

DISSERTATION

TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY OF PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP:  
PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Submitted by  
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In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
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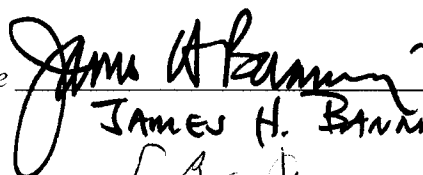
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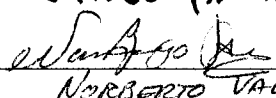
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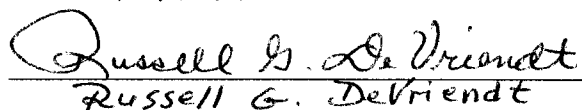
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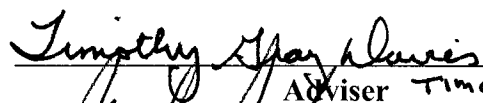
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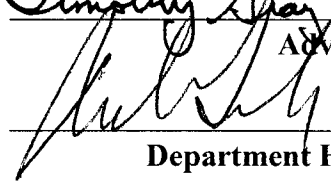
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## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

### TOWARD A GROUNDED THEORY OF PARTICIPATIVE LEADERSHIP: PERSPECTIVES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

According to the recent literature on the American comprehensive community college, the institution is currently encountering a vast array of complex issues that call for insightful, informed and visionary presidential leadership. The factors underpinning the current environment bring to the forefront serious concerns regarding the future of the community college, and increased emphasis is being placed on strengthening the internal environment of the institution. This study responds to the renewed interest in the importance of strong presidential leadership in creating effective, credible mechanisms for broad participation in campus decision making.

This grounded theory study addressed the issue of how community college presidents foster active, broad-based participation in campus decision-making processes. This study was based on in-depth interviews with seven community college presidents who were selected on the basis of their work in implementing participative governance within their respective institutions. The research process followed accepted practices within the field of grounded theory including theoretical sampling, coding and analysis. The findings of this study were presented according to the emergence of four axial categories, and a core category was identified and described. In general, the findings indicate that participative leadership is a highly interactive, dynamic, developmental process for building environments for broad participation. The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, reveals the centrality of the visioning process throughout each sequence of the participative leadership process.

This study responded to the need for research that illustrates the richness, complexity and multi-dimensional nature of participative leadership as it unfolds within the community college environment. A conceptual model of participative leadership is presented which is based on theoretical cornerstones. The cornerstones include envisioning the participative organization, participative passages, the web of participation and re-visioning the participative organization.

This model embodies key leadership practices that flow from the cornerstones. Thus, this study heeded the call for building theory on the topic of participative leadership as experienced by community college presidents. The results are intended for practitioners and researchers.

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As I reflect upon the sources who have contributed to the success of this study, I recall many people who provided support and encouragement that sustained me throughout this lengthy process. Indeed, just as the participants in this study drew upon a web of social relationships, I, too, have relied upon the support of family, friends and colleagues who have greatly contributed to this accomplishment.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

The American comprehensive community college is currently encountering a vast array of complex issues that call for insightful, informed and visionary leadership. The institution is contending with an increasingly turbulent, ambiguous and rapidly changing environment that requires leaders to develop proactive, thoughtful strategies. These issues impact the institution in its attempt to achieve the core functions of its mission, emphasizing the necessity of exploring the role of community college leadership. The critical need for this reexamination of the role of leadership is mirrored in the words of Cohen and Brawer (1994), who attested that community colleges “serve as agents of hope for all people regardless of their past experience with the educational system” (p. 20). Thus, new institutional forms are required to meet the needs of today’s learners and those of the future.

### The Social Context of the American Community College

The literature reviewed for this study indicates that community college leadership must consider significant factors in its external environment. These characteristics include the decreasing fiscal allocation to higher education, changing demographics of the community college population, the ongoing impact of technology, and the political context surrounding the institution. According to Hodges and Milliron (1997), the social context of the community college is characterized by fluctuations in “national, state, and local economies, wide legislative swings, significant demographic shifts, and expensive and seemingly unending technological improvements” (p. 1). Further, as Miller, Hood and Pope (1998) asserted, critics are dissatisfied with American higher education since it is “no longer a booming, protected business” (p. B6).

In accord, the factors underpinning the current environment bring to the forefront serious concerns regarding the future of the community college. As stated by Roueche, Baker and Rose

(1989), this time of rapid social change requires the ability to change appropriately and is a characteristic of effective organizations and its leadership. Hood et al. (1999) contended that the future requires leaders who will enable the institution to “survive the turbulence of the times” (p. 12). Thus, community college leaders must be able to deal strategically in a politically volatile environment.

### The Institutional Environment

In accordance with the focus on the future of the community college, increased emphasis is being placed on the institutional environment. According to Sarantos (1994), an environment must be created that acknowledges the role of change, the value of the contribution of individuals and responds to forces in the external environment. Johnson (1998) concurred on the importance of creating effective institutional environments in the assertion that the opportunity for change should be driven by the needs of the institution, and not from “state mandates” (p. 2).

This emphasis on strengthening the internal environment is closely linked to the increased role of institutional governance mechanisms as a means of involving members throughout the campus community in organizational redesign and renewal (Schuster, Smith, Corak, & Yamada, 1994; Richardson, 1976; Alfred, 1985, 1994; Twombly & Amey, 1994). Schuster et al. (1994) approached this issue by asking how institutions can create decision-making mechanisms that are “. . .credible—that is, legitimate and acceptable—to the campus community?” (p. 7).

Although the value of an effective, credible governmental mechanism for institutions of higher education is increasingly recognized by writers, there is also literature referencing serious issues related to the current research on the issue of campus governance (Schuster et al. 1994; Miller, 1998; Alfred 1985, 1994). For example, Alfred (1994), commented that while the issue of higher education governance is widely debated, only limited understanding of this topic has been achieved. According to Gollatscheck (1985), there is an absence of clear theory on institutional governance.

Further, despite the literature documenting the need for approaches to contend with the challenges in the external environment, there are writings that attest to the existence of serious obstacles to implementing and maintaining governance mechanisms within the institutional environment. The literature suggests that these constraints are reflective of the dual model of authority and power combined with the complex nature of academic culture (Schuster et al., 1994; Vineyard, 1993). The literature is indicative of the pivotal role of faculty within academic institutions and the importance of addressing this particular constituency (Vaughn, 2000; Schuster et al., 1994; Lee, 1991; Alfred, 1985; Richardson, 1976; Vineyard, 1993).

### The Call for Participative Governance

Much of the recent writing on governance and leadership in the American community college focuses upon examination of an organizational form and process referred to as participative governance, collaborative decision-making, collegial governance or some other term signifying active involvement in the decision-making process (Twombly & Amey, 1994, pp. 269-270). According to Twombly and Amey (1994), many community colleges have recently begun to implement participative forms of governance at some level of the organization. Alfred (1994) asserted that regardless of the context in which various community colleges operate, a unifying theme is clear movement toward participation in decision-making. As Alfred (1994) stated, "The ideal scenario would involve faculty and staff participation in a broad range of institutional processes and a shift in the focus of professional roles from the periphery to the center of decision-making and policy formation" (p. 248). This view is consistent with that of Twombly and Amey (1994) who perceived participative governance as characterized by organizational re-visioning, redefining leadership and leadership roles, communication, empowerment, consensus and team building, motivating, maintaining commitment, and balancing structure and autonomy.

## The Nature of Participative Leadership

In linking participative governance to the issue of community college leadership, Twombly and Amey (1994) indicated that participative governance requires the appropriate leadership skills. Twombly and Amey (1994) conceptualized leadership as interactive, dynamic and multi-dimensional, sharply in contrast with a view of leadership that is built around concepts of hierarchy, authority and power. According to Twombly and Amey (1994), leadership is perceived as what occurs in the relationship between a leader and others, including how leaders shape and are shaped by those with whom they interact.

Leaders *help* to establish vision, standards, and organizational direction, and they are helped in this process by others in the college community. This process of mutual influence invites the use of new verbs and metaphors to capture the essence of leadership—*weaver, cultivator, networking and connecting* (p. 270).

This conceptualization of leadership as an interactive process is congruent with the perspective of other writers. For example, Schuster et al. (1994) perceived leadership as “...a fundamentally interactive phenomenon—a function of a good match between institutional needs, individual strengths, and the context in which decisions are being made” (p. 9). Hodgkinson (1970) asserted, “We must be concerned with the interaction of person and organization” (p. 159). Further, research conducted by such scholars as Birnbaum (1998) and Roueche et al.(1989) are generally in agreement with this view.

Further, this perspective on leadership as a participative process is echoed by Roueche et. al.(1989) in their landmark study of community college presidents who were defined as exemplary leaders. Several primary themes were identified which Roueche et al.(1989) asserted are linked to the leadership behavior of these outstanding presidents. These themes include notions of teamwork, shared decision-making, empowerment, valuing people, focus on students, understanding, motivation, having a strong value system and promoting a vision of an ideal college. These themes are consistent with a leadership process that is clearly participative in nature. Further, these themes are consistent with the conceptual frame provided for the discussion

of participative governance described above by Twombly and Amey (1994) and Alfred (1994). Thus, given the clarity and focus of the views expressed by Twombly and Amey (1994), Alfred (1994) and Roueche et al (1989), this study adopts the terms participative governance and participative leadership as the appropriate terminology for guiding this study.

The review of literature for this study has demonstrated that although the topic of leadership has received much attention in the literature, there is considerable confusion and debate surrounding its meaning, uses and characteristics. For example, Roueche et al. (1989) indicated that the concepts of leaders and leadership are “. . . elusive—neither well understood nor appropriately delineated” (p.v). The elusive, ambiguous nature of leaders and leadership is linked to the split between theory and practice. Bensimon (1994) and Birnbaum (1998) concurred that the discrepancy between theory and practice raises critical issues in the study of community college leadership for theorists as well as for practitioners who require relevant, understandable models.

According to Birnbaum (1998), although the traditional models of leadership contain varying perspectives on organizational leadership, they are alike in that they portray leaders as heroic figures. This perspective is supported by Schuster et al. (1994) and Bensimon (1994) who also questioned the usefulness of models which center upon charismatic individually centered perspectives on leadership. In general, the literature suggests that traditional models are being increasingly challenged by new conceptions of leadership for addressing the pressing challenges facing the institution. This debate raises critical issues for the study of presidential leadership given the body of literature that substantiates the crucial role of the college president in building healthy, effective institutions (Roueche et al., 1989; Eaton, 1988; Vineyard, 1993; Vaughn & Weisman 1998; Vaughn, 1994, 2000; Schuster et al. 1994).

This brief review of the literature on the social context of the community college, the emergence of participative governance and the call for leadership, which is inclusive, collaborative, and collective, reveals the importance of further study on this topic. The following

section will demonstrate how this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on effective presidential leadership of today's community colleges.

#### Purpose Statement

The overall intent of this study was to develop greater understanding of the concept of participative leadership as it reflects the emergence of participative governance in the American community college. The purpose was to examine the participative leadership process as it reflects the actions of community college presidents in leading their institutions. Specifically, the intent was to contribute to the development of a grounded theory on participative leadership as understood within the literature on leadership and governance in the American community college.

This study was conducted within the paradigm of qualitative methodology, relying upon the approach of grounded theory. Grounded theory was chosen due to the need for: 1) in-depth descriptive accounts of the personal perspectives of participants; 2) generating data reflective of the everyday life of participative leaders; 3) building theory on the phenomenon of participative leadership; and 4) examining leadership as a distinct process. Since grounded theory is congruent with the purposes of this study as reflected in the central research question and sub-questions, the choice of grounded theory was clearly appropriate. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with 7 community college presidents who are recognized as participative leaders. The researcher followed accepted sampling procedures of grounded theory.

#### Research Question and Sub-questions

The central research question is: What are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? The sub-questions are: What are their experiences? What is the meaning of participative leadership to these presidents? What social interaction issues and broad conditions were present? What strategies do presidents employ as participative leaders? What are the consequences of employing such strategies?

## Operational Definitions

Participative governance – A type of governance characterized by re-defining leadership roles, communicating, empowering, consensus building, team building, motivating, collective decision-making, maintaining commitment, and re-visioning the institution (Twombly & Amey, 1994).

