DISSERTATION

CHANGE READINESS: REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF VICE PRESIDENTS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AT SMALL, PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

CHANGE READINESS: REALITIES AND PERCEPTIONS OF VICE PRESIDENTS FOR STUDENT AFFAIRS AT SMALL, PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

This phenomenological study explored the experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small liberal arts colleges with readiness for change within their organizations. The lived experiences of the participants were explored using the following research questions: (1) How do vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges define what "readiness for change" means to them? (2) How do vice presidents for student affairs describe their readiness for leading change? (3) What skills and traits do vice presidents for student affairs identify as being important to their readiness to lead change within their organization? (4) How would vice presidents for student affairs describe their own personal development of the skills and traits needed to lead change? How did they develop these skills and traits? (5) How would vice presidents for student affairs apply their own readiness for change to their strategy for readying their organization for change?

The researcher conducted semi structured interviews with twelve vice presidents for student affairs at small, private, liberal arts colleges in the United States. Using the interpretative phenomenological approach, five themes emerged during the analysis of the data. The lived-experience of the participants were represented by: (1) readiness for change; (2) communication; (3) value of relationships; (4) knowledge development; (5) change leadership. The data suggested that the essence of the lived experience of the participants was that they shared the desire to improve their organizations, develop their staff to be strong leaders on their campuses, and to create a high quality experience for their students.

Keywords: change leadership, student affairs officer, change readiness, organizational change

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DEDICATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"The only thing constant is change."

(de la Rouchefoucauld, 1680)

Change in organizations may be one of the most difficult aspects of today's businesses, and higher education is not immune to this need to adapt in an unstable, unpredictable, and competitive economy. The concept of change in organizations can be difficult due to the fact that change efforts can be perceived and implemented in many different ways (Kezar, 2014; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Schachter, 2007). Organizational readiness and adaptability play a role in successful change initiatives and it takes a certain amount of skill and knowledge in order to lead such efforts (Deevy, 1995; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kezar, 2014; McLagan, 2002).

Higher education in the United States is not immune to change both systemically and on individual campuses. Historically, change has been a pervasive theme within organizations, including many campuses today. Change is not a new idea to institutions of higher learning and it continues to be a challenging organizational undertaking (Deevy, 1995; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kezar, 2014; McLagan, 2002). There can be many reasons for change, which can be brought on by circumstances that may be planned and known to those involved, as well as those generated through a crisis or surprise event (Hiatt & Creasy, 2003; Kuk, Banning, & Amey, 2010; Schachter, 2007). Institutions who set about to change often do so given a change in leadership or some sort of impetus that is planned or unplanned (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2012). The incentive for change can be prompted by many internal and external factors, including but not limited to those that are economic or legislative, or those resulting from global conflict, a change in leadership, or a shift in priorities for research and education (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Schachter, 2007).

The reality is that change is happening all around us and those who sit and watch or pretend their organization will survive by staying stagnant will not endure in today's world, including those in higher education (Cohen & Kiskar, 2010). *The Innovative University* begins by describing the term "disruptive innovation" as the process of disrupting "the bigger and better cycle by bringing to market a product or service that is not as good as the best traditional offerings but is more affordable and easier to use" (Christensen & Eyring, 2011, p. xxiv). Colleges and universities should consider the current state of affairs in adapting their organizations. This is particularly relevant for institutions that have been in existence for a long time and been doing things the same way, while expecting to sustain themselves in the current market (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Cohen & Kiskar, 2010). As the discussion about change and how it impacts those in organizations evolves, it is vital to consider that there exist many essential and complicated layers of impact on current higher education organizations and those who lead them (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Cohen & Kiskar, 2010; Kezar, 2014). Having a process for change readiness and implementation can help organizations review the past and determine a course for the future (Lawler & Worley, 2006; Schachter, 2007).

Sustainable change efforts require leaders who are knowledgeable and ready to lead their organizations through the process of organizational transformation (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Beach, 2006; Dallas, 2015; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Quinn, 1996). Many authors suggested that there are skills and traits needed in order to be ready for change. While leading change can be a common task charged to those in leadership positions, leaders within institutions must be willing and able to take on the sometimes difficult tasks of coordinating and implementing change efforts (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996;). Being ready for change and leading change are integral perspectives for leaders to possess in facilitating change in organizations (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). Knowledge of the field, the organization, and the people in it are critical to implementing change and those in senior leadership positions can be instrumental in the success and/or failure of organizational change. Leaders who possess the aptitude to manage and facilitate change within their divisions, and be part of a leadership team, are key components to successful change initiatives (Hiatt, 2006; Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996).

Self-awareness and understanding of one's own perceptions and knowledge of change is fundamental to success in orchestrating change (Dallas, 2015; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). Change within an organization can give those leading and experiencing it the chance to develop skills and capabilities that are vital to leadership in an organization (Dalton & Gardner, 2002; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). Leaders who are able to understand their own skills and strengths as they relate to change leadership will be better prepared to lead change efforts (Dallas, 2015; Hiatt, 2006; Quinn, 1996).

Problem Statement

The growing need for change within higher education is evident, given the issues and challenges with which institutional leaders are faced (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Kezar, 2014; Schachter, 2007). There continue to be more examples of failed change than there are success stories (Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2012). For those responsible for managing and facilitating change efforts within organizations, the time of transition and planning for change can be challenging and difficult (Beer & Nohria, 2000; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012). Given the diverse perspectives members of organizations may possess, creating a strategy for implementation is very important. If the change initiative is not orchestrated well, it will not be sustained over time

(Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). Organizations, including those within higher education, need people in leadership positions who have the skills, traits, and talent to lead change, as well as an understanding of their own and the organization's readiness for change (Dalton & Gardner, 2002; Kezar, 2014; Lawler & Worley, 2006).

College campuses are comprised of a small group of senior leaders that include vice presidents. These positions serve the president in managing and leading the institution on a daily basis. These senior leaders must understand their own values, beliefs, and opinions about change before they can lead others in organization change efforts (Barr, McClellan, & Sandeen, 2014; Kuk et al., 2010). Having the knowledge, skills, and awareness in many areas is vital to the success of a vice president (Carey, 2014; Dungy & Ellis, 2011). Senior leaders in organizations, like vice presidents, have the most influence in engaging others in change in a positive and sustainable manner; and those who lead in higher education institutions are not immune to this charge. Those in senior leadership positions who do not possess the skills and traits necessary to create and sustain an adaptable organization, and lack the vision to establish an organization that is ready for change, can be detrimental to the long term effectiveness and success of the organization and its future (Dallas, 2015; Deevy, 1995; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kezar, 2014).

Vice presidents for student affairs are in a position to manage many aspects of campus life on many campuses today. Those in this position must be able to lead and facilitate change within their divisions in order to successfully support the academic mission of the institution, and provide the student experience that meets the expectations of the students, their families, faculty, and other staff (Dalton & Gardner, 2002; Kuk et al., 2010). "Student Affairs administrators are responsible for initiating change that can improve student learning, enhance the quality of facilities, services and programs, and enrich the quality of student life on their campuses" (Barr et al., 2014, p. 77).

Leaders in higher education environments often receive little training and education in how to lead change efforts (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015; Weiner, 2009). Many institutions expect that those in senior positions will be able to be leaders within their organizations; often these individuals in senior positions are thrust into positions without the skills to do them well. College and university leadership must rely upon those in senior leadership positions to help frame and guide their institutions for the future, and they must acquire the knowledge in order to do so (Barr et al., 2014; Cabrey, Haughey, & Cooke-Davies, 2014; Kezar, 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

Change facilitation involves a level of skill and possession of traits that are often lacking or are not viewed as important to leaders in organizations, and higher education institutions are often engrained in traditional ways that have been in existence for decades (Christensen & Eyring, 2011; Kezar, 2014). Others suggest, that in addition to skills with management and leadership, those in senior positions should possess a level of self-efficacy or confidence in leading change. (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015; Spangenberg & Theron, 2013; Weiner, 2009).

Being a senior leader can mean different things within different organizations. At small, private, liberal arts colleges, those in vice presidential positions play a significant role in leading the institution (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015). Those in leadership roles within a campus and responsible for a student affairs division are key to the success of the institution as it pertains to the student experience and life outside the classroom. Vice presidents for student affairs are not immune to the challenge of being ready for organizational change.

Vice presidents for student affairs are often from backgrounds specific to student development or counseling, or a discipline or functional area of expertise, and are not trained in the development of organizations. This infers that those in vice president for student affairs positions may need to develop and understand more about leading and being ready for change in their organizations early on in their tenure as vice presidents (Barr et al., 2014; Dungy & Ellis, 2011; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

The functional areas within student affairs correlate directly to retention and satisfaction of the students enrolled, which are vital components of the institution (Dalton & Gardner, 2002; Kuh, 1996; Kuk et al., 2010). Vice presidents for student affairs need to possess traits and skills that can lead on the day-to-day management of the division of student affairs within the institution; vice presidents for student affairs must also pay attention to the details of the delivery of a vibrant student experience (Kuh, 1996; Kuk et al., 2010). In order to succeed in their positions, those in leadership roles must possess skills and traits that meet the needs of the organization as it relates to readiness for change (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996).

Some of the skills and traits that have been suggested by the literature include: listening; having a sense of humor, having the ability to build trust and confidence, possessing a realistic perspective, being adept at determining readiness for change, possessing good communication skills, having the ability to obtain buy-in and build trust and confidence, and having the ability to foster and engage collaboration (Barr et al., 2014; Burke, 2014; Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2013; Smith & Blixt, 2015). Other skills that are helpful in leading change in organizations include: being detail oriented; the ability to define and predict reactions to the change; and understanding the organization and the bigger picture, as well as understanding the risks involved with the change initiative (Burke, 2014; Kotter, 2012,). Those leading change within the organization must also be self-confident; motivate others; be persistent; and have the trust and respect of others in the organization, as well as be credible and have integrity (Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Spangenberg & Theron, 2013; Weiner, 2009).

Purpose Statement

This study sought to examine and to add to the understanding of how vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges interpret their own readiness for leading change within their organization.

Research Questions

The overall research question that guided this study was: What are the lived experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges as they make meaning of their experience with being ready to change their organizations? To fully grasp the scope and understanding of each participant's experience and perceptions about change readiness, the following research questions were utilized:

1. How do vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges define what "readiness for change" means to them?
2. How do vice presidents for student affairs describe their readiness for leading change?
3. What skills and traits do vice presidents for student affairs identify as being important to their readiness to lead change within their organization?
4. How would vice presidents for student affairs describe their own personal development of the skills and traits needed to lead change? How did they develop these skills and traits?
5. How would vice presidents for student affairs apply their own readiness for change to their strategy for readying their organization for change?

Definition of Terms

Change: to make different; or become different; or become something else ("change," n.d.). For the purposes of this study the following overarching definition of change will be used: "Change = isomorphism, adaptation, organizational change, innovation and reform" (Kezar, 2014, p.xii).

Change management: The ability and process for managing changes and/or transitions in organizations or in one's personal life. Representatives from Prosci, Inc. (2010), a leading training and educational firm defined change management as the ability to apply skills, tools, procedures and organizational values to management of the human or people side of change to accomplish the desired change within the organization, project or initiative. Change management often refers to smaller more systematic changes (Gill, 2003; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kotter, 2012).

Change leadership: The ability to facilitate, implement, and navigate change that affects others within an organization and the potential long term characteristics and or directions of the organization. Kotter (2012) described it as the big vision, harder to accomplish and messier in the sense that there is less control in the outcome. Others described it as the "people" side of change and the "human element" which is critical in the change process and overcoming the failure rate in change initiatives (Prosci Inc., 2010).

Organizational Change: Change that occurs within a unit of some kind such as a club, business, or other group created for a purpose. It involves transformation within an organization regarding its structure, policies and practices, or culture. It can necessitate people within the organization to learn new competencies and conduct (Aremenikis & Bedeian, 1999; Burke, 2014; Krysinski & Reed, 1994; Sage & Rouse, 2009). For the purpose of this study, organizational change refers to institutions of higher education, specifically small, private liberal arts colleges and the division of student affairs leadership within each institution.

Readiness for Change: The organization's ability to be ready for change to occur. It also refers to the leaders within the organization and their individual and collective capacity or efficacy in engaging with change initiatives (Kotter, 2012; LenCD, 2013, Quinn, 1996; Rafferty, Jimmieson, & Armenakis, 2013; Weiner, 2013).

Vice President for Student Affairs: Someone with a position of senior student affairs officer or chief student affairs officer. This person reports directly to the president and has responsibilities that include the oversight and management of student affairs functions on the campuses included in this study.

Small, Private, Liberal Arts College: For the purposes of this study, is an institution with an undergraduate population between 800 and 3000 and a curricular focus on the liberal arts. *Liberal arts:* "College or university studies intended to provide chiefly general knowledge and to develop general intellectual capacities as opposed to professional or vocational skills" ("liberal arts," n.d.).

Change Engagement: For the purposes of this study, change engagement refers to the emotional and physical involvement or commitment and dedication to a specific and or general process of change within the organization (Burke, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996).

Traits: Refers to distinguishing characteristics especially of one's personal nature ("traits," n.d.). *Skills*: Refers to the ability coming from one's learned knowledge, practice, or aptitude; competent excellence in performance, expertness, or dexterity ("skills," n.d.).

Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this study was delimited to vice presidents for student affairs at 12 small, private, liberal arts colleges across the United States. The study's participants were senior administrators with vice president or equivalent titles at small, private liberal arts colleges who lead student affairs units, who have direct reporting relationships to the president, and who serve on the president's leadership team. Participants were solicited via an e-mail invitation to participate in an interview based on their position or title, at an institution that identifies as a small, private liberal arts institution. Participants had served in the position at the institution for a time ranging from seven months to more than 20 years.

Limitations of the Study

The findings of this study may not be comparable to senior student affairs or other administrators at other types of institutions. The findings represent only the attitudes and perceptions of those in vice president for student affairs roles at small, private liberal arts colleges or at the participants' institutions and does not address the attitudes related to change by other staff and faculty at the institutions. The study was conducted under an assumption that held that those in the vice president for student affairs role possess a certain amount of knowledge and experience with readiness for change and change within their organization. This assumption was based on the fact they are in the role as a vice president for student affairs and have been given that position based on their experience, credentials, and knowledge.

Significance of Study

There are many skills, traits, and attributes that are needed to effect change; a breadth of understanding and talent is necessary in order to effect change within organizations (Burke, 2014; Gill, 2003; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kezar, 2014). This study complemented other literature in higher education about change in that it focused on a personal assessment of leaders' attributes and attitudes in relation to readiness for, and engagement with, change. The results of this study will add to the understanding of how leaders perceive their own readiness and ability to lead change, specifically for leadership within the field of student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges. This will inform the needs for training of institutional leadership in order to better equip administrators at this type of institution to lead and manage change more effectively. This study will add to the literature in the specific area of readiness for change on small, liberal arts campuses.

Researcher's Perspective

Many of my past professional experiences have led me to want to complete this study. I have witnessed many situations where change has not been led or managed well at small, private liberal arts institutions where I have worked. Holding multiple positions over the past few decades at a handful of small, private, liberal arts colleges, I have seen and been a leader in different situations on campuses where change has been something to be avoided or concluded with quickly, and therefore not managed or facilitated well. As a result, change has not been sustained effectively. I have seen where a lack of knowledge, skill, preparation, and readiness have been detrimental to those in the organization and their constituents.

Another issue that I have experienced on small, private liberal arts campuses is one of isolation, or working in silos. Silos occur when those on campus become engrained in the day-to-day life of their particular area or department and are not aware of what is going on around them or in the field of higher education. Given this isolation, the organization can become stagnant. Leaders of these types of organizations need to be innovative and surround themselves with those who can be creative in their thinking.

As stated and cited above, numerous changes have an impact on campuses today; small, private liberal arts campuses especially need to able to keep up with changes in policy, law, protocol, and demographics in order to sustain themselves for the future. In today’s fast paced environment, I believe organizations need to be shaped as adaptable and sustainable. Leaders who have the skills, knowledge, and ability to lead the organization into the future in positive and productive ways must be at the helm in order for there to be successful organizational change. In my opinion, many institutions are stagnant and dormant in their ability to propel the organization forward. Leaders on campuses tend to be so entrenched in the day-to-day operations of the institution, they often have little time or energy to spend on assessing where changing will be more efficient and provide more sustainability for the future. As the researcher, I am currently a vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college, which may create a potential for bias to this study. It may also create an opportunity for deeper understanding and perspective of the participants’ experiences.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will focus on a review of the literature pertaining to readiness for change within organizations, the concept of leading or readying an organization for change, and the skills and traits needed in order to manage and lead change in student affairs in higher education (Barr et al., 2014). Vice presidents for student affairs are not immune to the current challenges with which their organizations are faced. Those in leadership positions require skills and traits to ready their organizations for change and then implement it (Dungy & Ellis, 2011). The literature review begins with a glimpse of the characteristics of small liberal arts colleges and the leadership needed to sustain them. This review will provide an overview of the topic of change readiness and models for change implementation. It will explore the role of the vice president for student affairs and characteristics associated with this position.

Small, Private Liberal Arts Colleges

Small, liberal arts colleges are a unique and often criticized form of higher education today (Gordan-Reed, 2013). However, reports suggested small, private liberal arts institutions have a more significant impact on the lives of their students than other types of institutions (Astin, 1999; Blaich, Pascarella, Wolniak, & Cruce, 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). These types of institutions allow for more connection with faculty, understanding of differences and inclusivity as well as give students a broader education which gives them the opportunity to learn skills beyond the curriculum (Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004; Umbach & Kuh, 2006). The foundation of a liberal arts education includes an experience that supports students in developing "a sense of social responsibility" (American Association of Colleges and Universities [AAC&U], 2014, p. 1). In addition to skills that encompass the importance of communication, critical thinking, and problem solving. Students from a liberal arts education have had an experience where the development of their "whole person" has been a focus of their time on campus (AAC&U, 2016; Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004; Annapolis Group Values Statement, 2016).

A liberal education adds value to the college degree in that it prepares the student for the professional work world, teaches them to be conscientious citizens of the world, and helps them learn how to lead a life of consequence (Colby, 2007). The Annapolis Group, comprised of a variety of liberal arts colleges, suggested institutions that are considered liberal arts should value the following:

> Specifically, they regard the overarching purpose of a liberal arts education as developing students' intellectual and personal capacities to: think clearly, analytically, creatively, and critically; understand the various ways disciplinary and interdisciplinary programs in the arts, humanities, natural and social sciences construct knowledge and create meaning; make effective use of technology; work collaboratively and successfully within diverse social environments; communicate effectively; grapple insightfully with ethical problems, adopt considered and rationally defensible moral positions, and then apply their ethical judgments through action with consistency and compassion; and embrace the obligation to function as informed, responsible citizens of their local, regional, and national communities and, ultimately, of the world. (Annapolis Group Values Statement, 2016)

Small, private liberal arts colleges have a greater impact on overall student satisfaction in contrast to other types of institutions (Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004; Roche, 2010). Students tend to be more content with their professors, the quality of their experience in the classroom, and are more likely to view the campus as one that is student-centered (Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004). Students who attend a private, liberal arts college increase the likelihood of degree completion, are more likely to hold a leadership position on campus, engage in trusting interchanges with the administration, and understand the value of the institutional mission of social change (Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004; Roche, 2010). The role leadership plays in this type of institution is critical to the success of the campus and can often be underestimated by those in key positions. Leaders of small, private liberal arts colleges must be ready for change to occur and to be at the forefront of implementing change initiatives on their campuses (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Smith et al., 2015).

Change Readiness

The research suggested many efforts to implement organizational change fail or are not as successful as those leading it may hope them to be (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012). Being ready both personally, and understanding one's organization's capacity for change is one way in which the success of the change could be measured (Burke, 2014; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Weiner, 2009). Organizational readiness for change has many dimensions and refers to the individual capacity of those involved in the change. It concerns itself with "change valence" and "change efficacy" which will be discussed later in this section (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Weiner, 2009).

Readiness referred to the attitudes, beliefs, and objectives regarding change. Those involved in the change should be prepared to undergo or be involved in the change initiative prior to embarking upon it (Armenakis, Harris, & Mossholder, 1993; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Being ready for change included the following: having a trust in the leadership who is implementing the change, understanding why the change must occur, and being committed to the change initiative at all levels of the organization (Armenakis et al., 1993; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Readiness for change has been referred as the "unfreezing" stage in Lewin's model of change (Burke, 2014). Armenakis et al. (1993) defined readiness "as organizational members' beliefs, attitudes, and intentions regarding the extent to which changes are needed and the organization's capacity to successfully make those changes" (p. 681). This is a reference to the meaning of this term as it relates to convictions, emotions, and meaning of readiness for change. Others suggest there is a sense of “urgency” and an intellectual process which occurs involves coming to an understanding of the reality of the current situation, or experience, and what the future reality needs to be, or will be after the change has occurred (Bouckenooghe, 2011, p. 503; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). This process of evaluating the old and the new and coming to the realization change needs to occur requires a shift in mindset that can lead to successful change (Bouckenooghe, 2011; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996).

Preparing for change involves a psychological process that entails determining the pros and cons of the change at hand. Other names for stages involved in preparing for readiness for change include pre-contemplative and contemplative (Cunningham et al., 2002; Prochaska et al., 1994). These stages are the initial stages in being ready for change where the necessity for change is not realized, and the person or organization goes through a thought process of assessing the pros and cons of the change in determining the need for it (Cunningham et al., 2002; Prochaska et al., 1994).

The process of working through the stages allows for those involved to prepare themselves, and for leaders within the organization to systematically prepare those within the organization. Leaders in the organization will need to engage with this process prior to others within the organization (Cunningham et al., 2002; Kotter, 2012; Prochaska et al., 1994).

> Readiness for change does not necessarily imply armed and prepared in the sense that we often assume it must mean; readiness may also means at peace, tolerant, or open to change. In this way, change readiness is defined as the state in which one is best prepared to change internally because one is best prepared for changes in the environment, and the challenge of change readiness becomes; how does a leader get ready to get employees ready for change? (Wallinga, 2008, p. 319)

Many of these theories or models can apply to small liberal arts colleges in that they are intentional and process focused. The nature of a small campus tends to be one in which many people get involved, and are expected to get involved, in change efforts. Taskforces and committees are ways in which processes can to take place in order to assess the need for change or implementing a change (Barr et al., 2014; Blaich et al, 2004).

Change Valence

Change valence or "personal valence" is referred to as the way in which individuals respond to change and what they expected as an outcome of said change (Jansen, Ship, & Michael, 2015, p. 9). Given the varied ways in which people experience change, there are different levels of personal valence associated with change. Some may believe the change will impact them positively; others may believe it will impact them negatively. Some are likely to be in between the two ends of the spectrum of feelings regarding the impact of change (Holt, Armenakis, Field, & Harris, 2007; Jansen et al., 2015). Valence has also been defined as:

> Valence refers to the perceived personal benefit (or personal loss) one may reasonably expect as a result of an organizational change. Valence for an organizational change may be a function of extrinsic, as well as, intrinsic outcomes. (Armenakis, Harris, Cole, Fillmer, & Self, 2007, p. 278)

Opinions regarding valence can shift over time as parties involved acquire information about the change initiative (Jansen et al., 2015). Those with high levels of personal valence are more likely to have higher levels of acceptance; a higher valence is related to a higher level of readiness for change (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al., 1993; Jansen et al., 2015).

As there are levels of readiness, levels of valence for change are realities as well (Jansen et al., 2015). Jansen et al. (2015) suggested there are terms associated with these levels. These terms include: champions, converts, doubters, and defectors. They described champions as those who have admitted the prospect of benefit to themselves is high enough and their valence has amassed over time and they are already engaged fully in the implementation and vision for the change (Jansen et al., 2015). They explained converts as those who at first see the change as less positive, and they will recognize the potential change as not being an advancement or benefit for themselves within the organization. Converts are slower to come to the table or get on board with the change initiatives and may not be involved at the beginning of a change initiative, however, they eventually engage positively (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al., 1993; Jansen et al., 2015).

