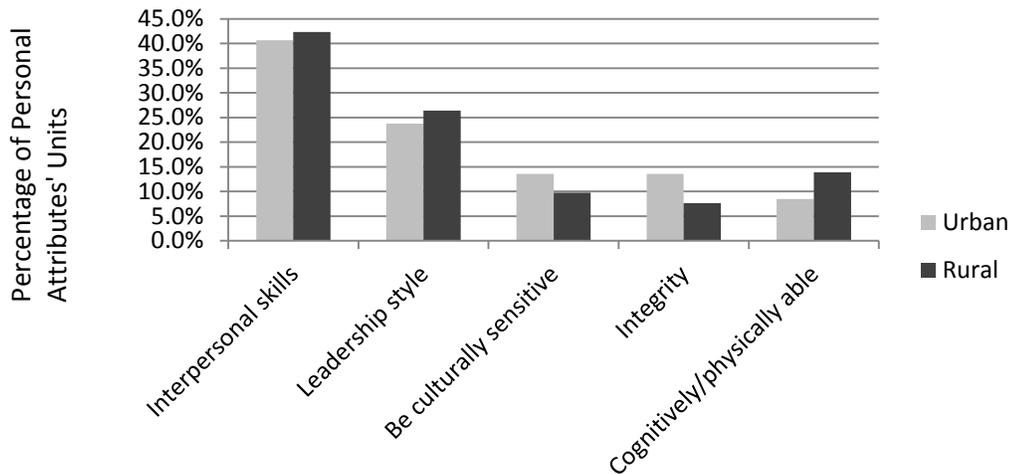


Figure 11. Personal attributes required of the president

Physical abilities. Position descriptions for both urban and rural community colleges were similar in their delineation of personal attributes required as president. Personal attributes were mainly cognitive in nature with a few exceptions. For example, the president needed to be able to “use a computer keyboard,” “drive a car,” and “physically stand or sit”.

Experience qualifications. Position description qualifications from both urban and rural community colleges incorporated similar presidential candidates’ experiences needed to satisfy responsibilities. The primary emphasis was administrative experience, which was given a broad definition. There were references to a minimal number of years with administrative experiences in many instances. Other experience descriptors were senior executive experience, program experience, budgets, personnel, facilities, technology, compliance, public relations, distance learning, and recruiting students. These experiences were illustrated using language such as “experience with accreditation,” “experience with college organization,” “familiarity with [state] laws,” “understands the learning process in a community college,” “three years of successful senior level administrative experience in higher education,” and “worked with campus leaders”. Other descriptors were financial experience, commitment to the community college mission, teaching experience, and support the community or service area. Refer to Figure 12.

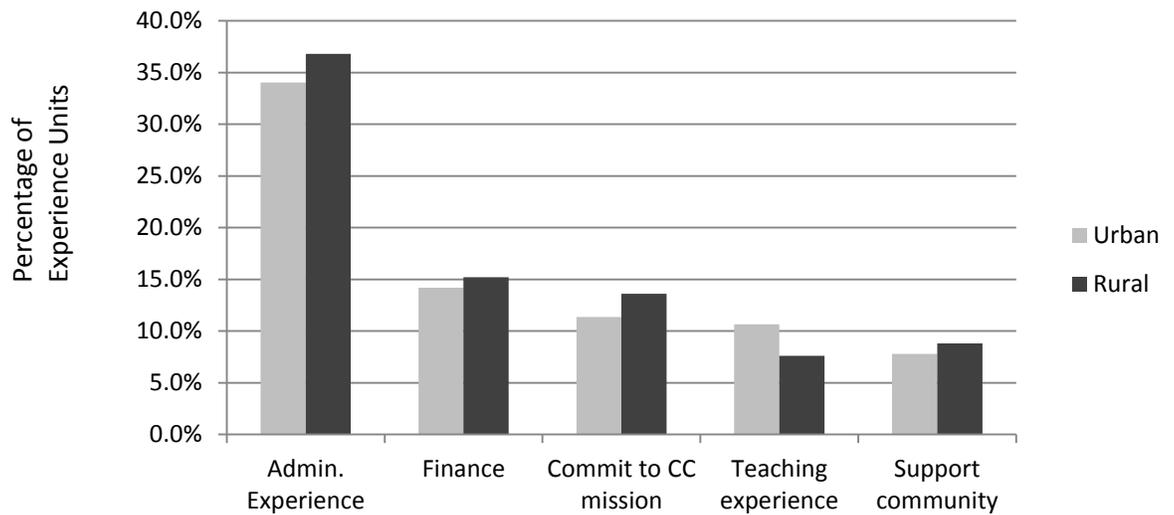


Figure 12: Experience required of the president

Level of education. Nearly all of the documents required an earned Master’s degree with a preference given to candidates with an earned Doctorate’s degree. A few suggested an equivalent amount of experience in a similar organization would be acceptable in lieu of a Doctorate’s degree. Some of the documents clarified a degree from an “accredited institution”.

To recapitulate, position description documents illuminated responsibilities of a community college president to fulfill the institutional mission. Many emphasized presidential authority. The president was also required to keep the board apprised of policies, compliance, and strategic planning. Additionally, the president was expected to promote the community college, lead in fundraising strategies, and provide leadership in student support services. Qualifications were also part of the position descriptions. These included both personal characteristics like integrity and experiences like administrative experiences. The final item

listed in position descriptions was the desired level of education of the president. Master's degrees were required, however doctorate's degrees were preferred.

The document analysis included mission and vision statements, which were reflections (Fritz, et al., 1999; Gioia, et al., 2000) of community college organizational identity. Mission and vision statements seemed to depict the need to support students and the communities or counties hosting the community college. The analysis also included position descriptions for community college presidents. As such, the boards' position descriptions for community college presidents consisted of presidential responsibilities boards' understood were needed to satisfy the mission and qualifications needed to fulfill presidential responsibilities. Responsibilities were comprised of public relations and financial matters. Qualifications entailed communication and collaboration skills in addition to experiences such as administrative or compliance. Finally, an appropriate level of education was required such as a required master's degree or a preferred doctorate's degree. The next section depicts board member interviewees' understanding of their community colleges and reasons for the selection of their community college presidents via interviews.

Interview Analysis

This section is organized in two major sections, by question and by theme. Both of these sections are subdivided in those interview participants' understanding of their community college and interview participants' rationale for selecting the presidential candidate.

There were 14 board members interviewed who represented four community colleges. Of the 14 board members, 8 represented rural community colleges and 6 represented urban community colleges. Many of the board members made several points, when they answered an interview question and each comment was counted as a separate unit of data. In addition, responses were both explicit and implicit in nature. If, during the interview, the meaning of the interviewee was understood, the data was categorized. The categorized data were appraised by a second reviewer to check and question reasoning for the interview data categorization. I discussed the suggestions with the reviewer who agreed with many of my interpretations of the data. When disagreements occurred, I reviewed the data again within the context of the statement and either changed my interpretation in agreement with the reviewer or left the original interpretation unchanged. This gave me an opportunity for an additional review.

Subsequent graphs depict the number of comments in terms of percentage per urban/rural category. A large percentage depicts greater weight given by the interview participants. There were two analyses of the interview data. One analysis occurred by question and a second analysis occurred by theme.

Interview Analysis by Interview Questions

Interview data were initially analyzed by interview questions. An experience for this research was defined according to gathered interview and document data as a presidential candidate having previously encountered some occurrence such as previous experience with some form of community college operations oversight. A personal characteristic was defined as a tendency, which distinguished a person such as one who had integrity. A second analysis was

completed after themes were sorted. A theme contained interview data purveyed across questions. The questions were divided into (1) board members' understanding of their community college identity and (2) how their understanding affected their choice of president.

Interview analysis for boards' understanding of the community college. The first five interview questions were intended to elicit interviewees' understanding about their community college. Interview participants disclosed information about their understanding before and after their board service, their understanding of the mission and vision, and how they came to their understanding.

The first interview question queried board members' about their understanding of the community college before board service. Organizational identity literature reviews have included concepts of image and reputation (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Price, et al., 2008), which reflect an outsider's perspective of the community college. Although the question was intended to elicit knowledge before board service, through their reflections, interviewees could have intermingled *a priori* board service understanding with *a posteriori* board service understanding.

Board members generally spoke positively about their institution's image before board service, "...so I had a positive feeling regarding the purpose of community colleges...". One urban counterpart stated, "...such an asset to the community both educational and in jobs...". Board member participants also claimed some understanding of their community college. For example, one board member from a rural community college said, "I have a wife who's in education so I kind of have an education background". Another board member who served on the board of a rural institution said, "...prior to serving on the board, I was familiar with the concept

of community colleges”. Likewise, urban board members had some understanding, “[p]rior to my taking the board the colleges were pretty much regionally developed and regionally maintained without a unified system”. A separate interviewee exclaimed, “...my impression was that it did serve a variety of needs for students.” Board interviewees also expressed knowledge of their community college programs before serving on the board. Some of the programs included seniors’ programs, athletic programs, job training, and technical programs. This suggested a notable identity by community college programming.

Interview question two asked how their understanding changed after board service. This represented a shift as an outsider claiming an understanding based on image and reputation (Gioia, et al., 2000; Price, et al., 2008; Whetten & Mackey, 2002) to an insider position for a different understanding of organizational identity (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten, 2006). All but one of the respondents stated their understanding of the community college had changed. One participant stated, “...actually, the [community college] image got better because number one I got to know several of the other board members.” This statement seemed to suggest that the interviewee’s understanding of the institutional image improved because of a change in relationships with other board members. I believe the word “image,” was used indiscriminately as the interviewee did not differentiate image and identity. Some participants suggested their community college was more complex in its programs, activities, budgeting, operations, and community impact (Figure 13). One rural participant presented a different understanding about the community college,

It's a college; it's a public school but yet, in this day and age, it's a business. It's running a business. ...there's a lot that goes on in the operations of a community college that is connected to the business world if the college is going to be successful. I consider our college very successful.