Shared governance – As defined by California Assembly Bill 1725, participatory management among the California community colleges, the Chancellor's office and the Board of Governors. The main focus is to move the California community college system toward a more collaborative decision-making approach (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Flanigan, 1996; Griffin, 1997; Giese, 1996).

## Delimitations

The pool of participants interviewed for this study was limited to community college presidents who are recognized for their participative leadership as defined within the conceptual foundation for this study.

## Assumptions and Limitations

Several key assumptions underpin this study and are stated herein:

1. Examples of participative leadership and participative governance exist.
2. Effective presidential leadership actions can be systematically discovered and described.
3. The community college president plays a pivotal role in addressing issues pertaining to participative governance.
4. The leadership actions of community college presidents have a direct bearing on successful efforts to achieve effective participative governance systems.
5. The methodology of grounded theory is consistent with the purpose of this study and will reveal the most important elements of participative leadership.

6. The selection of participants according to a broad conceptual frame describing participative leadership and standard sampling procedures for grounded theory is appropriate for the purposes of this study.

#### Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the literature on participative leadership in the American community college by documenting the perspective of selected presidents. The study responded to the need to gain greater understanding of how the college president can more effectively develop institutional environments that are conducive to participative governance. The research approach systematically elicited the perspectives of community college presidents who were actively engaged in leading their respective campuses. These perceptions are significant, given the gap in the literature on relevant theory for the study and practice of community college leadership. Therefore, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on participative leadership of the American community college and may be beneficial to theorists and educators.

#### Researcher's Perspective

My interest in the topic of participative leadership has its basis in my academic training and professional experiences. This background instilled in me a deep curiosity about this topic and a high regard for the methodology of grounded theory. This study provided me with a path for blending my academic and professional history that I found personally and professionally rewarding.

My previous experience with grounded theory involved research for a Master's thesis as described by Glaser and Strauss in their seminal work, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). I found myself immersed in an intriguing process that enabled me to gain a much richer understanding of the topic of the research. Thus, the current study provided me with an excellent opportunity to expand upon this previous experience by enhancing my skills and knowledge base. My interest in the topic of participative leadership is embedded in my professional history with the community college system. Over time, I have assumed various administrative roles and



frequently instructed sociology courses. Most recently, I completed nine years as a vice-president for instruction. Much of this period was spent assisting in the implementation of participative governance mechanisms as generally conceptualized in this study. I consider my experience in this lengthy process to be a profound aspect of my professional background. I found that certain expectations, beliefs, understandings and ideals regarding leadership within an academic organization have evolved significantly. Much important learning occurred, including successes and disappointments. The compelling nature of this professional experience provided me with a meaningful context for pursuing a more informed understanding of the phenomenon of leadership as it relates to participative governance.

Given this brief outline of my academic and professional background, my biases and philosophical stance are presented. Two general biases underpin this study. First, it is my belief that participative governance, given its basis in the values of inclusiveness, recognition of multiple ways of believing and acting, and emphasis upon human potential offers the community college a significant opportunity for improving the institution. Second, my perception is that the political context surrounding participative governance has often confounded the study of governance and leadership, as reflected in the rhetoric that sometimes characterizes the language of participation. However, I continue to believe that genuine forms of participative governance exist within specific contexts, and there is value in developing greater understanding of this phenomenon and the leadership approach it requires.

The philosophical stance underpinning this study is manifested in the selection of grounded theory as a distinct tradition within the qualitative paradigm. I value its relatively systematic approach to research topics that are difficult to discern and identify. I am aware that this method requires much time and that the researcher must contend with continual ambiguity. I recognize that this form of inquiry is evolving and inductive and that few “hard and fast rules” apply. I believe that the voices of participants in a study are powerful, passionate and eloquent, and thus their exact words will be an essential feature of this study. In short, I ascribe to a

worldview that upholds the process of emergence, the value of documenting multiple viewpoints, and the rewards that accrue from rigorous investigation of social reality.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

### Overview

This chapter reviews literature pertaining to the emergence of participative governance in American community colleges and the importance of the requisite leadership skills for advancing the institution in fulfilling its mission. This literature review includes research on the social context in which the American community college functions, literature on governance in the community college, and the literature on community college leadership. The literature that informs this study also includes some supplemental research in the general area of higher education. Each of these areas contains a substantial amount of literature.

The selection of the literature for this dissertation is reflective of the central research question: What are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? There are three key elements to the central research question: the participative leadership process, the president and the institution. A purpose of this study is to explicate the relationship between and among these elements by describing the process of participative leadership from the perspective of community college presidents. Thus, exploring the literature on the social context of the American community college, governance of the community college, and community college leadership establishes a broad foundation for addressing the key elements of the central research question.

The conceptual frame around which this study is organized views the phenomenon of participative leadership as an interactive process primarily influenced by two major factors. These two factors are the *leadership actions* undertaken by the president and the *institution* within which these actions occur. The leadership actions practiced by presidents in leading their institutions are perceived as occurring within the social context surrounding the community college. In this sense, the analysis is inclusive of both a macro and micro perspective.

This conceptualization of participative leadership as an interactive process is congruent with the perception of an increasing number of writers who generally view leadership as a process involving the president and the institution. For example, Schuster et al. (1994) perceived leadership as “a fundamentally interactive phenomenon—a function of a good match between institutional needs, individual strengths, and the context in which decisions are being made” (p. 19). Further, Twombly and Amey (1992, 1994) advocated for a concept of leadership as a process rather than a position. Hodgkinson (1970) argued, “We must be concerned with the interaction of person and organization” (p. 159). Research conducted by other scholars on higher education research such as Roueche et al. (1989) and Birnbaum (1998) is also generally congruent with this view.

The selection of literature for this section was also guided by recommendations for reviewing literature in accordance with the guidelines of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These authors assured researchers that they should not attempt to review all of the relevant literature regarding the topic prior to the data collection process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), one cannot anticipate what ideas or concepts will emerge. Further, the researcher should avoid becoming so immersed in the literature that his/her creativity becomes impeded. However, published materials, if used appropriately, can be used to enhance sensitivity. Gaining knowledge of existing theories surrounding the topic prior to collecting data, for example, may be helpful (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Thus, this review of literature is presented as a foundation for exploring issues related to the purpose of the study, allowing for extension of the literature as guided by emergence of concepts as the study progresses.

#### The Literature on the Social Context of the American Community College

In order to examine the need for a study on participative leadership, research regarding the contemporary social context within which the American community college functions are reviewed. This literature indicates that there is a vast array of issues impacting the institution in

its attempt to achieve its mission, accentuating the need for informed, visionary presidential leadership.

According to Bogart (1994), the American community college may be defined through its mission as involving "...community orientation, open door admission, and comprehensive program" (p. 60). This definition embraces the role of the community college as providing broad programs of study that typically include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, remedial education and community service and continuing education (Cohen & Brawer, 1996, p. 21). Vaughn (2000), stated, "The community college mission is the fountain from which all of its activities flow" (p. 3). Vaughn (2000) described the mission of the community college as serving several prevailing commitments: open access and equity, comprehensiveness, community-based orientation, teaching and learning and fostering lifelong learning. According to Cohen and Brawer (1994), the overarching objective of the community college is to enable people to achieve a better life. In this sense, community colleges "serve as agents of hope for all people regardless of their past experience with the educational system" (Cohen & Brawer, 1994, p. 20).

Garland (1994) stated that the current status of the comprehensive community college is reflective of the expansiveness and rapid change that occurred in the development of the comprehensive community college since 1900. This author perceived the contemporary period as a time for reflection and transition requiring rethinking the purpose and future of two-year education. As the following section demonstrates, emphasis is being placed upon re-examining the core functions of the institution within an environment which has grown more complex socially, demographically, politically and technologically. Community college leadership must consider key factors which include the decreasing fiscal allocation to higher education, changing demographics of the community college population, the impact of technology and political positioning. These issues may be understood in a global sense as deriving from the need to

rethink and redefine the overarching mission of the comprehensive community college as it exists as a fundamental component of the American system of higher education.

### *The Challenging External Environment*

The external environment for the contemporary community college has become increasingly problematic, characterized by constraints that include fiscal, demographic, political and technological issues. Hodges and Milliron (1997) reported that “Massive fluctuations in national, state, and local economies, wide legislative swings, significant demographic shifts, and expensive and seemingly unending technological improvements” underlie challenges for community colleges (p. 1). This section discusses the social context in which the community college functions in light of such prevalent challenges.

According to Vaughn and Weisman (1998), surveys of community college presidents consistently report that one of their major concerns is the lack of sufficient resources to achieve the mission of their institutions. This lack of resources related to cyclical fluctuations in the economic climate tends to create uncertainty regarding how higher education is to be financed (Schuster et al., 1994). Cohen and Brawer (1994) indicated that state legislators have become central to the discussion of fiscal issues since community colleges must compete for funding with other state agencies. According to Schuster et al. (1994), there is “. . . a fundamental rethinking of how higher education is to be financed, raising anew basic questions about who pays and who benefits” (p. 5). As reported by Miller (1998), critics are dissatisfied with higher education since “the United States is no longer a booming, protected business” (p. B6).

In addition to declining resources for higher education, pressing demographic trends have been identified by a number of writers as one of the most distinguishing features of the current environment for higher education. According to Vaughn (2000), there are approximately 1,100 two-year colleges, and about 970 are considered to be public institutions (p. 1). These public colleges enroll about 10 million students on a yearly basis. Approximately 45 percent of all first-time college students and 49 percent of all minority students constitute the population of these

colleges (Vaughn, 2000, p. 1). Cohen & Brawer (1996) stated that the increase in community college enrollments may be attributed to several conditions. These factors include participation by older students, females, under-prepared and minority students. The availability of financial aid, aggressive recruitment strategies, the reclassification of institutions, and part-time attendance are also cited.

Cohen and Brawer (1994) asserted that the diligence of community colleges in recruiting students from under-represented population groups has resulted in sizable increases in the college attendance of ethnic minorities. According to Rendon and Valadez (1994), over the past decade a large-scale transformation has been occurring in the racial and ethnic composition of the post-secondary student population. They maintained that an overwhelming tide of students of color and immigrants are contributing to a transformation of the largely Caucasian and traditional-age college population. These authors projected that by around 2015 Hispanics will be the largest minority groups in America, and people of color will comprise more than half of the American population (citing Cetron & Davies, 1989 in Rendon and Valadez, 1994, p. 5). These demographic trends provide an important context for analyzing the role of the comprehensive community college as an open-access institution. According to Hawthorne (1997), the emphasis on access has resulted in an unprecedented cross-section of students, which distinguishes the American comprehensive community college from other educational institutions.

The pressures relating to technology are another source of challenge for the leadership of the community college. Many educators stress the need for creating advanced delivery systems for the highly technological world of the contemporary community college. As stated by Schuster et al. (1994), a major force is “the explosion of technology that is just beginning to transform modes of teaching and learning in profound ways” (p. 5). According to Vaughn and Weisman’s (1998) study of the community college presidency, the second most critical issue identified after funding issues by survey respondents was the role of technology in the educational process.

An example of the dilemmas for educators created by technological change is identified by Rendon and Valadez (1994). According to these authors, the promise of technology as facilitating open access must be balanced against the socio-economic realities of new wave students. Gladieux and Swail (1999), who described the inherent difficulties of economically disadvantaged students in adapting to new technologies, support this position. In presenting data that demonstrates that the distribution of technology and competence in using technology is largely associated with socio-economic class, these authors accentuated the pressing need for public policy which narrows the digital divide between whites and minorities and the wealthy and the disadvantaged. In concert, Sarantos (1994) stated, "An unprecedented interplay of technological, demographic, and global economic forces is redefining the American workplace" (p. 1). Accordingly, these changes have begun to accelerate the status differential between the "haves and the have-nots" (Sarrantos, 1994, p. 1). Thus, rapidly changing demographics indicate that higher education institutions ". . . must adapt to the new workplace realities if they are to meet needs of a populace which is facing higher levels of technology and competition in the marketplace" (Sarrantos, 1994, p. 1).