Those having a consistent low level of personal valence were referred to as doubters and they are individuals who do not and may not ever admit or understand the potential for personal gain from the change (Jansen et al., 2105). Another potential label for those in an organization associated with change is defector; defectors are ones who show a diminished engagement with the change initiative and are likely to remove themselves from the change process. Defectors will discuss the lack of benefits they see associated with the change to others (Jansen et al., 2015). Doubters and defectors could be challenging for those leading the change, as well as detrimental to the change process. Attention should be paid to them by those leading the change in order to determine if bringing them back on board with the change would be helpful. The creation of incentives for those in the organization could be considered as a mechanism to avoid the possibility of negativity toward the change initiative (Armenakis et al., 2007; Bandura, 1986; Jansen et al., 2015).

Change Efficacy

> Efficacy is defined as confidence in one's ability to complete a task or accomplish a goal. An opinion may be offered such as 'we will be successful in implementing the proposed or implemented changes.' Also, for a change that has been implemented, evidence may be offered that people are successfully accomplishing their new jobs. In contrast, evidence may also be offered that the employees lack the skill-level to successfully perform in the new jobs. In an organizational change effort, the question to be answered

> is do I/we believe that I/we “can successfully implement the change?” (Armenakis et al., 2007, p. 282)

Possessing confidence in one’s ability to achieve the desired goals or outcomes of a change initiative, while simultaneously participating in a process for change within an organization, is vital to the success of the change initiative (Armenakis et al., 1993; Cunningham et al., 2002; Jansen et al., 2015; Prochaska et al., 1994). Individuals within the organization, possessing efficacy for change coupled with their ability to manage the process of change, are more likely to participate more fully in the change development (Aremenakis et al., 1993; Jansen et al., 2015; Weiner, 2009). In order for the organization or collective membership to have a sense of change efficacy as a group, individuals must first possess self-efficacy (Prochaska et al., 1997; Weiner, 2009). Change efficacy rises to a higher level when those involved share a collective confidence in their ability to implement change in their organization (Weiner, 2009). Assessment for this capacity in confidence is important in addressing the process for implementing change both at the individual and the organizational level (Combe, 2014). Organizations who have members who have a high capacity and confidence for change, who are persistent and loyal to the change efforts while being ambitious and motivated, will be successful in implementing new initiatives. With the right mindset, skill set, and environment, change initiatives can be satisfying and effective for those involved (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008, p. 54).

Models of Organizational Change

Organizational change can be defined in many ways, however it is straightforward in that it can be described as a transformation of some sort of an organization or unit such as a club, business, or other group, including an institution of higher education or units within said institution. It can allow for people within an organization to learn new competencies and conduct

(Aremenikis & Bedeian, 1999; Burke, 2014; Krysinski & Reed, 1994; Sage & Rouse, 2009). There are many models of organizational change that have been published and utilized in organizations. The following section will summarize a few of the most popular of the models.

Kotter's Eight Stage Process of Creating Major Change

While there are many models for engaging in change within organizations, John Kotter's (2012) model is one of the most prominent. Kotter (2012) suggested the process of readying or leading an organization has eight stages. The stages include: creating a sense of urgency, forming a guiding coalition, forming a vision, communicating the vision, empowering others to act on the vision, planning for and creating short term wins, consolidating approaches that will allow for more change, and institutionalizing new approaches into the framework of the organization (Kotter, 2012, p. 23). While this model has many stages it is one that is accessible and utilized as a resource and training tool for many organizations. Sequence of the stages is important and the author cautions against skipping any step as this could be detrimental to the change imitative for the leaders and the members of the organization (Kotter, 2012).

In order to make the change "stick" or fulfill the eighth stage within the organization, Kotter (2012) suggested the following strategies: create opportunities to celebrate milestones during the process, develop and assess structures that will sustain themselves for the long-term, provide education and training opportunities to enhance skills and knowledge of those involved, and continue to ascertain the principles and standards that reinforce the change that was created (Kotter, 2012). He also suggested continually communicating progress related to the change, clarifying the tenets about change to new members of the organization in order to set clear expectations, and developing new policies and procedures that further support and institutionalize the change within the organization (Kotter, 2012).

Benefits of this model are many, and entail giving the organization undergoing this process an opportunity for teambuilding and the creation of relationships that could be beneficial for the long term health of the organization (Lencioni, 2012; Nauheimer, 2009). It allowed for the change process to be divided into multiple stages and steps, which allow for more thoughtful and intentional change initiatives (Kotter, 2012). It is a plausible model and can be articulated to others within the organization. It enables those involved to experience a simpler change implementation because it focuses on the change readiness process more than the change itself (Kotter, 2012). The steps facilitated for clarity in the process are easily understandable and can foster successful change initiatives while adhering to both hierarchical and linear organizational models (Kotter, 2012; Nauheimer, 2009). The model is, however, imperfect. Weaknesses to be considered included: the linearity of the model can lead to misconstrued expectations, once the process has begun it is difficult to make adjustments, it is top down in its structure and does not give much room for adaptation, and implementation could lead to members of the organization feeling marginalized if their feelings and thoughts are not taken into consideration (Nauheimer, 2009).

Kurt Lewin's Three Step Change Model

Also popular in the field of change management is Kurt Lewin's three-step change model process. Like Kotter's, this model is easy to understand and allows for a phased transition to occur (Burke, 2014). Instead of eight phases, this model allows for three and the following section will describe it in detail.

The first stage in this model is unfreezing (Burke, 2014). This stage suggested that those in the organization need to have their current reality understood and shifted, or a change in mindset and understanding of the situation at hand must be created (Burke, 2014). This can be done by presenting a current problem or event that will cause people to acknowledge the need for change and have the desire to search for new solutions (Barron, 2015; Burke, 2014). "Unfreezing in the context of organizational change includes the process by which organizational members' beliefs and attitudes about a change are altered so that they perceive the changes as both necessary and likely to be successful" (Choi & Ruona, 2011, p. 2).

The second phase of this model has been adapted by Schein in recent years and referred to as "transition" or "change" (Barron, 2015; Schein, 1987). Lewin referred to it as "moving" in earlier versions, however in the late 1970s, Schein adapted it to be the following: Creating new behaviors, values, and attitudes in a variety of ways within the organization (Barron, 2015; Burke, 2014; Shein, 2004). This stage of changing or transition requires "cognitive restructuring" (Burke, 2014, p. 176). It is vital that members involved in the organization see things from a different perspective; this is the stage where there must be a paradigm shift among the members of the organization (Burke, 2014). This new perspective can be created by an outside consultant, a new leader within the organization, or a new way of thinking within the old structure (Burke, 2014). This stage involves researching and understanding how the work is done at other organizations and can involve scanning the landscape so to speak for new and different ways of doing things. It may mean inviting others to share their knowledge and experience to the organization or sending members of the organization out to hear the perspective of others and return with ideas and innovations to include in the change initiative (Burke, 2014, p. 177).

The final stage of this model involves "freezing" (Lewin, 1947; Shein, 1987, 2004). This pertains to the organization institutionalizing or developing the new behaviors, attitudes and ownership of the changes and integrating them into the organization. Others (Armneskis et al., 1993) refer to this as commitment: a commitment to sustain the change that has been implemented and to carry it forward in the behavior and practices of the organization. Changes must be reinforced at this stage of the process in order to prevent the organization from reverting back to old behaviors or practices (Armeneskis et al., 1993; Barron, 2015; Burke, 2014).

ADKAR: A Model for Change in Business, Government, and Our Community

The ADKAR model was developed by Jeffrey Hiatt from Prosci Inc., and published in his book in 2006. The model is based on five phases and those who have used it say it is easily understandable, works in the context of small and large change initiatives, and takes into consideration the personal or people aspects associated with change in organizations (Hiatt, 2006). The model stands for Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement (Hiatt, 2006). Similar to the models already presented, it is a sequenced process that has steps involved with applying the model to change efforts (Hiatt, 2006).

Awareness refers to the stage at which those in the organization become aware or are made aware of the need to change, the reason for the change and the danger associated if the change does not occur (Hiatt, 2006). This is the stage at which why questions are answered: “Why is the change necessary? Why is it happening now? What is wrong with what we are doing today? What will happen if we don’t change?” (Hiatt, 2006, p. 6). The considerations that need to be made at this phase involve understanding the kind of change and how it connects to the vision, the consequences that could occur if the change were not to happen, what will be the result on the organization, and what is to be gained for those in the organization (Hiatt, 2006). Things to be considered at this phase of the process include the style of the people involved, the integrity of the communicator of the messages, the presence of misinformation or rumors in the organization, and how much those in the organization understand the need to change. Once awareness is built the next phase is desire.

Desire is the second phase in the ADKAR model and can be a challenging phase as it relies upon those in the organization and the choices they make, and there is little control one can have over other people's decision making at this stage (Hiatt, 2006). A common misstep for leaders at this stage is the assumption that they have desire as a result of building awareness and this is not always the case (Hiatt, 2006). This phase has to do with internal aspects of people and their motivation, passion for, and understanding of the change (Hiatt, 2006). It is purely influenced by the people in the organization and their willingness and perception of the environment and what is in it for them (Hiatt, 2006). "Once a person has the desire to support and participate in the change, the next element in the ADKAR model is *knowledge* of how to change" (Hiatt, 2006, p. 22).

When a group or person has acquired the awareness and desire for change knowledge is the next phase and relates to preparing and learning about the abilities and activities needed to change; exhausting material on how to use new procedures, structures, and devices; and comprehending the new functions and tasks associated with change (Hiatt, 2006). Key features that influence this phase are the current expertise of the people involved, the competence level present to gain new knowledge, the means accessible for training and education, and the availability of the required information (Hiatt, 2006). Knowledge is a vital component needed in order for change to occur both personally and holistically throughout the organization (Hiatt, 2006). Ability refers to the fourth stage of this model and encompasses the aptitude to employ the change and realize the anticipated outcome (Hiatt, 2006). Factors that can impact success or failure at this stage are about the internal nature of a person and include "psychological blocks; physical abilities; intellectual capability; time available to develop the needed skills; and the availability of the resources to support the development of new abilities" (Hiatt, 2006, p. 32).

This phase is related to incorporation of the skills and abilities needed in order to implement the change and includes internal capacity in individuals and the organization to be successful. This stage can take time and attention for those involved and members of the organization as well as its leadership must practice patience and persistence at this stage of the model (Hiatt, 2006). Once the abilities are in place the next phase of the model is reinforcement.

Reinforcement is the final stage of this model and includes celebration of the achieved change; this final stage can take many forms (Hiatt, 2006). Suggested factors for this phase include: emphasis on making significance in the people involved, recognition of meaning to them, confirmed growth or visible success, lack of undesirable outcomes, and existence of measures to bolster the change (Hiatt, 2006). Activity at this phase reinforces the change, institutionalizes it, and makes it feasible for future change to occur (Hiatt, 2006). It allows for members to celebrate their success, understand the process for change within the organization, and create an environment conducive for future change to occur (Hiatt, 2006). Figure 1 is a visual depiction of this model in action. As one can see, the model has phases that move the organization along a process of implementation and upward trajectory throughout the course of the change initiative.

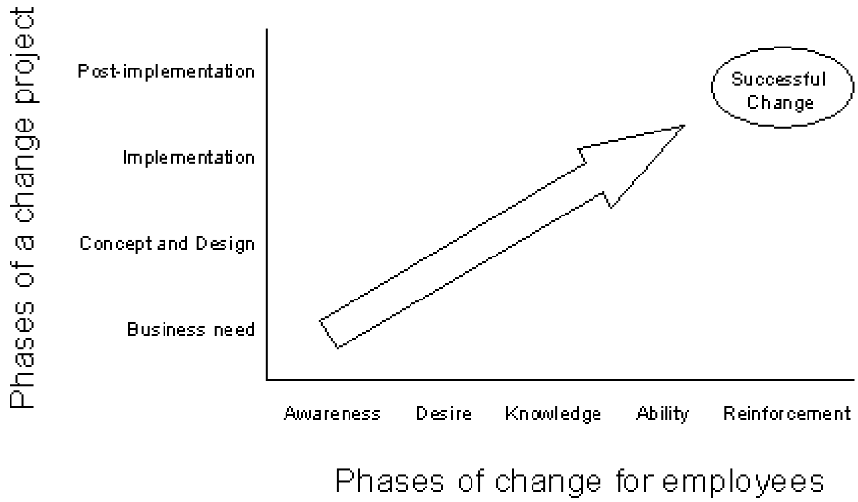

Figure 1. ADKAR model of change (https://www.prosci.com/adkar/adkar-model).

There are many models for instituting change in organizations and they have similarities and differences. The one's mentioned here are relevant to current needs within organizations and can be adapted for a small, private liberal arts college. Those who enact change could benefit from the understanding and knowledge about these models for change implementation. While there are many more models that could be discussed, the ones reviewed here are applicable to this study.

Levels of Change

Burke (2014) described levels of change that can occur during a change initiative and are important for leaders within the organization to be aware of in implementing change efforts. The levels are relevant to the internal aspects of the organization (Burke, 2014). The levels refer to "the individual, the group, and the total system" (Burke, 2014, p. 100).

Individual Level

The focus on the individual level refers to both what the individual person needs in regards to change, as well as some possible challenges for the individuals within the organization. Burke (2014) suggested the individual level begins at the recruitment and hiring stages of an individual's time at the organization. It also refers to the potential for "replacement and/or displacement," or removal from or moving someone within the organization (p. 101). This level involves acquiring, positioning, and sustaining the right people in the right roles in order to enable the larger goals of organizational change (Burke, 2014). It is important to consider organizational need, fit, and shared values when placing people in leadership or other positions critical to leading change (Burke, 2014). Being selective and intentional is critical when hiring people to be part of an organization including small, private liberal arts colleges. Change leadership and fit are important characteristics to consider when looking at this individual level of change within the organization. In doing so, issues, challenges, and resistance to change can be avoided (Burke, 2014).

Training and development, in addition to coaching and counseling, are techniques utilized to prepare leaders for change, as well as educate members of the organization (Burke 2014). Training and development can happen with senior managers in order to give them the skills and knowledge in order to lead change. Beer (1980) suggested there exists a challenge when instituting this type of support due to the fact that the interests and needs of the individual may not be in the best interest of the organization, or what the change leadership required. He explained that if the person counseling can help in creating mutual understanding about the goals, the counseling of the person and change initiative as it relates to the individual will be more successful (Beer, 1980).

Executive coaching is a newer way to look at counseling and coaching and can be viewed through a variety of lenses (Burke, 2014). These lenses included: skill development, performance enhancement, development for the future, and what the individual determines is necessary (Witherspoon & White, 1998). The coaching structure should include a discussion between parties about what can be expected with the coaching relationship, consideration of the individual needs, tasks to be completed after the coaching session, and follow-up from the coach on what was learned from the experience (Witherspoon & White, 1998). The individual level of change within an organization can be complex and challenging.

Individuals can also have reactions to change that merit some discussion. Burke (2014) suggested dealing with change is similar or can be like a grief process. Levinson (1978) proposed that whatever the level of resistance to change, it was still important to recognize the feelings that related to some type of loss, even if behavioral or routines were identified as the loss. Allowing members of the organization to share their thoughts and feelings was vital to overcoming these feelings on an individual basis (Levinson, 1978). Hambrick and Cannella (1989) suggested that resistance arises with change and that there are three kinds of resistance: blind, political, or ideological. With blind resistance, some people just do not like change; nothing matters to this constituency and nothing can be done to ease their fear and anxiety (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989). Encouragement and reinforcement are vital for these individuals, and with time they can often acquiesce to accept the change (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989).

Political resistance was explained as those involved have something to lose as a result of change; leaders were encouraged to remind individuals that trading something with something of value is a negotiation tactic for the individuals displaying political resistance. Finally, individuals' ideological resistance must be countered with information that can relate substantive and realistic perspectives (Hambrick & Cannella, 1989). Burke explained that individuals demonstrating resistance are better than those with apathy, he said: "at least with resistance there is energy, and the person cares about something" (2014, p. 111). Individuals possess different reactions to change and these aspects should be recognized when leading change in an organization (Burke, 2014).

Coping with Change on the Individual Level.

The final aspect of dealing with the individual level of change is of coping with the change. Bridges (1986) explained that there is a difference between change and transition. Leaders responsible for change should take into consideration this and the individual's needs in order to successful manage change (Bridges, 1986). He suggested three phases involved in the process of termination and letting go (Bridges, 1986; Burke, 2014, p. 112). The phases included: giving up; misunderstanding; and commencement or new beginning (Bridges, 1986; Burke, 2014). Giving up included giving up a current state or identity and being willing to change to make a successful transition and that a great deal of resistance can be a challenge in this first phase of transition (Bridges, 1986). Second, he explained is misunderstanding, vagueness and uncertainty and often sadness and worthlessness could be feelings for individuals at this phase (Bridges, 1986). And then finally emerged the third phase which related to a new beginning or commencement of a kind. Individuals acquire new proficiencies and create a new reality for the future and see themselves in it (Bridges, 1986). Bridges, stressed the importance of creating opportunities for members of the organization to talk through thoughts and feelings so they could work through them in a productive and appropriate manner (1986). There is much to consider at the individual level of organizational change before considering the group level.

Coping with Change on the Group Level

Consideration at the group level when change is occurring is also important to the success of the organization (Burke, 2014). The group of people charged with creating and sustaining change become vital to the organization's ability to fulfill the change initiative in being the “interface between the individual and the organization” (Burke, 2014, p. 115). This main group of leaders in the group also become the chief people responsible for social networks and maintenance of the individual level; as well as, “a determination of the employee’s sense of organizational reality” are integrated into the process (Burke, 2014, p. 115). Group functioning is of utmost importance to the organization and it is imperative this group get along well and work well with other groups within the organization (Burke, 2014).

At this level teambuilding is part of the fabric of the organization and allows for members to get involved while also becoming acquainted with each other in order to reinforce the change initiatives (Burke, 2014). Teambuilding has four goals for the group: goal setting; assessing efficiencies within the group; analyzing the group dynamics that include procedures, patterns, and exchanges between members; and finally assessing the personal connections amongst the group members (Beckhard, 1972). Beckhard (1972) cautioned that defining a primary intended outcome for the teambuilding and creating transparency amongst the members is important during teambuilding. Having a good working team, especially the primary leadership team, can be instrumental in creating and implementing successful change. Clear roles, debunking myths, and providing parallel direction are all underlying themes of teambuilding (Beckhard, 1972).

Like individuals, reactions at the group level must be considered. Burke (2014) explained “four potential forms of resistance as ‘turf’ protection and competition; closing ranks; changing allegiances; and demand for new leadership” (p. 121). Turf protection involves those within the group thinking the change will somehow change the central mission of the organization and this belief can be detrimental to the progress (Burke, 2014). He explained closing ranks as resistance within a department or group that does not want to change and feels as though they are justified in staying together, while changing allegiances refers to when a group decides to shift where they sit within the organization and either separate themselves or realign themselves with another group within the organization (Burke, 2014). Demand for new leadership refers to when the leader in charge of the group is not meeting the group's expectations, either as a result of outcry from the group or through incompetence of a person, and the only way to make progress or shake things up is to make a change at the leader level of the group (Burke, 2014). Assessing as to whether or not the group should remain in existence or be recreated is critical at this stage of the process (Burke, 2014). Before the organization moves on with the change process, determining the individual and group level needs are being addressed and progress is being made must occur before advancing to the system level changes (Burke, 2014).

Coping with Change on the System Level

System level changes are a large endeavor and rarely occur at the beginning of the change process (Burke, 2014). The foundation must be created in the individual and group level change processes prior to a system level change being initiated (Burke, 2014). System refers to an organization comprised of multiple individuals and groups; a college or university is a good example of a system for the purposes of this study (Burke, 2014). System change involves assessment of levels of change, phases of large system change, and the change emphasis (Burke, 2014, p. 122).

Kimberly and Neilson (1975) as cited in Burke advised, there are three levels or orders of change and orders refer to the focus of the change (Burke, 2104). They described first order change as a change within a smaller unit within the organization, like a department or a division (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975). Change at this order is small in comparison and depending upon the organization may not sustain itself. Change at this order could involve the process of intervening with teambuilding with the achieved outcome also being better relationships among those in the group in addition to whatever change initiative occurs (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975).

Second order change referred to a subgroup or system within the organization and a subgroup that will be directly impacted should the change initiative be successful (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975). An example of a group could be a senior leadership team or direct report team. An example of how this could materialize on a college campus could be the first order change is focused on the leadership team for the organization like a president's cabinet, and the second order change is focused on the vice president's direct reports and involves a specific intervention that will allow for change to occur within the organization (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975).

And lastly, third order change is explained as influencing change on multiple factors of an organization (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975). "Whereas second-order change attempts are designed to 'phase in' particular schemata and 'phase out' others, third-order change attempts aim to help organization members develop the capacity to identify and change their own schemata as they see fit" (Bartunek & Moch, 1987, p. 487). Third order is a more systematic or organization wide change effort that can be measured and evaluated over time (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975). The potential for a succession of changes is more relevant to third order change (Kimberly & Neilson, 1975). Third order change is a more holistic change that impacts the organization for the future in a variety of ways and can be intertwined with phases of change as discussed earlier in this chapter in the models section.

Change Focus and Change Process

Change focus as explained by Burke (2014) refers to the intention, or what needs to be changed, and why, and encourages the determination of the foci of the change initiative as crucial to setting the stage for systemic change within the organization. The leadership must determine if the change is to be transformational, revolutionary, or evolutionary for the organization (Burke, 2014). Having a focus will help in communicating at the individual and group levels, which can impact the larger system (Burke, 2014). Focus or intention can be on the mission and values of the organization, or on the infrastructure and organizational aspects of the institution (Burke, 2014). In determining focus, the phases and models already discussed can be utilized. Burke (2014) discussed change process as the next point to consider in system change efforts. He described this as the methods by which the change is communicated within the organization (Burke, 2014). This focus can be determined by providing opportunities for feedback through surveys to the members of the organization (Burke, 2014). Another mechanism for communication could be communicating through large group meetings (Burke, 2014).

Interorganizational Change

Interorganizational change occurs when mergers or acquisitions take place between organizations (Burke, 2014). A number of factors can result in this type of change; and can include the possibility of shared resources, which alone neither organization can provide, and improvement in effective resource usage and management (Burke, 2014). Success with this type of change involve the organizations impacted strive to have plans in place for a variety of scenarios, clarity of purpose, balance of power, control and expertise within the "new" organization, and good luck (Burke, 2014; Burke & Biggart, 1997).

Responses to system change could include the change not happening as much or as quickly as expected or anticipated due to the former culture or climate being too strong within the organization (Burke, 2014). A sense of urgency or motivation to change is not enough if not sustained in order to make the change pervasive (Burke, 2014, p. 130). Complacency with change is a potential reaction; for organizations that have tried change and failed, some within the organization could see the new change effort as just that, another attempt that will only fail. This attitude can be damaging to system change efforts and displays apathy more than resistance (Burke, 2014, p. 130). Burke further explained that avoidance or attempts to change the course of the change could occur; the potential for members of the organization to join together in denial of new initiatives and leadership is also present (Burke, 2014). Managing responses at this level are similar to management at the individual and group levels and Burke reminds those leading change that involvement at those levels prior to system change is crucial to successful system level change in order to avoid some of the pitfalls mentioned (Burke, 2014).

Consideration of change at all levels is important in leading change and should be deliberately addressed during change initiatives. Individual and group level changes should be considered as steps in readying the organization for change and those who lead it.

Change Leadership

Having a vision is a vital component in leading change (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). It is important for leaders to create a reasonable story about the organization's future in light of current constraints. Leaders must work with others to maintain momentum and move forward in pursuit of this vision; more importantly, leaders need to follow through with intended plans and institutionalize the achieved changes in order for the organization to accept ongoing change (Beach, 2006; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Change leaders must have the capacity to adapt to the varied responses of change and remember deep transformative learning is required in order for change to be successful (Burke, 2014; Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009; Kotter, 2012).

Many authors suggested that leadership in organizations is personal and should not be taken lightly, especially when it comes to implementing change and making decisions that affect the lives of those in the organization (Hiatt, 2006; Quinn, 1996; Schachter, 2007;). "Being aware of your personal capacity for change is one of the most important factors in being able to manage and even seek out change" (Schachter, 2007, p. 40). While all change can be stress producing, it is important to realize that change is inevitable in all organizations. Change can help leaders learn and grow in their own capacity for handling potentially difficult situations, as well as leading others in productive ways that benefit the future of the organization. Change affects people both personally and professionally, positively and negatively, depending upon the situation (Quinn, 1996; Schachter, 2007).