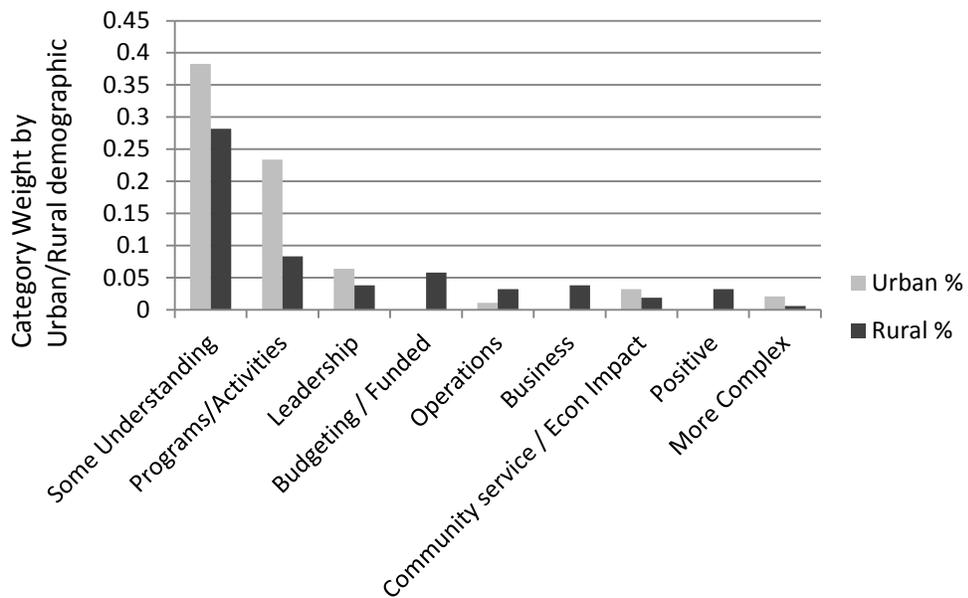


Figure 13. Urban and rural understanding after serving on the board.

The third interview question considered board members' understanding of what was central, enduring, and distinguishing (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten, 2006) about the community college mission, which was a representation (Fritz, et al., 1999; Gioia, et al., 2000; Swales & Rogers, 1995) of the organizational identity. Both urban and rural board members wanted to distinguish their institutions through the implementation of new

programs in support of the local community and the community's students. One respondent realized the need for differentiation, "...everybody is looking for their own niche, and everybody's trying to find theirs and where they're going to draw students." Board members from both urban and rural community colleges spoke of opportunities with business institutions and developed programs to mutually benefit. A community college established a Veterinary Science Technology program, which provided support for the local zoo and the agricultural economy. One rural board member seemed to depict one application attribute (Margolis & Hansen, 2002) of the community college, "...46% of our credit hours are vocational, so [we are] basically job oriented." Another participant responded, "when they [students] finish [at the] community college, they are able to go into some sort of trade without having to move away," which would suggest the desire to support local jobs. Urban community colleges board members commented on established workforce training partnerships with for profit and non-profit institutions such as the United Way and Cerner whereby businesses help provide capital for the community college and in return have access to an available trained workforce. Programs provided an education for traditional students to move into the workforce and students in need of retraining. This sentiment seemed to reflect a dual service for the community college to provide training and enable the graduate to remain nearby in support of the local community.

Participants wanted to support the local community and businesses, "maybe the number one thing". Partnerships with businesses were mentioned by many of the urban representatives. They expressed vital relationships needed to provide community colleges with funding for programming and in return, provide businesses with skilled workers. One urban board member

said, "...more and more we're doing vocational things as we see the economy and peoples' jobs changing...". Another one stated, "[t]hey are there to serve the community need, be responsible to it."

Partnerships were also described as a need for secondary schools and four-year institutions. One board member mentioned the relationship in terms of dual credit enrollment where "...you can be in high school and still be getting college credit, so that's a big asset". On the other end of the educational spectrum, articulation agreements were mentioned to provide community college students seamless transitions into four-year colleges and universities. Another board member stated, "I think our reciprocal programs are very good with other [four-year] institutions."

Many of the board members wanted to provide opportunities for transfer students and understand that community colleges can provide the first two years of college education at a reduced cost. One commented about relationships with state universities, "we have a good transferability of those credit hours and I think that's really important". These partnerships and relationships provide the basis for another application attribute (Margolis & Hansen, 2002), "...to get students prepared to move on. Most of them hopefully are going to go on to a four year college". Figure 14 illustrates the participants' understanding of the community college purposes.

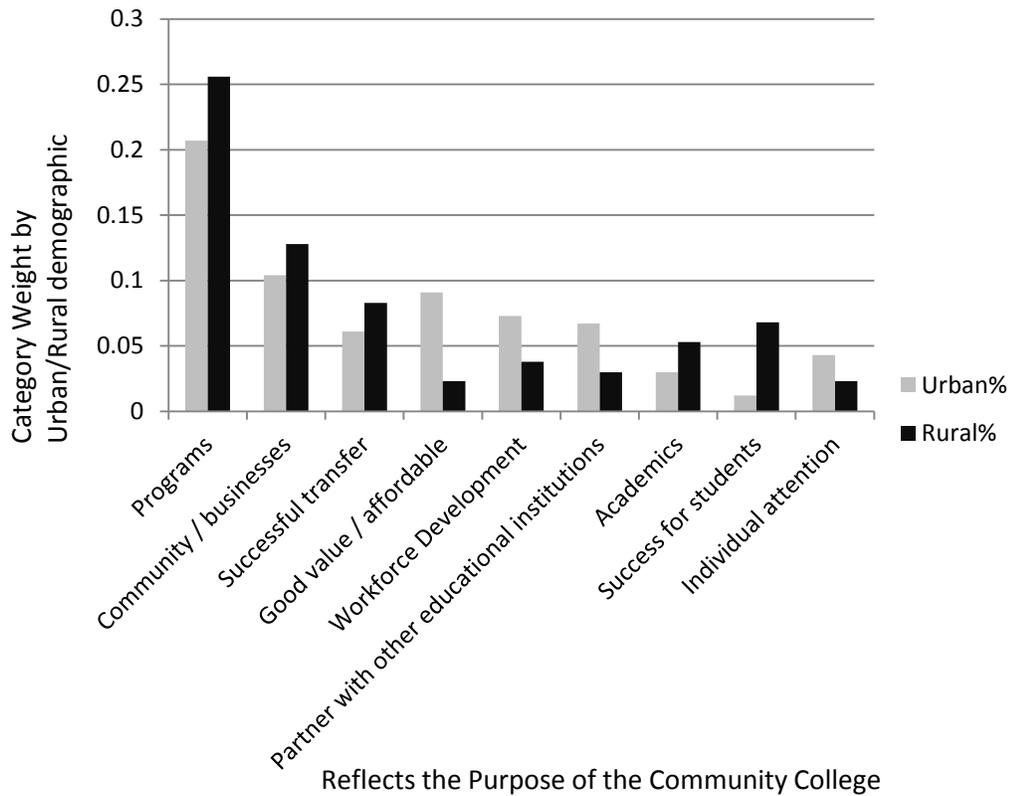


Figure 14. Urban and rural understanding of the purpose of the community college.

The fourth interview question was designed to evoke board members' understanding of the vision for their institution (Albert & Whetten, 1985; Hatch & Schultz, 2002; Whetten, 2006). Board members from the same community college wanted to provide students access to programs through outreach and job training, "...we're doing a tremendous amount with outreach, online, I mean we have a huge percentage increase in enrollment...[and] of course, we are expanding our job connection". Another board member concurred, "...if it wasn't for the business opportunities we're doing today, we wouldn't be able to offer the variety of education

we do today”. Other board members recognized the need to provide programs and remain economically viable, “[w]e’ve got so many people who are educationally oriented they’ve got to remember, hey, we’ve got to make sure the education thing is funded and if it’s not funded you’re out of here. We don’t need you.”

Finance and tax concerns reflected a greater concern for rural community college board members than their urban counterparts, Figure 15. This may illuminate a financial status understood as tenuous, which raised a concern for the future of the institution.

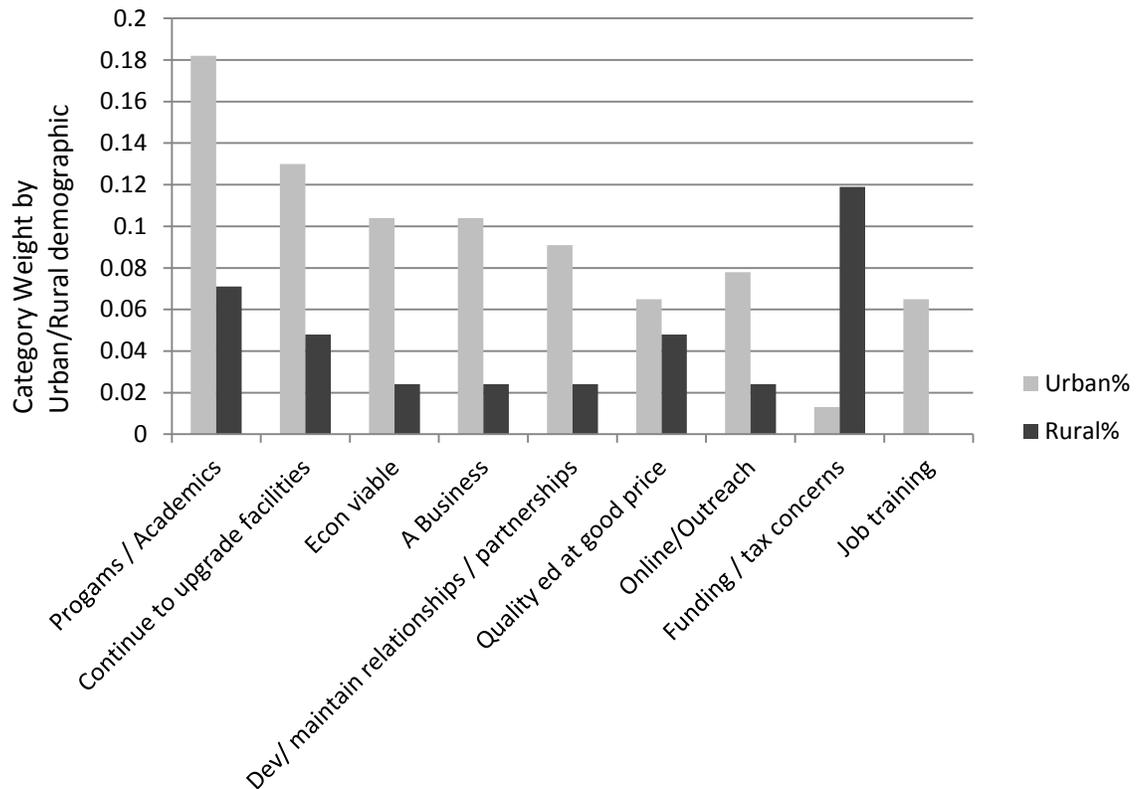


Figure 15. Urban and rural understanding of the vision for the community college.