The pressures surrounding declining resources, demographic shifts and the advent of technology provide a basis for examining the political context within which higher education functions. Since most community colleges are public agencies, their support is reflective of the perceptions of the public of their social value (Vaughn, 2000). As stated by Cohen and Brawer, (1994), colleges function ". . . within a political arena where public relations coalitions, inter-institutional cooperation and image guide decisions regarding support" (p. 8). In their study of community college leadership, Hood et al. (1999) stated that a problem that has emerged for the two-year college is that of institutional image. The issue of institutional image is also addressed by Schuster et al. (1994) who commented that apart from the great sums of money directed toward student financial assistance, "Education remains a politically handicapped contender for public monies. Its appeal extends just so far" (p. 6).



### *The Future of the Community College and the Challenges for Leadership*

This brief examination of some of the prevailing issues underpinning the American comprehensive community college brings to the forefront critical problems facing the leadership of the American community college. According to Schuster et al. (1994), the future for higher education is “replete with challenges” (p. 6). Roueche et al. (1989) stated, “Clearly, there is a tremendous need for leadership and an expanded opportunity to make a difference in their institutions” (p. vi). In short, the future of the American comprehensive community college is brimming with challenges reflective of an external environment characterized by uncertainty, rapid change, turbulence and pressures to redefine the mission of the community college.

According to Roueche et al. (1989), “We live in a time of rapid social change. The ability to change appropriately, in fact to determine the nature of the change, is one mark of a successful organization—and a successful leader” (p. 34). Hood et al. (1999) asserted that the future will require leaders who “help the institution to survive amidst the turbulence of the times; and be able to deal with the politics that will envelop the institution” (p. 12). In short, as stated by Schuster et al. (1994), “It is clear, however, that higher education’s leaders will need great skill and insight to negotiate a way through the awaiting hazards” (p. 6).

Recently, writers have tended to agree that higher education leadership must focus on ways to directly confront external realities. For example, Schuster et al. (1994) stated that although the literature previously emphasized merely responding to environmental conditions, the focus has shifted toward the importance of a proactive stance. According to Bennis (1997), higher education leadership must “. . . create an environment that actually embraces change, not as a threat but as an opportunity. I think that’s the only way to run an organization in a turbulent world” (p. 152).

This section has provided a brief review of the literature on the social context surrounding the American community college, focusing upon the necessity of responding to fiscal, demographic, technological and political forces. The literature indicates that the institution

is contending with an increasingly turbulent, ambiguous and complex external environment, calling for informed, visionary and proactive leadership. As the following discussion indicates, current literature supports the assertion that leaders develop strategies reflective of external realities through focusing on ways to strengthen the internal environment of the institution.

### The Literature on Community College Governance

In accordance with the need for engaging directly with external forces, the importance of focusing upon the institutional environment is increasingly identified in the literature. As Johnson (1998) stated, "I believe the best opportunity for change comes from inside the college—not by state mandates" (p. 38). Sarantos (1994) also referenced the need for focusing on the internal institutional environment in the assertion that ". . . an environment can be created that recognizes the constancy of change, values the importance of individual contribution and perspectives and proactively adapts to changing educational and market-based forces" (p. 2).

This increasing focus on the internal environment of the institution has led to renewed interest in the importance of creating structures and processes that are conducive to effective decision-making (Schuster et al., 1994; Richardson, 1976; Alfred, 1985, 1994; Twombly & Amey, 1994). According to Schuster et al. (1994), a critical challenge for higher education leadership is how to devise an effective governance approach to enable the institution to face challenges in the external environment. Schuster et al. (1994, p. 7) stated, "How can campuses create mechanisms that both will be reasonably effective in determining priorities for the future and will be credible—that is legitimate and acceptable—to the campus community" (p. 7).

Although the merits of an effective, credible governmental apparatus for higher education institutions is substantiated in the literature, there is also literature documenting serious issues related to the current status of campus governance. As stated by Miller (1998), "The level of discontent over campus governance has once again reached a higher-water mark" (p. B6). According to Miller (1998), critics include business leaders, trustees, political leaders, faculty, and campus administrators. Miller (1998) asserted, "Now, however, we need to make the harder

decisions required in for a mature, increasingly competitive enterprise. Those decisions will affect the nature and possibly the survival of traditional higher education . . .” (p. B6).

In order to establish a context for the examination of participative governance as it is perceived for the purposes of this study, it is useful to briefly examine the literature on the broad topic of campus governance. As stated by Alfred (1994), “Governance, closely related to concepts of administration, management, decision-making, and leadership, is one of the most widely discussed and misunderstood subjects in community college education today” (p. 245).

### *Definitions of Governance*

Alfred (1994) approached the issue of campus governance by offering several definitions of governance. Governance is defined by Alfred (1994) as “. . .the process for locating authority, power, and influence for academic decisions among internal and external constituencies” (p. 245). Alfred (1994) also stated, “In its simplest form, governance may be defined as the ‘act of decision making.’” (p. 245). Gollatscheck (1985) stated, “At its simplest level, governance is the process through which decisions are made in an institution” (p. 83).

Vaughn (2000) offered a broader definition of governance. “In the academic world, governance is the process through which institutional decisions are made. The governing process is influence by rules, regulations, committees, formal and informal groups and leaders, organizational structure, and the history and culture of the organization” (p. 20). Gollatscheck (1985) viewed governance as an accumulation of processes. Thus, according to Gollatscheck (1985), the structure of governance for a college is

. . .the accumulation of those decision-making processes the institution has used to establish policies and procedures concerning its mission, goals, and objectives; how the institution should be organized to achieve those missions, goals, and objectives and how it operates on a day-to-day basis (p. 84).

Deegan (1985) concurred with this emphasis on structure by stating that “governance is the framework within which decision making occurs” (p. 73).

While writers vary in defining campus governance according to issues of process, structure and context, there appears to be agreement among writers that governance invariably involves decision-making. Further, a consistent theme found in the research reviewed for this study is that the higher education literature does not provide a definitive theory on campus governance. According to Gollatshceck (1985), "While governance issues may have generated one of the largest bodies of literature in the field of higher education, no clear theory about governance within institutions is generally accepted" (p. 73). Alfred (1994) maintained:

The published research on community college governance is beset with problems. Much of the work is descriptive in nature or is limited in scope and design; selected work is reflective of excessive dependence on organizational scholars such as Selznick, Cohen and March, Corson, Pfeffer, Pfeffer and Salanick, Mortimer and McConnell, and Baldrige (p. 245).

#### *The Emergence of Participation in Campus Governance*

The push for participation in campus decision-making has been discussed by a number of writers within higher education (Alfred, 1985; 1994; Schuster et al., 1994; Richardson, 1976; Vaughn, 2000; Twombly & Amey, 1994; Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Vineyard, 1993; Richardson, 1976). The literature has tended to focus on describing a central construct from which to explore the higher education literature on increased participation of faculty and staff within the institution.

From a historical standpoint, Cohen & Brawer (1994), Twombly and Amey (1994); Gibson-Benninger (1994); and Alfred (1994) credit Richardson, Blocker and Bender (1972) as providing the earliest example of a form of governance referred to as participative governance. According to Cohen and Brawer (1994), the institutional form described by Richardson et al. (1972) constituted an ideal community college. Twombly and Amey (1992) concurred, indicating that Richardson et al. (1972) disapproved of the prevailing image of autocratic community college leaders. As a response, Richardson et al. (1972) proposed a model of governance that contained ideals of participation. For the most part, community college research has only recently begun to reincorporate this work into the literature (Twombly & Amey, 1992).

Authors have also approached the topic of the increased call for participative governance from the viewpoint of the corporate domain. For example, Schuster et al. (1994) indicated that there is a revolution in management within the United States that is at the heart of the literature on participation in organizational decision-making. In addressing the increasing prevalence of participative governance in American community colleges, Twombly and Amey (1994) stated, "In the last several decades, participative forms of governance have captured the imagination and practice of U. S. organizations" (p. 268). Acebo (1994) likewise asserted that the movement toward participation in campus governance in community colleges should be viewed in the context of a broader, nationwide effort toward quality management and that a strong trend has emerged involving the use of team-based decision making.

Schuster et al. (1994) referenced the perceptions of skeptics who viewed these various approaches to organizational decision-making such as Total Quality Management (TQM) or Continuous Quality Improvement as "false prophets, unable to deliver on their alluring claims" (p. 13). However, Schuster et al. (1994) suggested,

There is another way to view this succession of decision-making disciplines. Each is part of the ceaseless effort to develop decision-making models that will be responsive to the demands of the times and sensitive to the institution's own culture (pp. 13, 14).

Another approach to discussing the emergence of participative governance is through the literature on shared governance in California. According to Cohen and Brawer (1994), shared governance in California is a key example of "accelerating cooperation among staff" through legislative action (p. 14). Although the terms "participative governance" and "shared governance" are often used interchangeably in the literature, and there is considerable conceptual overlap, it is important to distinguish these terms given the purposes and scope of this study. The term "participative governance" in the context of this study is viewed as a form of governance consistent with the call for greater involvement campus decision-making (Alfred, 1985, 1994; Twombly & Amey, 1994; Richardson, 1976; Palmer, 1985; Gollatscheck, 1985; Vineyard, 1993; Schuster et al., 1994). As distinguished from the term "participative governance," the term

“shared governance” refers to California Assembly Bill 1725 (Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Flanigan, 1996); Griffin, 1997; and Giese, 1996).

According to Flanigan (1996), Assembly Bill 1725 calls for participatory management among the California community colleges, the Chancellor’s office and the Board of Governors. Its overall purpose is to provide greater faculty, classified staff, and student input in the decision-making process at all levels. As defined by Assembly Bill 1725, shared governance is the process by which individuals become involved in the decision-making process and is based on cooperation, trust and shared values. Its main intent is to accomplish a shift in power and move the community college system toward a more collaborative decision-making approach.

This review of the research on participation in campus governance suggests that although the literature on shared governance in California is of interest given the purposes of this study, writings on shared governance topic tend to focus on the prescriptive elements specified by Assembly Bill 1725. Hence, the recent advent of Assembly Bill 1725 serves to demonstrate the increasing prominence of participative governance within the evolution of the community college institutional structure.

#### *The Resistant Environment to Participative Government*

There is substantial literature on the need for strategic approaches to contend with the challenges of higher education’s external environment. Despite the urgency of responding to this volatile, complex set of conditions, obstacles to implementing and maintaining participative governance exist. The literature suggests that these obstacles are reflective of the dual model of authority and power and the nature of academic culture (Schuster et al., 1994; Vineyard, 1993).

According to Schuster et al. (1994), dual models have traditionally suggested that there is a separation of control and authority over particular domains within the institutional structure. However, as Schuster et al. (1994) admonished, “Dual models which once tended to separate decision-making according to faculty and administrative interests are “clearly inadequate when a scarcity of resources requires decisions that squarely impact academic programs” (p. 17). Culture

is generally described as the collective mutually shaping pattern of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that guide behavior of individuals and groups. When viewing the culture of an institution, it is often described as a “kind of organizational glue” (Kuh & Whitt, 1998, cited in Johnson, 1998, p. 37). According to Bensimon (1994), culture may be viewed conceptually as a social construction since participants are continually interpreting and creating organizational reality.

Several authors recognized the importance of examining the particular culture of the academic environment. Schuster et al. (1994) referenced the limitations of the corporate model, stating that the challenges for decision-making in higher education “are different—in considerable measure because of the distinctiveness (some would say peculiarities) of academic culture” (p. 13). Further, the complexity of organizational life is a further complicating issue according to another literature. “The views of more than a single group may define organizational reality, and these separate views may or may not be congruent (Bensimon, 1994, p. 44). Thus, the impact of the prevailing cultural aspects of academic life, along with the structural factors which underpin the dual model of authority and control, provide the backdrop for organizing the literature pertaining to the resistant environment to participative governance.

This review of literature suggests that the factors that constitute this resistance include issues of hierarchy and control, ambiguity, power and conflict, and the influence of the faculty sub-culture. The following unit describes how these elements constitute an adverse affect on efforts to establish and maintain systems of participative governance.

### *Hierarchy and Control*

First, one of the factors constituting the resistant environment is the impact of hierarchy and control. According to Vineyard (1993), the official institutional structure may be considered synonymous with the notion of the “chain of command” (p. 75). Vineyard (1993) indicated that the official governance structure is often ignored or dismissed as a form of participating in

governance by constituents in academic settings. "Usually it is viewed, especially by faculty, as a means of supervision and control. And indeed it has this purpose" (Vineyard, 1993, p. 75).