Creating positive change opportunities requires vigilant thought and should espouse the right people in the organization and adequate resources. Synergy between the leader and members of the organization are essential to the success of the change occurring (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Weiner, 2009). Open and clear communications between levels of the organization are vital during the creation and implementation of change initiatives (Guidroz, Luce, & Denison, 2010). Ensuring that communication can occur through multiple venues is important and should be explored at all levels within the organization. Use of technology, individual, and group meetings are potential mechanisms to help create ongoing and transparent communication (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Stevens, 2013; Weiner, 2009).

These characteristics of change leadership translate well to competencies for student affairs leaders and to the role of a vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college. Many of the competencies described are relevant to the campus environment and can be found in the stories utilized by student affairs professionals to describe the standards and characteristics needed to be a successful vice president for student affairs.

Student Affairs Leadership

The following section will provide an historical overview of student affairs as a profession. It will describe the philosophies of the profession and culminate in a summary of some of the skills and traits needed for student affairs and at the advanced level of vice president for student affairs.

Historical Perspectives

The seminal document, *The Student Personnel Point of View,* addresses the challenge of encompassing the student as a whole; the document provides a founding philosophy that is still present today (American Council on Education [ACE], 1937, 1949). This document defined education as inclusive the "entire" student as a whole person, keeping this concept at the forefront of the work on college campuses, while relying on the student as a participant in the process (ACE, 1937, 1949). It described the work of professionals who catered to educating the student outside the classroom in very simple ways, developing the basic premise of student affairs that is still viable today (ACE, 1937, 1949). For the 50th anniversary of *The Student Personnel Point of View,* a task force was created to create a review or perspective document that was called *A Perspective on Student Affairs*, published in 1987. This piece was endorsed by the American Council of Education and the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators as a commemorative piece and its intent was to offer perspective and understanding about student affairs for leaders within higher education. It was not meant to take the place of *The Student Personnel Point of View*, however it allowed for a deeper understanding of the expectations of the work of student affairs ("A Perspective on Student Affairs," 1987). It shares the perspective which historically, student affairs has influenced a unique outlook pertaining to students, their experiences and campus environments ("A Perspective on Student

Affairs," 1987). From the complex role of student affairs professionals and the reality of their obligations as they pertain to students, student affairs professionals continue to have a vital role on a college campus as they develop, implement, and support the activities and programs outside the classroom (ACE and NASPA, 1987). "As a partner in the educational enterprise, student affairs enhances and supports the academic mission. In addition, student affairs professionals must advocate for the common good and champion the rights of the individual, encourage intelligent risk taking and set limits on behavior, and encourage independent thought and teach interdependent behavior" (ACE & NASPA, 1987, p. 9). The profession stays committed to the ideals of assisting students and their campuses in meeting their goals and expectations (ACE & NASPA, 1987).

In 1996, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA) created the *Student Learning Imperative* (SLI), which invited professionals in student affairs to incorporate the challenges facing higher education as an opportunity to assert the collective commitment to student learning and development (ACPA, 1996). The SLI promoted the necessity of an emphasis on student learning and the significance of working collaboratively with students, faculty academic administration, and others in creating environments conducive for these partnerships to occur (ACPA, 1996). In 1998, NASPA and ACPA, created a joint document that outlined seven principles of good practice for student affairs. The *Principles of Good Practice* outlined seven beliefs of best practice for student affairs and was inclusive of including assessments that could be implemented in creating positive learning environments for students (ACPA & NASPA, 1998). The goal in labeling the practices was to enhance the profession in its focus on learning, to influence the ability to endure challenges that arise, and to drive daily practice in student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 1998).

Also in 1998, a joint report by the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), and NASPA–Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education entitled *Powerful Partnerships: A Shared Responsibility for Learning* was published (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998). The details of this report implore those on campuses, and especially those who work in student and academic affairs, to instill the philosophy of a mutual obligation for student learning (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998). This report challenged those in campus administration to reimagine how their campuses are organized; it encouraged the establishment of creative ways that would allow for integration of student and academic affairs work in line with institutional goals, resource allocations, and plans (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998). It also challenged student affairs professionals to lead in creating opportunities for cross divisional and departmental collaborations in developing opportunities and programs that contribute to the holistic education of the students (AAHE, ACPA, & NASPA, 1998).

In 2004, *Learning Reconsidered* was published and defined the role of students affairs was defined as the lead partner in bringing clarity to and describing in partnership with faculty the goals associated with student learning at their respective institutions (ACPA & NASPA, 2004).

> The goals identified were: engaged citizenship; community service, social justice, and participatory involvement; career planning; ethical approaches to business, relationships, problem-solving, and conflict; practical leadership; emotional intelligence; critical thinking; evaluating sources of information; informed decision-making; working in teams and groups; conflict resolution; cultural competency and cross-cultural understanding; tolerance of ambiguity. (ACPA & NASPA, 2004, p. 20)

The writers of this report implored those in student affairs to consider how they could transform their practice on their campuses to incorporate these goals and to enhance the learning experience for students (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). They described the changing context of the student body and listed many attributes associated with students that needed addressing such as student demographics, learning needs, management of expectations, social and cultural trends, and emerging technologies and policies (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). Also mentioned were the impacts of access to higher education and the financial repercussions of this access, coupled with the decreasing financial support available for students (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). The needs of the changing student population were also mentioned as needing to be considered in developing and implementing programs and services for students (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). The demand for the value of education and the focus on outcomes was also a driving factor for student affairs administrators to determine how to convey the value of a college education, coupled with an assessment of outcomes (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). External influences including involvement from parents, mandates from governments, as well as increased expectations for globalization and diversification were also mentioned as considerations in enhancing environments for student learning (ACPA & NASPA, 2004). *Learning Reconsidered* highlighted and may have even forecasted the many changes and transformations campuses should take in order to be the best for the students who attend them (ACPA & NASPA, 2004).

Evident in these seminal student affairs documents is the need for leaders among student affairs divisions to possess the skills and capacities that enable productive and comprehensive management and leadership of their organizations. The following section discusses the skills and competencies that are suggested for those in student affairs

Skills and Competencies for Student Affairs Professionals

Lovell and Kosten (2000) facilitated a mixed-methods study based on the literature that provided an overview of the qualities necessary to be “a successful student affairs administrator” (p. 569). They explained student affairs professionals must demonstrate a variety of skills and abilities (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). In a meta-analysis of 30 years of data, they discovered student affairs professionals possessed the ability to work efficiently, acknowledge collaboration, relate to professionals, and understand the political dynamics of the institutional environment (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). Political skills allowed for a student affairs administrators to be prepared for achievement in the future (Lovell & Kosten, 2000). They suggested the following skills critical for student affairs administrators: “knowledge base, and personal traits such as administration, management, and human facilitation skills; knowledge of student development theory and functional area responsibilities; and traits of personal integrity and cooperation required” (p. 569). This study suggested more should be done to encourage replication of this type of study and the fact that campuses were changing. They explained different skills and knowledge bases were going to be needed in order to meet the needs for the future, and they highlighted technology, political savvy, and policy as key among those needs (Lovell & Kosten, 2000).

In 2013, Herdlein, Refleir, and Mrowka expanded this study. They found that student affairs professionals needed skills in “human and interpersonal relations, multicultural competency, analytical reasoning, and collaboration” (p. 251). Other skills that were discussed were: “oral and written communication, conflict management, problem solving, advising, crisis intervention, program development, and planning and implementation” (Herdlein, Refleir, Mrowka, 2013, p. 251) Also mentioned were effective listening, caring and empathy, leadership, supervision, administrative skills, and consultation abilities (Burkard, Cole, Ott & Stofflett, 2004 p. 251; Herdlein, 2004; Kretovics, 2002; Waple, 2006). Important topics to be considered in trainings were “administrative/management competencies such as program development and planning, organizational skills, leadership, goal setting, budgeting, research and technology, and general administrative skills” (Herdlein et al., 2013, p. 252). Prominent differences between the two studies were counseling and human facilitation was changed to assessment, management, leadership, and supervision (Herdlein et al., 2013, p. 266). Emphasized in this study was multicultural competency and diversity; assessment and evaluation; and leadership and management including areas such as strategic planning, budgeting, and legal and ethical issues in addition to organizational structure (Herdlein et al., 2013). Both of these studies explained the variety of skills and characteristics that student affairs professionals should possess or at least aspire to achieve. The skills and characteristics reflected are relevant to current student affairs professionals and applicable to small, private liberal arts campuses as well (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004; Herdlein et al., 2013). The following section will discuss more recent work that has evolved around the topic of professional competencies for student affairs professionals.

In 2010, ACPA and NASPA published a document from the Joint Task Force on Professional Competencies:

> This collaborative work identified the following areas of competency for student affairs professionals: Advising and Helping; Assessment, Evaluation, and Research; Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion; Ethical Professional Practice; History, Philosophy, and Values; Human and Organizational Resources; Law, Policy, and Governance; Leadership; Personal Foundations; and Student Learning and Development. The report outlined many of the major competency areas identified in this study and delineated skill level (Basic, Intermediate, Advanced) to further the applicability of the information provided. (ACPA & NASPA, 2010)

In 2015, a new task force was created between the two organizations and the joint competencies were revised. The task force outlined their goals that included the necessity of a focused approach to keeping an all-inclusive, growing vocation of student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The task force explained their priorities, which included adding technology as a knowledge area that student affairs professionals must adapt to their knowledge base given the trend toward online or virtual experiences for students as well as brick and mortar campuses (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). A second priority was the acknowledgement of a wide ranging emphasis on innovation, and the fact that student affairs work is vibrant and multiple mechanisms to engage students must be utilized (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The authors explained that in updating the competency areas they “kept the threads” created throughout the previous version. There are many parallels between the two versions that were created intentionally, however these parallels are now referred to as “intersections,” which include “globalism, sustainability, and collaboration” (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 9).

The field of higher education faces multiple changes given the increase in issues of affordability and access, as well as increased diversity and innovation, which are leading to new ways of teaching and learning, globalization on campuses, and experiences for students. Calls for accountability from stakeholders, escalation of expectations, and rising costs are all indicators of a climate of change within higher education (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Student affairs organizations could be threatened by budget reductions as well as compliance issues (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

The intersections defined in the updated competencies allow for most of the outcomes of the competencies to connect either directly or indirectly through three highlighted points: globalism, sustainability, and collaboration. These three topics do not stand alone as distinctive areas as each of them is individual in nature, yet connected to the others. The goal is to inform the other competencies in their entirety and to influence learning in a variety of ways (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 10). The following section will provide an overview of the updated competencies. Those competencies highlighted for the purposes of this study relate to some part of change leadership and readiness for change from the researchers perspective.

Current competencies for student affairs professionals. Each of the updated competencies is accompanied by a set of foundational, intermediate, and advanced outcomes or proficiencies (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). These are suggested results at different stages of one's career and are related directly to a person's individual abilities, coupled with consideration of philosophies or a progression/priority (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Personal and ethical foundations. "Involves the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to develop and maintain integrity in one's life and work; this includes thoughtful development, critique, and adherence to a holistic and comprehensive standard of ethics and commitment to one's own wellness and growth" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 12). Integrity has an internal focus and is informed through both a personal and ethical foundation as well as an inner voice in conjunction with lived experiences. Integrity is developed through a practice of inquisitiveness, contemplation, and personal authorship (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the foundational level this skill set involves understanding and knowing one's own ethical standards; acknowledging strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to student affairs work; and possessing the ability to balance work and life. At the intermediate level the skill set includes acknowledging alignment of personal and professional ethical standards, enhancing one's ability to engage in stress reducing activities, and defining excellence for oneself and how it can be interpreted by others. At the advanced level skills are reflected in behavior, which includes engagement with others regarding ethical standards and behavior; serving as a role model for others; and displaying awareness of the role of wellness and how others in the organization perceive and practice it (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Values, philosophy, and history. This competency involves knowledge, skills, and dispositions that connect the history, philosophy, and values of the student affairs profession to one's current professional practice. This competency area embodies the foundations of the profession from which current and future research, scholarship, and practice will change and grow. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 12)

Displaying this ability confirms a professional's cognizant perception of the profession's history, philosophy, and values (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). In a new professional this competency is displayed as the ability to: communicate campus types and functional areas within student affairs; convey the value of inclusion and exclusion of persons with multiple identities on college and university campuses; possess the capability of modeling the values of student affairs, and possess a similar expectation from peers and staff to model the principles of the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level this competency is displayed as the ability to impart the beliefs of the profession to staff while integrating the values of equity and inclusion (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Integration and investigation of philosophies of practice are vital at this level, while connecting with faculty for learning and research in this area are important at the advanced stage (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced stage, the ability to be a role model who advances and advocates these values while contributing to the knowledge of the profession are important for this competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Assessment, evaluation, and research.

> Focuses on the ability to design, conduct, critique, and use various AER methodologies and the results obtained from them, to utilize AER processes and their results to inform practice, and to shape the political and ethical climate surrounding AER processes and uses in higher education. (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 12)

At the foundational level this competency can be viewed as the ability to understand the differences between the diverse manners in which evaluation and assessment can be utilized; enable suitable assessment and evaluation efforts; and accurately, responsibly, and effectively share the results of such practices are done so with accuracy, responsibility and effectiveness within the organization (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level this competency involves the ability to inform constituencies at all levels of the institution regarding the value of this work in the organization and convey findings in "culturally appropriate" terms and language while contributing to the ethos of assessment and evaluation in the daily functions of the organization (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level this competency reflects the ability to utilize the data resulting from assessment and evaluation to inform the development and implementation of strategies, programs, resource allocation, and practices within the organization while managing and procuring appropriate resources to allow assessment, evaluation and research to be central to the daily operations of the organization (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Law, policy, and governance. "Includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions relating to policy development processes used in various contexts, the application of legal constructs, compliance/policy issues, and the understanding of governance structures and their impact on one's professional practice" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 13). At the foundational level this competency involves the ability to understand and communicate the varied types of institutions and their differences while communicating current trends and issues that could impact the organization while recognizing when it is appropriate to notify others of issues or concerns (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level this competency involves the employment of institutional, local, state, and federal policies while being able to investigate the use of policies for fairness and equity on campus while implementing best practices for the profession (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level this competency incorporates the ability to deliver effective information to community leadership; question laws and policies and ensure equity among them and their use on campus; partake in shared governance on campus; and to be influential in the realm of policy making where appropriate at the campus, local, state/province, and national levels (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Organizational and human resources.

> Includes knowledge, skills, and dispositions used in the management of institutional human capital, financial, and physical resources. This competency area recognizes that student affairs professionals bring personal strengths and grow as managers through challenging themselves to build new skills in the selection, supervision, motivation, and formal evaluation of staff; resolution of conflict; management of the politics of organizational discourse; and the effective application of strategies and techniques associated with financial resources, facilities management, fundraising, technology, crisis management, risk management and sustainable resources. (p. 13)

At the foundational level this competency is demonstrated by the efficient oversight and utilization of the varied resources available to new student affairs professionals. New professionals should possess the ability to engage in response to incidents and crises as well as an understanding of sustainability practices within the organization (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level the ability to engage in the creation of policies and procedures; and incorporate decision making strategies that abide by policies, while minimizing risk to constituencies is at the core of this competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Employing good practice and policies regarding recruitment, hiring, and onboarding of staff that meet campus policy and institutional goals while reviewing staffing structures, roles, and work flow is important (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level this competency can be seen as the ability to assess risk at all levels of programs and services while ensuring the staff reflect the population of students in diverse ways. The creation of long term resource allocations and divisional priorities is also vital to this competency (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Leadership.

> Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required of a leader, with or without positional authority. Leadership involves both the individual role of a leader and the leadership process of individuals working together to envision, plan, and affect change in

> organizations and respond to broad-based constituencies and issues. This can include working with students, student affairs colleagues, faculty, and community members. (p. 13)

At the foundational level this competency includes the ability to recognize personal strengths and challenges and to pursue leadership development (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Being able to articulate the values and practices that lead to campus improvement as well as creating relationships that are supportive and span across differences is important at this phase of development (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level the ability to juxtapose leadership models for the goal of improving the organization coupled with the creation of environments that encourage others within the organization to be engaged civically and in their communities is an important characteristic (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level this competency entails establishing an environment that promotes engagement in committees, task forces, and cross-functional teams (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). The creation of an environment conduce to this engagement involves enabling "reflective learning and relationship building across campus, the community, and the profession" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 13). Leaders at this level also employ strategies that take into account culture, political, global, technological, and sustainability issues (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Social justice and inclusion.

> It is defined here as both a process and a goal which includes the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to create learning environments that foster equitable participation of all groups while seeking to address and acknowledge issues of oppression, privilege, and power. This competency involves student affairs educators who have a sense of their own agency and social responsibility that includes others, their community, and the larger global context. (p. 14)

Understanding systems of oppression, privilege, and power while engaging in analytical reflection about oneself and one's own biases are key elements at the new professional level (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). New professionals must possess a basic understanding of social justice and inclusion with the context of higher education (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level it is expected professionals are able to create programs and events that promote social justice, inclusivity, and social consciousness. Professionals should also be able to challenge current systems of oppression while creating opportunities for self-reflection and self-evaluation regarding oppression, power, and privilege (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level it is expected professionals are integral in the construction of a campus that understands its place as it pertains to bias and oppression, while promoting strategic opportunities that enhance the "inclusive initiatives and practices throughout the institution" (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 14).

Student learning and development. "Addresses the concepts and principles of student development and learning theory. This includes the ability to apply theory to improve and inform student affairs and teaching practice (ACPA & NASPA, 2015, p. 14).

Entry level professionals should be able to convey paradigms and concepts that detail the learning and growth of college students and their holistic experiences while also seeing the challenges and opportunities in utilizing current models and theories to diverse student groups. They should be able to communicate how identities can impact development at this stage of a person's life (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level professionals should be able to develop and evaluate learning outcomes that assess the purpose of their respective unit, division, and campus while they educate those around them to enlighten future initiatives (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level professionals should possess the ability to interpret these concepts to multiple stakeholders within the organization including: peers, faculty, students, and parents while efficiently improving knowledge regarding the work of student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Assessment and evaluation of the value of the knowledge growth opportunities are vital to this level of expertise as professionals at this level are responsible for the creation and maintenance of campus environments that are “inclusive, socially-just, and welcoming while promoting deep learning which fosters student success” (p. 14).

Technology.

> Focuses on the use of digital tools, resources, and technologies for the advancement of student learning, development, and success as well as the improved performance of student affairs professionals. Included within this area are knowledge, skills, and dispositions that lead to the generation of digital literacy and digital citizenship within communities of students, student affairs professionals, faculty members, and colleges and universities as a whole. (p. 15)

The use and understanding of technology in institutions is vital to their success in a variety of ways. Entry level student affairs professionals must be able to understand basic technological functions and be able to utilize staff in information technology in order to be successful (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). They must be able to turn to research, current trends, and the nature of their environment in understanding the needs of their community constituents (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the next level in one’s professional life practitioners must be able to employ a variety of approaches, methods, and evaluation techniques in understanding the information that is available to them and how to share it with others to impact the mission of the institution and goals of the department/division (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Intermediate professionals must be able to enable and educate those in the organization best practices, ethics, and standards as well as policies and laws associated with the use of technology (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level professionals must be able to lead the organization in creating, utilizing, and assessing the tools and spaces available to students. Advanced level professionals must be able to lead the way in procuring resources for technology and its availability and use as it enhances the experience of the student in a holistic way (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Advising and supporting. Addresses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to providing advising and support to individuals and groups through direction, feedback, critique, referral, and guidance (p. 15).

Student affairs professionals at all levels are charged with being advisors and supporters to students and colleague within the institutions they serve (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). As professionals, it is vital early in one's career to learn the skills necessary to create relationships with those on campuses including and most importantly students (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Through these relationships, possessing the ability to create opportunities for the presence of individual and collective support, enhance the process for individual and collective decision making and goal setting, and provide appropriate challenge and support are vital (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the intermediate level, professionals should be able to evaluate the needs of students in regards to their development, as well as the needs of student groups and organizations, while engaging with students in a variety of ways including manners that allow for understanding patterns of behavior as individuals and play the role of intermediary for students (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At this stage of one's career being a mentor to students, as well as fellow staff, is part of the role one plays on a campus (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). At the advanced level it is important for professionals to contribute, participate, and lead in the areas of research about students and their wellness; evaluation of programs and initiatives related to advising and supporting, as well as coordination and leadership of campus crisis interventions are also important (ACPA & NASPA, 2015). Collaboration across campus as well as networking with community agencies is critical to success in this area in tackling issues of health, wellness and success in a holistic and collaborative way (ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

While these competencies are suggested for all levels of those in student affairs, they are particularly helpful for those in vice president for student affairs positions to be aware of and strive toward achieving relative to their own growth and development and that of their staff whom they supervise. Many of the competencies suggest the need for skill, knowledge and talent in a variety of ways which relate to change and readiness for leading change. The following section will discuss the role of vice president for student affairs and the knowledge necessary specifically for creating, leading, and implementing change within their organizations.

Assessment in Student Affairs

Student affairs professionals must acknowledge assessment as fundamental to the success of their organization (Schuh, 2013). Hunches, intuition, and trends are not ideal ways in which to pursue new ideas and initiatives (Schuh, 2013). Understanding how organizations are developed and function is an important step in understanding how and what to assess (Kuk et al., 2010). Establishing a culture of assessment within the division of student affairs is critical to the success of the division and must be done in order to create evidence within the division of what works and what does not (Schuh, 2013). In addition to student assessments, organizational assessments must be implemented in order to gain knowledge and awareness about what needs to change within the organization (Kuk et al., 2010). Assessment must define, measure, and report a program's effectiveness while being intentional (Shutt, Garrett, Lynch, & Dean 2012). Utilizing learning outcomes has become a way to gather data within student affairs units. Vital to the success of student affairs is the notion of understanding the student experience in addition to the services and programs with which they engage (Dean, 2013). Most worthwhile with assessment is to learn from students what they have learned from the involvement and experience (Schuh, 2013). Assessing at the organizational level should include not only the who and the what, but the why and the how within the organization (Kuk et al., 2010). The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) can be helpful for those in student affairs in determining an assessment plan, benchmarking standards for units, as well as incorporating such standards into the practice of student affairs (Dean, 2012).

The challenges associated with assessment include: knowledge of the best practices for assessment within the division, access to information, time, and resources (Blimling, 2013). Student affairs work can be daunting and it can be challenging to fit assessment into the regular workload given the training and expertise needed in order to implement assessment strategies (Blimling, 2013).

Characteristics for Leading Change in Student Affairs

Student affairs leaders must see themselves as innovators within the field and within their organizations (Smith, 2011; Smith & Blixt, 2015). Smith explained the term “innovators” as those who strive to comprehend the scope of their work as a broader field of knowledge, as well as how it applies to their specific organization (Smith, 2011). Smith challenged those in student affairs leadership roles to be more creative leaders, to look at the institution more holistically, and to hire staff who exemplify these characteristics in their daily work (Smith, 2011). Others explained how leaders of change in student affairs must focus on the fact that change is inevitable and one must work within the division team and the campus constituents to develop a vision and then embolden those within the organization to transform vision into reality (Culp, 2011, p. 20).

Leaders who exemplify innovation and change leadership must possess values that nurture innovation within their organizations such as being curious about the topic at hand and supporting others in doing the same; having an imagination that allows for idea creation and development of multiple ideas; having the courage to take steps to be bold in making changes even when they may be difficult, intimidating, or superfluous; having patience with learning the culture of the institution and with the process of change even when the process can seem daunting; and possessing persistence (Barr et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015). Having persistence and determination to sustain the effort for change when it seems unfathomable or difficult, and to recognize all aspects of a project or initiative may not come to fruition is also significant (Barr et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015). With these values at hand and a reframing of the role of vice president for student affairs to change leaders; efforts can be successful and the practice of change can be at the forefront of the change process within the organization (Barr et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2015).

As suggested in the competencies for student affairs practitioners, collaboration is a value leaders in student affairs must possess in order to successfully implement change within their organizations (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Kuk et al., 2010). Student affairs organizations should explore manners in which to enhance relationships and partnerships and consider structures that allow for more cross departmental and lateral connections to occur within the institution (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Kuk et al., 2010; Laws, 2014). It is important to work collaboratively rather than competitively within departments and divisions on campus (Pain, 2014; Laws, 2014; Smith et al., 2015). Creating teams that are highly functional, effective, and ethical is also important in implementing change initiatives (Barr et al., 2014; Kuk et al., 2010; Laws, 2014; Smith et al., 2015).