Indeed, both urban and rural board interviewees seemed to concur that their community colleges' core attribute was to provide students a post-secondary education. Core attributes were depicted in the inner ring one of (Figure 16). As suggested by the board interviewees, there were also similarities in the delivery of core attributes, which consisted of various programs, individual attention, transfer education, workforce development through various partnerships with community businesses, K-12 institutions, and baccalaureate granting institutions. These are located in ring two. In addition, rural interviewees desired student involvement, a delivered sense of belonging, and a global presence (ring two). "But it's [our purpose] really to educate our students into the world; to give them a broader picture, an overall global type of presence." Both urban and rural interview participants stated that these were practiced (Margolis & Hansen, 2002) through stable leadership and faculty and financial support, ring three. Urban interviewees also wanted to provide students with facilities. Interviewees distinguished their community colleges through the instigation of new programs and relationships. Urban board participants seemed interested in a projected image of a premier community college with a quality education. Rural board members suggested a comprehensive community college with quality education. Projected image attributes are located in ring four.

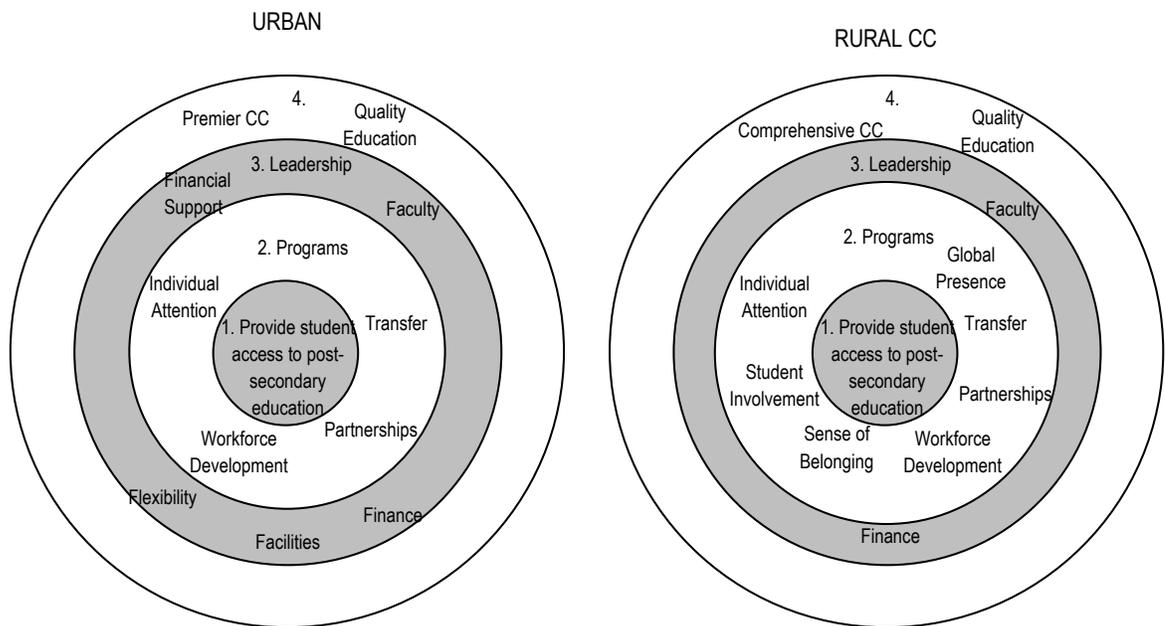


Figure 16. Urban and rural organizational identity using Margolis & Hansen (2002) model.

The fifth interview question asked interviewees about how they came to their understanding about their community college identity, Figure 17. There was a variety of answers provided which ranged from board experiences such as board meetings and conferences to conversations with various constituents. Interview participants revealed conversations they had with fellow board members, acquaintances, members of the community and community college. Board meetings provided a setting for dialogue conveyed information to members about their institutions and also a means of observation or participation in community college activities understood as experience. “I just think that being on the board...” and “learn[ing] by the school of hard knocks.”

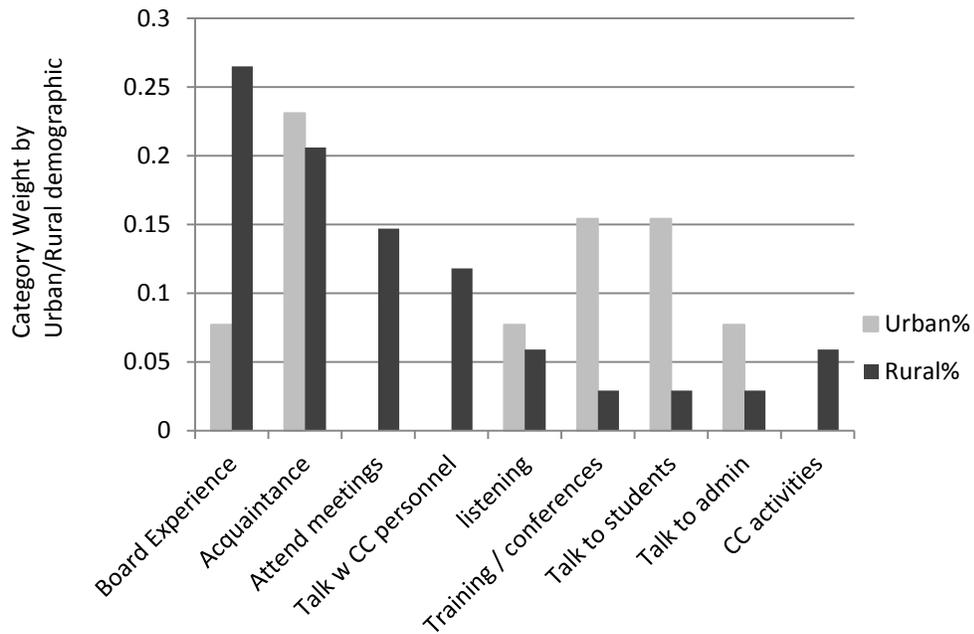


Figure 17. How board members came to their understanding about the community college.

Interview analysis for boards' selection of the community college president. The next five interview questions were intended to gain interviewees' understanding about their rationale for selecting their president such as experience, personal characteristics, community college vision, or culture.

The sixth question elicited reasons to select a particular presidential candidate. Experience and personal characteristics were stressed. Comments such as “[h]e’d had the experience we needed,” were not uncommon. “[Our president] knew the organization, we knew him”. One other research participant commented, “[h]e had come in and served under a variety of positions here so he had a great history of what this institution was about.” The word

“experience,” was often stated however, experience with financial matters and community relationships were specifically mentioned such as, “[the president] was a money guy,” and “was originally a treasurer”. Another interviewee said, “[h]e more than fulfills everything we wanted. Whether it’s fiscal or personnel or any program, involvement in the community, he more than fulfills everything that we were looking for.”

Personal characteristics were oftentimes mentioned. These comprised intelligence, adaptability, to recognize people for their successful work, helpfulness, and to be ethical. Interpersonal skills such as communication and the ability to develop relationships were also cited as desirable characteristics. Interviewees favored presidential candidates who were articulate and made personal connections. “...as he communicated, I thought here’s a guy [who] can talk to his staff...can talk to his employees and he’s proving to be very good at that.” Another board member stated, “[t]here’s time when you are trying to increase the overall morale of your faculty and your non-faculty base and just trying to bring somebody in to reinstitute some energy the organization.”

Selected presidential candidates referred to in this study were hired internally at three of the four community colleges. Board members suggested familiarity with internal candidates as reasons for their selection, “one of the things we were trying to do was recruit from within”. Another board member said, “[w]e hired a guy. We know what he was. He was a known quantity...” The community college boards that hired a presidential candidate from within the institution commented in favor of an internal candidate. In contrast, one board member suggested

the need for “new ideas from out and around”. Coincidentally, the represented community college hired an external candidate.

One unusual set of comments revealed a fragmented board (Fiol, 2001) challenged with a lack of consensus and hinted of an inward focus. One board member stated, “we had...a divided board...we needed some unity, some focus by the board” before the presidential selection. Another member seemed suspicious about motives and political posturing, “[the president] would play board members against each other...,” or concerns about a political agenda by other board members. Participants of only one board made comments such as these, Figure 18.

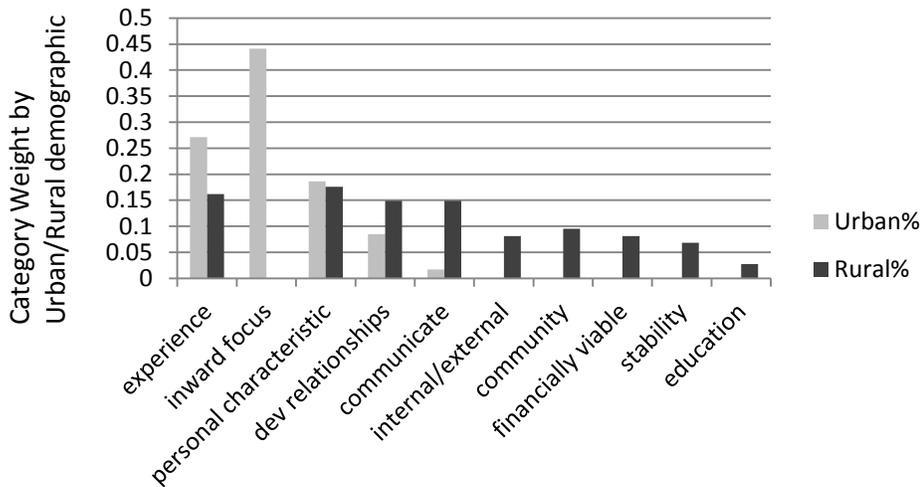


Figure 18. Reasons for selecting the current president

The seventh interview question asked respondents their given consideration of the match between the candidate’s experience with the issues of the community college. This question

revealed reasons for the preferred presidential candidate and asked first to obtain data without prejudice from subsequent questions. Experience, as defined by interviewees was participation by the presidential candidate in community college or community college-related activities. The most frequent type of experience mentioned was related to various aspects of the community college such as, “had taught before,” “administrative experience,” or “know the jobs that are under them”. Other experiences consisted of business leadership experience and community leadership.