Vineyard (1993) noted that the official institutional structure provides a method for communication that theoretically provides a method for leadership to provide direction and information throughout the institution. The structure may also be used by faculty and staff for advocating for issues upward through the system. However, Vineyard (1993) argued that the institutional structure is beset with several difficulties. First, the official structure ". . . cannot escape the stigma of the 'chain of command' among faculty members who will continue to see it as the span of control rather than the funnel for input" (Vineyard, 1993, p. 76). Second, since the official structure follows the shape of a pyramid, communication tends to flow downward following a linear mode. However, the pyramid does not adequately provide for other forms of communication. In other words, the hierarchical form of institutional structure does not effectively enable members of various divisions to convey their collective concerns and ideas upward through the system (Vineyard, 1993).

Cohen and Brawer (1994) concurred with Vineyard's (1993) conception of the college administrative organization as a hierarchical form with a pyramidal shape. Thus, the board and president are located at the top with administrators, faculty and staff distributed below. However, according to Cohen and Brawer (1994), the concept of a hierarchical organization has never been quite suitable for describing the college environment due to the autonomous role of the faculty. Cohen and Brawer (1994) asserted that within the context of the classroom, faculty exerts their authority to provide instruction as they so choose. The autonomy experienced by faculty also applies to other members of the collegiate organization. In short, "The personal interactions that govern the daily activities of all college staff members influence their behavior far more than does any organizational chart with arrows showing who reports to whom" (Cohen & Brawer, 1994, 11).



While Vineyard (1993) asserted that the official institutional structure should be regarded as a part of a participative governance system, Cohen and Brawer (1994) noted that colleges now tend to be viewed

as having flatter profiles, with all staff members participating in a co-equal fashion. In this view, the institution encourages ideas from all staff members. Everyone has the opportunity to share and participate in decision making. Orders do not flow from one level to another; instead, people transmit ideas to each other as co-equals (p. 11).

Schuster et al. (1994) also contributed to the literature on difficulties with the institutional decision-making structure. In this view, campuses have been addressing issues related to the role of faculty and staff in decision making due to prevailing dissatisfaction with governance. Schuster et al. (1994) noted that there seems to be lack of coordination among constituent groups, as well as inadequate communication within constituencies. Consequently, “ The mere fact of participation on committees, representing a faculty or administrative perspective, does not ensure that the ‘representative’ has either discussed or informed the rest of the constituency about the issues under discussion” (Schuster et al., 1994, p. 21).

Despite ongoing problems related to institutional decision-making, Vineyard (1993) contended that it is critical that discussion of an institutional participative system continues. Vineyard (1993) stated, “It is essential that colleges not abandon the search for a structure which will embody the essential features of the faculty association mode while still retaining the values of the structural design of the official system within the institution” (p. 78).

In addition to communication and coordination issues, writers have also addressed the slow pace of campus decision-making. For example, Schuster et al. (1994) asserted that during the past several decades, this characteristic of the institutional governance system has become a matter of great concern. These authors noted that as the environment of higher education is changing rapidly, institutions are perceived as having poorly designed administrative structures for timely responses. Also, according to Miller (1998), the preference of faculty for consensual

decision making processes contributes to the existence of lengthy decision making processes in academic organizations.

Thus, regardless of the extent to which the hierarchical, pyramidal form exists and the degree to which change efforts have been implemented, the literature reviewed is indicative that dissatisfaction with the prevailing governmental mechanisms is prevalent within higher education and within the public sector. This discontent constitutes a serious factor that impedes efforts to implement and maintain participative governance.

### *Ambiguity*

A second obstacle characterizing the resistant environment to participative governance is that of ambiguity. Many writers generally agreed that most colleges have diffuse and ambiguous goals and that priorities are often lacking or poorly defined (Baldrige et al., 1977; Birnbaum, 1998; Eaton, 1988; Gardner, 1990; Schuster et al., 1994). As noted by Birnbaum (1998),

Community colleges are told to strengthen concepts of open access, but at the same time are told to emphasize our missions and move toward goal consensus, even though our goals are ambiguous and organizations can operate effectively without agreement on ends as long as there is agreement on means (p. 149).

This view is confirmed by Baldrige et al. (1977) in the assertion that goal ambiguity is one of the key characteristics of educational organizations since they rarely have a single mission. Indeed, "They often try to be all things to all people. Because their existing goals are unclear, they also find it hard to reject new goals" (Baldrige et al., 1977, p. 12).

Schuster et al. (1994) viewed the ambiguity as stemming from a future with formidable challenges in which "the litany of unknowns is broad and deep (p. 4)." Gardner (1990) referenced the problematic future faced by higher education in a discussion of goal setting among various constituencies. According to Gardner (1990), goals may emerge from many different origins that include the culture, constituent concerns and the directives of higher authority. This diffusion in the sources of goals, interpretation of goals and variation in priorities clearly contributes to the ambiguity of the organizational climate.

Thus, the absence of clear goals and priorities, often conflicting but justifiable goals originating from various constituent groups and the uncertainties of an increasingly problematic future are contributors to the difficult task of creating a climate conducive to participative governance.

### *Power and Conflict*

A third issue identified in the literature as characterizing the internal environment of higher education is that of power and conflict. Baldrice et al. (1977) linked the issue of power and conflict to the problem of goal ambiguity in higher education, differences among internal constituencies and the connection of academic institutions to their environments:

To summarize, academic organizations have several unique organizational characteristics. They have *ambiguous goals* that are often strongly contested. They serve *clients* who demand a voice in the decision-making process. They have a *problematic technology* for in order to serve clients their technology must be holistic and adaptable to individual needs. They are *professionalized organizations* in which employees demand a large measure of control over institutional decision processes. Finally, they are becoming more and more *vulnerable to their environments* (p. 4).

Although this statement was made several decades ago, the more current literature is indicative that issues of power and conflict continue to characterize the academic environment. For example, Miller (1998) referenced the conflicting views that exist between administrators and faculty by outlining four key problem areas relating to decision making on most campuses. These include “a diffusion of authority, a lack of clear accountability, a paucity of information, and an unworkable time frame” (p. B6, B7).

A segment of the literature regarding the struggle for power and control concerns the question of responsibility for the antagonistic working relationship between administrators and faculty. Some writers reported that faculty is to blame for an apathetic, complacent, self-indulgent attitude. For example, Miller (1998), in reference to the protected job status of faculty, explored the issue of accountability for decision-making. Miller (1998) posed the question, “Who has not seen some tenured faculty members who act like aging *enfants terribles* (p. B6)?” The source of

conflict is traced to differences in values, suggesting that faculty are concerned that their traditional authority is declining. This value conflict is expressed by faculty who are dismayed “by some administrator’s use of terms such as ‘industry’ and ‘customers’ to refer to education and students” (Miller, 1998, p. B6). Findings reported by Schuster et al. (1994) also supported the view that some hold faculty culpable for the conflicting relationships that exist on many campuses. For example, administrators are often disturbed by “. . .the power and control of faculty; resistance to a reordering of priorities, entrenched ‘turfism,’ rejection of the dictates of the marketplace. (Schuster, 1994, p. 7).

Other writers, however, hold administrators responsible for the contentious working environment in academic organizations. For example, Richardson (1976) connected the problem of oppressive administrative practices, institutional image and diminishing academic freedom for faculty:

We cannot increase our status at the expense of reducing theirs. Community colleges have suffered from image problems. That image problem has been due in no small measure to the deliberate attempt of administrators to repress faculty activity as practicing professionals (p. 59).

Further, the result of infrequently listening to faculty or student feedback has led to a situation characterized by “. . .fear, control of the system of reward and penalties, and control of the channels of communication” (Richardson, 1976, p. 52). Thus, by misuse of their authority, administrators have been able to achieve their own goals and advance their own values.

In contrast to those who hold either faculty or administrators responsible for the contentious working environment, Gardner (1990) and Leatherman (1998) asserted that both are to blame. Gardner (1990) asserted that the failure of leaders is related to lack of decisiveness, abuse of power, lack of confidence, pessimism and the inability to win the trust of their constituents. Conversely, unsuccessful leadership is often reflective of constituents’ passiveness, apathy and tendency to view themselves as being denied respect (Gardner, 1990). According to Leatherman (1998), the struggle for power is reflected in turmoil over the issues of faculty

participation in governance in such states as California, Minnesota and New York. This author indicated that the concept of faculty having a role in governing their institutions “. . . is a cherished idea, but it’s under siege, threatened by overreaching trustees, ineffectual presidents, and professors themselves (Leatherman, 1998, p.A8).

Regardless of who should be considered liable for the contentious working environment, the capacity for faculty to resist change is significant (Alfred, 1985). As Gardner (1990) indicated, “People who think of themselves as victims are in no mood to collaborate with others to shape a constructive future. They are more likely to be accusatory and intransigent (p. 96).” Hence, struggles for power, regardless of the source, impede participative governance because they tend to create a climate of mistrust, apprehension, and contention.

#### *Faculty Sub-Culture*

The following section presents literature specifically concerned with matters pertaining to the faculty sub-culture and its impact on efforts to enhance participative decision-making. The importance of acknowledging the pivotal role of faculty within academic institutions is well documented in the literature (Vaughn, 2000; Schuster et al., 1994; Lee, 1991; Alfred, 1985; Richardson, 1976; Vineyard, 1993).

Vaughn (2000) stressed the centrality of faculty in the assertion, “Faculty, whether full-time or part-time, are the heart of a learning institution. Community colleges employ more than 104,000 full-time faculty and approximately 190,000 part-time faculty” (p. 15). The significance of the faculty in issues related to governance is cited by Schuster et al. (1994) who cautioned leaders that the institutional decision making mechanisms must be viewed as legitimate and credible. Schuster et al. (1994) declared, “The importance of this governance element should not be underestimated. The ‘best’ plans and strategies are of little use if the campus community—especially the faculty—does not find them credible” (p.7). Further, Schuster et al. (1994) presented survey results in a table entitled, “Faculty attitudes about administration and Governance Items from Recent National Surveys of Faculty” which documents the assertion that

both university and community college faculty report dissatisfaction with the administration of their campuses (p. 8).

This literature suggests that decisions reached by administrators in the absence of support from faculty fuel constraints to participative governance. This section will provide a brief description of the problems experienced specifically by faculty which include job insecurity due to fiscal conditions, low morale and lack of confidence in administrators, and their adverse effect on efforts to contend with the challenging external environment.

First, the uncertain fiscal conditions facing higher education identified previously often mean dwindling resources for academic programs and diminished faculty salaries (Schuster et al., 1994). Thus, faculty are faced by the potential impact of declining resources on their professional futures, and feel threatened by the potential impact of administrator's final decisions (Richardson, 1976). Further, Alfred (1985) asserted that as fiscal resources decline and pressures to engage in institutional renewal intensify, faculty will develop an increased interest in the resource allocation process.

Second, another section of the literature reviewed for this study addressed the continuing problem of low morale among faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Johnson, 1998; Hood et al., 1999; Alfred, 1985; Richardson 1976; Schuster et al., 1994). Cohen and Brawer (1996) indicated that faculty satisfaction and dissatisfaction with professional matters has been traced for a number of years. Findings suggested that workplace characteristics, such as a perceived failure to receive support from administrators and colleagues and institutional policies were most likely to be the sources of faculty dissatisfaction (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). According to Richardson (1976), the problem of faculty self-image is a result of the oppressive atmosphere characterizing academic institutions for which leadership is clearly responsible.

The problem of faculty morale continues to plague academic institutions several decades later according to a study conducted by Johnson (1998) of twenty-four community colleges. This study was intended to generate further understanding of how the culture of these institutions is

viewed by respondents that included presidents, administrators, department chairs, and full-time faculty members. The findings revealed “alarming results” which indicated that significant differences exist in terms of perceptions regarding the cultural influence of the presidents (Johnson, 1998, p. 38). These results indicated that presidents were generally unaware of the morale level of their colleges. Further, presidents differed most significantly from the faculty regarding how positive their cultural influence is perceived to be in their various institutions (Johnson, 1998).

This body of literature indicates that issues related to faculty morale must be addressed because it has an adverse effect of faculty’s willingness to develop collaborative relationships with administrators. As Schuster et al. (1994) stated, “Faculty seldom voice their frustration ‘for the record;’ political astuteness generally requires a less provocative stance. In sum, the gulf between administration and faculty very often is wide and deep” (p. 7).