Summary

Vice presidents for student affairs must see themselves as change agents or change leaders within their organizations (Barr et al., 2014; Kezar, 2014; Kuk et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). Change will always exist within higher education institutions and having leaders at the helm who understand how to manage individual personalities and dynamics, as well as institutional and organizational subtleties, is vital to creating and implementing change within organizations. Understanding the systems, structures, politics, and people involved in organizations is important to creating environments that are ready and conducive for change at any level (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Barr et al., 2014; Kuk et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015).

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Purpose Statement

This study sought to examine and to add to the understanding of how vice presidents for student affairs (VPSA) at small, private liberal arts colleges interpret their own readiness for leading change within their organization.

Research Questions

The overall research question that guided this study was: What are the lived experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts campuses as they make meaning of their experience with being ready to change their organizations? To fully grasp the scope and understanding of each participant's experience and perceptions about change readiness, the following research questions were utilized:

1. How do vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges define what "readiness for change" means to them?

2. How do vice presidents for student affairs describe their readiness for leading change?

3. What skills and traits do vice presidents for student affairs identify as being important to their readiness to lead change within their organization?

4. How would vice presidents for student affairs describe their own personal development of the skills and traits needed to lead change? How did they develop these skills and traits?

5. How would vice presidents for student affairs apply their own readiness for change to their strategy for readying their organization for change?

Research Design and Rationale

The research design for this qualitative study was phenomenological. Qualitative research is an investigation of an issue that can create a picture of those involved and their experience with the topic. The inquiry of participants is done in their “natural setting” in order to gain the most in depth understanding (Creswell, 2013; Tracy, 2013; Willis, 2007). This method is meant to provide the researcher with a deep understanding of the participant’s experience; to provide a rich, thick description of it using an iterative approach to get there (Tracy, 2013). Through open-ended dialogue the researcher was able to gather information regarding the perspective of vice presidents for student affairs and their readiness for change leadership within their organization. The researcher was able to explore with more depth during the interview in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the interviewees’ discernment of their own readiness for change.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The paradigm or framework that was utilized for this study was that of an interpretative or constructivist paradigm. This was chosen due to its foundation in the idea that reality is created through individual experience, knowledge, and understanding of a subject (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011; Tracy, 2013; Willis, 2007). The approach is subjective and based upon the relationship that is created between the researcher and participant; the researcher and participant become connected in a way that brings understanding to the study (Lincoln et al., 2011). Constructivism or Interpretivistism relies heavily on “naturalistic” methods such as interviewing and observation in analysis of the texts formed by the interviews. All interpretations are based in a particular moment located in a context (Guba et al., 2011; Tracy 2013). The goal of this type of study is give the participants voice in the process, to comprehend the why and how, as well as to be constructive and thought provoking (Tracy, 2013). This socially constructed reality becomes the foundation for the research process given many the "realities" that are created through the "lived experiences and interactions with others" (Creswell, 2013, p. 36; Lincoln et al., 2011; Tracy, 2013).

Another value inherent in this framework is one of conversation between the researcher and participants. Within this conversation individual values are respected and agreed upon. The process is "inductive" and the themes emerge as they are shared and developed over the time of the interviews with a focus not only on "behaviors but intentions and emotions" as well (Tracy, 2013, pp. 48-49). Grounded in a hermeneutical style of analysis, by interpreting the material gathered in an empathic and engaging way the researcher is fully immersed in the experience of the participants (Tracy, 2103). Double hermeneutic circling was used as a way to understand the participant views, the context of the topic, and the researcher's comprehension of the topic (Willis, 2007, p. 106).

There are many types of qualitative research, including but not limited to phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study. All of the types have the same end goal in mind, to tell a story of an experience (Creswell, 2013). In this study, phenomenology was used. Being interpretative, phenomenology illuminates the themes used by those involved in the research to make meaning of their world (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Phenomenological analysis explores similar characteristics of a subject using descriptive and interpretive research methods to evaluate the nature of a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). A phenomenological approach is one where the researcher attempts to answer questions that begin with how and why. The researcher tries to understand the quintessence of individuals or a group of individuals who share a similar experience (Gliner, Morgan, & Leech, 2009).

Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) is a lens through which a thorough assessment of the "human lived experience" is established without categories and set guidelines for structure. In IPA less is more (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32). One trait of IPA is the fewer the participants, the greater the quality the interaction and therefore the better the understanding of the individual experience (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). Fewer participants with fewer questions and fewer themes allows for a more in depth approach and analysis (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). Phenomenological research combines expressive and interpretive research methods to investigate personal experiences and attempts to set aside a researcher's predetermined ideas and prior experiences to objectively question the nature of a particular phenomenon (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Smith et al., 2009). IPA ventures to illustrate the quality of one's experience. IPA includes first making meaning of the participant's experience then the researcher making meaning of the participant (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013).

The theoretical framework that was utilized in this study was Kurt Lewin's three steps originally written in 1947, which have been adapted in many ways and still referenced today. Lewin's steps as expanded to phases by Schein (1987) include the concepts of unfreezing, change, and refreezing (Burke, 2014).

Data Collection

Participants were chosen purposefully based on the foundation that they possess a certain viewpoint to offer the study (Smith et al, 2009). For IPA research, best practice is to find a homogeneous sample using a purposive sampling method. The goal was not to have a large quantity of participants, but to have a small participant pool in order to garner the depth needed with each participant (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Larkin et al., 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). Eligible subjects were individuals in the position of vice president for student affairs (VPSA) or an equivalent position at small, private liberal arts institutions with an undergraduate enrollment under 3,000 students. The researcher directly contacted the potential participants of this study by sending an initial e-mail inviting them to participate.

Subject Recruitment

Twenty-seven potential participants were sent an e-mail recruiting them to participate in this study. The researcher utilized a list prepared and provided by National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) in addition to personal contacts to recruit participants. Potential participants were selected from the initial recruitment e-mail (Appendix A) that shared the criteria for participating in the study. Potential participants completed a brief information form in order to garner demographic details about them in order to determine if they fit the criteria as outlined for participation (Appendix B). Follow up e-mails and phone calls helped to establish a group of 12 who were willing to participate in the individual interviews.

Final selection of participants was made using the information collected from the short questionnaire (Appendix B). The researcher chose participants based on size of institution and years in the vice president of student affairs position. An attempt was made to have gender, ethnic/racial diversity, tenure in position, and geographic balance among the participants. The questionnaire helped the researcher understand if potential participants fit the criteria for participation, as well as gave the researcher some relevant background information. Preference for participation was given to those who fit the criteria outlined above regarding size of institution, time in position, gender, and ethnicity.

Two rounds of recruitment e-mails were conducted and follow-up phone calls were made to recruit the last nine participants to achieve a participant pool of twelve. All participants fit the criteria except for one. One participant had only been in the role of vice president of student affairs for seven months instead of the one year initially required. The researcher chose to include the individual in the participant pool given the participant's overall experience of 20 years at another other small, private liberal arts institution. The roles she had at that institution were progressive in leadership and she reported to the president for a time. One participant was disqualified from participation due to the fact that they had only been in the vice president role for four months at the time of the study. Participants were told the interview and would last approximately 60-90 minutes and the interviews lasted on average about 45-60 minutes. An e-mail outlining this process and describing how to schedule a time to do the interview were outlined in the participant e-mail (Appendix C). Those not selected were sent an e-mail informing them and this letter can be found as (Appendix D).

A pilot study with one vice president for student affairs was conducted prior to data collection. This was done to ensure the research questions made sense and were suitable for moving forward with this study. This pilot lasted just over an hour and confirmed the guiding questions provided the participant the opportunity to engage in a conversation about the topic in a meaningful and thoughtful way. The participant fit the criteria for the study and was able to articulate their thoughts in answering the questions regarding their experience with readiness for change. The recording of the interview worked well and the session was one of a conversational nature.

Smith et al. (2009) suggested that there are underlying qualities a researcher must possess: "open-mindedness, flexibility, patience, empathy, and the willingness to enter into and respond to the participant's world" (p. 55). These traits were kept in mind as the study was undertaken. The interviews were semi-structured. In order to achieve the best results from each interview, each participant was asked the same questions (Appendix E); subsequent questions were asked for clarification and more in depth understanding. This method of data collection and observation was the preferred method due to the depth of personal experience, which can be garnered from individual interviews and conversation (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). To begin the interview the participants were asked to define readiness for change and what it means to them. They were then asked to describe their own readiness for leading change followed by a question that garnered from them what traits and skills they felt were important to being ready to lead change. The interview continued with questions about their own personal development of these skills and traits and how they went about developing them personally. The interview concluded with questions regarding their application of these skills and the preparation of those within the organization to be ready for change.

Each interview was recorded using MP3 Skype Recorder and a backup recorder called Voice Recorder, which is an app on the researcher’s phone, was used as well. This tool allowed the interview to be recorded then downloaded and transcribed as an audio file. The phone was used for interviews only if for some reason Skype could not be used for a participant. While the goal was to have all interviews via Skype in order to have it be as much as a conversation as possible, many participants did not have access to Skype or preferred the phone. For those on the phone a similar application was utilized called Call Recorder, which allowed the phone conversation to be recorded and then downloaded to an MP3 file to be transcribed in the same manner as the Skype interviews. Six out of the 12 interviews were conducted using Skype; the other six were completed on the phone.

After they agreed to participate, a mutually agreed upon time for the interviews was determined. For those participants whose interviews were conducted via telephone, the conversation, and as a result the data that was collected, was just as rich as those who participated via Skype. The only difference was the ability to interact face to face. Participants were told interviews were recorded and gave verbal consent prior to the beginning of each interview.

At the start of the interview, verbal informed consent was obtained from each participant (Appendix F). The process for obtaining informed consent included the researcher having a discussion with the participants that allowed them the opportunity to ask questions while ensuring they had an understanding of the study. The researcher clarified how the data was to be used and assured participants that any identifying information would not be shared. They were reminded they could withdraw their participation at any time. Transcriptions were reviewed and checked for accuracy prior to being shared with each participant. They were given the opportunity to review the transcription prior to any follow up questions being asked of them. Corrections were made if inaccuracies were found in the transcriptions prior to moving forward.

Transcriptions were created of the interviews by an outside vendor and shared via email with the researcher, who then shared them with the participants (Appendix G) and is called the Member Check Instructions. Interviews were transcribed within two weeks to ensure the proper recall of what was said during the interview. Participants were able to review the transcript for accuracy and details via e-mail prior to the follow up interview. Follow-up questions were asked, if necessary, within one week of transcription in order to ensure the participant would be able to recall what was discussed during the interview. To protect the confidentiality of the participants, transcriptions were coded and retained separately from the other documents and a pseudonym was used in data analysis.

Data Analysis

The analysis was how the researcher made meaning of the experience of those interviewed. A systematic process as described by Smith et al. (2009) was followed. Each transcription was read and re-read in order to be able to highlight specific statements and to create categories of information (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). These statements were gathered in a step referred to as "horizonalization" or understanding how the participants experienced the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). From this step the statements were organized together or "clustered" in order to establish themes (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009). The following steps were utilized in the analysis process: Reading and re-reading, initial noting, development of emerging themes, and looking for connections across the themes for each case. After each case was complete, patterns were sought across the cases (Smith et al., 2009).

The first reading was done by examining the parts of the participant's experience and what issues they may have raised. An attempt was made to understand each participant. The initial reading gave an overview and began the process of gaining some familiarity with the transcripts. It allowed the researcher to begin to construct the ways in which the participants discussed, understood, and thought about the phenomena. The outcome of this stage of the process was to create a thorough and dynamic set of notes and comments about the data. These included descriptions, language, and theoretical responses made by the participants.

Next began the process of theme development. Ideas were taken from the material developed from the researcher's notes and the transcriptions. The researcher created themes that articulated where there were connections and potential for interrelated concepts and patterns (Smith et al., 2009). Analysis done at this stage of the process had the primary goal of categorizing the emergent themes and creating concise statements that reflected both the experience of the participant using their original material and the understanding of the researcher (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013;).

This type of process and organization of the data is helpful to the researcher in creating a method for analysis and tracking, as well as having a conversation with the data at hand (Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). It helped the researcher to "get inside the heads" of the participants and truly connect with their experience. The interpretative account of the themes evolved as this process was implemented (Willig, 2013). It was about thinking imaginatively and determining what questions needed to be asked of the data in order to fully come to an understanding of the phenomena being studied (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). Clusters of the themes and concepts were created and then were compared with each case, adding the themes to the clusters as they were identified.

The researcher utilized Atlas ti, a qualitative software tool, as a way to clarify themes and cluster them. Interpretation of the data gave the researcher an opportunity to view the information from an empathic or more meaningful point of view. The researcher then continued to review the transcripts and clusters in determining themes in order to further deepen the understanding of the lived experience of the participants and how it could relate to current and future vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges.

Trustworthiness: Validity and Reliability

The following ethical standards, as well as good standards for research, were employed: having a relevant and interesting topic, adhering to rich rigor and sincerity in the process of collecting data, creating a thick description of the experience being studied, and following the guidelines of human subjects' research (Tracy, 2013, pp. 231-236). Ethics in research are vital to the success of the research and created trust within the results (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996;

Creswell, 2013). In addition to good process and following guidelines, Merriam stated: “One of the assumptions underlying qualitative research is that reality is holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed and measured as in quantitative research” (1998, p. 202). There are a variety of strategies for augmenting internal validity that can be implemented in qualitative research.

Lucy Yardley (2000) has the most relevant steps for examining the quality of qualitative research. IPA tackles them in ways that meet her criteria (Smith et al., 2009). Sensitivity to context is the first of her standards and IPA researchers have opportunities at almost every stage of the process to meet this standard. Sometimes the choice of this methodology allows for researchers to be more sensitive given its structure and the way in which it is developed and implemented through the interviews. The “interactional nature” and the values inherent in the process of IPA are part of the method of conducting this type of study (Smith et al., 2009 p. 180; Yardley, 2000). From questioning to analysis, it was important for the researcher to be sensitive to the participants’ perspective.

Other principles that were included commitment and rigor, which refer to the “degree of attentiveness” and the “thoroughness of the study” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181). Attention was paid to the participants by making sure they were comfortable, they were related to individually, and they were listened to while engaging in the interview process. IPA as a process fits the first two criteria for this trustworthiness test well given the inherent characteristics of making a connection with the participants and being intentional about those connections; IPA also allows the researcher to pay attention to the experience of the participant during the process of the interactions and interview (Smith et al., 2009; Yardley, 2008).

Yardley's third objective is one of "transparency and coherence" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 182). This involves how and what goes into the written documentation and analysis of the study (Smith et al., 2009). Questions that were considered included: How clear is the path of the study to those reading it? Is it understandable? It will be important for the researcher to be descriptive and thorough in writing about the study and sharing the results of the study. And the final standard is "impact and importance" (Smith et al., 2009 p. 183). Yardley says, "However well a piece of research is conducted, a test of its real validity lies in whether it tells the reader something interesting, important or useful" (Yardley, 2000, as cited in Smith et al., 2009 p. 183). The researcher incorporated these standards into conducting this study with the utmost of ethics and integrity in order to insure a trustworthy outcome.

From the letter inviting participants to the study to the process of setting up the interview the researcher did all that she was able to do to make the participants feel welcome and comfortable. Given the researcher also holds the position of vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college, there was a balance of personal connection without seeming biased. While this was a fine line to manage, it was important to pay attention to during the data collection phase of the study. The researcher was careful not to share her own opinion or experience with others during the interviews unless it seemed appropriate and assisted with gathering more understanding to the participant's experience with the topic.

The semi-structured interview allowed for participants to feel comfortable in sharing their lived experiences. The researcher was committed to ascertaining the authenticity of the participants' voices and interpreting them with integrity during the process of analysis. Throughout the process the researcher reiterated the rights of those participating as stated in the recruitment letter and the informed consent materials in order to insure understanding of the participants, as well as to answer any questions which arose. This is called member checking and is a common step in assuring quality of the data collected (Creswell, 2013). A peer review was utilized in order to get an outside perspective on the findings of this study (Creswell, 2013). A current vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college, who was not a participant in the research, was asked to review the findings in addition to the member checks. The peer reviewer said the following:

> I found as I was reading—from my perspective as a VPSA at a small private, liberal arts college—that I was inspired to consider my own resiliency to change, and to seek opportunities in the future to positively impact my staff through role modeling resiliency. I am someone who actually is very effective in chaos and through change, and so I also found this work affirming.

In order to better remember specific details about the process and the interpretation of the experience of those being interviewed, the researcher employed the use of field notes. Field notes are a tool that are used in qualitative research in order to remember schedules of interviews, impressions of participants, random thoughts about the topic and lists of ideas for which follow up is needed (Creswell, 2013; Smith et al., 2009; Willig, 2013). The researcher used a Word document on her computer to keep track of the details related to the study as well as any notes from the interviews.

The methodology utilized was successful and proved to be the appropriate manner in which to conduct a study of this type. The phenomena of realities and perceptions of change readiness emerged as one of interest and involvement with the participants. Overall, the depth of conversations allowed for a rich and descriptive set of data which to analyze as it related to readiness for change from the perspective of vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This study explored the lived experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges who have experienced leading and implementing change within their organizations. The researcher used Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to allow the participants to share their personal experiences with readiness for change during semi structured interviews. This study sought to examine and to add to the understanding of how vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges interpreted their own readiness for leading change within their organization. The researcher conducted a comprehensive analysis of the narratives and identified common themes.

This chapter characterizes the main themes that emerged through the interviews with 12 vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges in the United States. Participants' characteristics are introduced in a table followed by a brief biography of each. The experiences of the participants will then be shared as the themes are explored.

Participants

Twelve participants were interviewed for this study—five men and seven women. Each served in the role of vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college and had recent experience with change within their organization. They each provide leadership to a division of student affairs and report to the president of the institution; each participant also serves on the president's leadership team or council for the college or university.

Table 1

Participant and Institution Demographics

Name	Gender	Length of Time at Institution	Location
Nelly	Female	11 years	Northeast
Carrie	Female	7 months	Midwest
Ben	Male	5 years	South Central
Peyton	Male	9 years	Northeast
John	Male	25 + years	Northeast
Mary	Female	6 months	Midwest
Lisa	Female	3 years	Northeast
Abe	Male	1 year	Northeast
Julie	Female	2 years	Mid-Atlantic
Ann	Female	2.5 years	Southeast
Paul	Male	21 years	Southeast
Polly	Female	3 years	Northeast

Nelly

Nelly is a female vice president for student affairs at a small, private, liberal arts college in the northeast region of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 1,900 students. She has been in her position for 11 years and has been in the profession for 26 years. The changes she described dealing with in her role include personnel changes, federal regulation of Title IX, and student culture changes such as an increased focus on diversity and inclusivity.

Carrie

Carrie is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest with an undergraduate enrollment of slightly more than 2,000 students. She has been in her position for 7 months, and has been in the field for 16 to 20 years; Carrie has served in a leadership role within an organization for the past 10 years. She describes the types of change within her organization as change in leadership, including her own experience as a fairly new vice president with a leadership team that has been at the institution for a long time.

Ben

Ben is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the south central part of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment less than 2,000; Ben has been in this position for five and half years. He described his experience with being ready for change as his organization has experienced new leadership at the senior level, a revised mission and vision, as well as institutional restructuring and an accreditation process.

Peyton

Peyton is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the northeast part of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 3,000; he has served in this role for nine years. He has been in leadership roles for more than 17 years and been in student affairs for more than 20 years. Peyton provided examples of readiness for change due to changes in leadership both at the senior- and mid- levels of the organization. He described crisis as a means to change within his organization.

John

John is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the northeast United States with an undergraduate enrollment of approximately 2,000; John has been in the profession for more than 25 years. He has served in this role at the same institution for 10 years. He described readiness for change as being informed about what is happening in higher education, connecting with colleagues on campus and off, and understanding the landscape of trends and issues across the country.

Mary

Mary is at a small, private liberal arts college in the Midwest and has been in the role of vice president for student affairs for the past six months. Her current institution has an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,000 and her role was newly created in the last year due to restructuring at her institution. She has served in leadership roles on college campuses for the past 10 to 15 years, but has only worked in student affairs for the past five. This allows her perspective on readiness for change to come from a different background of experience than others in a similar position. Mary shared she has to keep herself from making changes too quickly. She says she has to take her time to do her research and often will consult with mentors and good friends to get their perspective before making changes within her organizations.

Lisa

Lisa is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private, liberal arts college in the northeast region of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,000. She has been in this position for three years and was promoted after serving in multiple roles on the same campus. She described her readiness for change as being developed from dealing with crisis situations multiple times, and proving to those who were involved and watching that she is able to successfully manage a difficult situation and the people involved with it. She shared something she works on developing is a shared understanding with other stakeholders on campus including staff and faculty of where the college is headed as it relates to strategic planning.

Abe

Abe is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private, liberal arts college in the northeastern United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,000. He has been in this role for one year and has held leadership positions within this and similar institutions for the past nine years. He describes his readiness for change as being willing to look at things from the perspective of a new person on campus, but also with a lens toward improvement.

Julie

Julie is a vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,500; she has served in this role for two years. She has served in a leadership capacity at an institution for more than seven years and in the field of student affairs for more than 20 years. Julie has experienced change recently as she initiated new programs, experienced change in senior leadership, and restructured her division.

Ann

Ann is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the southeastern United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,000. She has been in the field of student affairs for 10 to 15 years and has been in this role for two and a half years. She has served in leadership roles for seven years of her career, and her experiences with change in this role have included assessment of her organization, restructuring, and senior leadership transitions. She spoke about approaching readiness for change from her roots in social justice and transparency with those whom she serves.

Paul

Paul is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college in the southeastern region of the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,000; Paul has been in this role for more than 20 years. He has spent his entire career of more than 36 years in student affairs and described his philosophy with being ready for leading change as being proactive and consistently embracing it in his work. He described how he and many of his staff have been on campus for a long time and being ready and implementing change is important given the changing student culture on campus.

Polly

Polly is the vice president for student affairs at a small, private, liberal arts college in the northeastern United States with an undergraduate enrollment of less than 2,500. She has been in this position for three years and has served in multiple leadership positions throughout her career, which has led her to this role. She described readiness for change as being able to have the relationships with people within the organization to be able to implement change when necessary or the situation calls for it.

There were common themes identified in the lived experiences of the 12 participants, and each participant shared different ideas about being ready for change and readying their organizations for change. They shared some of the same and some of what they believed to be different traits and skills needed to be ready for change. Many discussed a variety of ways they defined readiness for change and how they prepared those with whom they work for change within the organization.

Emergent Themes

The participants each shared their personal experiences as a vice president for student affairs and being ready to lead and implement change within their organizations. Participants did not hesitate to define what readiness for change meant, or to share recent and current examples of how they dealt with change in their everyday work lives. Some have thought about change on a regular basis; for others it was a newer idea.

Multiple themes emerged based on the participants' lived experiences with readiness for change in the role as vice president for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges. Their accounts alluded to the many ways in which they have been tasked with implementing change, both planned and unpredicted. They described how they ready themselves for change, where they gained their knowledge, and how they readied those who report to them within the organization.

The participants also identified several skills and traits that they felt were important to their own readiness for change, as well as which skills and traits they felt were important for their direct reports and others within their organizations. They shared where they believe they gained their personal knowledge, as well as how they developed knowledge for those they supervised. Many discussed having a philosophy that supported change and creating an environment where change could occur on a regular basis. In creating this environment, they spoke about how they ready their staff for implementing change within their division. The following sections describe in detail the major themes that emerged.

Readiness for Change

Each participant shared their definition of what it meant to be ready for change. Many had examples of how they came to this definition and used words to describe what it meant to them in regards to their role as vice president for student affairs. They talked about how their interpretation of readiness for change could be different depending on the leadership within their institution, as well as the leadership they supervised in their own division. Participants shared the need for those in the organization to understand why change needed to happen. Participants also identified being able to communicate effectively as a common trait participants needed to have when preparing for change within their organizations. John shared his perspective and some examples on readiness:

> My answer is contingent upon where in my career I'm making change, where in the timeline, what institution, and what kind of backing do I have from the president or from the community. Sometimes you have to make negative change for students whether it's about sexual assault or alcohol consumption. Then you have to go out and try to sell that to the rest of the world, or to the football team or the other sports captains of the world.