When the board member seemed pleased with the selected president, the labels “fit,” or “match,” were spoken, which implied attributes the candidate brought were the correct ones for their particular institution and time, Figure 19. “There’s just something about how he came across in the last interview that we just immediately knew that he was a [good] fit....” Another interviewee mentioned that the candidate had already made good connections [in the community] and as a result, “[h]e was a good match”.

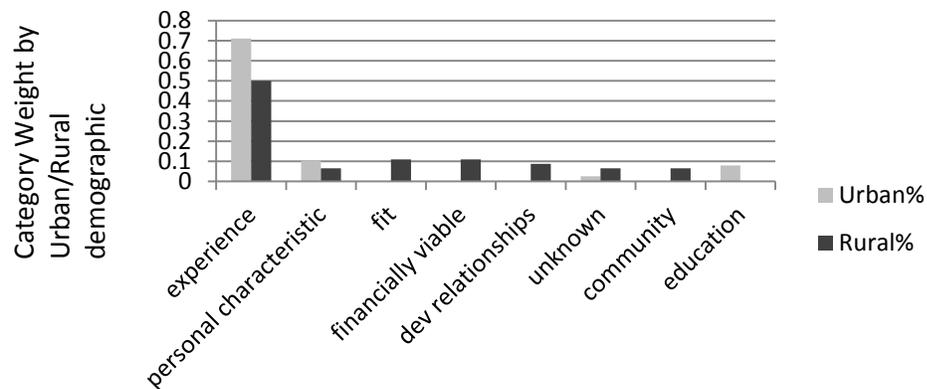


Figure 19. Matching candidates’ experiences with the community college issues

The eighth question asked about the candidate’s personal characteristics, Figure 20. Personal characteristics as described by board members have been defined as cognitive and physical abilities, which enabled a presidential candidate to fulfill community college responsibilities. In like manner to the experience question previously explained, some board members talked about experience requirements when asked about personal characteristics. There was a wide variety of personal characteristics discussed which encompassed an ability to articulate, work with others and the community, to persevere, to be of good character, confident, and innovative.

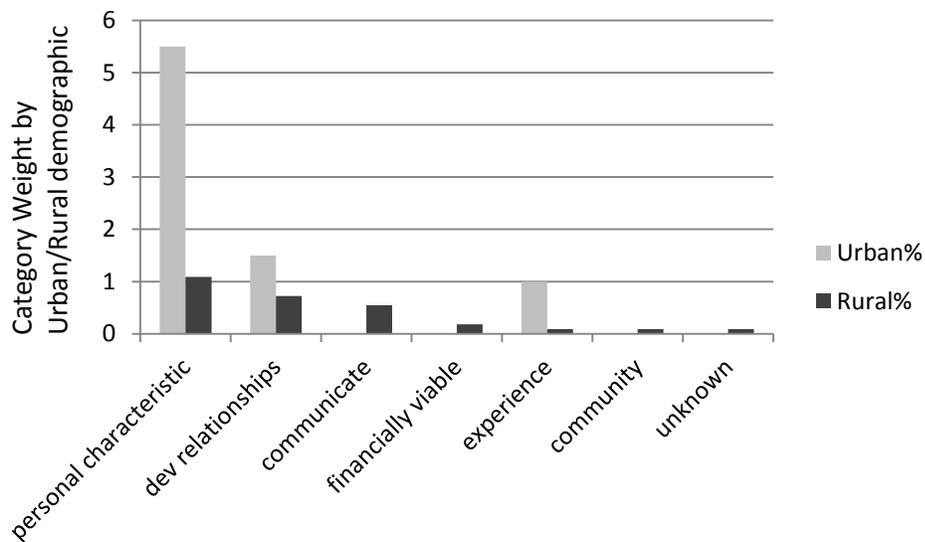


Figure 20. Matching candidates’ personal characteristics with the community college issues

Interview question number nine inquired about consideration interviewees might have given for the community college environment when the president was selected, Figure 20. Board members used environment and culture interchangeably in their responses. When they described

their understanding of environment, many comments, positive and negative were related to faculty such as “faculty association,” “good faculty,” “negotiations,” and “whiners”. Statements were also made about faculty tenure. Some board members were concerned about tenure and the amount of power tenure endowed upon the faculty, “of course, they want to run the college”. One other interviewee concurred, “He [the president] wasn’t on board a year and they wanted to get rid of him”. Another board member wanted to change the community college environment.

We wanted to get out of the community college culture. Community college culture is academia. Academia is not in touch with the real world. They got tenure! They choose the warden! No other part of the world works that way. We’re [faculty] better than everybody.

There were also statements made about administration and presidents. The comment below was from an interviewee from an urban community college.

...we have had a constant battle between presidents who want to be autocrats on their own campus and in answering to higher authority administrators. That’s been an ongoing...they think they run their campus and they don’t [have to] answer to vice chancellors and the chancellor and they do.

Observations about presidents were both positive and negative, “very innovative and very much the leaders,” and “[h]e’s not confrontational, he’s kind of ,let us work together””. In contrast, one other interviewee stated, “[o]ur last president...was very divisive in terms of the community college culture. I mean [the president] had a vast experience of doing things at the community college but it seemed that people were either for or against [the president]”.

Inward focus was a category meant to identify their understanding of board issues. One board member stated,

Our board needs unity and it's real easy to get cross ways with common purpose. It's because we have a lot of geniuses. We have a lot of geniuses on our board. So we had a succession of leaders who couldn't put it all together and in part because the board was split. It was split because we were all geniuses. Geniuses sort of coalesce around like mighty geniuses and we had at least two splits or two divisions and maybe three.

Similar to responses about experience, the category "fit," was referred to when asked about the community college culture. The word "fit," may be recognition of a good communicator as well as the ability to develop relationships. When an interviewee was satisfied with the president, the interviewee might say the president was a good fit. "I think we needed somebody that could talk to working people as well as business people and just fit in the...area." Another board member stated, "[y]ou wanted somebody that could fit...because you want a connection to the rest of the community." When an interviewee was not satisfied with the president, the interviewee might say the president was not a good fit. "They're capable, they're just not the right fit."

When asked to clarify interviewees' comments about fit, their remarks included "some academic freedom", "allow ideas to come up the ranks," be open and accessible to staff, faculty, the community, and form partnerships. One interviewee remarked, "...to me it's a personality fit with the people in the community and being able to listen more than you talk". Another participant qualified, "It's...more important when you're the president of any organization than

when you're a ...department manager because you have more people you have to inter-phase with, a more diverse group." One other board member stated, "...he was a good fit because he could speak to community, rural, and he could speak to educating students, he could speak to the special programs that we have".

The ability to communicate and develop relationships may be the means to personal connections. To describe "fit," interviewees looked for ways to make a connection to the president. For example, rural board members would say that the candidate was from a small town or "had that knowledge of a community college rather than a big university or a four-year university so I think he had more of an association with the issues we face as a community college". Another interviewee stated the board wanted the new president to "get out and join clubs, Rotaries and all this type of thing. You can talk to anyone on the street who knows him and he's doing a great job. He has been a good fit in that regard".

The development of relationships (Figure 21) from the understanding of the research participants required additional personal characteristics of integrity. "Being honest with people and build trust. It doesn't take long to see through somebody if you're trying to pull the wool over someone else's eyes you're not being upright and honest."

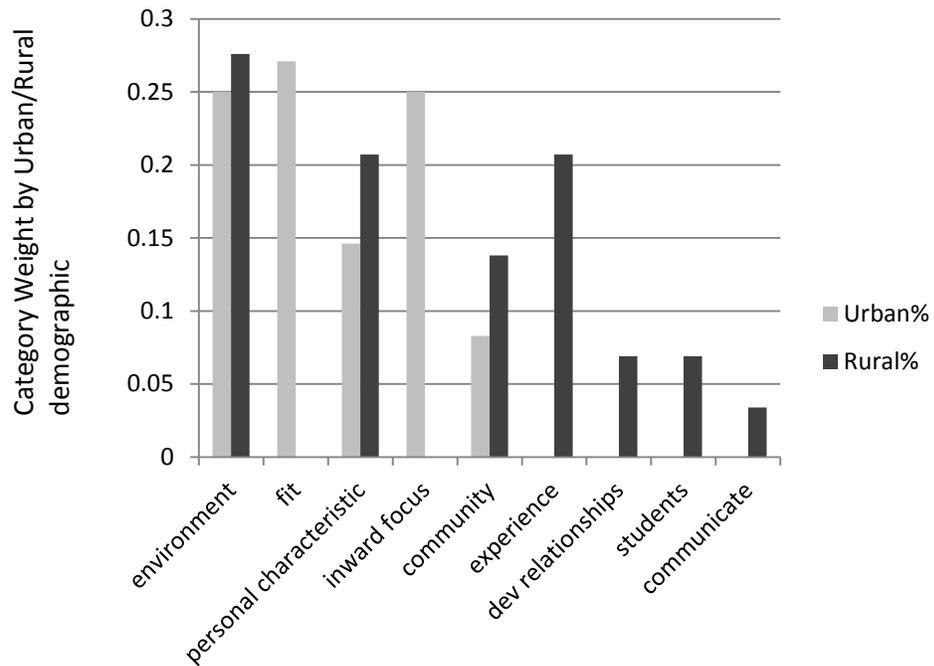


Figure 21. Aspects of community college environment when selecting the president

Interview question ten asked board members' about their vision for the community college and how their vision affected their presidential choice. Financial stability was on the minds of many participants. "Financial stability, number one. We know that going forward next 24 to 36 months are going to be extremely difficult financially." Another board member stated, "Funds are going to be short. Taxes are going to be down. Our income is down. Everything is under stress. We need more of a fiscally responsible person now than we have ever needed before." This research occurred during a recession, which may have influenced interview participants' financial contemplations.