A third characteristic of the faculty-subculture illustrating the chasm between administrators and faculty is their perceptions of administrators as lacking in integrity and having a strong need for aggrandizement. According to Richardson (1976), academic institutions have an “. . .abundance of autocratic and frequently arbitrary administrators . . .who have regarded themselves endowed with a wisdom denied to lesser folks” (p. 52). Alfred (1985) linked the problem of administrators’ perceived self-importance to the institutional governance process in cautioning that aggrandizement can have antagonistic effects on governance processes. “Administrators accustomed to high levels of personal power will often invoke a forced-choice decision climate when faced with declining resources” (Alfred, 1985, p. 60). This creates issues for resource allocation and accentuates the problem of institutional subcultures with differential values” (Alfred, 1985, p. 60).

Thus, the problem of the perceived self-aggrandizement of administrators impedes efforts of campus leadership to invoke institutional change. This issue is particularly relevant to the study of presidential leadership since “A president must be seen as the champion of the

institution and its constituencies” (Vineyard, 1993, p. 14). This author encouraged community college presidents to conduct themselves so that they are perceived as acting in the best interests of all constituencies. Hence, “The president must not appear to be self-aggrandizing. He must not appear to be a social climber in the community or the state, or to have ambitions beyond his present position”(Vineyard, 1993, p. 14). Eaton (1998) succinctly addressed the issue of aggrandizement in the view that presidents may exercise power but should not show too much pleasure in doing so.

In sum, this brief review of the literature suggests that obstacles impeding efforts to implementing and maintaining participative governance include struggles of conflict and power among constituencies, ambiguity in institutional goals and priorities, and problems of hierarchy and control. Further, faculty resistance to joint decision making is related to job insecurity, low morale and unfavorable perceptions of campus administrators. Failure to respond to these issues will likely impede efforts to implement and maintain systems of participative governance. Thus, academic leadership must address these issues to build an environment viewed as credible and legitimate by the campus community.

### *The Literature on Community College Leadership*

As the preceding sections have demonstrated, the comprehensive community college is currently encouraging a complex array of issues in its external and internal environment that call for discerning, informed and strategic leadership. The challenges embedded in the institution’s external environment are manifested in enhanced strains within the academic environment, resulting in an increased emphasis on the need for effective governmental decision-making practices. Thus, a fundamental challenge for academic leadership is to establish institutional mechanisms to prepare for the emerging realities of an increasingly problematic future.

The following unit addresses several major issues contained in the literature regarding presidential leadership. Who has the responsibility for focusing the efforts of faculty and staff toward creating a credible environment for participative governance? What are the traditional



and contemporary concepts or models for presidential leadership? What leadership actions are considered relevant for participative governance?

### *The Link from Participative Governance to Presidential Leadership*

Given the considerable attention in the literature regarding the importance of constructing academic environments conducive to participative governance, it is necessary to address the issue of which leaders have the responsibility and authority to create a favorable climate for collaborative decision making. Ample higher education literature documents the position that the authoritative leader of the academic institution is the president (Roueche et al., 1989; Eaton, 1988; Vineyard, 1993, 1994; Schuster et al., 1994; Vaughn, 2000).

Vineyard (1993) described the responsibility and accountability of the president according to the expectations of the position. The president is at once a manager, spokesperson for the college, leader of the administrative team, and judge-arbitrator. The president is generally held responsible for all that transpires within the organization. Schuster et al. (1994) also conveyed the importance of the college president by referencing the salience of “...skillful leadership...especially at the presidential level” (p. 188). In effect, “...the role of presidents, in particular, continued to be depicted as critical to the health of an institution” (Schuster et al., 1994, p. 19). On the whole, the college president has a crucial role in participative governance within the institution. The role requires the president to assume responsibility and accountability for building environments that encourage active participation of constituents in decision-making practices.

### *Models of Leadership*

Given the relevance of effective presidential leadership and participative governance, the body of literature pertaining to concepts of community college leadership will be briefly reviewed. This unit will provide a short description of traditional models of organization and leadership followed by some new conceptions of leadership contained in the literature.

Several authors approached the topic of leadership models by describing the intangible nature of leaders and leadership. For example, Roueche et al. (1989) indicated that these concepts are “elusive—neither well understood nor appropriately delineated” (p. v.) Accordingly, Birnbaum (1998) indicated that much of the writing on leadership tends to be an exercise in rhetoric. Birnbaum (1998) further stated:

On the one hand, leadership has been referred to as almost everything, and on the other, it has been considered as almost nothing.... Probably everything written about leadership is correct some of the time, but nothing is correct all the time (p. 148,149).

Bensimon (1994) also remarked on the elusiveness of leadership in the assertion, “There are probably as many definitions of leaders and of leadership as there are people who have written about these topics” (p. 30).

The elusive, ambiguous nature of leadership is related to the split between theory and practice. According to Bensimon (1994), there is a split between theory and practice regarding scholarly publications relating to the topic of college leadership. This disconnection between academic leadership and research is related to the difficult language often used by scholars, the preference of administrators for specific solutions and the lack of appropriate distribution of scholarly works (Bensimon, 1994). Birnbaum (1998) concurred that there is a serious problem in the split between theory and practice. “We deny the discrepancy between our espoused theories and our theories-in-use, even when the gap between what we say presidents do and what we see them do, is obvious” (p. 145).

### *Traditional Models*

Despite the elusive quality of leaders and leadership, continuous efforts are made to examine the notion of leadership and its relevance to the success of academic institutions. Birnbaum (1998) addressed the topic of community college leadership through a short discussion of three types of models that are important for understanding the traditional approach to how leadership interfaces with college governance. The description of the traditional models provided by Birnbaum (1988) generally corresponds with the models presented by Gollattscheck (1985)

and Deegan (1985) who consider these approaches to organizational decision making as models of governance.

The traditional approach generally consists of three models of leadership in organizations. The first model is often referred to as a bureaucratic representation of an organization. This model views the college as a large, complex hierarchy that requires the effective leader to establish goals, organize the work of subordinates, and engage in planning. The major shortcoming is that the model tends to ignore the importance of informal influence networks and the fragmentation of sub-units. The second model is the collegium, often thought of as the community of scholars. The effective leader listens, persuades, and influences decision-making through sharing information and appealing to reason. The collegiate model tends to ignore the presence of conflict and differentials in the status of organizational members. The third model views the college as a political system in which conflicts exist among various groups and subgroups. The role of the leader is to manage processes and mediate conflict that pervades the organization (Birnbaum, 1998, pp. 140-141).

According to Birnbaum (1998), although the traditional models contain varying views of organizational functioning, they are similar in that each pictures leaders as heroic figures, in contrast to the newer models. This point is underscored by Schuster et al., (1994), who indicated that the primary change in conceptions of leadership during the last several decades is “. . . a retreat from the belief that a single leader can serve as organizational savior in all times and situations . . .” (p. 19). Bensimon (1994) concurred with this perspective since these models “promulgate a view of leadership as individual centered” (p. 33). Bensimon (1994) asserted that these models of leadership will become increasingly irrelevant due to the flux and uncertainty of a situation in which new groups of women, people of color and socio-economic groups become more predominant on college campuses.

The issue of exclusion of under-represented groups regarding traditional models of leadership are addressed by Twombly and Amey (1992) who reviewed the literature on

community college leadership and concluded that strong, militaristic descriptions of leaders have typified the historical approach to the topic. In the opinion of these authors, the force of traditional images of leadership raises serious issues for the future of the community college, since these images have tended to impede the efforts of women and minorities to gain access to positions of power. As stated by Twombly and Amey (1992),

Yet, can community colleges, serving such diverse constituencies, afford to maintain images of leadership that are narrow and exclusionary? Organizationally, can they afford to perpetuate the great-man models of leadership when many writers agree that different behaviors are called for (p. 146)?

### *Alternative Conceptions of Leadership*

Given the perspectives of leadership scholars on collegiate organizational leadership, which indicated that traditional models are giving way to new conceptions of leadership, the following unit provides a brief account of current writing on this topic. Bensimon (1994) advocated for a concept of leadership which...“embraces the multiplicity of viewpoints, rather than one that is based on the assumption of a single and shared reality. Leadership needs to be reconceptualized as a collective practice” (p. 33, 34). The task of leadership is to “. . .have an understanding of ‘a plurality of voices vying for the right to reality—to be accepted as legitimate expressions of the true and good’” (Gergen, 1991, p. 7 cited in Bensimon, 1994, p. 33). Gibson-Benninger et al. (1995) concurred, indicating that the task of community college presidents is to “. . .create an environment in which diverse qualities and abilities of students and staff make positive contributions to the organization” (p. 1). These authors also challenged the “great man theory” and advocated for organizations that provide opportunities for leadership in various segments of the organization (Gibson-Benninger et al., 1995, p. 1).

### *Leadership Actions for Participative Governance*

What constitutes an environment for participative governance that is viewed as legitimate and acceptable to the campus community? If credibility must underpin the campus environment necessary for joint decision-making, then academic leadership must focus on building institutions that are conducive to constituents working jointly to meet institutional goals. Given the critical role of presidential leadership to community colleges, what are the leadership actions that establish a credible environment for participative governance?

According to Alfred (1995), successful approaches require the commitment of individuals. "Commitment follows from "meaningful involvement of professional staff in strategic decision" (Alfred, 1995, p. 1). According to Hood et al.(1999), organizational changes can only result " . . .in a climate of trust built by college leaders" (p. 6).The critical importance of the perceived credibility of leaders was underscored in the landmark study of leadership qualities conducted by Kouzes and Posner (1995). According to survey respondents, "More than anything, we want leaders who are credible" (Kouzes & Posner, 1995, p. 26). This literature indicates the importance placed by researchers on generating relevant information on credible leadership for the community college.

According to this review of literature, Twombly and Amey (1994) and Roueche et al. (1989) have provided a broad conceptual frame which constitutes a foundation for examining participative leadership and the actions that characterize this process. The focus of these authors provides a basis for beginning a study of the leadership processes associated with a credible environment for participative governance.

Twombly and Amey (1994) contended that participative governance systems are based on leadership skills that require re-conceptualizing the community college as an organization, reviewing assumptions regarding leadership and rethinking the roles of constituents. Twombly and Amey (1994) indicated that many required skills may have similar terms as those required with any form of governance, but they may involve different activities within a participative

setting. The conceptual frame provided by these authors includes re-visioning the organization, re-visioning leadership and leadership roles, communicating, empowering others, consensus and team building, motivating, maintaining commitment and balancing structure and autonomy. According to Twombly and Amey (1994), these terms constitute a conceptual frame for beginning a study on the leadership actions associated with participative governance.

Similarly, Roueche et al. (1989) in their seminal study on community college leadership identified a group of community college presidents who were defined as exemplary leaders. In defining the concept of leadership within the context of the community college setting, Roueche et al. (1989) stated, “**Leadership** is the ability to influence, shape and embed values, attitudes, beliefs, and behavior consistent with increased staff and faculty commitment to the unique mission of the community college” (p. 18).

Using this definition of leadership, the Roueche et al. (1989) study asked over 650 community college presidents to nominate individuals who demonstrated leadership qualities consistent with this definition. A list of 256 leaders was developed, and this group also named individuals who were considered to be top leaders. The result was a group of 50 presidents (“blue chippers”) who were identified and interviewed along with the members of their leadership teams (Roueche et al., 1989, p. 12).

Several themes were developed which Roueche et al. (1989) asserted are linked to the leadership behavior of these 50 presidents selected for the study. These themes include notions of teamwork, shared decision-making, empowerment, valuing people, focus on students, understanding motivation, having a strong value system and a vision of what a college can be (pp. 12-13). These topics suggest a form of presidential leadership that is clearly participative in nature and are consistent with the general definition of participative governance described above by Twombly and Amey (1994).

### *The Nature of Participative Leadership*

As documented in this review of literature, a critical need exists for developing new models of community leadership consistent with the emergence of participative governance in academic institutions. However, the review of literature indicated that the research specifically focused on the concept of participative leadership is limited, particularly within the literature on community college presidential leadership. This literature review has revealed that during the last several decades, the general notion of a form of leadership which is participative in nature has been primarily discussed in the general literature on organizational leadership, focusing on the corporate context (Kanter, 1983; Senge, 1990; Helgesen, 1995; Yukl, 2002). The following discussion provides an account of the literature on participative leadership and demonstrates that a significant gap exists in the literature on this topic.