A few talked about how having change in leadership forces you to be ready for change; others talked about how being ready meant being able to manage a crisis. Many of these aspects regarding readiness for change allowed participants to create their own definition given the context of their personality, as well as their present reality, combined with past experience. Joyce described her definition of readiness to change:

> People are more or less ready for change depending on flexibility I think on their own sense of well-being, will I be okay? Will this change me for me? I just think change is hard and readiness for change requires flexibility and a realization that the status quo though lovely or good might not be the only way to do a thing, or the best way to do a thing.

Participants described their own definition of readiness for change in ways that had some depth and insight into this complex part of their leadership roles. A sense of urgency was a common theme among their definitions. Polly described her definition as the following:

> People see that there's a need to do something different, so whether it's internal or external influences presented in an organization with a need to act in some way, that if people are ready to change, that they understand that there is an urgency to do that, and

> that they understand the reasons why change needs to happen, and that they understand what we're working towards.

Paul shared the following:

> It's to make, initiate or become different in ways that we presently do not. So I don't think of change as always been or that it should be responsive. I would hope that we would have enough insight, enough courage to have change that is also proactive. That is a recent judgment of the environment and responding to that before circumstances require.

Both Paul and Polly shared some commonality with these thoughts. Creating or responding to a sense of urgency is often a way change evolves, as well as seeing where something could be and should be different or better can also be an impetus for change.

State of mind. Others described a tendency to get bored or stagnant, or to not want to stick with the status quo for the sake of not changing. Mary shared she has to take a step back and try not to change things too fast especially given her personality, which she described as quick and decisive. Other participants talked about the aspects of their personality that they employed when needing to be ready for change including being nimble, agile, flexible, resilient, adaptable, and resourceful. Ann described a spiritual grounding which helps her have stability when she is preparing for change:

> The first characteristic that comes to mind is flexibility, I mean just the ability to be agile, being able to really find steadiness within a moving system. There is a Sanskrit phrase that guides my perspective on this and I could talk about that later but essentially, amidst the movement, how do you lead and how do you be in a space of stability? It sounds interesting because when we talk about readiness for change, we can get movement but it's possible to be in a space of stability, in a space of change.

She, as well as others, described a state of mind when preparing for change to occur and talked about other leadership and human traits necessary to be successful:

> For me, when we talk about compassion, forgiveness, grace, those elements come into that space. Again, elements of agility, openness and joy and compassion are actually what I think are the core elements to be being ready, being in a space of readiness for change.

John also shared the need to have a certain state of mind:

> You have to be confident about the change that you want to make. You can't be skeptical or halfway about it. You've got to be sold on it yourself. You've got to develop a plan of how to sell other people and go out and try to sell them. If that's not working, you've got to consult with somebody to figure out what might work. Ultimately, if nothing's working, you've got to make the change. You've got to have the fortitude to go ahead and say, "We're going to do this no matter what we have to do."

Many participants explained that it did not matter whether they were the one initiating the change, whether the change was due to a crisis, or whether the change was being imposed by another. They believed their acceptance and readiness for change were dependent on some basic personality characteristics. Common thoughts among this theme were the ability to see what needed to change or have a vision; the ability to be flexible and encouraging of staff; in addition to being able to persevere through difficult stages of change. Nelly shared: "I try to be open to finding those things that need to be changed. I think personality wise I'm pretty flexible—and willing to consider other possibilities." Carrie shared her perspective:

> I think that if you just have an open mind with a willingness to do, you could be ready for change because you don't really know what the outcome will be. To me that openness of what the possibilities could be indicate a readiness for change.

Multiple participants gave ideas and thoughts about the state of mind or personality characteristics they felt were necessary for readiness for change. Included among them were flexibility, perseverance, fortitude, confidence, being courageous, and being proactive, which fit within this theme of state of mind for readiness for change.

Culture of assessment. The participants repeatedly shared that having a culture of practicing assessment of themselves, of their staff, and of their organization, as well as for their organizations, was vital in creating or readying the organizations for change. Abe shared that in order to share the story, the background information needs to be in place for those who will be impacted by the change: "What comes to mind is having the information to help tell the story that is required for people to understand how to envision the future that's different from the present." Mary had an example of making a change in her division: "A factor was that he, [outside consultant] had gathered a lot of data having interviewed all my direct reports and me; and that helped to also inform my decision."

Others shared their use of data from assessment within their divisions or creating a culture that they developed assessment strategies in order to determine what changes needed to occur. Ann's approach when she was a new vice president was to gather feedback from the campus about what her division meant to the constituents on campus and shared this after undergoing a series of focus groups with the student body on campus:

> We got amazing data about what people thought we did, what we actually do, what they expect of us, what they need from us. From there, I was able to rely on the—I mean I treated it like qualitative narrative analysis, then I said, you know, our community is asking of those things. They are saying this is what we need. Some things might be beyond our scope, but how do we now take this data to define our values and mission? And then how do we construct our organization in a way that meets the needs of our community, and what we think we should be doing and be data informed about it?

Other participants discussed how they utilized and gathered data to inform their decisions as well as created a culture within their staff that saw assessment as important. Peyton shared:

> I would say that we had a culture that was very much not akin to attempting to use data and assessment as a means of determining program effectiveness and helping set priorities for funding and resource allocation. Through having the right staff members in place, we were able to find and make the time when we could define what a better assessment and resource allocation assessment program might look like and have it be one that was created through a process that involved listening to staff.

Assessment of their organizations and the people in them was a key component to the participants' abilities in readying themselves and their organizations for change.

Communication

Participants believed communication was extremely important in regard to readying themselves, their direct reports, and their divisions for change. They discussed the need to have the ability to ask the right questions to understand the change that was being considered, as well as being able to answer the questions that may be asked about the impending change.

Communication both up the ladder of leadership within the organization, and below to direct reports and staff within the division was of importance and a common theme amongst the vice presidents. Mary shared an example of needing to tell her direct reports about a change that was occurring:

> I appealed to them to trust me and to work with me and to communicate with me moving forward so that I could gain the benefit of their input and consideration in making those decisions. I then spoke with each member of my leadership team either in person or on the phone. I think people were surprised by it—one of my staff members said: "You know, X College doesn't do this. This is not what we do here."

Communication can occur in many different ways and in many different directions in preparing for change to occur. Listening emerged as both a skill and a necessity when readying oneself and one's organization for change. The context was apparent in the manner in which the participants discussed the practice of asking questions and being willing to hear the answer; as well as in gathering data about the topic of the change initiative.

Peyton disclosed this about setting the stage for communication when asked about readying those in his organization for change:

> Conversation, listening, bringing groups together that have common synergies who are interested in particular topics, trying to have those who may be more ready for change partnered with those who may be less ready for change on a specific portion or whatever that change is going to be to see if there are ways for them to learn from each other, to learn from experience, and certainly learn from the energy that they each bring to the table.

Polly shared the following as it relates to buy-in and her ability to communicate the vision:

> For me I think I need to buy into the direction that we're going in. So if there's a stated vision or a reason why we're changing, and then a stated vision as to what we're working towards, I need to believe in that and feel committed to that outcome.

Communication is a vital and difficult part of readiness for change. The participants shared this in many different ways, using many different descriptors as noted in the quotes above. Within communication skills, listening, the ability to engage in conversation, and an understanding of another's perspective were also apparent. Some participants also shared their use of communication with colleagues and mentors should the change being considered be an issue or topic which they may not completely understand, or they feel they may benefit from some conversation with someone for an outside perspective.

Transparency. Transparency emerged as a theme as it related to communication about change and readying others within the organization for it. It was clear being transparent was a value that most vice presidents had in their top considerations when implementing or getting ready to implement change. Many felt when the time was right, being transparent with those who would be impacted the most was an important part of leading change within the organization. Ben shared his approach to this concept of transparency and communication:

> I'll talk more one on one I guess with the direct report if it's something that we need to talk about and then bring out to others. I think as much as possible trying to plan for it, what you can plan for every scenario plus I like getting inputs from those who are affected by it. If there's a particular change, I try to seek input from what do we see as the consequences of this? What do we see as the potential problem? What are we not—what am I not thinking of that comes to mind for you? Those kinds of things because I think it's—I certainly try to avoid.

Ann said:

> So my definition of transparency isn't that you show all your cards all the time about everything as people want. It's transparency about process. What I said to my direct reports when I first met them in every one on one, I am and will be transparent but that doesn't mean you get to see everything. What that means is I'll be as transparent as I can be and for the things that I'm not able to share, I will openly say this is not something I feel comfortable sharing. For things, I need to be translucent about, I'll just be transparent about the translucency of certain elements.

Carrie discussed transparency in the context of sharing staff time and discussions about new ideas or initiatives, and taking the time to talk about what is going on at other places or what is happening in the field related to a topic. She shared that many of her staff had been at the institution for a long time and had not taken time to discuss current needs and trends.

> I think modeling it too in the sense of saying, I'm trying to be current in the literature as well and really explaining to them some of the pitfalls that I had as an AVP and how it's okay to fail at some things. I think that prepares them, the candidness, the transparency prepares them in ways that a lit review won't.

Polly said:

> I think the most important thing is information sharing. So I try to be as transparent as possible with folks in terms of here's what's going on, this is what we need to address, here are the issues we need to address, here's the goal that we're trying to get to, here are some action steps we can take but what else? What else can we do? Making sure that people feel as if they're part of the change process and not just being told how to go through it.

Transparency as it relates to communication was a strong theme and for many of the participants was what they believed made them successful in many other aspects of their role. They saw transparency as a way to build trust among stakeholders, share information vital to a change process, as well as hold true to their own values with integrity and care for others.

This notion of communication transparency, which resulted in trust, was evident in many of the conversations with participants. There were ways in which it connected to almost every concept that was discussed in this study. These values and skills cannot be underestimated for the power they can hold in an organization and these leaders saw themselves as constantly honing these skills in their daily work with others as they enhanced and developed working relationships within their organization.

Value of Relationships

Many of the vice presidents shared their philosophy of having relationships across campus and how important it was when implementing change. They described having the trust and confidence of colleagues and building partnerships across departments and divisions as vital to their success, not only with change initiatives, but with the day to day operations on their campus. They discussed it as important when one is trying to ready for change, as well as in the aftermath of change. It was also an example of a benefit when dealing with a crisis situation that could result in change. Many talked about the advantage of a small campus when it comes to the idea of relationships. Peyton described it in the context of scale in comparison to larger campuses:

> Scale [of a small campus] provides opportunities for more rapid change, more rapid relationship building and more rapid understanding of the culture of the institution and can afford the opportunity for change. Fewer layers of bureaucracy, fewer layers of divisional separation, that separation by scale itself provides a stronger opportunity.

John and Lisa both discussed the importance of having relationships with colleagues, both at the senior leadership level and cross divisionally. They saw this as helpful because of the work they did; they desired to do their work well and in alignment with the vision and mission of the institution. Lisa shared this: “It’s about relationship building and making sure that they [other vice presidents] understand why and what I care about, why I’m doing it. So that’s very important to me.” They realized their work cannot and should not be done in a silo.

Ann shared her philosophy of relationships as being primary above all else and shared an analogy of change as “cracking a safe”:

> Humility is particularly critical because when you try to interrupt dimensions of power and privilege in contacts like this, I think relationship has to trump being right. You could have a million dollars in a safe. So what? Okay, the change is cracking the safe. Let’s say that’s the change experience. But what we’re trying to do is find the combination not like bang the safe. A million dollars means nothing without that combination. It’s useless. It’s

> just a heavy lead box and so thinking about relationships as more important to being right. Being right doesn't get you to the million dollars in the safe, being in the relationship does.

Polly described her experience as the following:

> I am very big in terms of the relationship piece. So for me, in order to be ready, I need to have built the relationships that are necessary in order for the change to be effective and that I have a team that's on board to work with me to facilitate that change as well.

Carrie shared her philosophy on relationships:

> So I think developing those relationships with people on the front end are critically important. To me letting people know that we're going to do this but the only way that we can do this and be successful at it is if we do it together. So a lot of it is community building on the front end. If you build community, people will trust you to make change.

Peyton described his value of relationships more generally:

> I think ability to build and maintain relationships I think is the most important piece of leadership in many institutions. Leadership certainly in attempting to motivate change, the ability to hear, to listen, to understand, to meet people where they are and yet to find ways to talk to each of those folks in a way that helps bring folks into another part of a conversation. The approachability that folks believe that you were actually seen and you demonstrate that you're listening and hearing it is important as well.

Relationships were a vital component shared by the participants as they worked within their institutions in readying them for change, as well as implementing change. They were clear in their opinions about working together and cross divisionally in many different ways led to more successful and sustainable change initiatives.

Knowledge Development

The participants spoke about a variety of ways in which they continued to enhance their knowledge of change readiness for their staffs, as well as how they persisted with professional development for themselves. They also spoke about how they develop knowledge about readiness for change within their staff team. Examples of having mentors in the field to which they could turn, as well as role models they aspired to be like, were shared. Professional associations and attendance at conferences and events coupled with daily and weekly news outlets such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and other news sources were mentioned as sources for information. Many spoke about the need to constantly keep up with current trends and issues, and to do so by reading on a daily basis and keeping up with what is in the current media. Polly shared her thoughts about how she gained her knowledge in this area:

> I think for me, some of it is observing who I feel to be successful leaders, people who I have seen be effective within their role specifically around change. In general, being able to watch and observe and learn from other people for me is significant. The flipside of that though, being able to see things that haven't worked so approaches from people, well-intentioned that fall flat and why it was that that happened.

Lisa divulged a different perspective on learning about change: "I think that I was the recipient of change and I knew very keenly at times where it was effectively done, and done with respect and care, and times where frankly it was not." This reflected the idea of learning through experience and watching others implement change poorly. Abe shared this about his knowledge development in this area:

> Practice. Yeah, I think a lot of trial and error, and advice and guidance from my mentors. I have learned over time to balance being passionate for a particular vision and moving that forward, with the need to be politically savvy in figuring out how to navigate through a complex organization to influence goals.

When Paul realized there were programs within his divisions' realm of responsibility that had not been reviewed or changed in years, even though the student population had drastically changed, he decided to do the following:

> So I tried to lead the group through a couple of days retreat on innovation. How do we take the values that we have, how do we take the programs that have served us well and how do we innovate? How do we continually innovate? How do we become a continually innovative organization? We were able to do that in a lot of different dimensions. We have five different focus areas. We look to change across many dimensions. I think more importantly, it helped us create a mindset that we got to be doing this every year.

Julie described her learning in this area related to her graduate work:

> Well one, I think from working with organizations, and my background isn't student development. My background is actually public administration and public administration organizational change and development was my favorite part. And so I have done reading about how organizations and people in organizations work, how change happens. I think it's kind of by my own interest and my own inquiry I think is how I came to know and understand change and how to make change.

The participants shared a variety of ways in which they learned the skills and abilities they employed in their current role within their organization. Many also spoke about being up-to-date and knowledgeable with current trends and issues as vital to their success. John put it best when he said: "I'm a voracious reader and I like to check out all the information. I'm an info junkie." He spoke about reading every day more than five news outlets, reading other campus newspapers, as well as sharing information with others as a way he learned about issues and trends that could impact his campus. Others shared similar tactics used in keeping up with current matters within higher education.

Networking and professional organizations. In addition to graduate work both through master's and doctoral programs, participants also discussed the importance of networking with those in the same position either through consortium groups, meetings with others locally and regionally, as well as having a peer group with which to bounce ideas and challenges off of when needed. Many named specific organizations, which allowed them to network and connect with professional organizations both online and in person. Paul shared the following:

> We can't do it in isolation. I've always been a strong advocate of my own continuing education whether that be reading, whether that be a professional organization, whether that be conferences. When I attend NASPA or a different conference, it's really with the whole intent of new knowledge. I can't imagine how we would work without the publications provided, the content that comes with the attendance [at conferences] that I would be able to do anything than what I can do now. I mean I just think we share knowledge well.

In addition to reading and sharing among colleagues, they discussed networking on and off campus as very helpful to their own personal growth and development. They also discussed the importance of having opportunities for their direct reports and other staff to engage in development opportunities together. This was done by many on a regular basis in the manner of meetings, both as a leadership team as well as an entire division. Some spoke about holding staff retreats a few times a year to help build the team, as well as enhancing the capacity of the team around implementing new initiatives and changes within the division.

In a similar fashion, Ben realized his division did not have enough capacity in the area of assessment. He knew they needed this both for an accreditation process, as well as ongoing evaluation of the programs and services his team provided for the campus. He realized he was not able to help his staff see the value in this work of assessment and felt lots of resistance to changing how things were done. Ben connected with a speaker he had seen at a regional conference who could speak about the topic to his staff. Even though he knew what needed to be done, he felt using an "outside expert" would help his staff develop more quickly. After discussing this session he shared the following:

> So again, I guess back to my own readiness for change, it depends on the context, or something like assessment I had some background. I think, in general, that's my approach of thinking through why are people going to resist this if they are, how can I get them excited about it, how can it seem like a necessary or beneficial kind of thing, and then what knowledge is needed, what skills or knowledge or whatever is going to be needed so that people can develop, adapt, whatever this is going to be.

Utilization of networks beyond the campus, as well as professional organizations, were essential to the growth and development of the participants throughout their careers. Many participants see it as an ongoing part of their work, especially in relation to developing their staff and continuing their own learning. They shared how the use of networks and professional organizations assisted them with learning their own capacity for change within their organizations as well as their ability to manage change and be ready for it.

Personal skill development. When asked how they gained their knowledge and skills regarding readiness for change, many vice presidents shared their own professional journeys as instrumental in expanding knowledge in this area. They discussed what they learned from specific classes in graduate school as well as what previous positions may have taught them in preparation for leading at the vice president level. Paul also shared.

> I think one of the most valuable things I do is the yearly gathering with other deans. The issues concerning change and the need for change and the challenges of change are on the table and we help each other and we have continual dialogue through a listserv throughout the year. Those are invaluable.

John and Nelly also confirmed sharing information and connecting with peers is vital to learning and growing in this area of change readiness. Mary spoke about the value of having close comrades she can confide in, in order to talk through situations and look at situations from a perspective she knows is difficult for her to see on her own. She shared the following:

> Well, I'm someone who really intrinsically embraces change. I'm someone who held I think four or five different positions over my 20-year career in my previous institutions, so I don't like to get stale or stagnant. I like new challenges so I would say in general, change is good. But I also talk with people who I trust and who I respect. I have a close colleague who directs an office at a previous institution and I speak a lot with him because sometimes I worry that I'm not as sensitive to the human side of things—so I speak with someone that is a trusted friend and adviser because he is also more attuned than I am to the more human element of it, and so he is a great sounding board for me and has insights that I just don't have.

Carrie talked about her own learning of what to do to be ready to make change; one way she develops her staff is through talking with them one on one and building trust. As a newer vice president, she is the newest member of her leadership team. She had the following to share about readying her staff for change:

> That's probably the harder piece because this is a group that here in particular, they've been together for a while. They've been together for a while like the last decade or so. So I'm the new person that's coming. It's those commonalities. Again, it's asking them, what's working for you? And then what's not working for you? So to me if I change one

> thing that they don't like, then if I let them know first, then I can go second. It's really a tradeoff. It's almost like a game you're playing. One of my associate deans, I say to her all the time, "Tell me what's broken." She tells me. She says, "Whatever you ask me, I'm going to tell you." So I say, "Tell me what's broken." And so to me it's changing something that they're okay with me changing.

Many of the vice presidents shared they learned often the hard way, through trial and error, as well as when change initiatives did not go well or as they had planned. This coupled with past experiences in other roles, combined with the knowledge they had gained allowed them to learn from their mistakes in order to not repeat them in the future. Paul shared the following insight:

> Part of that is experience and making mistakes and learning from mistakes and realizing you can't do it that way in the future. Part of that is judgment. It's pretty hard to if you can't learn from mistakes and we all make them and move on and gain both confidence and competence from that, then change can be really instructive.

Peyton shared he had a few instances of trying different initiatives that did not work the first time, and how through mistakes one can learn how to readjust the trajectory to make it better the next time:

> I think there is an element of it that's trial and error and as I have mentioned the assessment effort before. At first, I tried to make that change occur in a way that wasn't effective. It wasn't effective because I was trying to explain what I wanted to have happen as opposed to saying it in a way that made the staff want to accomplish the same goal, but make it meaningful for the staff to engage in that conversation and that program.

Whether the participant said they embraced change or not, all were clear they did not learn the skills necessary for leading their organizations without learning from their own mistakes and the mistakes of others. Many rely upon the relationship with mentors and their experience as the foundation for these skills. Worth noting is the tendency to know when to ask for help and utilize these mentors and other relationships in dealing with these types of issues and initiatives.

External consultants. Many of the participants shared their perspective of personal and professional development happening in a variety of ways, both personal and educational. They shared that at times development included outside resources and use of personal connections. A few vice presidents spoke about engaging with outside consultants in order to enhance staff skill set around mechanisms for change; as well as helping them in determining how and what to change within their organizations. Mary said:

> Another person who was really helpful was the organizational consultant that I mentioned who helped me really think about what the impact would be on the department as a whole and how I needed to work through that process and also the other folks that I mentioned.

Nelly shared her experience with being told her president had hired a consultant to come in and assess the division for effectiveness and efficiency:

> Well a few years ago my president decided that she wanted to kind of work her way through the divisions of the college using an outside consultant to assess our efficiency and whether or not we were doing the right things in the most effective ways. I worked with the consultant for about a year or a little less than a year. We started in the fall and the consultant talked with everyone in the division and trustees, and senior staff, and other folks around the college to kind of assess all of the areas of student affairs and whether or not they were aligned to meet the College's mission; whether or not my leadership was operating in way to really promote both that alignment and accomplishment. Mine was the first division of the college to undergo this kind of evaluation. And so it was an interesting time because it could be the kind of thing that could be a little bit threatening right?

Many talked about the value of reaching out to external consultants in order to ready their staff or further develop skills, as well as in their assessment of the work they are doing. They shared how often an outside person can see things within the organization cannot and can add helpful perspective to the conversations about readying those in the organization for change.

Change in Leadership

In sharing examples for readiness for change or for implementing change within their organizations, many of the participants shared their experiences with leadership changes within their organizations. They discussed occurrences of leadership changes both within the senior leadership for the institution, including the presidential level and the vice president level. Some participants shared the challenge of having a new president as the impetus for change within their organization. Change in leadership at the presidential level was discussed as being exciting and stressful for those in the vice president role. Being in an interim role or being a new vice president was also a shared experience among some of the participants. Many of the participants shared how making change in leadership or managing new leadership, especially when it is your boss, can be very challenging and helpful simultaneously.

Ben shared that on his campus they had a few years of "interims" after a financial crisis that resulted in the departure of a president after a brief presidency that lasted four years:

> We got a new president. He's only been here seven months at this point. He started in July. I think what he's done is come in and been very deliberate to try to break down silos, deliberate to make sure that we're collaborating on whatever issues there are. He's implemented a kind of a visioning process as is the norm when new presidents come in. I would say that the change process there is being managed from a deliberate planning, and envisioning what the future is going to look like.

Ann shared the following when asked about examples of change:

> All kinds of change. I have been at X College, this is my third year, or year 2.5, like I'm in my third year right now. And in my third year, I am reporting to my third boss. So I've had a different boss each year, different president each year. The president who hired me stepped down and we had an interim president and then of course the president who is here now is I'm hoping here to stay, I think is here to stay and he is in his first year.

In talking about how she communicated, the president was going to bring in a consultant to assess the efficiency of the division of student affairs; Nelly described, while this was not a new president, but a new endeavor or behavior shared by the president; Nelly communicated the following approach with her team:

> At the start of the process I identified this as something that the president was doing not just with the division of student affairs, but with other divisions as well. After us it was the dean of faculty's operation. But it's not that we were being singled out because

> something is broken. It's because we have to be efficient and nimble and want to do the best job that we can.

Lisa shared the following in regards to her role as stepping in as an internal candidate for the vice president position, after being interim, with a new president, and the challenges associated with needing to make change happen quickly in order to show visible and tangible results related to changes within the organization:

> When I took over in this role, I had to do some organizational change and that meant a couple of people lost their job and they are never going to feel like what I did was fair to them. I know that. When you're doing something like that and we were in—I'll be brutally honest, we were in a survival mode. If I didn't make the changes I had to make, I don't know if we would be here today in terms of our retention rate, in terms of where we're at. I really don't. I think our student satisfaction rate, I think a lot of things would have absolutely been not where we want them to be if I hadn't made the decisions I made.