Board members also demonstrated an understanding for new programs in the future as “committed to putting forth programs that were going to prepare students for the future”. Possible programs were developed for homeland security, which board members related improved relationships with corporations for receiving capital equipment to be used for training their employees. There were other programs discussed for future possibilities such as the establishment of a police academy, to provide education for commercial driver’s licenses, and the development of a culinary institute. These were a few ideas that were developed or expanded to enlarge community college programs.

In terms of interview participant emphasis, financial stability and programs were viewed similarly between urban and rural board members, Figure 22. There was a big difference in personal visions for the balance of categories. Interviewees from one community college board had three distinct ideas for a personal vision: consensus, facilities, and programs. The differences in a vision could demonstrate a fragmented board. Board members identified other areas as their vision for the institution, student centeredness and the aspiration for a leader, who could communicate and be a good fit for the community college.

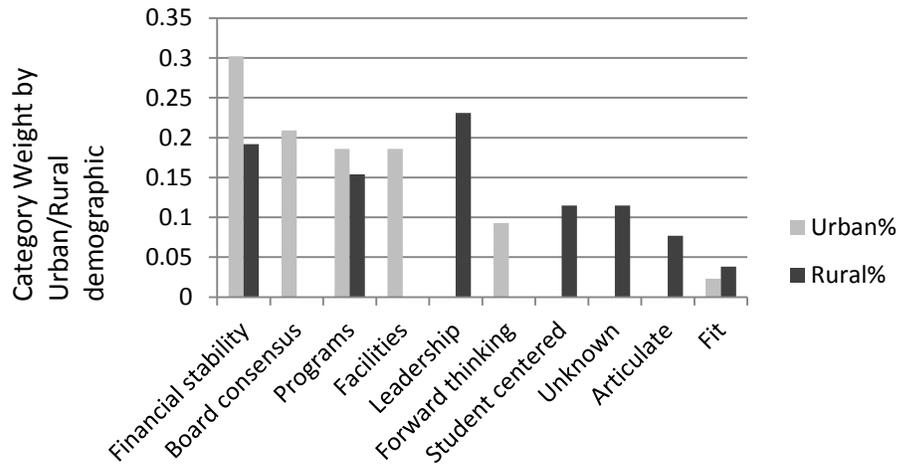


Figure 22. Aspects of personal vision when selecting the president

The next question, question 11, was intended to extract consideration given to the level of education of the presidential candidate. Many respondents (Figure 23) mentioned that a doctorate was preferred but not necessary. Other factors were often deemed more favorably than the level of education. One board member declared, “[I]et’s look at the person, the degree is secondary”. Other factors mentioned experience, administrator skills, and communication skills. Another interviewee declared, “I met a lot of PhDs that I wouldn’t trust with running a checking account so again he has done the job in the past so he seemed very suited for it...” Another board member stated, “[w]e passed up on people with doctorate degrees that didn’t have the administration experience”. Yet another participant said, “[t]he best...leader is a guy who can surround himself with people, who are more highly qualified than he is and can motivate them to

produce”. A few comments from the urban respondents confirmed a doctorate degree was required.

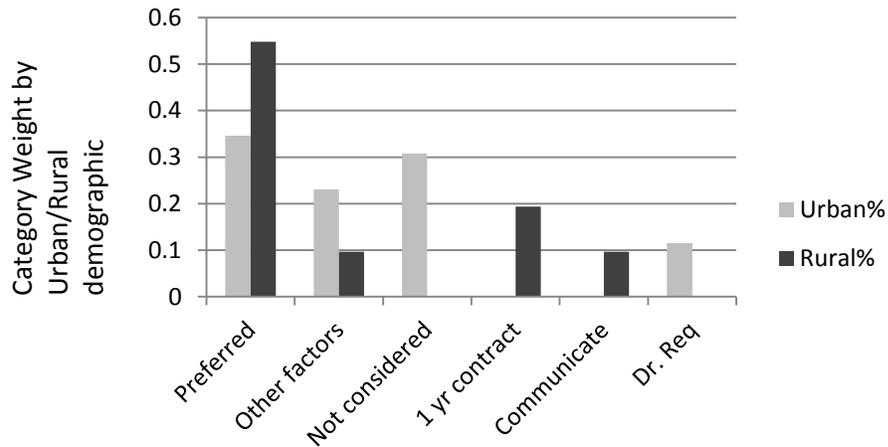


Figure 23. Level of education considered when selecting the president.

The next question, question 12 was asked to explore whether or not the reasons for candidate selection were valid after the president had been at work for some time. Nearly all of the respondents were pleased with their choice and reaffirmed their rationale. Some of the reasons reiterated were personal characteristics such as communication, motivation, dedication, and the energy level. Knowledge of programs and fiscal experiences were cited as reasons for the selected candidates. Community was also suggested as rationale for the candidate, “[h]is openness and his awareness of the community”.

Familiarity appeared to be a primary reason for a selected candidate, especially for the urban board members (Figure 24). The candidate was selected from within the community college for various reasons, familiar with the community, a history with the community college,

or the professed knowledge of the employee’s strengths and weaknesses. “...we like to bring in new blood at a lower level and see how the blood performs before we promote him to the chancellor.”

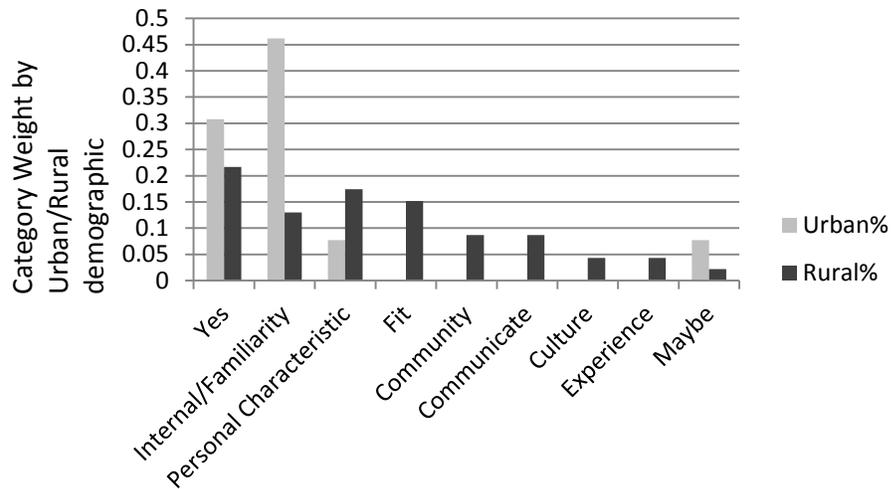


Figure 24. Confirmed whether or not selected candidate was a good choice

Question 13 asked if an instrument would have been helpful when the board worked through the selection process. Most of the interviewees believed an instrument would have been helpful. “An instrument...[would] give you a starting point, would be tremendously helpful.” Another interview participant said,

Yes. I don’t think we used that type of survey. You have to get a feel for the person and of course they ask as many questions of you as you ask of them in the process. That’s a starting point for the interaction.

A few board members did not believe an instrument would have been helpful, “No, I feel that...we knew we needed, I think it worked well.” Another interview participant said, “I’m not sure how successful it would be because I would think that in a lot of ways the candidates would be able to read into the questions.” Refer to Figure 25.

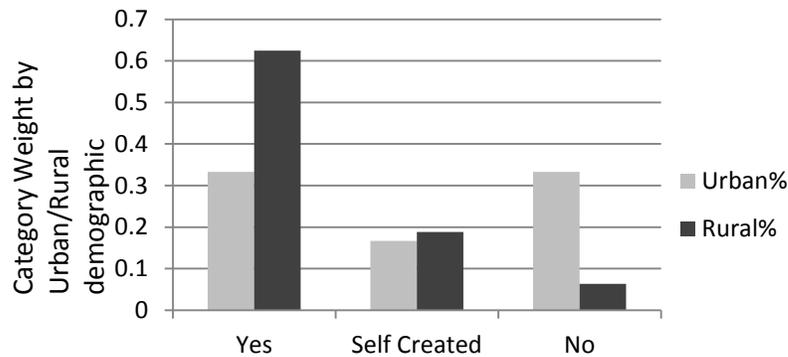


Figure 25: Would an instrument have been helpful in your search?

Question 14 was intended to ascertain the ability level of board members who participated in the interviews to use web logs or blogs. These were to be used as a method of follow up with the interview participants once the data had been analyzed. Of the 14 board members interviewed, 12 board members did not have any knowledge about blogs, one board member maintained his own blog, and one was unsure about her ability to use a blog. One board member stated concern about issues confidentiality. During the course of the conversation, the interviewee believed the use of a pseudonym during online discussions would be satisfactory.

The lack of knowledge about blogs might have occurred because of the age of the board participants. The mean age of the board participants was 61 years. Many of the board

participants may not have felt comfortable with blogs as six of the fourteen interviewees were retired. Perhaps future board members will have more blog experience, which would make data collection by blog more feasible.

Interview Analysis by Emerging Theme

Interviewees sometimes answered questions with information, which would have been more suitable to a different question, e.g. responding to a vision question with a response of experience. Therefore, this research included a second interview analysis by emerging themes in an attempt to comprehend interview participants' values of the dialogue expressed across questions. The last interview section includes the analysis of community college understanding and the selection of the community college president.

Boards' understanding of the community college. When interviewees were asked about their community colleges, the theme expressed most often was the need to support students. Prior to and during board service, board members claimed an image that seemed to understand the value of the students to the community college. Students were recognized as "traditional," when they arrived at the community college directly following high school and "adult," when going back to the community college for additional education after a break from formal education. Adult students were also identified as people who sought to be retrained. This ranged from course completion to program completion.