Yukl (2002) appeared to have offered a succinct definition of the term participative leadership. In a chapter entitled "Participative Leadership, Delegation, and Empowerment," Yukl (2002) stated, "Participative leadership involves efforts by a leader to encourage and facilitate participation by others in making important decisions" (p. 81). Further, participative leadership includes the use of decision-making procedures that allow influence over the decisions made by the leader. According to Yukl (2002), other terms commonly used in referencing participative leadership include consultation, joint decision-making, power sharing, decentralization and democratic management (p. 81). Although this definition is generally consistent with Twombly and Amey (1994) and Roueche et al. (1989), Yukl's (2000) approach dwells primarily on the issue of empowerment and delegation. Further, Yukl (2000) limited the application of this definition almost exclusively to the corporate world.

Associating the term participative leadership with the issue of empowerment and delegation also characterized the approach of Roueche et al. (1989) who made a brief reference to the term "participatory leadership" in conjunction with the term "participatory management" (pp. 141, 142). These authors indicated that most of the presidents interviewed in their study were

concerned about the misuse of the term participatory leadership and that this type of leadership should be used in conjunction with participatory management. Roueche et al. (1989) concluded that in responding to the challenges facing community college leadership these presidents exhibited a style of leadership “. . .in such a way that collaboration, in conjunction with delegation and empowerment, was accomplished primarily through following their intuition” (p. 142).

In sum, this unit suggests that the literature on the specific topic of participative leadership is limited in that it mainly focuses on the application of participative forms of leadership within the corporate setting. Moreover, the focus in the literature in higher education has been on establishing the need for new models of leadership given changes in the external and internal environments of the American community college. While these perspectives are useful to community college leaders, there is a need for additional research that goes beyond the corporate literature. As well, the need also exists for rigorous research that addresses the call for alternative models of leadership and provides a conceptual framework for identifying specific leadership actions.

### *Summary*

This review of the literature has provided an account of the current social context of the American community college, the role of governance within the institution, and the challenge for academic leadership. This literature reveals that there is a vast array of issues impacting the institution that requires highly informed, proactive presidential leadership.

The external environment of the contemporary community college has become increasingly problematic, characterized by fiscal, demographic, political and technological constraints. These considerations are causing leadership to rethink the core functions of the institution in a time of rapid change, uncertainty and an ambiguity. In accordance with acknowledging the need to engage directly with forces in the external environment, the literature review underscored the move toward creating institutional mechanisms that effectively contend



with the constancy of change and adaptation to evolving educational and market-based forces. This increasing focus on institutional systems and processes has led to renewed emphasis on credible environments for effective decision-making. However, there is substantial literature that documents serious concerns regarding the status of campus governance. Further, there is a paucity of accepted theory on the topic of academic governance, particularly within the community college literature.

The literature review also demonstrated that there is an increased need for participation of faculty and staff in campus governance, and that some unique aspects of academic life serve as impediments to efforts for establishing participative decision-making. These constraints include problems of hierarchy and control, ambiguity in goals and priorities, pervasive struggles for power, ongoing conflict among constituents, and ongoing discontent among faculty.

The literature on community college leadership documented the issues faced by academic leaders as they prepare for the emerging realities of a complex, volatile future. This review substantiates the perspective that a key challenge is to create institutional environments that are viewed by constituents as relevant and credible, especially by the faculty. The community college president has a crucial role in this effort which requires a keen understanding of how to build environments that encourage active participation in decision-making processes. The study of leadership is complicated, however, by the elusive, intangible nature of leaders and leadership and the split between theory and practice. Further, some writers contend that deficiencies in the traditional models of leadership have hampered efforts to develop conceptualizations of leadership which practicing academic leaders find useful and relevant. Thus, there is an increasingly prevalent perspective among writers that the traditional models of leadership will be disregarded as new groups of women, minorities and members of other underrepresented groups become more extensive on campuses.

In sum, this review of literature demonstrates that despite the pressing need for informed presidential leadership of the community college, there is little research on the topic of the

community college presidency. Further, the research on participative leadership in the community college is especially inadequate. While there is some writing that provides a strong conceptual foundation for examining participative leadership for the community college, more research is needed. Specifically, empirically based, rigorous research is needed to examine the ways participative governance and presidential leadership interacts to accomplish institutional mission and goals.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### *Overview*

The overall focus of this study is to develop greater understanding of the concept of participative leadership as it reflects the emergence of participative governance in the American community college. The purpose is to generate increased understanding of the participative leadership process as it reflects the actions of community college presidents in leading their institutions. Specifically, the intent is to contribute to the development of a grounded theory on participative leadership as understood within the literature on participative governance in American community colleges.

This chapter is divided into the following main sections: research design, participants and site, data collection, data analysis and verification. Each of these substantive areas are examined in accordance with the central research question and sub-questions. The central research question is: what are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? Sub-questions include: What are their experiences? What is the meaning of participative leadership to participants? What social interaction issues and broad conditions were present? What strategies do presidents employ as participative leaders? What are the consequences of employing such strategies?

### *Research Design*

This section provides the rationale for selecting the qualitative paradigm as the methodology for conducting this research in light of the purposes of this study. It briefly describes how the assumptions and requirements of qualitative methodology are consistent with the overall purpose or intent of this research study as reflected in the research questions and sub-

questions. This unit also addresses the appropriateness of selecting grounded theory as a specific methodology in qualitative research.

### Rational for Using Qualitative Methodology

In this section, the rationale for selecting qualitative methodology as the research design is presented. As stated by Creswell (1998), it is important that those conducting qualitative studies understand that research design refers to the total research process from conceptualization through report writing. (p. 2). Given this perspective, the selection of the research paradigm is a critical beginning step in envisioning the study since it provides the overall context or frame for conducting the research process.

Creswell (1998) provided a comprehensive guide to describing how the type or tradition of qualitative inquiry shapes the design of a study. In the course of describing the five traditions or types of qualitative research according to theoretical and procedural dimensions, qualitative research, Creswell (1998) is defined as:

Qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting. (p. 15).

This definition of qualitative research is a means for discussing how to evaluate if a strong rationale exists for choosing a qualitative approach (Creswell, 1998). Miles and Huberman (1994) also provided a succinct overview of the strengths and characteristics of qualitative research. These considerations provide the general frame for demonstrating that the research question and sub-questions posed by this study provide a strong rationale for selecting the qualitative paradigm.

First, the nature of the research question and sub-questions contained in this study require narrative, descriptive responses for expressing perspectives on the topic of participative governance. According to the literature, individuals construct or interpret their own reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As stated by Miles and Huberman (1994),

Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's 'lived experience' are fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* people place on events, processes, and structures of their lives: their 'perceptions, assumptions, prejudgments, presuppositions' (Van Maanen, 1997) and for connecting these meanings to the *social world* around them (p. 10).

A qualitative inquiry yields data that are richer or more highly descriptive than could be obtained through quantitative approaches such as a survey distribution to a sample of presidents. Since this study examined the worldview of these presidents, it focused on discovering the meaning of participative leadership as manifested in the life situation of this particular group.

Second, qualitative research has a strong potential for uncovering or revealing the complexity of a social phenomenon. As stated by Miles and Huberman (1994), "Such data provide 'thick descriptions' that are vivid, nested in a real context, and have a ring of truth that has strong impact on the reader" (p.10). As described by Eisner (1991), "Thick description is an effort aimed at interpretation, at getting below the surface to that most enigmatic aspect of the human condition: the construction of meaning" (p.15). This study was designed to discover the meaning of participative leadership for participants. In this light, the aim of this study was to produce thick descriptions of this phenomenon and is thus congruent with the strengths of qualitative design.

Third, the research question and sub-questions indicate the need for selecting a qualitative design due to its focus on generating data reflective of the richness and holism of everyday life. In describing qualitative data, Miles and Huberman (1994) stated, "One major feature is that they focus on *naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural settings*, so that we have a strong handle on what 'real life' is like." (p. 10). Since this study focused on discovering and explicating the ways presidents in a specific setting (the institutional context) came to understand, account for and manage their everyday life situations, qualitative design is consistent with the purpose of this study.

Accordingly, in order to generate data that yield the complexity, richness and holism of everyday life, this study sought to reveal the intricate detail surrounding the experience of participative leadership as experienced by participants. As stated by Strauss and Corbin (1990),

Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. It can be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known. Also, qualitative methods can give the intricate details of phenomena that are difficult to convey with quantitative methods (p. 19).

The purpose of this study, to uncover the personal perceptions of participants and to discover the “intricate details” of their experience as participative leaders, is again compatible with the selection of qualitative research design for this study.

Fourth, the research question and sub-questions indicate the relevancy of qualitative paradigm for development of an integrated theory on the topic of participative leadership. As Creswell (1998) asserted, a qualitative study should be chosen because the topic requires exploration for the development of theories. Specifically, a qualitative study is well suited to a subject area for which it is difficult to identify variables, and there are insufficient theories for explaining the social phenomenon under investigation.

As the review of literature has demonstrated, there is a substantial amount of literature available on participative governance and the general topic of higher education leadership. However, the literature review illustrated several problem areas in the theoretical understanding of the form of leadership associated with participative governance. In general, these areas indicate the lack of clear, relevant theory on this topic for the use of theorists and practitioners. These problem areas clearly substantiate the need for contributions from a qualitative approach that expands the body of knowledge on the topic of participative leadership within the community college setting.

#### The Research Design Phase of Grounded Theory

As indicated previously, the rationale for selecting a qualitative design included four considerations that flow from the nature of the research question and sub-questions. These criteria

include the importance of documenting the personal perspectives of selected presidents who have implemented participative governance, the relevance of thick description for revealing the complexity of a social phenomenon, the need for generating data reflective of the everyday life of those who have participated in the social context under study, and the need for expanding the range of theory available on this topic. This section provides a brief overview of the grounded theory approach to qualitative inquiry in accordance with the intent of this study as stated in the research question and sub-questions.

The first consideration relating to the central research question and sub-questions is the need for in-depth, narrative descriptive accounts for expressing the personal perspectives of participants. Creswell (1998) discussed qualitative design as having five traditions of inquiry. These traditions include studies that are biographical, phenomenological, case study, ethnography and grounded theory. Creswell (1998) stated that the purpose of a grounded theory study is to “generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema or a phenomenon, that relates to a particular situation” (p. 56). Creswell (1998) distinguished grounded theory from phenomenology in noting that a phenomenological study emphasizes the meaning of an experience for a number of individuals. In contrast, grounded theory focuses upon developing or generating theory closely related to the context of the phenomenon being studied. This distinction is important for the purposes of this study. Although the study will seek from participants in-depth accounts of their social reality, the focus is clearly upon generating theory on the phenomenon of participative leadership and is therefore congruent with the choice of grounded theory.

Second, the research questions and sub-questions reflect the need for generating data reflective of the everyday life of participants who have experienced the phenomenon of participative leadership. The term “grounded theory” is associated with the book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In this seminal work, the authors contended that grounding theory in data from the field is more likely to be representative of the phenomenon under investigation than the various “grand theories” which provide an a priori, logical-deductive

explanation. In this view, the theoretical insights gained from this research are closely related to the particular segment of social reality under investigation.

Third, the research question responds to the need for developing theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of participative leadership for the purpose of building theory on this topic for practitioners and theorists. Creswell (1998) indicated that grounded theory is becoming increasingly popular in various fields, including sociology and education (p 56). In asserting its value in the systematic discovery of theory from the data of social research, Glaser and Strauss (1967, p. 3) advocated the need for theory that is readily understandable to social scientists and laypersons. Further, Glaser and Strauss (1967) argued for a scientific approach that goes beyond research that is merely descriptive. Glaser and Strauss (1967) asserted, “Sociological relevance is sorely needed both for understanding the ‘dust heap’ of data piled up by agencies and for correcting the conventional ideology that guides this piling up of data” (p. 7). Since the research question and sub-questions of this study signify the need to generate theory that is relevant, useful and understandable, the choice of grounded theory is clearly consistent with the need to develop theory that is useful for both researchers and practitioners.