Peyton shared the following about changes at the senior level at his institution:

> We have senior staff turn-over over the past 10 months and with that then came organizational change for the institution of different elements of different portfolios would be pushed into different positions. Again that brought us to a place where staff working together could take advantage of opportunities like that, then present themselves in a lot of different ways to make some institutional changes.

These comments reflected a variety of ways in which change in leadership could be instrumental in bringing about change. All of these situations were challenging and difficult as it pertained to change within organizations. Most who shared examples like these, also shared how often times new leadership and new ideas can be energizing and bring new perspective to institutions.

Discussion of Research Question Answers

This study sought to answer five main research questions using a phenomenological methodology. This section will focus on the answers to those research questions found within the data collected from the participants. The answers come from both the emergent themes that were previously identified, as well as other ideas and factors that emerged during the interviews.

1. How do vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges define what “readiness for change” means to them?

The participants were all asked during the semi structured interviews to define what readiness for change meant to them. There were commonalities among them in what they shared; many had the ability to share unequivocally their thoughts and opinions about what readiness for change meant to them. They distinguished between themselves and their role as a vice president in meaningful ways. Both Polly and Mary shared their definition included having or creating a sense of urgency. Being ready for change meant a need to do it quickly or fix something fast. Polly shared:

> People see that there’s a need to do something different, so whether it’s internal or external influences presented in an organization with a need to act in some way, that if people are ready to change, that they understand that there is an urgency to do that and that they understand the reasons why change needs to happen and that they understand what we’re working towards.

Mary shared that her tendency is to move quickly to make changes and given this awareness she has to work hard to take a step back, talk to people involved, and assess the situation in determining the right steps to take. She said: “I consult with interested parties in order to get to the point where I feel comfortable but others are also engaged in that change process.” Some of the participants discussed the fact that higher education can often be seen as slow to change and certainly there are parts of campuses, even smaller campuses, where there may be resistance to change, but once the situation and timing is right, change can happen quickly. Peyton shared his insight:

> When you get to that point, you start to have opportunity and readiness for different sorts of change. Readiness for change can also come as a result of crisis and folks certainly have seen that from time to time. But I think it has something to do with timing, something to do with institutional desires, and good leadership efforts and at times can view ready to change out of a response to crisis.

Julie spoke about change being difficult:

> I think change is hard for people and for organizations. I think about the third kind of organizations that I would call traditional organizations; and I think colleges and universities are in that group; especially those that have long histories. 'This is how we have always done it here' is a common theme. . . . I think it can, readiness for change can be really, really hard.

Despite being difficult, some of the participants defined readiness for change as being willing and able to make change happen on a regular basis. They spoke about the obligation they felt in their role on their campus to always be looking for ways to make things better, to improve and to respond in innovative ways. John shared this insight: "It's got to be somewhat philosophically based and it's got to be enough team based so that you don't have trouble selling it to people." Nelly had a similar thought: "I'm kind of always ready to do that because I think there are always things that we can do better, either more efficiently or more creatively or in a more focused way."

2. How do vice presidents for student affairs describe their readiness for leading change?

The participants were asked questions pertaining to their own readiness for change and how they interpreted it for themselves and for those in their organizations. They were asked questions about how they describe their own readiness for change and how they gained their knowledge in this area; they were also asked to share examples of how they became ready for change and to provide recent experiences with change within their organizations. The examples were many and reflected a breadth of experiences with facilitating and implementing change within their divisions and on their campuses. This quote from Paul epitomizes much of what was said in this question for many of the participants:

> I think that's always a work in progress. It is always so much easier the longer you're in a role like this to be content with how things have gone. Particularly if any measures look

> like things are just fine. I don’t think that serves the institution well. I don’t think it serves our students well. I don’t think it serves our profession well. I think institutions and organizations only become increasingly effective when they're willing to change. I think it’s critical for organizations or institutions to embrace change, to not be afraid to change when it's required. I think there should be a certain amount of restlessness that comes with this work. Well, I hope I've consistently embraced change.

There were a variety of responses that mirrored what Paul stated. Many felt they were in the role because of their willingness to constantly improve things and to be more effective. They described not wanting to be stale or stagnant. They shared a deep-seated philosophy of embracing change and how it allowed for new energy and creativity to flourish within their divisions. Mary shared this reaction after a recent staffing change in her division:

> It’s like the plug has been pulled and all of a sudden this creative energy and ideas are flowing, whereas you were just stagnant before and now people are coming into my office saying, “I have this idea,” and that didn’t happen before this change was made.

She seemed energized and more confident in the staffing change which occurred as a result of this reaction she experienced from her staff within a week of the other person leaving the institution.

Examples of change experiences were shared and included staffing changes both created and planned, and restructuring within departments or divisions. Use of assessment that resulted in change was also a common for many of the participants. Some shared being new at an institution, having new staff, or having a new president are often opportunities where change can and should occur. Taking advantage of opportune timing can be important and vital to the success of the change, but, not change for change sake.

Some described their own readiness for change as being part of who they are and have come to be as a person, a leader and a professional. Julie shared this insight:

> I want to be part of an organization that is always trying to move to the next level, always trying to move the institution forward and so I think I don't -- well I don't like chaos. I don't like chaos at all. I don't like complacency. I think that I am a leader that is capable

> of leading change, enjoys leading change and encourages change within my division with the people that worked for me.

John and Paul both talked about their relationships with the president and others around the senior staff table as being critical to their change efforts and their readiness for change. John shared this insight in relation to getting ready for change and gathering knowledge:

> Some of it is personal investigation and professional curiosity. Some of it is listening to my boss which is why it's important to have a dialogue with the president. I never try to make changes without my president behind me. If my president isn’t behind me and I'm trying to make change, I'm exposed. Sometimes I have to sell the president on that change especially when it's going to cost money or it's going to change opinions either in the student culture and the faculty culture, but I really don't make change without the president on my side.

Paul shared this:

> The other thing I would say is you get pushed, we get pushed by our trustees and I get pushed by my president. There's an expectation of change that certainly exists in higher education. The influence of trustees are often part of change happening in addition to the business sector or the nonprofit sectors that change is inevitable and change is required and change is a common practice for them is a good push for us.

This comment is relevant in its portrayal of the pressure that can be placed on those in leadership positions on college campuses. Pressure can come from senior leaders, board members, students, faculty, staff, parents, neighbors, and many other stakeholders to make strategic and impactful change.

Assessment surfaced multiple times as a way in which vice presidents became ready for change, as well as how they gained their knowledge in order to create change within their organizations. They described talking with people within the organization, hearing from those outside the division about their perceptions of the division, as well as listening to and asking questions of direct reports and others. Ann described the following technique she utilized in her first year in the role as vice president:

> To get the organization ready, the first thing that I tried to do is really understand what we all do. The first exercise that I engaged all of the directors in was focused around the communities' understanding of student affairs, students don't understand student affairs; faculty didn't understand student affairs. All have assumptions. So what I would like for us to do is to actually all of us lead focus groups all over campus. Even though we think it's an obvious conversation, have the conversation, what do people think we do? What do people think we should be doing that we are not doing because they think we do certain things and we might not do these things.

She described the results of these focus groups as being instrumental in creating the foundation of determining what they needed to do to improve, as well as allowing the staff to gain a deeper understanding of the perceptions of what they do on campus and how it integrates into the future of who they wanted to be a their institution. Mary described how she went about making some difficult staffing changes as a new vice president and took time to assess the situation so as not to only come to her own conclusions based on her own observations, but to also gather information from those closest to the situation. This excerpt is in relation to a vice president assessing the situation about a staff member on her team:

> I needed to talk with the people around the staff member who worked closely with her. I needed to talk with other college constituents because I wasn't really clear what sort of allies she had on campus and as you well know, in a small residential community, those relationships can run really deep. And I wanted to ensure that I wasn't going to start off a firestorm, or give the impression that having recently arrived to the college that I was slashing and burning all over the division.

Others illustrated their use of data to inform decisions whether it be surveys, input from staff or other benchmarks available to them on a regular basis. They discussed the importance of sharing data with their direct reports and staff in a timely and strategic way which would allow them to be creative and think about how best to incorporate change as needed based on the data and feedback they received. Paul shared an example of sharing the most recent data regarding the newest students enrolling at his institution. He said he shared the results with his staff about their new students being more diverse than ever before, and this was the impetus they needed to take a look at everything they did through the lens of creating a diverse and inclusive community. Having the proof or evidence from the enrollment picture was helpful for his staff in being able to acknowledge the changes which needed to be made in order to better meet the needs of the students. Many others described the role of data in determining if change could or should occur in their organizations. They use it in a staffing assessment, program effectiveness, and to understand the population of students whom they serve and their experience.

Most of the participants mentioned their use of many sources of information from which to gain knowledge on this topic of change readiness. While some relied on past experience and trial and error, others were reflective of their former positions and how their experiences prior to being a vice president framed who they have become as a leader within their organization. Many described their commitment to their own personal growth and education in this area. They discussed reading and sharing of ideas on a daily basis through online resources, as well as a network of colleagues who have the same role on other campuses. Peyton shared the following reflection in answering this question:

> I think it's through good mentors who have been through change and witnessed change and had opportunity. I think it is in part by working at institutions where you were led by a person who wanted to bring around readiness for change.

Others again noted, having good mentors in the field to turn to when needed was really helpful to them.

Peyton and Lisa disclosed that they gained some of their knowledge about readiness for change from dealing with crisis situations. Both had recent examples of very different kinds of crises, and communicated that the knowledge they gained allowed them to put some of their new knowledge into perspective with other situations. It also allowed them the opportunity to show

how the institution needed to change in the services it provided to students based on the context of the crisis. And Lisa shared this insight:

> I have a lot of experience managing crisis and I really think crisis is a pretty extreme form of change because really the goal in managing a crisis is to bring things out of crisis and that's a change. It may be a change back to normalcy or may be a permanent change to something that's very different than what someone would have considered as normal.

In reflecting on a recent crisis that lasted almost an entire academic year, Peyton described the following:

> As a result of a dealing with that crisis, there was both significant opportunities for change and significant change that did occur on campus. I would say that some of that—let's say, the issue with the crisis led change at times can be that the change happens so quickly that it's not necessarily done in a way that is perhaps most effective, or perhaps is the most well thought out way to move forward; and yet a time that can still provide very good opportunities for additional—in our case additional services to students that are well beyond what we have been able to provide before.

While one hopes crisis situations do not happen often, they do provide the opportunity for making changes that can benefit a situation for the long run, can impact the trajectory of an organization, and can shed light on issues and concerns that need to be addressed.

In revealing the depth and breadth of what is outlined here in regards to readiness for change and change leadership, it is apparent, an incredible amount of deft skill, especially on a small, private, liberal arts campus, is necessary for those in leadership positions.

3. What skills and traits do Vice Presidents for Student Affairs identify as being important to their readiness to lead change within their organization?

The participants expressed a variety of skills and traits they identified as being important to their readiness to lead change including: communication skills, relationship building skills, creative thinking, listening, being agile, nimble, adaptable, modeling the way we want people to act and treat each other, holding people accountable, optimism, transparency, awareness of privilege and power, humility, candor, visionary, being able to see the big picture, curiosity for knowledge, love of learning, trustworthiness, flexibility, able to go with the flow, collaborative, and strategic thinking.

The participants shared the following insights regarding skills and traits. Polly disclosed, "I think overall the person just needs to be a good leader in terms of vision and big picture, but at the same time a really strong manager when it comes to getting the work done, and making sure those goals and objectives are being hit." And in a similar vein Mary said:

> Certainly the skill and ability to think creatively and to bring their own experience and perspective to bear. And candor. Candor is really critical because—and that's something I think I've noticed, since I'm relatively new to student affairs, that we struggle with a little. We don't want anyone to feel bad and so we don't really say what's on our mind and so ever since arriving at X College, I've really been working hard to ensure that people feel safe and feel comfortable expressing what they really think, because if you don't tell me what you really think, then this isn't going to work.

Some of the participants described a more philosophical or behavioral approach in sharing their thoughts about skills and traits. Ann explained:

> Energetically, I think optimism is really important and not an uninformed optimism, like not inaccurate fake optimism that's not grounded in data, but true optimism for what the future holds. Like to be able to imagine and articulate an optimistic and flourishing future. I think is important because you have to give people something to look to and it's their responsibility to generate that energy within them; but we have to steward that. And so, I mean, I was pretty intentional. At least for me, even with things particularly my first year, it was rough, but I was really cognizant of never letting that show.

Participants shared common beliefs about the skills and traits needed. Many participants shared some very insightful and thoughtful responses to this question. Their commonalities and differences were striking in this conversation and were reflected in their responses. Tenure in the position, as well as length of time at the institution, were factors in how they responded to this question. Perspective over time can change for leaders and this was change was evident with these vice presidents. Julie said:

> I think you have to bring people along and part of it is one, having done your own homework and two, providing folks with evidence that your vision has some legs that it's based on something other than just change for the sake of change.

The participants were thoughtful and insightful when it came to their own skills and traits. Nelly communicated this in regards to her thoughts about flexibility:

> I don't need to get locked into particular way of doing or thinking about things. I recognize that there are other ways that are good or better than what we may be doing right now. I'm open to exploring those possibilities. I can also plant my feet and say: No, this is really what I think we need to be doing to move that thing forward. But on the whole, I think if you're not flexible with it it's not going to work out very well.

Ben stated:

> But openness to new things, openness to change to some degree is I guess a trait of mine, a strength of mine, whatever you want to call it, I feel like. I try to be pretty solution focused and be aware of the fact that people need to discuss the problems and the challenges; everyone has to complain a little bit; but then I shift that conversation to, okay, so what does that tell us about what our next steps need to be?

A few of the participants shared some very insightful thoughts about their approach to traits and skills. They see themselves as really serving those they lead and manage and having the responsibility of sharing information and keeping people going, even thru difficult or sometimes unstable circumstances. Ben expressed his thoughts about motivation and recognition:

> I think most folks in student affairs are at least on some level; you have to be intrinsically motivated. In whatever ways that works for you—whether it's the pat on the back or the recognition at the staff meeting, whatever, that kind of encouragement and those kinds of things are something I pay attention to.

Carrie shared her thoughts about skills and traits in the context of building community within her division:

> To me, letting people know that we're going to do this, but the only way that we can do this and be successful at it is if we do it together. So a lot of it is community building on the front end. If you build community, people will trust you to make change.

Lisa had a different perspective in how she approached sharing information when readying herself and her organization for change:

> I consider myself as someone who is a story teller. And I'm not telling my stories, I'm telling other people's stories and I enjoy hearing what people's concerns are. When you're dealing with change in an environment of change, one of the things that I think is also important, is remembering that people aren't necessarily resistant to change, they are resistant to their story being changed and they are resistant to who they are and how they are defined. You have to be sensitive to that. You have to show it and you have to honor it—You have a legacy here.

While traits and skills are vital to readiness for change, many of the vice presidents shared their own personal insight into what they feel is important to them in this area. Many also shared that while they may not have all the skills and traits they need, it is important to have people around them who can complement and round out the skill set of the team. They also shared the importance of reaching out to others to get feedback, as well as learning new skills if necessary.

4. How would Vice Presidents for Student Affairs describe their own personal development of the skills and traits needed to lead change? How did they develop these skills and traits?

Many of the participants were able to share specifically where they felt they developed the skills and traits necessary for leading change within their organizations. They disclosed that their graduate preparation, both master's and doctoral levels, gave them the opportunity to learn about a variety of different things that pertain to the work in which they are currently engaged. In addition, they mentioned the value of being involved in professional organizations and how involvement allows the opportunity for acquiring new knowledge, as well as networking with others who may be dealing with the same or similar issues.

Paul talked about how his participation in professional development opportunities throughout his career has helped him gain knowledge and skill, as well as “keep it fresh”:

> We can’t do it in isolation. I’ve always been a strong advocate of my own continuing education whether that be reading, whether that be professional organization, whether that be conferences. When I attend NASPA or a different conference, it’s really with the whole intent of new knowledge. I can’t imagine how without the publications provided, the content that comes with the attendance that I would be able to do anything than what I can do now. I mean I just think we share knowledge well.

Julie, Ben, and Polly all shared the following about how their knowledge base comes from their educational background. Polly said:

> My husband would kid me and say, “You don’t use your social work degree.” I said, “Oh, my gosh, I use it every day!” So I think not only the skills that I was able to develop working one-on-one with people by talking, but about working within systems is really critical, especially when it comes to change. So I think just my own educational background helps to prepare for it.

Julie’s background, while not in student affairs, helps her understand better the nuances of working within organizations:

> My background is actually public administration and public administration organizational change and development was my favorite part. And so I have done reading about how organizations and people in organizations, how organizations work, how change happens. I think it’s kind of by my own interest and my own inquiry I think is how I came to know and understand change and how to make change.

Ben shared:

> Both educational background and professional work, I guess. When I was getting my doctorate, the institution that I attended had a connection with the association for research, and so there was a certificate program in institutional research you could do. So I did three or four classes, whatever it was that gave you that certificate. So that was I guess the educational part of it.

Others revealed they have learned from watching others both succeed and fail. They discussed the need to have mentors and colleagues to which they can turn and seeking an outside perspective is very important. Polly said:

> I think for me some of it is observing who I feel to be successful leaders, people who I have seen be effective within their role specifically around change, but just in general, and being able to watch and observe and learn from other people for me is significant. The flipside of that though, being able to see things that haven't worked certain approaches from people, well-intentioned that fall flat and why it was that it happened. I think, obviously, reading up and doing our own research and reading the materials that come up to help us complement our experience with a theory base. Learning from other people, as well in terms of their expertise is critical for me.

Some participants were able to articulate the role of mentors in their knowledge development. Mary said:

> I've been enormously fortunate to have really good mentors at every stage of my career; and so I've tried to learn as much as I can from those individuals who have oftentimes provided me with candid feedback that I needed to hear. So I pay it forward, I try to do that for my staff, as well and for students too for that matter. I think the opportunities that I had to reinvent myself several times at one institution was a real gift because I had a chance to learn about different aspects of the college, to get to know different people, to get to know different ways of doing things.

Peyton shared:

> I seek mentorship a lot. As part of the change that we went through that was crisis inspired, I brought in a person whom I have known for 20 years to come in and really help not only me, but with our division and conversation and topics that will bring us to a place where we can certainly think about what we're doing and push us and challenge us and pushing me and challenging me to understand where we are and what's happening. I think I certainly attempt—I try to read a lot and so that's probably the other big piece of me.

Other participants articulated the traits they possess that have allowed them to build upon their knowledge in this area. Keeping their focus on the mission and purpose of the institution was also important in understanding the traits and skills necessary to lead change within their organizations. Paul said:

> It comes in lots of different forms, some expected; some not. I've always kind of been restless. It's an innate trait of not ever being content, that we're not doing everything the way we ought to be, recognition that the push for excellence, the push for competence requires change, but it's also a judgment.

Mary shared:

> I think even in student affairs we should focus on what we know and what we do best. It’s not to say that we can’t be again creative, but we have to really keep student development at the center of everything that we do because that’s what we know and that’s what we do best.

A few participants shared that their past experiences, both good and bad, helped frame their awareness and skill set in this area. Lisa disclosed:

> I think that I was the recipient of change and I knew very keenly at times where it was effectively done and done with respect and care and times where frankly it was not. Going back to your question about where did I get the skills? I started working in higher education in 1989. From my first job to my current job, there has always been time of change and change for good, change for survival, change for vision, change happened. I have been well-managed in those situations and I have been poorly managed in those situations. I again, going back to my days and my training as a journalist, a lot of what I learned is through observations and through frankly, it's just living and that's where I came from.

Abe shared:

> Practice. Yeah, I think a lot of trial and error and advice and guidance from my mentors where I have learned over time to balance being passionate for particular vision in moving that forward with the need to be politically savvy in figuring out how to navigate through a complex organization to influence goals. My previous supervisor at X College, the VPSA, there was instrumental and helping me think through that during my time working for her.

This summarizes the ways in which participants have approached gaining their knowledge of skills and traits they see as important in being ready for change. Many mentioned a variety of ways, and also highlighted how experience and working with and for others had been instrumental in expanding their knowledge. They felt knowing these skills and traits, and knowing how they impact their behavior as a leader, helped them determine when and how to apply these skills to their change initiatives.

5. How would Vice Presidents for Student Affairs apply their own readiness for change to their strategy for readying their organization for change?

Participants were asked the following questions in order to gather data pertaining to this question: How do you apply these skills and traits to the implementation of change within your organization? They were asked to explain and to provide examples as appropriate in their answers. They were also asked if the conversation flowed in a direction, to share how they prepare those they lead to be ready for change within your organization. Again, explanations and examples were welcomed. And finally, each participant was asked how they onboard or prepare new members of their organization to meet their standards and understand their philosophies regarding readiness for change within the organization. The participants all shared examples of how they engaged their staff, how they got “buy-in,” and how they readied their staffs for change to occur within the organization. They discussed the importance of being transparent with the process, helping members of the organization understand why the change is happening, and giving an opportunity for feedback as part of the process. Polly disclosed:

> People can understand what the reasons are, can understand the why behind it, the how, where we want to get to and that they can continually provide feedback. Not that all that feedback is going to be incorporated into how we're going to do things, but I think people being able to feel heard is really important. I make myself available, make sure I'm engaged in the process so that they know if there is a concern or a question they have, they can come to me and express that. Once again, if there's something that I can help with and assist to make it easier, I will, but I think making sure we're all riding the same train in the same direction is really important.

Other participants also shared their role how they led their teams toward a vision or change initiative. Getting members on the same page with what had happened was a common theme among them. Mary had this to say about her approach:

> I think it’s more about developing relationships. I mean especially at a college like this that is so highly relationship-based. So it’s about attending to people and ensuring that when someone comes to me—well, there’s two ways. When someone comes to me that I actually take the time and sit down and really talk to them. Also, there’s ad hoc opportunities, but then the more intentional opportunities are the teambuilding that I’m engaged in right now and setting up clear expectations with people both with me and with one another as part of that team. So I think having retreats, having meetings to give us

> time to step away and gain the benefit of some reflection and also the benefit of that collegiality and input from others is really important. So there's both the informal and the more intentional.

Many of the participants spoke about their commitment to really understanding those with whom they were trying to engage. They described how taking time to engage them in meaningful ways through conversations, retreats, and formal and informal ways was a priority when trying to ready or make change occur. Julie voiced her approach to sharing her vision for what she hopes to accomplish and then invites people to respond.

> I have one-on-one conversations with people and then I have group conversations with people; and when I think we are ready to move together; we have met the needs to take place across the group. But I spend a lot of time I think working on the one-on-one relationship and inviting people to share with me their reluctance, their apprehensions, their concern about what it is that we are doing because that way, you can do it better. We can do a better job.

Participants shared the need to look at their organizations differently and how important willingness to be open and vulnerable during a time of assessment and evaluation was critical to being ready to change. Others spoke about how understanding and asking what the members of their division needed for professional development being an important part of the process while it also empowered members to share ideas and their needs. Having a plan or staying on a plan for change was also mentioned by the participants. Some mentioned developing a plan with their staff; others mentioned keeping with the strategic plan of the college was their priority in any new initiative. If it was not part of the plan, it did not get to the top of the list.

Ann had a little bit of a different approach to engaging her staff. She was not as committed to the idea that she was able to have an influence on their overall development. She said:

> I think we can give people tools but people are going to use tools differently based on their strengths, right? I don't think that—it's how you leverage people's strengths to lead

> in a way that allows them to thrive and flourish and also advance the organization. Sometimes we're lucky with that, sometimes we're not.

Abe also takes a more empowering approach in working with his staff:

> I engaged my direct report group in a way that—the person that did it, I changed the name of the direct report group from direct reports to the Student Life Leadership Team, SLLT, and made it very clear that it was that group's responsibility to lead the division and that I am here to help frame a conversation, and set the priorities and to help advance them; but that group is responsible for thinking through how we're going to move forward. Regardless of what their particular area of specialty is that we are—I'm going to be challenging them to be thinking about other areas.