Interviewed participants expressed the need to provide "quality education," to students. By "quality education," board members wanted to sustain a variety and relevant curriculum of "programs," fulfilling students' needs for transfer to four year colleges and universities,

workforce development, and developmental courses. Some board members used the term “comprehensive,” to describe the array of educational services provided by their community colleges.

Furthermore, board members indicated that more was needed for the students than to provide a quality education. They suggested this education should be “accessible,” to the students. They described access for students as “convenient,” “flexible,” “open,” “affordable,” or “outreach”. Interviewees wanted to continue outreach as a way to extend their institution’s education to off-campus satellites and dual credit possibilities in high schools.

Boards’ selection of the community college president. The number of responsibilities identified by interview participants of the community college president was vast and required a presidential candidate with many experiences. Although one interviewee stated there was “no perfect presidential candidate,” board members lifted up experiences such as administrative, teaching, budgeting, financial, developing partnerships, familiarity with the state system in which the community college was located, accreditation, business leadership, technology, academic, and the culture of a large or small system.

Although experiences were high on the list of priorities board members used as a guide to select a president, they also desired personal characteristics. These included integrity, energy, intelligence, perseverance, decision making abilities, confronts challenges, insightful, confidence, and the ability to adapt to the context of the institution. In addition to these personal characteristics, there were certain elements pervasive throughout the interviews stated either explicitly or implicitly.

Board members desired presidential candidates with interpersonal abilities, and who could articulate the vision, values, and needs of the institution. In this way, a positive image could be presented to the community, potential employees, and students. Ultimately, board members expressed the value of partnerships with other institutions of higher learning, public schools, community, and business leaders. The ability to develop relationships with all constituents seemed to be a desirable personal characteristic to lead the institution. They said these relationships were needed to share in the delivery of an innovative and quality education and seemed pleased to label their president with abilities to communicate and develop relationships as a good “fit” for the community college.

Comparing Board Members’ Understanding of the community college with Document Data

This study was designed to comprehend community college board members’ understanding of their institution’s organizational identity and how they use their understanding to select a presidential candidate. Their understanding, expressed in the interviews and position descriptions was compared with the community colleges’ vision and mission statements. Through a comparative analysis, I hope to learn more about board members’ presidential selection rationale.

Comparing Board Members’ Understanding of the Community College with Community College Mission Statements and Vision Statements

The selected documentation included mission statements, which depicted enduring values, espoused beliefs (Schein, 2004), and assumptions considered vital by the organization’s

leadership (Swales & Rogers, 1995). Additionally, community college vision statements were identified and used to compare board members' future vision (Albert & Whetten, 1985). This study was initially designed to include mission statements from the four community colleges whose board members' were interview participants. Upon receipt of the documentation from community college human resource departments, some vision statements were included. This presented an opportunity for expanded research to try to comprehend how interviewees' understood their institutions' future. However, only two of the four community colleges included vision statements. For that reason, vision comparisons included only data from participants' interviews and vision statements, hence the dotted box in Figure 26.

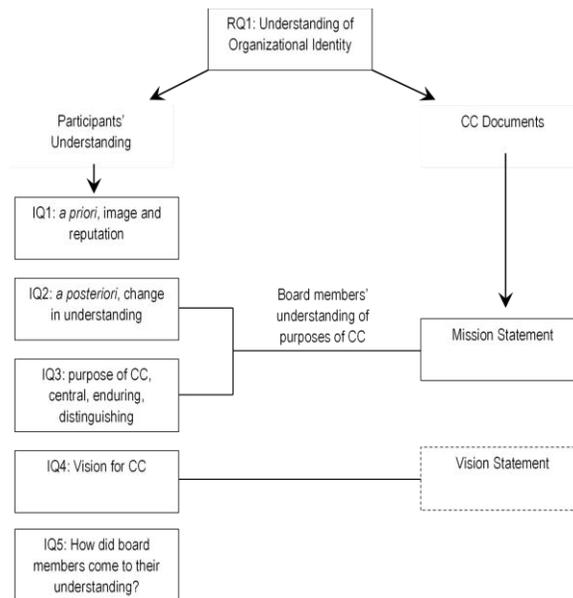


Figure 26. Research question 1 conceptual model: board members' understanding relative to community college mission and vision statements

Mission statements encompassed a student purpose and a community purpose. Mission statements stated the need to “provide a culture of learning,” intended to prepare students for “cultural enrichment,” “global awareness,” and “lifelong learning,” through job entry programs and transfer to four year institutions. Furthermore, there was a concern for community support in the way of “economic development,” “community education programs,” and to “deliver career/vocational education supporting businesses”.

Interview participants were primarily concerned with student support as well. This was expressed in many forms such as programs, transferring students, good value for students, workforce development, and academics. Similar to mission statements, many interviewee comments indicated the need to support the community through “participation in community activities,” and “being connected to the community...I think it’s a really, really, really major thing”.

Community college vision statements also reflected student support through access to, exchange of ideas, and participation in a diverse curriculum to prepare students for lifelong learning in a local and global society. Additionally, organizational learning using institutional assessment and adaptation and employee development were additional aspects raised in the vision statements.

When asked about the vision for their community colleges, board members were primarily concerned about the success of the students. They stated that as a part of student success, their institutions needed to provide a quality education and adapt to changing societal needs through the development of new programs. Interviewees mentioned difficulties to provide

the quality education in a time of financial stress due, in large part, to the current recession. Some board members suggested opportunities to work and share with area corporations the financial burdens incurred by implementing new programs to educate corporate employees.

In summary, interview participants were concerned about support for students in their preparations beyond their community college. This was comprised of pertinent programs and transferability. As for the future of their community colleges, interviewees wanted to prepare students to support the local communities and businesses. However, this was an issue for their community college because of foreseeable funding shortages. Partnerships were considered as a viable option to bolster community college support.

Case Analysis: Board Interviewee's Understanding of Position Description Qualifications

Prior to delving into the reasons for community college president selection, I completed a case analysis pilot of one community college and compared a list of qualifications in position description documents to the interviews' data. This was done to explore for potential congruency between the required qualifications in the position description and board members' understandings of the position descriptions.

There were some instances where interview data did not match any of the qualifications such as an arbitrary comment about needing to pick up some groceries. There were also statements made which the interviewee understood as a qualification, however, the mentioned qualification was not included in the institution's position description. For instance, one board member stated the need to select a president to, "give us some stability so we didn't have this continual turnover". Furthermore, an interview unit might have encompassed more than one

qualification. To illustrate, one interview participant desired to, “make sure that the community has a good feeling about the community college”. This statement could indicate multiple qualifications such as the need for an active president in the community, to communicate to members of the community, to develop relationships with members in the community. Each of these could be used to develop and maintain good community feelings about the institution. Consequently, one interview unit might consist of more than one qualification.

The comparison analysis revealed that interview data supported position description qualifications, which suggested board members were generally aware of and supported the qualifications. To illustrate, one qualification in the position description required leadership with external constituencies, which was confirmed by interviewees who made statements such as “...[we need] somebody that can get the college back involved in the community,” and “represent us in the state and associations and with the state legislature”. There were also interviewee statements made which were not parts of the position description qualifications like to work with the board, which supported Vaughan and Weisman’s (1997) research about a positive relationship between the board and president. One interview participant said, “We expected [the president] to provide the leadership and come to the board with solutions,” and “[t]he president needs to come clean with the board. Don’t try to hide things”. Finally, there were other statements made that were deemed not relevant to the position description qualifications such as interview procedural matters. One example was, “One day for a week, we took them around town.” Another interviewee commented, “the ones that have left here have gone on to bigger community colleges”.

Comparing Boards' Understanding of the community college with Reasons for Selecting the President

I explored the boards' understandings of their institutions as their basis for presidential candidate selection. The position description comprised specific presidential responsibilities intended to support the community colleges' mission (Poston, 1997; Silon, 1983). It also included presidential candidate qualifications required to satisfy the responsibilities (Tompkins, 1987). Through the interview process, questions were asked of the board members about their understanding of their community college's identity. The data results were then compared to their own responses to interview questions as to the reasons for the selection of the presidential candidate in order to answer research question two: What were the critical elements of the match between the organizational identity and the characteristics of the selected presidential candidate?

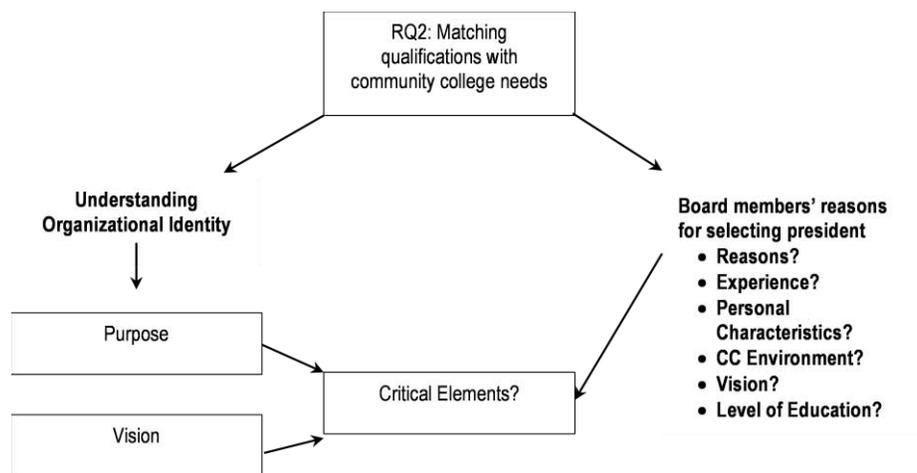


Figure 27. Research question 2 conceptual model

Comparing Mission and Vision with Reasons for Selecting the community college President

Although board members seemed positive about their community colleges, they expressed a need for a variety of programs and support of transfer students. They also stated a need for workforce training, which supported students and the community. In addition to working with the community, interviewees desired partnerships with local schools and area colleges and universities. Interview participants were concerned with the relevance of future programs and job training. They were also interested in outreach with online and satellite campuses to continue to provide access to potential students and were concerned with future economic viability.