Fourth, the central research question is framed so that the emphasis is upon an examination of leadership as a distinct process. Since the analysis of process is viewed as a specific feature of grounded theory, the selection of grounded theory methodology is clearly appropriate. As stated by Dey (1999, p. 149), “Unlike most research methodologies, grounded theory is about processes and is not about people or places.” This perspective is underscored by Strauss and Corbin (1998):

*Process*, then, can be described as a series of evolving sequences of action/interaction that occur over time and space, changing or sometimes remaining the same in response to the situation or context. The action/interaction may be strategic, taken in response to problematic situations, or may be quite routine, carried out without much thought. It may be orderly, interrupted, sequential, or coordinated—or, in some cases, a complete mess. What makes the action/interaction process is its evolving nature and its varying forms, rhythms, and pacing all related to some purpose (p. 164).



## The Key Elements of Building Grounded Theory

In order to establish a theoretical foundation for the notion that grounded theory design is an emergent process, a brief description is provided of the key elements of building grounded theory as they inform the research design process. These key elements provided the basis for the data collection and data analysis sections below, and they are conceptually described as follows.

Grounded theory can be viewed as having three essential elements: concepts, categories and propositions (Pandit, 1996; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Concepts are considered the basic units of analysis since the conceptualization of data, rather than the actual data per se, gives rise to the theory that is discovered or developed. In the words of Corbin and Strauss (1990),

Theories can't be built with actual incidents or activities as observed or reported; that is, from 'raw data.' The incidents, happenings are taken as, or analyzed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels . . . Only by comparing incidents and naming like phenomena with the same term can the theorist accumulate the basic units of theory (p. 7).

Categories, the second element of grounded theory, are defined by Corbin and Strauss (1990) as:

Categories are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. They are generated through the same analytic process of making comparisons to highlight similarities and differences that is used to produce lower level concepts. Categories are the 'cornerstones' of developing theory. They provide the means by which the theory can be integrated (p. 7).

The third element of grounded theory is sometimes described as propositions. Pandit (1996) indicated that propositions indicate generalized relationships among categories. As Pandit asserted, propositions involve conceptual relationships, whereas hypotheses require measured relationships. Creswell (1998) noted that hypotheses and propositions are sometimes used interchangeably. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory can be presented either as a set of propositions or in an ongoing theoretical discussion, using conceptual categories and their properties.

Importantly, the generation of concepts, categories and propositions is an iterative, reciprocal process. As stated by Strauss and Corbin (1990), grounded theory is:

...inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory should stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge (p. 23).

The reciprocal nature of the relationship among data collection, analysis and theory is a fundamental aspect of building grounded theory. As the data collection process begins, the researcher also initiates the analysis.

Creswell (1998) explained a grounded theory study as a “zigzag” process in which the researcher goes out to the field to gather information, analyzes data, returns to the field and continues to analyze data (p. 57). Other authors substantiate this emphasis on the emergent quality of the research design of grounded theory. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985) cited grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) among other methodologies in stating, “The very requirement of an emergent design, in which succeeding methodological steps are based upon the results of steps already taken, implies the presence of a continuously interacting and interpreting investigator” (p. 102).

#### *Participants and Site*

This section describes how the prospective participants of this study conform to the attributes of the population addressed in the background statement contained in Chapter 1. This section describes the approach used to gain access to prospective participants and how the roster of prospective participants was developed. The sample of participants is also described in accordance with the notion of purposeful sampling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the procedures of grounded theory known as theoretical sampling (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the logic and strength of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which much can be learned about the topic identified for the purpose of the research. The sample for this study was drawn from a group of community college presidents who have been identified

as participative leaders of their institutions due to their focus on implementing participative governance. These presidents are known for their leadership in fostering high levels of involvement from many constituencies into the decision making process. Since the focus is upon the experiences of selected participants, the baseline criteria is that the individuals have served in the role of community college president for a minimum of six months and are recognized by others for their participative leadership. The selection of this population mirrors the purpose statement in that there is a need for rigorous research regarding clear leadership by persons in presidential positions who demonstrated participative leadership in order to meet the formidable challenges of successfully accomplishing the mission of the community college.

#### Gaining Access

The issue of gaining access to the prospective participants was been given considerable care and thought by this researcher. Strauss and Corbin (1998) recommended asking participants to lead the researcher to other participants. This technique is consistent with theoretical sampling because it enables the researcher to generate theoretical understanding, which is the purpose of grounded theory. The value of acquaintance referral is described by Lofland and Lofland (1984):

It seems quite typical for outside researchers to gain access to settings or persons through contact they have already established. They cast about among their friends, acquaintances, colleagues and the like for someone who is already favorably regarded by the persons or persons with access control. In short, wherever possible you should try to use "pre-existing relations of trust" to remove barriers to entrance (p. 25).

Since the researcher has twenty years experience within the community college system, spending nine years as a vice-president for instruction, contact with sources of referral had been established. The researcher relied upon trust-based relationships for referral to prospective interviewees who were favorably regarded by those who facilitated access. In addition, the researcher actively sought input from members of the dissertation committee on the appropriateness of prospective participants for the study. From an initial list of prospective participants, a list of initial prospective participants was developed. The sampling evolved according to the practices of theoretical sampling in order to theoretically saturate the categories.

This process is described in more detail under the section outlining data collection and analysis procedures.

### Sampling Frame

Table 1 provides the relevant demographic characteristics of the presidents selected for the study along with data regarding the institutions they served. As the table indicates, these presidents are described according to age, gender, race and educational background. Also, institutional headcount is provided, and the accreditation region is designated. The institutions were also provided pseudo names in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants.

Table 1

#### *Demographic Information and Institutional Characteristics*

| Pseudo Name | Age | Gender | Race      | Ed.   | Status  | Yrs in Position | Inst. Hd ct. | Accd. Region  |
|-------------|-----|--------|-----------|-------|---------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| Bob         | 75  | Male   | Caucasian | Ph.D. | Retired | 17              | 60,000       | Southern      |
| Eric        | 68  | Male   | Caucasian | Ed.D. | Retired | 23              | 11,000       | North Central |
| Fred        | 60  | Male   | Caucasian | Ed.D. | Retired | 18              | 1,200        | North Central |
| April       | 57  | Female | Caucasian | Ph.D. | Active  | 9               | 12,000       | North Central |
| Joyce       | 50  | Female | Caucasian | Ph.D. | Active  | 5               | 10,000       | West States   |
| Dan         | 58  | Male   | Latino    | Ph.D. | Active  | 1               | 2,500        | North Central |
| Jerry       | 48  | Male   | Caucasian | Ph.D. | Active  | 1               | 5,000        | North Central |

The seven participants ranged in age from the late forties to mid seventy. Five participants were male and two were female. Six presidents were Caucasians and one was Latino. Three of the seven participants were retired at the time of the interview and four were active. All participants held doctorate degrees, either a Ph.D. or an Ed.D.

The length of time in the presidency varied considerably. The range in length of time in the presidency ranged from one year (Dan and Jerry) to 23 years (Eric). Bob, Eric, Fred and April

held presidential positions primarily at one community college. Bob spent 15 years in the presidency at one college, and he had previously held the position as president for two years at another college. Eric had also spent a short period of time as president of another college prior to assuming his role as a long-term president. Fred was president of one community college for 16 years. Joyce had served a total of five years in several presidential positions at the time of the interview.

The size of the institutions served by these presidents also varied. The colleges ranged in size from an unduplicated headcount of 1,200 students to a multi-campus institution with more than 60,000 students. The participants were representative of three of the six regional accreditation areas. Given the particular emphasis of California Assembly Bill 1725 regarding the implementation of shared governance, the sampling process did not include presidents serving California colleges.

As the data contained in Table 1 reveals, this multi-regional sample was inclusive of race, gender, age levels and varied according to retired and active status. There was a wide breadth of experience of these presidents, ranging in one year to twenty-three years. This sample spanned the geographical areas of the United States, providing a national sample of participants. As well, institutions ranged significantly in terms of numbers of students served.

Further, the researcher relied upon her theoretical sensitivity to the conceptual dimensions of this research topic throughout the process of theoretical sampling. For example, given the importance of developing new conceptualizations of leadership reflective of the impact of diverse populations on the community college, an effort was made to develop an inclusive roster of participants guided by the precepts of theoretical sampling. Further, given the researcher's understanding of the importance of maintaining confidentiality in order to generate relevant data, a primary focus was to establish an atmosphere of trust and sensitivity when requesting the participation of these presidents and throughout the data collection process.

## *Data Collection, Instruments and Procedure*

### **Data Collection and Theoretical Sampling**

Prior to addressing the specific procedures used for developing the sample for this study, the concept of theoretical sampling will be addressed in order to lay a foundation for this discussion. Once the basic research questions have been formulated, the initial step in collecting data is to select the first case. Cases are considered the principal units of data and should be selected according to the principle of theoretical sampling. As described by Glaser and Strauss (1967), theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory by jointly collecting, coding and analyzing data. The researcher decides what data to collect in order to develop the theory as it emerges. This process is controlled by the emerging theory and is based only on a general subject or problem area. The process may begin with a partial framework of concepts, in which a few general features of the situation are named. The relevancy of these concepts is not initially understood since the problem itself must emerge. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45). The importance of constructing the data collection process according to the principle of theoretical sampling is underscored by Strauss and Corbin (1990) who stated, "Unlike the sampling done in quantitative investigations, theoretical sampling cannot be planned before embarking on a grounded theory study. The specific sampling decisions evolve during the research process itself" (p. 192).

Creswell (1998) indicated that during the initial data collection process, a full coverage of the data is required. Subsequent efforts at collecting data require only collecting data on categories of information. The criterion for evaluating when to stop theoretical sampling is based primarily upon the category's theoretical saturation. This condition is explained by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as occurring when no additional data are being found for developing properties of the category (p. 61). Since similar instances are appearing repeatedly, the researcher becomes confident that a category is saturated. Glaser and Strauss (1967) provide three specific factors influencing the decision that theoretical saturation has occurred. These conditions include a

combination of the empirical limits of the data, the degree of integration and density of the theory, and the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### Open Sampling and Coding Procedures

The sampling process for this study followed the logic and intent of theoretical sampling. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), sampling is guided by three basic types of coding procedures: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Coding is also related to the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher that develops along with the emerging concepts. Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated that since the aim of open coding is to discover phenomena, this phase requires keeping the collection procedures open to all possible occurrences. "Sampling is open to those persons, places, and situations that will provide the greatest opportunity for discovery" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 206).

During open sampling these authors emphasized that one should not structure data gathering too tightly since this activity leads to premature closure on discovery. Future sampling decisions are based on the emergence of categories and must conform to indicators regarding theoretical relevance (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This position is supported by Dey (1999) who recommended that at the outset of a study, the researcher should rely on unstructured methods of collecting data and conclude data collection when theoretical saturation has occurred. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also asserted that open sampling can be conducted using different approaches and recommend a combination of strategies. For instance, sampling on the basis of convenience is an appropriate approach. This study developed a roster of potential participants according to the open sampling procedures described above.

### Interview Process

#### *Interview procedure and instruments*

This section describes the interview process and the instruments that were used in collecting data for the research. Relevant literature is also included. As indicated by Creswell (1998), grounded theory studies typically rely upon conducting interviews for the purpose of

gaining theoretical saturation. Since the research question and sub-questions guided the investigation, the initial interview guide reflected the primary substantive areas identified in Chapter 1 (Appendix A). All interviews were audiotaped and transcribed word for word by a professional transcriber.

This grounded theory study of the participative leadership process is based upon in-depth interviews with seven community college presidents. Nine in depth interviews which lasted between one and one half hours and three and one half hours in length were conducted in various settings. Six interviews were conducted initially and three focused interviews were conducted in accord with the theory building process. Other data sources included collecting professional vitas of presidents and collecting news articles about these individuals and reviewing published works. These data sources were not formally coded but did contribute to contextualizing the study.

#### *Interview Settings*

The settings in which the interviews were conducted varied in terms of location and method for conducting the interview. The locations were chosen on the basis of the preferences indicated by the presidents as well as convenience sampling. Given the importance of facilitating “thick description” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), efforts were made to conduct these interviews in face-to-face settings. Five presidents were interviewed in face-to-face settings. Fred and Joyce were interviewed at their homes and interviews with Dan, Jerry and April were conducted in their offices. Since Bob and Eric were located at great distances from the researcher’s home, they were interviewed by telephone. Although the telephone interviews were more difficult to conduct, they nevertheless resulted in highly valuable, rich data which greatly contributed to the theory building process. The perspective of the researcher is that efforts to build rapport prior to the interview were important factors in creating a trust-based environment for generating candid, rich information surrounding experiences as participative presidents.