All of the participants when asked this question discussed the importance of making sure those involved had a good understanding of what was happening and why. They ensured those who would be most impacted were given a chance to ask questions and understand the change which was about to occur. Professional development in the form of reading groups, regular staff time, meetings and retreats were all examples of how vice presidents created a culture readiness for change within their divisions. Many of them were concerned about their staff as people first, and not just employees and shared their desire to help people grow and develop as the organization did the same.

The discussion about onboarding of new staff was an interesting one. Some of the participants had not really thought about onboarding staff around this particular philosophy of readiness for change. Others had been doing it for years. Most agreed that finding out about how someone will react to the environment or to change could occur in the interview process. They also shared how they interviewed every candidate for every position within their division in order to determine fit, but to also share their philosophies and values around the work with each candidate.

Those who described a robust onboarding process shared some specific details. Tom probably has the most robust program for his new employees:

> If you want to hire people who have an openness to change, who have a willingness to do so, have the capacity to do so, then you got to be aware of that when you hire people. That's almost in some ways the easiest way to do it. I also recognize that a group of people who in many cases have been here a while are good enough to keep, but may have to embrace new ways of doing things and that setting clear expectations, that is mentoring, that is guidance, that is evaluation. I have a daylong orientation with new people. We would typically have four to six new people every year, and I spend a full day going over everything from the history of the institution to the financials of the institution, to the demographics of our student body, to data on our students, all to set a framework for your work you need to fully understand the institution, and its values.

Polly described a similar approach:

> I think it happens during the hiring process, so making sure that I'm communicating to people the type of work environment we have here and what we hope for and expect from all of our employees. We really stress a teamwork approach. We really stress our mission and why we're here. So I think making sure that you're hiring people to begin with that are team players, and that are open to thinking creatively and being innovative and trying different things is really important.

Lisa was the most direct in this regard. She said:

> When I meet with entry level first job people all the way up to directors and mid management, I always say to them, if you want something you need to know about X College is you run very, very—We run on a very lean on the bench. When I say lean on the bench—you've got to understand something, when you're running lean on the bench and you're trying to change something, you are engrained in it and you are up to your neck in it. It is important for people to be aware of this if you are going to work here.

This shows transparency and honesty in a very direct and intentional way. It creates the expectation about what a new person may be encountered with, and prepares them to be ready to be part of the team. Evident in this section was also the role organizational values had for the vice presidents and for their organizations. They were able to articulate how they established, developed and maintained these values amongst their staff at all levels of the organization. Common among their experience was the value of the people in their organization and their willingness to help people learn and grow in their roles.

Essence of the Lived Experience

According to Patton (1990), a phenomenological approach is distinctive due to the fact that it assumes there is an “essence” to the shared experience. A shared understanding is another way to describe the essence of the phenomenon. Essence is regarded as the ways in which the experience among the participants is synchronized. Data from this study suggested the essence of the shared experience of the participants was first created given the fact that they are all vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges and share in the day to day responsibilities and challenges which are inherent in the position. They shared the desire to improve their organizations, develop their staff to be strong leaders on their campuses, and to create a high quality experience for their students, which meets the expectations of students and their families while allowing them to be successful students in the classroom.

When asked about what they believed to be attributes of a small campus, many shared that they thought change was easier due to the size of the campus, and many of them articulated this as being a smaller organization and being highly relational. They spoke about the benefits and challenges of being part of a smaller organization as it relates to change and readiness for change. They disclosed that they keep relationships at the core of the decisions they make all the time. They also shared the belief that less bureaucracy and politics occurred on their campuses. While it still existed, they felt it was easier to manage given the value of relationships and the connectedness on their campus. Size of the institution was shared as a benefit in achieving goals related to change and being ready for change. Participants used analogies to describe this. One participant related it to the size of a ship, “it’s easier to turn a sailboat than an aircraft carrier.” Another used a sports or coaching analogy, “I can get a soccer team dressed and on a bus faster than I can a football team.” Scale and size seemed to matter for the participants, and made a difference for them in their experience with leading change.

Another attribute included that of the “bandwidth” or capacity of those who work in student affairs on a small campus. Many shared that being a generalist or knowledgeable about other areas on campus was vital to their ability to make change happen. Others shared frustration at the length of time it can take to get things done given the amount of time needed to spend managing relationships, especially the communication and transparency aspects of change within the organization. Most vice presidents also shared a professional trajectory of experience within many different realms of student affairs and seemed to utilize their foundation of experience in relating to their staff and students in their current role. They all were in the shoes of those whom they supervised, which caused them to stay connected, on some level, with their experiences prior to becoming a vice president. They shared that this previous experience was critical in the approach they took in being ready to change their organizations.

The participants disclosed that at a small institution, relationships can be both challenging and rewarding. While the environment allows for change to occur more quickly, it can also slow things down depending on the initiative at hand. Some spoke about needing to take so much time to “vet” their ideas or change initiatives that progress was impeded. They also shared that when something happens on a small campus, everyone knows about it, or the perception that everyone could know about it was present. It was clear throughout this study that the nuance of a small, private liberal arts campus was seen as both a challenge and an opportunity to allow for leadership and readiness of change within the organization.

CHAPTER 5 – DISCUSSION

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), according to Smith et al. (2009), is a study where the researcher "engages in dialogue" between the findings and the existing literature (p. 112). In keeping with this method, this chapter summarizes the study, discusses the results of the study in the context of the literature, offers suggestions to the field of student affairs, specifically to vice presidents for student affairs regarding their readiness for change, as well as shares ideas for future research on this topic.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the findings presented in Chapter 4, all of the vice presidents for student affairs believed there was a combination of strategies, approaches, and skills that are effective when introducing and readying their organizations for change. There were a number of findings within each theme. The following section describes and explores the findings associated with the themes. This section continues with a discussion of the findings as they related to the literature in addition to other meanings that were discovered.

Steps for Consideration in Making Change

Readiness for change was an integral part of the participants' lived experiences that were shared during this study. The participants of this study each defined readiness for change differently, however, there were similarities in what they described regarding readiness for change during the interview.

Many of the participants suggested being ready for change themselves and helping to lead their teams to be ready for change was something on which they regularly spent their time. They utilized their own thoughts, feelings, and experiences in how they prepared for change and defined readiness for change. Many of the participants did this by reflecting on their past experiences, and shared that utilizing mentors or colleagues as a way to share ideas and perspectives as well as reading or researching specifically about the topic to be changed was critical to their experiences with readiness for change. However, regardless of the vice presidents' readiness for change, they also considered the timing, the nature of the change, and the potential for impact on those in the organization. Focusing on these elements was key in their ability to present and eventually be ready to implement change. The ability to be ready for change referred to their skills and competence, as well as their capabilities associated with readying an organization and those in it for change. Many resources suggested taking these factors, among others into consideration as imperative when considering a change in an organization (Kotter, 2012; Kuk et al., 2010; Rafferty et al., 2013; Smith & Blixt, 2015). Understanding the organization from all levels, as well as the people who are in it, was an important aspect of readying oneself for change and the potential impact of change on the organization (Armenakis & Harris, 2002; Armenakis et al, 2007; Kezar, 2014; Kotter, 2012). Readiness for change could be interpreted as a leader understanding the many factors and aspects of the organization as important in readying the organization and the people in it for change. I believe understanding what is needed to be ready to change is a critical step in the change process. An understanding of the nuances involved in the organization, as well as the potential for impact on the organization, are important things to be considered when envisioning a change initiative. Based on the conversations with the participants, having the patience and understanding of change as a process was also an important consideration in determining whether or not change should occur.

Need for Improvement

Participants consistently discussed the need to be different or to make their organizations better. Many shared instances where they knew they needed to improve an office or operation, program or procedure within their purview. Some of the participants could articulate what needed to change and why it needed to change in order to improve. Some had more challenges associated with getting ready themselves and readying others for the change needed.

Participants had a variety of ideas and adjectives that described what was meant by readiness for change. Many of them shared how being ready for change was part of their leadership style and was something they felt prepared to do. The participants shared examples of wanting to make things better or improve their organizations. They shared being ready for change meant seeing a need for a circumstance or situation to be different and seeing how changes could potentially make a situation, program, or program area better. The participants gave examples of creating new programs or initiatives, restructuring their divisions to better reflect the necessary daily functions, and incorporating student and other feedback into their goals for improvement.

Participants identified competencies for the profession that reiterated the need for those in student affairs to be able to understand different aspects of the profession, as well as understand the core functions of student affairs. They believed that those in student affairs need to be able to assess the need for improvement on a variety of levels including improvement of programs and practices, improvement of staff productivity and performance, and use of technology for improving both of these things to name a few (ACPA, 1996; ACPA & NASPA, 2015).

Bouckenooghe (2011) drew the distinction between focusing on improvement versus overcoming problems or weaknesses. He suggested this concept involved motivating others to achieve at a higher level of performance and referred to this as overcoming resistance to change. He emphasized the value of motivation toward change for the better as a more positive and potentially more successful approach in creating a commitment for change (Bouckenhooghe, 2011). This could potentially mean that the participants had an understanding of the need to focus on the positive as it pertained to changes within their organizations. It could mean that the vice presidents were thinking about how best to improve their organizations and whether it was about learning a new skill or talent, or creating an environment that strove to do better, while not settling for mediocrity. Some of the participants shared the need to strive for excellence within their organizations. Creating excellence as a value within their organizations helped to set goals and inspire those within the organization to go beyond what they may have originally thought of as good enough.

Many of the participants shared their frustration with adopting new organizations as a new leader. Some of the participants described how it could be challenging sometimes to urge others to see the difference in being ready for change vs. waiting for an issue to arise as an impetus for change. While quite a few of the participants shared their idea of change and how being ready meant being ready for anything that could happen. Others also shared the need to be proactive in addressing the needs to be better at something, or to be ready to change based on the needs of the students and the institution who served them. Those in positions of leadership, such as vice presidents, should have the tools and the knowledge to improve their organizations in a variety of ways.

Self-Awareness

Weiner (2009) suggested being ready for change is a multifaceted, multidimensional construct grounded in those involved in leading change having a certain level of efficacy both within their own abilities and within their knowledge about how to go about being ready for change (p. 2). The participants suggested their self-awareness of understanding the skills needed to be ready for change was supported and enhanced by understanding the multiple ways in which leading change manifested itself in their organizations. For these student affairs leaders, their ability to implement change really depended upon their awareness level of the skills and capacity they possessed personally, as well as those of the members within their organizations. The participants shared a deep understanding of themselves in the context of readiness for change and these ideas were supported in the literature (Karp, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Quinn, 1996; Rafferty et al., 2013; Weiner, 2013). Possessing an awareness of one's own feelings, thoughts, and attitudes about change is an important aspect of leading change and being ready for change within an organization (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012; Karp, 2006; Quinn, 1996; Rafferty et al., 2013; Weiner, 2013). Research pertaining to competencies for student affairs professionals also appears to support self-awareness as a competency necessary for strong leadership in student affairs (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Herdlein et al., 2013).

This literature indicated the need for vice presidents for student affairs to have a well-developed level of self-awareness, especially when it came to leading change initiatives within their respective divisions or institutions. This could mean that being self-aware as a leader could possibly make a difference as to whether a change initiative goes well and sustains itself, or goes poorly and fails. Possessing a deep level of understanding of how one personally reacts to and responds to change is important when one is leading an organization. Knowing oneself and what opinions, values, and beliefs one holds is important when leading an organization and making decisions that could impact others both in ways that impact their well-being, as well as their livelihood. A deep level of personal awareness and understanding of readiness for change was present in how the participants utilized outside perspectives via friends, colleagues, and mentors in checking out their own perceptions and evaluations of a situation before they moved forward with change initiatives. I interpreted this as a knowledge of being self-aware also means knowing when to seek outside guidance or counsel. This level of self-awareness appeared to be a strategy utilized by the participants as they made sometimes difficult decisions.

Mindset and Understanding of the Human Side of Change

The importance of recognizing the human or personal aspect of change was mentioned in the findings and is supported in the literature. The participants discussed the need to have a frame of mind or attitude in order to be ready for change. This attitude was important as they readied themselves and those in their organization to be ready for change. This frame of mind or attitude relates to self-awareness, however, it can also be seen as an overall way in which one thinks and acts when leading change (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Herdlein et al., 2013). The participants shared possessing a value in understanding the human side of change as an important factor in the process they implemented in readying themselves for leading change. The literature suggested that possessing an understanding of the impact of the change on the people within the organization as important (Dallas, 2015; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996). The literature also stressed the importance of keeping the people involved at the top of one’s mind when readying the organization and those within it for change (Karp, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Quinn, 1996; Rafferty et al., 2013; Weiner, 2013). Giving those in the organization the consideration, patience, time, and understanding when engaging in a change process could be imperative to the success of the change initiative (Hiatt & Creasey, 2006; Higgs & Rowland, 2010). This could be interpreted as the participants in this study understood the value of paying attention to individuals and their needs within the organization. They saw this was just as important as paying attention to the needs of the organization as a whole. I believe this meant those in leadership positions should possess and maintain a positive attitude even during difficult times. I interpreted this as having the frame of mind and awareness of these elements of change could help a vice president be able to sustain the organization and those within it during a change initiative. Having the attitude every day, even in difficult situations, and especially when there is change afoot is an important characteristic that leads to success as a vice president for student affairs.

Characteristics Needed for Readiness to Change

The varied aspects of readiness for change shared by the participants are mirrored in the literature and include: being agile and nimble, having flexibility as a trait, communication as a skill, building trust in those around them, having a shared vision, and being able to articulate the vision for the organization (Armenakis et al., 1993; Hiatt, 2006; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kotter, 2012). Many of the participants described their own readiness for change utilizing the same words and terms as listed above. The terms most reiterated by the participants were personal flexibility, being creative, and building confidence. Other terms which were shared surrounded the competencies involving communication and building trust within their organizations.

Literature regarding competencies necessary for leadership at an advanced level of student affairs also suggested the importance of characteristics that relate to creating an environment conducive for change (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Herdlein et al., 2013; Kuk et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). This appears to suggest for the participants in this study that knowledge of their own skills, characteristics, and traits was important to them and something that they had spent time in realizing and learning about as it pertained to their ability to lead change. The participants believed possessing the ability to be nimble and agile, as well as communicating a vision, were key in presenting to and implementing change with their staffs and other key stakeholders. The skills and traits that the participants said they possessed included their consideration of the capacity of those within the organization and their feelings and personal thoughts, as well as the personal skills they identified as necessary for change. When considering buy-in and participation of their staff members, a key aspect that was mentioned was one of developing the vision and working together to develop meaning for their division.

This could be interpreted to mean that the vice presidents for student affairs who participated in this study have a vast knowledge and understanding of the skills, characteristics, and traits needed to lead change within their divisions and on their campuses. They must possess or know where to acquire the skills necessary to lead and implement change initiatives. I think this is tied directly to the competencies that are valuable to those in the advanced stages of their careers and in vice presidential positions.

The literature suggested that possessing a belief of the best way to enhance efficacy and reduce the potential for gaps in change readiness is to enhance the mechanisms in place that build organizational confidence in the change that is about to occur, or in identifying the change (Burke, 2014; Combe, 2014; Quinn, 1996). The mechanisms mentioned by the participants for enhancing confidence in change readiness included training, readings, and professional development. Many of the participants shared how they utilize national organizations including list serves and conferences as well as daily news sources to learn and develop their knowledge about issues or topics in the profession and field of higher education. Some of the participants were able to identify where they gained their knowledge and how they developed it and utilized examples from their graduate degree curriculum. This could be interpreted as the participants developing a desire to enhance their knowledge. It could also be interpreted as some of the participants possessed a foundation from their education and training on which to build their knowledge.

Prior research suggested building the capacity for change within the organization for change as vital to sustaining change efforts within the organization (Combe, 2014; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kuk et al., 2010). “The most meaningful areas for building confidence and reducing change readiness gaps tend to include actions that build intrinsic personal, team, and organizational confidence” (Combe, 2014, p. 21). The responses from the participants were supported by the literature many times. The participants shared examples of how they were utilizing one-on-one conversations, as well as observations and feedback from others in the organization, to understand the capacity for change within their organizations. This could be interpreted as the participants understood what was needed in regards to the capacity to change both on an individual and organizational level in order to impact readiness for change. Participants also shared how they were willing to work with members of their organizations both as individuals and as teams. This appeared to be consistent among the participants and was something many of them spent time, resources and energy doing on a regular basis.

Sense of Urgency

Consistent in some of the participants’ responses in reference to readiness for change was the notion of creating or feeling a sense of urgency. The participants shared examples of urgency being created by a situation they defined as a crisis or a situation that needed to be remedied quickly. Some participants shared examples of urgency created by those above them in the leadership of the organization. Kotter (2008) suggested this is the first step in creating an environment for change to occur, and without a sense of urgency most change efforts fail. While this can be the most difficult of the stages in implementing change, once created, it can help in building momentum and lead to more successful and sustained change efforts (Kotter, 2008). Kotter also suggested missing from organizations is a real sense of urgency or an attitude and intuition present that lead people to look for opportunities while avoiding difficulties (Kotter, 2008). Ways in which urgency could be created are possible when those within the organization are unaware or don't see what the potential challenge or issue could create in a negative way should change not be considered (Kotter, 2008; Weiner, 2009). Creating a sense of urgency could occur when there is complacency within members of the organization; when there is a lack of knowledge or understanding of a situation or circumstance, and when the disparity between the existing and potential future reality is clear (Bouckenhooghe, 2011; Weiner, 2009).

This was supported in how the participants described their readiness for change and how they described how they readied those in the organization for change. Examples of how the participants shared this experience included: seeing changes in the student population and utilizing data to support the need for change; a crisis situation that uncovered gaps in policy or services on campus; budget reductions; and the need for new programmatic initiatives. Each of these examples supported creating a sense of urgency. I believe these examples of changes necessitated the vice presidents in this study in developing buy-in from their staff, and also a realization of readiness for situations that needed immediate attention such as a crisis situation. It appears they were mindful of the need to be flexible and to pivot in order to respond to crisis situations. Many of the participants understood the need to have the ability to be agile in difficult situations as an important component in engaging others in change initiatives.

Models of Change

The participants shared possessing the desire to see something different as important as it related to their organizations and this allowed them to be able to move the organization along in a different direction. Many of the participants had a sense of how to go about making change happen on their campuses. While they may not have shared the name of a theory or a model, I believe the answers they gave suggested a connection between some of their strategies to specific models or theories of change leadership. For example Lewins' three-step change model of unfreezing, change, and refreezing (Lewin, 1947; Burke, 2014). The participants were able to reflect on the past, and the history or tradition of their organizations, in determining how to move forward. They were also able to see clearly what needed to happen and/or to engage others in steps to seek the answers to those questions while still maintaining their own personal beliefs. The participants showed persistence and a sense of resolve and resilience as is also suggested as important in the literature (Quinn, 1996; Smith & Blixt, 2015). Many of the participants were able to describe how they would go about determining the need for change. In readying those within their organization was described as a persistent and often sustained process over time.

In his expansion of Lewin's model (1987), Schein suggested the stage of unfreezing could have three possible methods in making this occur. This stage of creating motivation and readiness to change could include: "disconfirmation or lack of confirmation; induction of guilt or anxiety; or the creation of psychological safety" (Burke, 2014, p. 176). The participants shared a variety of ways in which they were able to understand what steps needed to be taken in readying their organization for change. Some of the participants revealed that they were challenged to consider, deeply at times, what the full impact of a change could have on the organization and the people in it. Many of the vice presidents also disclosed listening as an important factor in helping them determine what steps needed to be taken in order to create change within their organizations. They also shared that they felt that making people within the organization feel a sense of safety as important. These steps in the process of readiness for change are supported in the literature and follow this step of Lewin's model of unfreezing well.

Some of the participants spoke about recognition being an important part of creating a collegial and supportive environment for change. I believe the participants' experiences suggested this stage of unfreezing as relevant to their change readiness and leadership within their respective organizations. This appeared to be relevant even though they may not have known they were using this theory of change in their practice. This could be understood to mean that they were also able to understand the need to create an environment conducive for change which made people feel comfortable.

Disconfirmation or lack of confirmation refers to surfacing of issues or concerns within the organization (Burke, 2014). An example of this that was shared by participants was a lack of satisfaction by staff or students about a service or program. Another example which was articulated was that of receiving direction from the president or board of trustees. Induction of guilt or anxiety could be related to sharing data that sheds light on a situation or practice that is in need of changing (Burke, 2014). Some of the participants used examples of sharing data about the current student population in order to help members of the organization see the need to change. Others shared data related to how their divisions were structured, as well as what others were saying within the organization as a way to motivate others to change.

When it came to the creation of psychological safety, Schein suggested it is vital to members of the organization moving forward with the change (2004). They need to feel the change will not make them feel embarrassed, humiliated, or lose their confidence among their peers (Schein, 2004). The participants disclosed how they would create environments within their organizations that were encouraging, friendly, and supportive when making change efforts occur. This could be inferred that the vice presidents for student affairs in this study have an understanding of the facets of change theories or models as they pertain to readiness for change whether or not they were able to name the theory or model. I interpreted this as an advanced skill necessary for vice presidents for student affairs that helps those in the position lead change within their organizations.

Vice Presidents for Student Affairs as Change Agents

Student affairs leaders are tasked with making change happen in a variety of ways (Barr et al., 2014; Kuk et al., 2010). As suggested in the data analysis, many vice presidents saw themselves as change agents or leaders in implementing change within their organizations. Higher education is changing every day and leaders within organizations must have the aptitude to assess, orchestrate, and implement change and innovation (Barr et al., 2014; Kuk et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). The phenomena that emerged in this study supported this notion of being a change agent within the small campuses where the participants spend their days. Many of the participants in this study shared examples of their experiences that supported the literature, such as the necessity of adapting to the needs of their campus, understanding and shifting to the changing demographics of their students and their communities, and adapting to the strategic directions of their presidents and boards (Barr et al., 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015). The vice presidents approached the change initiatives they shared during this study with care and compassion. This could be understood as those who participated in this study possessed an awareness level of what is needed in their organizations, as well as an awareness level of what needs to be done, in order to get themselves and their organizations ready for change.

Communication

The participants felt that communication was a vital component to being able to ready themselves, their organizations, and their campus for change to occur. Many of the participants articulated that they felt communication was one of the more influential proficiencies they could possess and was frequently articulated among the participants throughout the interviews. This is reflected in the literature in a variety of ways and includes suggestions regarding communication as a skill for leading change, as well as a mechanism in which the climate for change is created (Combe, 2014; Kotter, 2012). Smith et al. (2015) suggested that senior student affairs administrators must possess the ability to share the vision in the organization, must be a strategic thinker, planner and implementer (p. 93). Hiatt (2006) described these characteristics as needing to be fluid and flexible within the skills which are utilized depending upon the change, and context of the situation. The competencies suggested for successful practice in student affairs which could be translated to leading change highlight communication as critical in many ways within the work of student affairs leaders (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Herdlein et al., 2013; Smith et al., 2015).

The participants in this study shared many of these same thoughts about communication when talking about their own experience with readying their organizations for change. This could be considered as something these participants found to be vital in their process for readying their organizations for change. They seemed to have the understanding that communication is a necessity within organizations. This could be interpreted to mean that possessing the knowledge regarding how, when and to whom to communicate as reflected in their descriptions of their experiences is an important skill and invaluable in the readying an organization for change. This could also be an understanding among the participants that communication at many levels of the organization and in multiple ways as important in the change process.

Examples in the literature included building coalitions, collaborating across departments, and possessing shared priorities with other leaders in their organizations (Combe, 2014; Kotter, 2012). Many of those in the vice president for student affairs role in this study agreed to and shared many of the same values, beliefs and understandings of what those in the field of change leadership suggested as best practices for instituting change. For example, many of the participants were consistently able to articulate how they communicated both to those who lead the organization above them, meaning presidents and boards, as well as to those they supervised in their direct reports and staff. For many, even more important was the role of communication to the students whom they served. For the participants of this study the value of communication was an important facet of their leadership.