Both urban and rural board members desired presidential qualifications, which would aid in “growing the community college,” through implementation of new programs in collaboration with the community and community businesses. Board members expressed an understanding that “...programs prepare students for the current job market...”. In turn, this would educate local citizens for local jobs and “provide an economic benefit to the community and community college there and having people who are employed there [at the community college]”. One interview for a rural community college expressed the desire to provide local citizens with opportunities to remain in their home community upon completion of the program, “...a lot of those students...are able to go into some sort of trade without having to move away.” This suggested a mutual benefit and perhaps a method of self-preservation for all parties, which included the community college, community, and local businesses.

Urban interview participants were also interested to collaborate with local industry and provide the means of a trained workforce ready to fill needed positions for local corporations. The community college would benefit from increased enrollment and corporations would benefit through the utilization of an educational institution to help them develop a trained workforce.

Furthermore, interviewees stated the need for a president to communicate with and develop relationships, maintain relationships, and advocate for the community colleges with external constituents such as the “community,” “accreditation” agencies, “state associations,” or “state chancellor[s],” and “state legislature[s]”. One interviewee mentioned, “[o]ur [president] serve[d] on national committees and accreditation committees all over the country”. There was recognition of a special relationship between the community and community college, “we’re not [just] a junior college, we are a part of this community”. This sentiment seemed to represent a board understanding for the president to be “community minded,” and be involved in the community, “...he’s been able to come into the community and be quite involved, quite involved.” Another interviewee said the president should be, “...[o]utgoing. Willing to meet with and work with the agencies of the community that include the commissioners, all the public entities of...[the] community.”

Interview participants also claimed the need for the president to be able to improve the internal operations of the community college with faculty and staff, “...[t]here’s time when you are trying to increase the overall morale of your faculty and non-faculty base and just trying to bring somebody in to reinstitute some energy the organization [needed]...”. Another interviewee stated,

He's got to be that leader on the campus and that's difficult because you have a group that has been there and they are looking for one thing and you have another group and he's got to blend those type of personalities together and keep them all focused and keeping them going in the same direction.

Urban and rural board members had similar concerns for the selection of the president based on their vision for the community college. Again leadership was an issue emphasized by interviewees, "...[the president must be able] to use the institution for what the board envisioned...". Another board member stated, "...when we interview the presidential candidate we always ask, „Do you have plans?“ ” A separate interview participant stated, "...he seemed to know the problems [of our community college] and where we needed to go. So it worked out really well."

Interview participants were interested in making connections with the community, "...we knew that we needed a community leader. He has certainly proved that, by a year he had already made all of these connections and started a number of others." Another board member said, "We have to have that connection [with the community]. We can't have the county divided in half and at one time it was". A board interviewee from a separate board stated,

...we're trying to get the community involved and I think it was one of the questions we asked him, [w]hat are you going to do about that? And we have to remind him now to maybe kind of slow down a little bit.

When asked about the community connection, a board member stated, "...when I say it's a community college, you're wanting good relationships with the community. The president must work with community groups and clubs and work with the community on fundraising."

Financing was another concern for the future of the community colleges. An interview participant explained,

We query them [presidential candidates] for instance on how they plan to raise money.

That's very important with the shrinking population around here, you can't keep going to the public and say give us more money, give us more money.

Another board member exclaimed, "[o]ur job description, one of the top is fundraising. As a president, you need to keep the money coming in other than through the normal channels. And that doesn't mean the 10,000 people that live here". An interviewee from a separate board said the president must be

innovative, they've got to be innovative. We are always looking for new ways to squeeze 10 cents out of the same state dollar. We have worked hard over the last few years to make money for ourselves so that we can keep our tuition low.

An interviewee from an urban community college expressed an understanding that was shared by other interviewees about the type of institution and leadership needed, "There was a time when academia needed to run the thing but now days, it's a business. We needed a CEO, we didn't need a teacher that raises to a level of incompetence." An urban interviewee from a separate community college expressed that during difficult economic times, "...we do money people and then good times, we do academic people". Yet another urban board interviewee

exclaimed, "...he was a financial guy to begin with. As I said we changed from an educational institution to a business. We're big business now and we need to be run like a business."

Critical Elements of the Match Between Boards' Understanding of the community colleges and Their Selection of the President

As previously mentioned, financial experience, which encompassed fundraising was a factor throughout the interviews, and in listed responsibilities of position description. A document analysis of the position description qualifications identified two additional factors desired for the selection of a community college presidential candidate, experience and interpersonal skills with greater emphasis given to experience.

While experience was the basis for the selection of presidential candidates, not all presidents were selected for their experience. Candidates were generally interviewed because screening committees believed their resumes included items desirable to the community college board. Interviewees commented about a candidate who "looked good on paper," or "[a]t first impression, he really came across...[but] as soon as the interview process began some of the things started coming out." These candidates were not selected as president. If position descriptions emphasize that experience was necessary for a candidate, why were candidates with the most experience not always selected? Indeed, one community college selected a candidate who was young and lacked the experience other candidates possessed, "[h]e was probably not as experienced...as some because he was one of the youngest one of the bunch".

In this case, one interviewee seemed convinced because of a sense of connection between the candidate and the board, "...the person that we chose, was just so head and shoulders above

every candidate that we interviewed...”. The interviewee continued, “...[t]he board was totally unanimous and we knew it as soon as we started the interview of our current president.” Another interviewee from the same board stated that after the interview, “OK, we found our [president]”. When asked why they selected the president, interviewees stated that their selected candidate was “young,” but they also seemed struck about the candidate’s ability to make connections, “...he made all of these connections”. One other interviewee stated being “comfortable,” with the candidate and felt a sense of “connection”.

How did this candidate make the connection during the board interview? It appeared as though the candidate was able to convey a genuine sense of care for the community, “I got the feeling that [the candidate] cared about [our community].” Interviewees also understood the candidate’s ability to communicate as “...he carried himself well in the interview,” and the candidate “...proved to be very good at communication...”. In addition, interviewees understood a sense of relationship as one member referred to the desired candidate as “...one of ours...”. Board interviewees seem to favor a president who could develop relationships with the “community,” and “personnel of the college”.

Interviewees from other community colleges also mentioned this same sense of connection. They indicated the need for “community connections,” “if they [community members] see us as an island, they don’t feel that connection”. Interview participants seemed to desire candidates with “state connections,” and “business connections”. One other board interviewee stated, “if you don’t have that connection to a place, why would you ever donate back to the college?”

Board members seemed to indicate the need to make connections through interpersonal skills of communication and relationship building. In the previous case, board interviewees appeared to select a candidate who was able to make a connection with them rather than select a candidate with more experience. There were other implications related to communication and developing relationships.

Communication. Board member participants referred to the need to communicate and remain informed. One interviewee stated the president should “keep the board well aware of everything that is going on”. Another interviewee mentioned the importance of not only general communication skills, but also the ability to communicate within a particular cultural setting, “to communicate with a small, rural community”. This same interviewee not only wanted the president to be able to communicate in a small, rural setting, but be sincere and genuine in efforts to use the community college to enhance the community,

[In] a rural community...people think the ideas may be a little narrow and fixed. And so we were looking for someone who would rise above that and still communicate and present himself or herself to the community as a whole and not have judgment as to whether or not this was a good community to be committed to, [but] doing what they could do to make it better.

Communication skills were referred to in cases as the ability to convey some particular meaning and listen, “I wanted someone who could talk academics”. Another board member said that the president should, “[be] able to listen more than talk,” and one other interviewee suggested to “listen before leading”.

Another board member stated the need for communication in a way of making intentional connections with constituents. This example reflected the desire for one board interviewee to communicate with people who could help the community college with funding issues, “you’ve got to go talk to somebody about additional funding or capital improvements or whatever it takes.” Another example expressed the need to be able to communicate with other community college officials in an effort to collaborate, “...[w]e are reaching out to possibly work with some other local community colleges to maybe share some employees and positions,... we’re trying to communicate with them to see if there’s some fit there”. Interviewees mentioned the need for a president to communicate internally, “a guy that can talk to his employees,” and externally with members of the state oversight board, “[the president should] communicate with all of the Board of Regents that we have to report to”. One other interview participant stated the need to communicate with the “public” and “all levels of people”. Both communications including listening skills and relationship development with various constituents appeared essential for success.

Relationship building. From the very beginning, one board member stated, “during the presidential interviews, you ask candidates questions, then they ask the board questions and that’s the starting point for interaction”. This starting point further developed into a relationship with the board itself, “he [the president] delivers the board packet every month [to] the board members and that gives him a one-on-one chance to visit.” The ability to effectively communicate and develop a relationship may prove sufficient to overcome all other personal deficiencies as a presidential candidate.

Going into the selection, we had gone over the resumes, work experience, and everything and basically the person we picked after the interviews was...not the person we picked beforehand. We tried to put the resumes in order from what we thought just by the resume. That not being the criteria but we were just curious to see how we would rate them. And he basically was not the best for a resume and I think it's because of his youth and inexperience. But after the interviews, it was basically unanimous [because of] the way he came across to us.

Board members mentioned opportunities to develop external relationships such as the desire for a president, "who could listen to them [business leaders] and engage them." Another board member stated the need to develop "partnerships tautology with the community and allow community members access to the community college facilities. To me it's a personality fit with the people in the community...". An interviewee from a different board suggested,

[h]e's friends with one of the guys whose a major builder here in town who used to be the president of [corporation name]. He's known this guy for like 20 years now. They used to go duck hunting. So when he sees this guy that's the first thing he talks about so he's got a different level with some of these people in town than others do.

Communication and relationship building: garner support. Board members seemed to express that relationships should be utilized to garner support for their community colleges, it never hurts to have that first name relationship with other department heads when you're calling on behalf of [community college name] and you've got to go talk to

somebody when you're needing tax credits or you've got to go talk to somebody about additional funding or capital improvements or whatever it takes.

Board members revealed various aspects of relationships. They seemed agreeable to positive presidential connections with the board and in some cases, revealed an innate desire to belong by making a personal connection to create a bond or sense of belongingness to a group. "I know I'm older than [the president's] mother because I've met her but, it's that kind of rapport that he has. That was starting to show even in the interview. It was like „we've known you forever." Furthermore, interviewees desired a rapport with other constituents, "[w]e have to have that connection. We can't have the county divided in half and at one time it was. [There was] a lot of resentment against the college because we were not conveying that they're important." Included as part of a positive relationship, board interviewees revealed the desire for a type of relationship, which required personal involvement.