Transparency was also a subset of this conversation regarding communication among the participants. The importance of transparency was shared as both a potential skill that was needed, as well as a strategy to be utilized, in order to gain trust and loyalty from those within the organization. This is supported in the literature that suggested communication and transparency are important in creating an environment that is ready for change (Barr et al, 2014; Combe, 2014; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012). Being forthcoming and honest could allow for transparency to occur (Combe, 2014). Burke (2104) summarized an empirical study by Ford and Ford (2012) that articulated "communication" as the one behavioral category that is common across all of these studies. The language used in these studies were phrases such as "engaging communication," "communicating the need for change," "communicating appropriately," and "communicating and creating conditions" (p. 149). Many of the participants' answers mirrored these same suggestions in creating an environment conducive for change. Some of them shared examples of how they communicated both individually, as well as with others within their organization and broadly amongst members across divisions or departments. Examples included personal communication with individuals at all levels of the organization, in writing and across departments. This reflected how relevant the theme of communication as it pertained to readiness for change was in this study. The results of this study are supported by the literature and the participants shared examples of communication being imperative in the success of their change initiatives within their organizations.

Effective communication is a common theme in the literature regarding readying and leading an organization through a change initiative. Without consistent, effective, and strategic communication, change efforts can fail or be more disruptive than they are productive (Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Lawler & Worley, 2006). Leaders who have the skills and understanding of the varied ways communication happens within an organization are more successful at leading their organizations and leading them through change (Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Lencioni, 2012; NASPA, 2014). The results of this study appeared to support the literature given the participants demonstrated through their answers how they utilized and incorporated communication in its many forms. The participants shared examples of both vertical and horizontal communication across their departments. Many participants revealed how they discussed ideas for changes and how to ready for change with their respective presidents and fellow vice presidents, as well as with their direct reports and others within the organization. The participants articulated how they would frequently share their thoughts with those in the organization above and next to them before sharing with those who reported to them. The vice presidents discussed how they created collaborations and built relationships in order to have accurate information in people's hands, so others in leadership positions within the organization could communicate the vision and the reason for change. Participants spoke about the ways in which they communicated both in person, through one-on-one and group meetings, as well as via written and online communication.

Participants appeared to have believed, above all else, that intentional exchange of ideas and thoughts was a priority in these conversations. From what was shared from some of the participants in this study, they conveyed their expectations, their vision for the change as well as the reasoning for the change. Many shared examples of the way in which they went about being transparent with those in the organization. Their examples would lead one to consider that transparency and communication were seen as priorities for those in this study in the context of organizational change and the creation of a culture which was ready for change. This could be interpreted as vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges in this study saw communication and transparent communication, as well as the varied mechanisms utilized to achieve it, as important in the work they do on a daily basis and especially as it pertained to readiness for change. One could also deduce based on the literature and the results of this study that communication done well can lead to successful and healthy organizations which allow for change and readiness for change across all levels of the organization.

Relationships and Collaboration

Relationships in organizations can be vital to the success of the organizations (Kotter, 2012; Weiner, 2009). Some of the participants in this study were able to articulate examples of both positive and negative impacts of both good and bad relationships within their organizations. They also shared experiences regarding relationships within their organizations that are indicated in the literature as vital to change readiness. Organizational readiness as described by Weiner

(2009) refers to “a shared team property—that is a shared psychological state in which organization members feel committed to an organizational change and confident in their collective abilities to do so” (p. 6). This could be interpreted as those in leadership positions possessed the potential to connect to each other in meaningful ways. Those in this study could share examples of how they came to an understanding of the nature of the personalities, strengths and abilities of those whom they lead. This could be construed as a relationship between members of the organization with those who lead the organization. I believe this implied there existed a relationship between those in the organization, and an understanding of the nature of their personalities, strengths, and abilities.

Some of the participants were consistent in how they approached creating an environment that was conducive for change, as well as building a trust in leadership that relied heavily on relationships, both on and off their campuses. Many of the participants described the role of relationships at their campuses. In sharing their experiences with readying their organizations for change, some participants described their campuses as “highly relational,” “this place runs on relationships,” and “relationships matter here.” The participants appeared to possess an awareness of the importance of relationships that was consistent and ran deep in many of the experiences of the participants. This appeared to be a value held by a number of the vice presidents personally, it also seemed to be a value within the institution in which they worked.

The nature of small campuses can often be described as places where relationships are important for the success of the institution; and where creating an environment for students that holds value in relationships is important and pervasive (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Astin, 1999; Blaich et al., 2004). Many participants referred to their relationships around the president’s cabinet as being the most important in their preparation of readying for change initiatives. Some described in more detail the importance of the relationship with the president and the support and trust necessary in that relationship. Others described the value of collaboration and relationships as something they instilled in their staff, and made it a priority in the work they do to have healthy and productive relationships with colleagues within the departments and across divisions. Many of the participants articulated this value of relationships as part of their experience. The practice of relationships and values was articulated by many of the participants. It was also supported in the literature in the context of knowing who is in your organization; the differences related to managing and leading; as well as the differences in creating the team to be able to implement change (Combe, 2014; Kotter, 2012). I believe this means that those in vice president positions saw the value in relationships as critical to their success at many levels with the organization. This could be interpreted to mean that some of the participants understood the varying degrees of relationships within an organization. Some of the participants could articulate how they created relationships in addition to creating an environment which saw the importance of collaboration within their organization and building relationships. This appeared to suggest that the vice presidents had the skill, knowledge and personal fortitude to create, maintain and develop relationships within their organizations.

While some of the literature does not discuss relationships specifically, it does describe healthy organizations and team work as important measures to have in place in order for change to occur and sustain itself (Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Kuk et al., 2010; Lencioni, 2012). Functional teams exist when trust, communication, integrity, common purpose, and understanding are all present in the day-to-day operations of a team (Lawler & Worley, 2006; Lencioni, 2012; Quinn, 1996). Some of the participants in this study utilized some of the same words and examples as described in the examples of the literature above. This could be construed as the vice presidents in this study seeing the value in creating an environment conducive for positive relationships to grow. Kotter (2012) described the importance of relationships in his eight-step process as "creating the guiding coalition" (p. 61). Other literature also supported the importance of relationships in creating readiness for change. The literature was similar to many of the same characteristics some of the participants of this study described, including: creating teams with the strengths and skill needed to implement change, building the team to have the knowledge and trust they needed amongst themselves (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Higgs & Rowland, 2010; Kuk et al., 2010).

The vice presidents involved in this study were consistent in how they described and portrayed the importance of relationships and how relationships played a role in their shared experiences with leading organizational change. For example, many discussed surrounding oneself with people who can be trusted and are dedicated; they also explained how they integrated building a strong team into their regular work. It appeared that most of the participants in this study understood the value of relationships when making decisions and developing strategies related to change in their organizations. I believe the participants saw the role they played in creating the opportunity for positive relationships within their divisions and across campus as an important part of their role as the leader of their division. This could be understood as the participants in this study being vital members of the leadership team in how they create, sustain, and develop new opportunities for relationships across campus. The participants seem to have held relationships as very important to their success and they saw relationships at all levels of the organization as worthy of time and attention.

Professional and Skill Development

The literature suggested that having and knowing the capacity among one's own skills and talents, as well as that of one's team was vital to being ready for change within the organization (Combe, 2014). Others suggested having a plan in place to assess the capacity for change within the organization as an important first step in planning for change (Combe, 2014; Hiatt, 2006; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003). These scholars also suggested that once the knowledge gaps are realized, it is important to determine if the talent exists among the team members, if it needs to be developed or acquired, or if it can be learned among the current membership (Combe, 2014; Hiatt, 2006; Hiatt & Creasey, 2003; Weiner, 2009). The participants in this study shared a variety of ways in which they gained their knowledge and developed the skills and traits needed to lead change. Their practices and experiences shared during the interviews, included: looking to role models, experiencing through trial and error, networking with others in the field of student affairs, utilizing resources through professional organizations, and following their intuition about people and situations. This could be interpreted as the participants possessing the insight and knowledge to be able to know when to seek outside consultation. It also appears to be that the participants in this study had a breadth of experience which lead them to the vice presidential position and that this experience was vital in informing their practice in their current day circumstances.

It appears that the vice presidents for student affairs in this study were able to identify how and what their teams needed to be successful. They were able to integrate ongoing learning and education into their daily work with their staffs in order to ready the staff members for change. They were also able to see where the gaps in knowledge and skills were among their teams and create opportunities for development in those areas.

The literature suggested developing knowledge during times of change as important to the success of the change (Combe, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Smith & Blixt, 2015). The participants shared many ways in which they gained their knowledge that support the literature. Examples included: "one on one advising or coaching sessions, user groups and forums about the topic at hand, and effective training and education sessions" (Hiatt, 2006, pp.106-107). Many of the participants shared their use of professional organizations, daily news outlets such as online newspapers and magazines, and the use of mentors in the field that are reflected the literature as ways to enhance knowledge in a topic or area (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Hiatt, 2006; Kotter, 2012; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

According to the participants, ongoing leadership development was also a tool utilized in creating sustainable efforts for change. The literature suggested that those in leadership positions could benefit from a variety of opportunities for further development if it is timely, intentional, and well planned (Kuk et al., 2010; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Smith & Blixt, 2015). The analysis of the results of this study shared experiences that reflected these characteristics of knowledge development. Organizational learning is a concept widely used in the literature and can be created in a variety of ways to strengthen and enhance the knowledge base of those within the organization (Combe, 2014). This study supported the literature in that it referred to the ongoing training and development needed in order to sustain and create healthy, thriving organizations (Kuk et al., 2010; Lawler & Worley, 2006; Lencioni, 2012; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

Many of the participants spoke about utilizing a variety of mechanisms for themselves and those within their organization to continually develop their learning. The participants shared examples such as professional organizations, conferences, and networking. Some of the participants also shared how external consultants and educators were used in creating opportunities for their direct reports to come together and learn about a skill or topic. They utilized these mechanisms for education and training in order to create a culture that was ready for change within their organization. These practices were supported in the literature as a tactic used in readying one's organization for change (Combe, 2014; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

Most of the participants possessed the knowledge and awareness to be able to understand and incorporate the needs of their organization in supplying the development of those in the organization to be ready for change. Also reflected in the experience of the participants and also supported in the literature, was the value of developing a team and the relationships amongst those who would be leading the change as well as those potentially impacted by the change (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Combe, 2014; Kotter, 2012; Smith & Blixt, 2015; Stevens, 2013). Nearly all of the vice presidents repeatedly shared the importance of ongoing training for those in the organizations in making them ready for change. They appear to have understood how professional development could occur and the mechanisms that could be utilized both for their own knowledge development, as well as the development of the staff they supervised.

Change in Leadership

The participants in this study were consistent in their examples of a change in leadership either as new leaders themselves, or in managing a new leader in their organization. This type of change is a common occurrence in organizations, including small, private liberal arts colleges according to those who participated in this study. Change in leadership can have a significant impact on the organization and the people in it in both positive and negative ways depending upon the person and the circumstances. A change in an organizational leader is a good example of organizational change and one that is not uncommon (Kotter, 2012; Stevens, 2013). As such a transition occurs, being aware of oneself and how one deals with a change of this type is important (Quinn, 1996; Stevens, 2013). Understanding the impact that such a change can have on others, as well as those closest to the leader, is important in creating an environment for a successful transition (Barr et al., 2014; Lencioni, 2012; Smith & Blixt, 2015). The literature referred to this as organizational culture or climate and a change in leadership and how it could impact the climate in positive and negative ways depending on the circumstances (Burke, 2014). This is reflected in the analysis of this study and was a shared awareness among some of the participants. This appeared to be reflected in the literature as stated above as something important for leaders in being ready themselves, as well as readying those in their organization for change.

When there is change in a leader either at the presidential, vice presidential, or even direct report level within a small organization, the impact can have a "ripple effect" on the institution. Given the importance of having the right skills, personality, and knowledge in being a leader who can institute change, could have an impact on the organization. Those in vice presidential positions need to be ready to manage this type of change within their organizations given the potential frequency with which personnel changes can occur. Changes in leadership were fairly common on many of the situations described by the participants in this study. Some of the participants explained that they could see when a person may or may not be the right fit within their organization. Some of the participants also identified when making staffing changes made sense for an organizational change initiative or for the betterment of the organization. This could also be seen as some of these vice presidents for student affairs in this study having the capacity to see when a person within their division may not have the capacity to carry out the mission and goals or the current needs of the organization. It might mean vice presidents for student affairs in this study could see the potential new leadership or a new personality could do for an organization. It may be interpreted as some of the participants in this study seeing the potential for change to occur when a new leader or leaders are in place on a small campus. It appears as though it is important for those in leadership positions to possess an awareness in managing such a change.

Implications for Practice

Several implications for practice arose for vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges as a result of this study. The findings suggested that vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges demonstrated that they needed to possess a capacity for being ready for change in a variety of different ways. The findings indicated that vice presidents for student affairs needed to understand their own capacity for change, the capacity for change and the overall aptitude for change among those within their organization. It also suggested that vice presidents must understand the potential impact of anticipated change within the organization.

These results also suggested that there is a need for a level of knowledge and skill regarding change leadership and readiness for change if vice presidents for student affairs are to successfully implement and sustain change in their organizations. Vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges should consider the competencies for change readiness necessary for themselves, as well as those within their organization; the level of understanding and awareness of the leadership skills necessary to lead change; and the mechanisms available to develop this knowledge of change readiness in themselves and those who will assist with leading change within their organizations. Having an understanding of the social and interpersonal ramifications of change, as well as the ability to measure the level of the readiness of an individual versus an organization for change, is relevant to small, private, liberal arts colleges vice president for student affairs (Armenakis et al., 1993). Vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges should be well prepared for change and be ready to meet the challenges with which they may be faced taking into account their backgrounds, training, and development as leaders (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Kuk et al., 2010; Smith & Blixt, 2015).

These findings suggested that vice presidents for student affairs should stay current in their reading of trends and issues, as well as daily news outlets pertaining to higher education. They should have an awareness of professional organizations and the opportunities for development in readiness for change. The findings in this study demonstrate the importance of vice presidents for student affairs possessing the knowledge and ability to train and educate their staffs on how to implement change within their organizations. Another implication for practice that was consistently shared among the participants was the value of networking, professional development, and mentoring in the field of student affairs as a valuable tool in understanding the need for change and how to foster readiness for change.

The results of this study also suggested that there should be more education and training on the topic of readiness for change as it pertains to student affairs specifically at small, private liberal arts colleges. These educational opportunities should be integrated with more frequency into regional and national conference schedules, as well as regular publications and online teaching mechanisms.

These educational opportunities could include the creation of training and education modules for those aspiring to become, or who have become, vice presidents for student affairs. An assessment tool that could determine capacity and readiness for change could be developed. This could be beneficial to the field of student affairs in that it will prepare more people to be able to be ready for and to lead change at their institutions. An assessment tool would allow those in vice president for student affairs positions and other leaders within institutions the ability to gain awareness of their own capacity and how it relates to their ability to lead and implement change. Higher education will not see a shortage of the need to change in the near future and having leaders who have the capacity, confidence, and skill in this area of change and change readiness would be very beneficial to the individuals, the field of student affairs, and their specific campuses.

While many participants answered how they onboard new members of their organization to their philosophies and values around readiness for change, few had concrete plans or programs in place that accomplished this in a formal, standardized way. A potential area for further growth in practice could be intentional development of orientation, training, and education for new employees about the institutions' and the divisions' philosophies regarding change and the mechanisms used to ready the organization for change.

Another aspect of this could be to develop a similar intentional and formal training session on how to manage a change in leadership. Many of the participants spoke about the challenges associated with a staffing or leadership change, the time it takes to manage, the implications of a new leader at the top of the organization, as well as being new as a leader in an organization when others are not. Change in leadership or transition in leadership could be an area for further consideration as it relates to preparedness for leadership in organizations. This enhancement for practice could help mitigate some of the challenges and issues that may arise for the people involved when a person in a leadership role changes, or they themselves transition to a new leadership role.

Implications for Research

While there are many models of organizational change theory and practice, much of what has been written and applied has occurred in the corporate world. Little has been written about the change process that applies directly to higher education, specifically student affairs, and even more specifically student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges. Further research needs to be done that focuses on the change process, specifically readying an organization for change. Another research gap to be filled could include that of specific training on how to ready small, private liberal arts colleges for change. While there was much research on this, little existed that specifically related to small, private liberal arts colleges and more could be done to fill this gap. Research questions could include: How are small, private liberal arts colleges different than other types of institutions as it pertains to readiness for change? How do those in the vice president for student affairs position differ from other types of vice president positions at small, private liberal arts colleges? At other types of institutions?

More research could be done on the skills and traits needed as vice presidents for student affairs and their capacity for readiness for change. Research could include an assessment of the skills and traits needed to be ready for change. An assessment would assist those in a vice presidential role the ability in recognizing their own level of readiness for change which will allow for better understanding of readiness for change as a concept for their organization. Further questions regarding readiness for change to be considered for future research could include: How does the relationship between the vice president and president of the institution impact the experience of readiness for change? How does the relationship between vice presidents and their direct reports impact the experience of readiness for change within the organization? How does the number of years in a position impact the experience of ones readiness for change? How does gender identity impact the experience of readiness or the perception of readiness for change? How do vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges measure their own readiness for change and the readiness of others in their organization?

Further research could include the impact of change on the student experience. Little to no research has been done on how changes at an institution directly impact the students who attend the institution during the change. While one could argue that being ready for change and implementing change within an organization always impacts the students, little was said about students in this study.

This study focused on readiness for change and the skills and traits associated with it, however it did not look at implementation and sustaining change initiatives. More research could be conducted on the actual implementation and sustaining of change within student affairs organizations. Further research could include a longitudinal study over time at one or a few similar institutions and their capacity for implementing and sustaining change. The need for change in higher education will not end and having leaders who possess the skills and knowledge to be ready to implement change will be important to the future of higher education institutions.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Date

Dear Participant,

My name is Kate McCaffrey Kenny and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the School of Education. The purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study is to explore the lived-experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small, private liberal arts colleges with their readiness for change within their organizations. The title of the project is Realities and Perceptions of Change Readiness of Vice Presidents for Student Affairs at Small Liberal Arts Colleges: A Phenomenological Study. I am serving as the Co-Principal Investigator under the supervision of my dissertation chair, Dr. Linda Kuk, School of Education.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete an Electronic Information Sheet: 5-10 minutes
- Participate in an interview via a Skype/phone: 45-90 minutes
- Review a copy of the transcribed interview: 30 minutes
- If needed, participate in a follow-up 2nd Skype/phone conversation: 45-60 minutes

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

Participants will identify a pseudonym to be used throughout the study to protect confidentiality. While there are no direct benefits to you, we hope to gain more knowledge on the phenomenon of change readiness of vice presidents for student affairs.

All interviews will consist of questions about understanding of change readiness and skills associated with it. No deception will be used and participants are able to decline from answering any question that makes them uncomfortable. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

If you are willing to participate in the study please fill out the Electronic Information Sheet. If you are selected Kate McCaffrey Kenny will email you to set up a time to schedule the 60-90 minute interview.

If you have any questions, please contact Kate McCaffrey Kenny at kathrynemccaffrey@gmail.com or (508)212-5120 or Dr. Linda Kuk at Linda.Kuk@colostate.edu or 970-491-7423.

If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator, at 970-491-1655.

Sincerely,

Dr. Linda Kuk

Associate Professor, School of Education

Kate McCaffrey Kenny

Ph.D. candidate, School of Education

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT ELECTRONIC INFORMATION FORM

APPENDIX B

Electronic Information Form

This will be used by the researcher to determine eligibility in the study only. Information will only be shared with the research team.

Name

My ethnicity is:

- Caucasian
- Hispanic or Latino/a
- Black or African American
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- other

What is your full job title?

My gender is:

fill in response

How many years have you been in your current position?

Have you experienced change within your organization in the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Don't know

Have you led change within your organization in the past two years?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe
- Don't Know

My higher education institution is:

check all that apply

- Public
- Private
- Religiously Affiliated

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO VPSAs SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN STUDY

Date

Dear (Name)

Thank you for volunteering to participate in my study. My name I is Kate McCaffrey Kenny and I am a doctoral candidate in the College and University Leadership program at Colorado State University. You may contact me with any questions at kathrynemccaffrey@gmail.com or by calling me on my cell phone at 508-212-5120.

For my dissertation research I am investigating how Vice Presidents for Student Affairs at small liberal arts colleges make meaning of their experience with being ready to change their organizations. I am gathering information by interviewing up to 15 people.

To participate in this study, I need to have a one-on-one interview with you. These interviews are anticipated to take no more than 90 minutes each. They will take place via Skype. Below are a list of possible dates and times for these interviews. Please review these and respond with a time that works best for you. If none of these times work for you, please respond with a list of dates, times, and locations that do would work best for you. If you do not have access to a Skype account please let me know and alternative arrangements can be made for participation via telephone.

(List of dates, times, and locations)

These interviews will be recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions will be kept secure and confidential and all consent forms will be kept separate from the interview transcriptions to keep participants identities confidential. At a point after the interviews have been transcribed, I will email a copy of the transcripts back to you in order to give you the chance to review the transcripts to ensure they were transcribed accurately. You will have ten days to review the transcripts and give submit any corrections to the researcher.

All information collected will be kept confidential and secure. At the beginning of the interview you will select a pseudonym and your real names will not be released to anyone. The data collected will be analyzed and reported as a part of my dissertation. A summary of the results will be available upon request.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Kate McCaffrey Kenny

PO Box 336

Norton MA 02766

APPENDIX D: LETTER TO VPSAS NOT SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE

Date

Name

Institution

Dear (Name),

Thank you for expressing interest in my study.

I am unable to include you in my study at this time. I appreciate you interest and in the event that I decide to continue this research, I will keep your name on file as a potential participant.

Again, thank you for your willingness to volunteer.

Sincerely,

Kate McCaffrey Kenny

PO Box 336

Norton MA 02766

kathrynemccaffrey@gmail.com

(508)212-5120

APPENDIX E: GUIDED QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEW

The following guided questions will be utilized in the interviews:

1. Would you define what “readiness for change” means to you?
2. How do you describe your readiness for leading change?
3. What skills and traits do you identify as being important to your readiness to lead change within your organization?
4. How would you describe your own personal development of the skills and traits needed to lead change?
    a. How did you develop these skills and traits? Please explain.
5. How do you apply these skills and traits to the implementation of change within your organization? Please explain.
6. How do you prepare those whom you lead to be ready for change within the organization?

APPENDIX F: VERBAL CONSENT INFORMATION

Hello, my name is Kate McCaffrey Kenny and I am a researcher from Colorado State University in the School of Education Higher Education Leadership PhD Program. We are conducting a research study on change readiness and the purpose of this interpretive phenomenological study is to explore the lived-experiences of vice presidents for student affairs at small liberal arts colleges with their readiness for change. The title of our project is Change Readiness: Realities and Perceptions of Vice Presidents for Student Affairs. You qualify for this study because you are a vice president for student affairs at a small, private liberal arts college with an undergraduate population under 3000.

The Principal Investigator is Linda Kuk, PhD, School of Education, (970)491-7243, Linda.Kuk@colostate.edu and I am the Co-Principal Investigator: Kate McCaffrey Kenny; kathrynemccaffrey@gmail.com; (508)212-5120.

During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions about: how you define what "readiness for change" means to you, how you describe your readiness for leading change, the skills and traits you believe are important to possess when leading change and how you develop and apply those skills. You will have the opportunity to answer with as much detail as you feel comfortable providing. With your permission, the interview will be recorded and will last about an hour. You will have the opportunity to review the transcription of your interview for accuracy. Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participation at any time without penalty.

We will be collecting some personal information about you, however you will be asked to choose a pseudonym to be used for reporting. When we report and share the data with others, we will combine the data from all participants. There are no known risks or direct benefits to you, but we hope to gain more knowledge on vice presidents for student affairs and their readiness for change.

Would you like to participate?

If yes: Proceed.

If no: Thank you for your time.

Offer to give the participant your contact information and the Participant's Rights contact information (If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.). This was shared verbally and in the form of a follow up thank you email to participants

APPENDIX G: MEMBER CHECK INSTRUCTIONS

Date

Name Institution

Dear (Name),

As we discussed, attached is a copy of the transcript from our interview on (date).

Please review this transcript and contact me if you would like to clarify any of your responses.

If I do not hear from you by (date) I will assume that you believe that transcript is an accurate depiction of our conversation.

As mentioned in earlier communications, once the study is complete I will forward you a summary of the findings.

Again, thank you for your participation and I appreciate the time you gave me.

Sincerely,

Kate McCaffrey Kenny

PO Box 336

Norton MA 02766

kathrynemccaffrey@gmail.com

(508)212-5120