Some of that is, here again, we're trying to get the community involved. It seems like he's involved in a lot of community activities and we keep reminding him now let's don't get burned out here, let's don't over achieve. But he's been able to come into the community and be quite involved, quite involved.

One board interviewee seemed to believe that involvement was a way to generate and perpetuate community "buy in," or equity in the community college, figuratively and literally. One community college board member stated,

[The chancellor goes] to [corporation name] and...says we want to go do this program, we want to expand in this training and we say, I [chancellor] think we can provide that

for you. And then they develop...the program at a profit and return that money back to our institution.

To the contrary, board participants suggested that without a positive relationship the institution would languish. In this case, a negative aspect of a power relationship was between the board and president.

Some board members said this is enough. You've got to leave so this will change and [the president] would say, „no, I'm going to fight it out.' So board members were criticizing [the president] in board meetings [the president] was criticizing [the board]...and finally I said you've got to go, you're bringing down the whole institution. Interviewees from another board suggested concerns with power relationships on the board, I think he [president] got too strong and the board wanted to be stronger, he felt like he wanted to keep them [board] down. He sat down right next to the chair in the middle of the table. After he left, they [new president] sat with the audience in the front row or next to the board.

This seemed to hamper the board's ability to develop what interviewees referred to as consensus. "But it was what our needs were which were [to find] someone who [we] could develop a consensus around." Another interviewee on the same board expressed frustration about a lack of consensus,

Back in the good old days when we had national news and we didn't have the floating opinions that we have today, people used to report what was news as opposed to their

damn opinions. And therefore, you could find a consensus a hell of a lot easier than you can today.

If board interviewees express the need for communication skills and the ability to develop relationships, then why are experiences included in position descriptions? A candidate was expected to provide a sufficient amount of evidence based on experience to be deemed as a suitable president. However, in one particular case, an incongruity seemed to have occurred when a candidate was apparently selected based on desired personal characteristics rather than advertised experiences in the position description. This was based on an interviewee's statement that the candidate was "only 35," years of age.

This raised the question whether a board member would prefer an experienced candidate rather than a candidate with desired personal characteristics? I followed up with the 14 interviewees in an email, which asked the question, "If given a choice of one or the other, would you select a community college presidential candidate based on personal characteristics or experience? Why?." I received replies from six interview participants. There were two respondents who desired experience and two preferred personal characteristics. One interviewee stated, "[m]inimum would look at experience, only experienced would make the short list". Another interviewee wrote, "[c]ommunication skills, the ability to develop relationships, cultural sensitivity, and personal integrity are vital personal characteristics for a community college president". One respondent said both were important and another response did not answer the question.

To further explore, I compared emailed responses to the community colleges' qualifications listed in their position descriptions. The qualifications in position descriptions included a greater number of experiences than identified personal characteristics. However, qualifications stated by board interviewees included more types of personal characteristics than experiences. There seemed to be a discrepancy between the published position description qualifications and the board members' desired qualifications.

A screening committee scrutinized presidential aspirants' applications based on appropriate experience. The candidate's ability to make a personal connection through dialogue could then provide a favorable impression on the committee.

5. SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDY

This research report concludes with a summary of the findings and recommendations for future research.

Summary of the Findings

Board members must understand their community college, the context, and the qualities needed to lead the institution through inevitable challenges. This study examined community colleges' Boards of Trustees to try to assess this understanding of their own institutions. The match between their understanding of the community college and the desired characteristics of the selected presidential candidate was critical?

I collected community college mission and vision statements and position descriptions from community colleges across the country. Mission statements described the purpose or what was central and enduring (Albert & Whetten, 1985) about the institution. Vision statements were community college documents that indicated the desired future for the institution. Position descriptions were also collected from the same institutions. Position descriptions were documents that included presidential responsibilities and required qualifications and experience. A comparative analysis was conducted on mission and vision statements. The mission statements tended to emphasize access, learning culture, workforce preparation, and preparation for transfer to four-year colleges or universities. Mission statements also included relationship building and mutually beneficial collaboration with local communities and businesses. Vision statements focused on student success.

Presidential position descriptions were obtained from community college human resource departments. These documents usually identified the president as the head of the institution, reporting to the governing board or in some cases the state chancellor. The president would oversee all aspects of the community college including operations, finance, public relations, political advocacy, and workforce development.

Position descriptions also included required qualifications, including level of education, personal characteristics, and experience. A doctorate was preferred although a master's degree was required. Personal characteristics included communication skills, ability to develop relationships, cultural sensitivity, and personal integrity. Required experience would include administration, teaching, finance and fundraising, programming, public relations, planning, technology, and government relations.

Interview transcripts were categorized. Participants shared their understanding of community college organizational identity. Both urban and rural interviewees spoke to the importance of leadership and provision of affordable post-secondary education. Interview participants stated that this would be accomplished through programs for transfer students. Interviewees were also interested in collaboration with communities and businesses to guide workforce training. Board members' visions related to their community college's missions. Financial viability was a concern, especially during a recession. Extended reach with online programs and satellite campuses was also a concern.

Board members were then asked about presidential selection criteria. Most emphasized experience—administrative and financial—and personal characteristics—intelligence,

adaptability, interpersonal/communication skills, and ability to develop relationships with communities or politicians. Board interviewees' foci were student and community support.

More specific selection criteria included leadership potential for innovation and dealing with adversity as well as collaboration with local communities and businesses. In rural communities, this mutually beneficial collaboration would have the goal of retaining local citizens for education and employment. In urban settings, workforce and economic development were important considerations. In both cases, local communities and businesses could assist with contributions to educational infrastructure.

While there was an incongruity between position descriptions and apparent selection criteria, this depended on stage of the selection process. Initial selection was made on the basis of documented experience, particularly financial management and fundraising. During interviews, interviewees then concentrated on ability of candidates to relate to the individual board members, irrespective of their backgrounds.

If board interviewees' expressed the need for communication skills and the ability to develop relationships, then, why are experiences included in position descriptions? An incongruity seems to have occurred between the position description qualifications and the board candidate filling the position when a candidate was apparently selected based on desired personal characteristics rather than advertised experiences. A follow-up question was sent to board member participants asking them for a preference, experience or personal characteristics when they select a presidential candidate. Responses were compared to their community colleges' position description qualifications. Position descriptions included a greater number of desired

experiences; however, their responses to the email follow-up reflected a greater emphasis on personal characteristics.

Implications

Based on this research, I would advise candidates to emphasize experiences in their applications, particularly financial and fundraising experience. Then, I would advise candidates at the interview stage to make a connection with board members. Making a connection means conveying a genuine appreciation and commitment to the community, the community college's mission, and each member of the board.

Future Research

Participants in this study were community college board members. Future studies might consider other perspectives such as those of the faculty, students, community, or other administrators. Interview participants for this study were from Midwestern community colleges, while board members from other regions of the country might have different perspectives. In addition, participants represented only elected board members and those who were appointed might have yet another perspective.

This study analyzed documentation from Native American community colleges which valued preservation of the heritage and tradition of the local Native American culture. Similarly, rural community colleges viewed the community college a means to preserve their rural community and prepare local students for local jobs. Much more research could be conducted about community colleges community and cultural relations.

Finally, the researcher had been an elected board chair during the recruitment of a community college president. Future research could consider the findings of this research in terms of the researcher's particular perspective.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Interview Questions

1. How did you perceive (Community College Name) prior to serving on the board?
2. How do you now perceive (Community College Name)?
 - a. Probing question: Who is (Community College Name)?
 - b. Probing question: What does (Community College Name) represent?
 - c. Probing question: What are the central attributes (descriptors or qualities) of (Community College Name)?
3. What is the purpose of (Community College Name)?
 - a. Probing question: How do you distinguish (Community College Name) from other institutions?
4. What do you want (Community College Name) to be?
 - a. Probing question: What is your vision for (Community College Name)?
 - b. Probing question: What do you want (Community College Name) to become in the future?
 - c. Probing question: What are the enduring attributes of (Community College Name)?
5. What are some important reasons for selecting your current president?
6. What consideration, if any, did you give to match the selected candidate's experience with the issues of the community college?
7. What personal characteristics of candidates, if any, did you consider when making your selection?

8. What aspect of the community college culture, if any, did you consider when making your selection?
9. What aspect of your vision for the community college, if any, did you consider when making your selection?
10. Why was the level of education considered, if it was, when you selected the presidential candidate?
11. If you were given another opportunity to hire the president, would you select him/her?
12. Do you believe that an instrument designed to match the best presidential candidate with your community college would have been helpful?

APPENDIX B

Consent Form



Department of Educational Leadership

Campus Box 142, Wichita, KS 67260-0142

Summer 2010

Participant Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a study of community college board members' understanding of the community college and their selection of the president. The study participants include community college board members. The study is being conducted by a Mark Watkins from the Wichita State University Educational Leadership Doctoral program. The purpose of this study is to endeavor to obtain the understanding of community college board members regarding their community college and the selection rationale of the president.

There will be approximately 8-12 community college board members participating in this study. Study participants are selected based on purposive sampling. Participants are selected based on recent experience of the presidential selection process. Your participation in the study entails answering a few questions regarding your presidential selection. Each interview will take approximately 45 minutes or less and will be conducted over a period of a few weeks.

During data collection, participants will be encouraged to be open in their responses with the interviewer. Any information obtained in this study in which you can be identified will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. The process and research results lead to a non-threatening study for participants. There will be no anticipated risks to the participants. All participation will be voluntary, and participants will be apprised of the research purpose.

If you have any questions about this research you can contact the dissertation chair, Dr. Mara Alagic, Assistant Dean, at 316-978-6974, mara.alagic@wichita.edu. Wichita State University, Wichita 67260-0142. If you have questions pertaining to your rights as a research subject, or about research-related injury, you can contact the Office of Research Administration at Wichita State University, Wichita, KS 67260-0007, and telephone (316) 978-3285.

You are under no obligation to participate in this study and may withdraw at any time. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your future relations with WSU. Your signature indicates that you have read the information provided and have voluntarily decided to participate. You may have a copy of this Consent Form.

Signature of Subject

Dates