### *Interview Method*

The interview process for this study can be best described as semi-structured, open-ended, interactive and informal. McCall (1980) described the format constituting this type of interview schedule as follows:

By 'semi-structured' interviews I mean that they loosely followed an outline. Important topics I carried with me to each interview. Early interviews differed somewhat from later ones, since as should happen in participant observation research, my questions changed as I became more knowledgeable (p. 147).

Although some of the questions were pre-determined, the responses were open-ended or unstructured. The flexibility in the interview method permitted the interviewer to adapt the questions and/or the order in which they are presented in response to the manner in which the interview progressed. Like McCall (1980), the later interviews changed as the researcher developed more knowledge regarding the experiences of these presidents. Strauss and Corbin, (1998) recommended developing an initial interview guide around concepts and then moving into an unstructured interview format with general guidelines to facilitate the discovery process (p. 205). This approach permitted this researcher to examine selected issues in greater detail by using descriptions and direct quotations that captured the meaning of an individual's personal experiences.

A two-phase process was used that included the following procedures. A telephone call was made to prospective participants or an initial email correspondence was sent (Appendix B). This correspondence explained the purpose of the study and requested their participation. Once a reply was received agreeing to participate, the interview was arranged. A letter confirming the interview (Appendix C) was then sent to the president. The letter also included a copy of the Informed Consent Agreement (Appendix D) and the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix E). Following the interview, a thank you letter was sent (Appendix F). Also included are focused interview guides with Eric (Appendix G), Fred (Appendix H), and Joyce (Appendix I).

As indicated, the informed consent agreement, the demographic questionnaire and the interview guide were sent to the presidents prior to the interview. At the beginning of the interview, the informed consent agreement and the demographic questionnaire were reviewed and signatures were obtained. In order to foster confidentiality, each participant was asked to select a pseudo name which then was used throughout the interview. This pseudo name was used to identify transcripts and present the findings of this study.

During phase two, a copy of the transcript was mailed to each president for review in accord with member checking (Creswell, 1998). During this period the researcher responded to any issues regarding confidentiality or accuracy identified by these presidents. The responses of these presidents to the request to check transcripts varied considerably. The retired presidents simply emailed the researcher that they had no concerns regarding the transcripts. However, two presidents who were active at the time of the interview did contact the researcher by telephone and requested the deletion of several sentences of the transcript on the basis of confidentiality. A third president requested that the researcher delete several pages from the transcript. After a discussion in which the confidentiality aspects of the study were reviewed and more fully described, this president eventually altered the request and only a small portion was eventually deleted.

Conversations with these presidents during the member checking process generally indicated their sensitivity to the depth and candidness produced within the interview. This response supports the need for carefully constructed measures for creating rapport and assuring confidentiality around highly sensitive issues. As indicated by Rubin and Rubin (1995), conversational relationships for conducting interviews must be created and maintained. Further, Rubin and Rubin (1995) indicated, "Qualitative interviewing requires intense listening, a respect for and curiosity about what people say, and a systematic effort to really hear and understand what people tell you" (p. 17). This researcher made a strong effort throughout the interview process to listen actively, respond sensitively and to learn about the world these presidents

inhabit. The member checking process is also described under the section discussing verification strategies.

### *Data Analysis*

The purpose of this section is to describe how the data was organized in accordance with the problem statement and the research questions and sub-questions. This description is presented in reference to the techniques and procedures of the grounded theory approach.

This section describes the analytic tools used by the researcher. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the primary method is asking questions and making comparisons in order to stimulate the inductive process (p. 89). As discussed under Chapter 1, researcher bias was acknowledged and detailed. However, as Strauss and Corbin (1998) commented, “Although some analysts claim to be able to ‘bracket’ their beliefs and perspectives toward data, we have found that doing so is easier said than done” (p.99).

### *Memos and Diagrams*

The researcher found that rather than being able to conduct the analysis free of bias, the use of memos served to help identify how biases influenced the analytic process and suggested ways to work within these limitations. A dissertation on the topic of grounded theory lent great insight into how memos and diagrams aid in theory construction. Orona (1989), in her study of identity loss and caretakers of persons suffering from Alzheimer’s disease, reported that memoing was very useful in various phases of her study. She stated, “First, memos were used to free associate, to enter the world of ‘blue skying,’ writing whatever thoughts I became aware of as I read the interviews or was working on anything at all” (p. 46). Further, she commented, “Second, I used memos for the purpose of unblocking. Often, especially during the analysis when I felt I could not quite capture in words what I felt was ‘occurring’ in the data, I would begin to write to someone” (p. 46). Like Orona, this researcher used memos to unlock thoughts regarding impressions, hunches, and obstacles. These memos were typically written to the dissertation advisor as a way of communicating problems and speculating on possible ways to move along the

path of discovery. Strauss and Corbin (1997) commented upon Orona's (1989) study as distinguished by "Her understanding of the influence of intuitions and creativity, as well as the nonlinear nature of her research process and the vital nature of an interplay between herself as a researcher and her data" (p.172). This researcher found that although grounded theory offers a systematic approach to the data collection and analysis process, the process is indeed nonlinear and requires awareness of how the researcher as instrument continually interacts with the data throughout the interpretative process.

This researcher also found that diagramming was a particularly useful tool. According to Orona (1997), diagramming can be used to demonstrate process, describe lines of action and to show how relationships between concepts are integrated (p. 181). This researcher used diagrams in this manner as a means to describe the ways processes occurred within categories and eventually as a means of communicating how process links the larger axial categories. Eventually these diagrams were formalized and became a primary device for depicting the conceptual framework and communicating theoretical formulations to others.

### Coding Procedures

#### *The coding steps of grounded theory*

Grounded theory relies upon a rigorous set of procedures for data analysis which include a coding and verification process. As stated by Strauss and Corbin (1998), the coding process consists primarily of open, axial, and selective coding. For the purposes of this study, the research question and sub-questions were posited in accordance with the coding steps of the general format of grounded theory previously introduced. The research sub-questions specifically follow the paradigm for developing a grounded theory model. A series of guiding questions are presented which focused the data analysis of this study.

As stated previously, the research question is: What are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? Sub-questions are: What are their experiences? What is

the meaning of participative leadership to participants? What strategies are used? What are the consequences of such strategies? What social interaction issues and broad conditions were present?

### Open Coding

In the open coding phase, grounded theory provides a procedure for developing categories. Categories are composed of sub-categories, or properties that represent various perspectives about categories. During open coding, the analytic process involves identifying concepts, and then properties and their dimensions are discovered in the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In order to begin the theory building process, the first step is conceptualizing. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), "It is an abstract representation of an event, object, or action/intertaction that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data" (p. 102). Data are broken into discrete parts and then assigned a name that represents them. These data may be referred to as *in vivo* codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). As the analysis continues, if the analysis discovers other pieces of data that are identified through comparative analysis as sharing common characteristics, then it is given the same name or code (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

First, during the open coding phase of this study, the guiding question was: What are the general categories of the experiences of participative presidents that emerge in the first review of the data? This study relied upon the use of microanalysis or line-by-line coding during the open coding phase. As indicated by Strauss and Corbin (1998), this detailed analysis is used at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories along with properties and dimensions. The first step involved reading transcripts and simply noting thoughts and ideas that emerged in the margins of the transcripts. These notes sometimes led to tentative codes that suggested themes around relatively large amounts of data. The researcher used labeling to identify concepts through focusing upon the context in which the event was located (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

The next step involved generating codes through use of the word processor. The researcher continued the line-by-line coding by systematically going through each transcript and

making additional notes. As this process developed, properties or attributes of categories began to emerge from the concepts that were identified. Memos were used at this stage to record thoughts about possible connections among concepts, emerging themes and areas where relatively large amounts of data were located. During this stage, many concepts were generated and some initial groupings around categories began to take shape.

#### Axial Coding

The second phase is referred to as axial coding. Axial coding is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as a process of reorganizing data which were splintered during open coding. Categories are related to one another to form more insightful understanding about the phenomena. Strauss and Corbin (1998) commented, "Although axial coding differs in purpose from open coding, these are not necessarily sequential analytic steps, no more than labeling is distinct from open coding" (p. 124).

The axial coding phase in this study involved systematically developing and relating the categories that had emerged. This step of the analysis was facilitated by using the axial coding paradigm developed by Strauss and Corbin (1998). As these authors attested, axial coding involves looking for answers to the issues of why, where, when, how and with what results. This process allows the researcher to discover relationships among categories and to contextualize the phenomenon. For the axial coding phase the guiding questions were: Given the experience of participative leadership, what strategies were used? What were the consequences of strategies? What broad social conditions and interactions were present? Memos reflected the identification of relational statements along with properties and dimensions of categories.

After five interviews had been conducted, 15 categories were identified. These categories included: (1) participative environment, (2) teaming process, (3) assuming the participative role, (4) resistance to participative governance, (5) implementing participative systems, (6) participative climate, (7) shared decision-making, (8) games people play, (9) presidential visions, (10) participative culture, (11) meaningful participation, (12) combating the resistance, (13)

revisioning the organization, (14) maintaining the participative culture, and (15) mutual involvement. These categories were grounded in the experiences of these presidents and had identifiable properties and dimensions. At this point a decision was made to halt the interviewing process and focus upon data analysis. Further data collection followed the procedures of theoretical sampling described below.

Throughout the process of open and axial coding, the researcher developed memos that recorded thoughts about the data, the analysis, frustration, ideas and hunches about the emerging conceptual framework. During the axial coding phase, memos became more substantive as interrelationships became more evident. As recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998), a visual picture was developed which displayed the interrelationship of the categories of information resulting from axial coding. Eventually, four axial categories were identified according to their linkages with the 15 categories identified during the open coding process. These open coding categories were the building blocks of the axial categories. The axial categories evolved into the cornerstones of the emerging conceptual framework and served as organizing tools for the next step in the theory building process, selective coding.

#### Selective Coding

The third phase consists of selective coding. A central category, or core category is selected that represents the central phenomenon or main theme around which the other categories are integrated. In describing how concepts are connected to the procedures used during axial coding Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated:

By using concepts, we also build the linkages among them. . . although not necessarily written as 'these conditions are associated with this phenomenon or process' or 'this action leads to this outcome,' relationships such as these are implied. Also, notice that the relationships are not written in a cause-and-effect fashion. The paths of association are more convoluted than direct, with all sorts of intervening variable entering into the analytic picture to influence the path of action. . . (p. 150).

Thus, selective coding is the process of integrating and refining categories for building the emerging theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated that

generating propositions may be appropriate for some forms of analysis, relational statements may be expressed in various ways. The central question generally involves identifying the central theme represented by either the core category or a story line. Following the recommendations of Strauss and Corbin (1998), this researcher developed relational statements that were inter-woven throughout the analysis, and a core category was identified. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) indicated, "The essential element is that categories are interrelated into a larger theoretical scheme" (p. 145, 146).

The researcher followed the criteria for selecting the core or central category provided by Strauss and Corbin (1998). This process was facilitated by developing diagrams and reviewing and sorting memos. As the emerging conceptual framework became more refined, it became clear that some categories were not saturated. Also, several potential core categories were identified and then discarded on the basis that they did not capture the conceptual breadth and density of the participative leadership process. Finally, a tentative core category was identified along with seven properties. Due to the need to examine the core category in more depth and reduce the number of properties, additional data was needed. Therefore, three focused interviews were conducted around emerging issues and themes, following the methods of theoretical sampling described earlier (see Appendix G, H and I for focused interview guides). According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), this is the process of validating the theoretical scheme and requires determining if anything important was omitted from the emerging conceptual framework.

#### Coding for Process

After collecting additional data through the process of theoretical sampling and interviewing techniques, the researcher made an important discovery that led to a modification in the coding process. As the theoretical framework became more refined, the centrality of process within participative leadership became very salient. In addition, the focused interviews produced a relatively large amount of additional data.



According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), analyzing data for process occurs simultaneously with axial coding and includes identifying properties. However, the focus is on looking at action and interaction in response to changes in context or conditions. Coding for process allowed this researcher to organize relatively large amounts of data by coding according to the phases that had developed within each of the axial categories. Further, the researcher continued to reexamine the tentative core category and refine it according to the notion of process as the key concept or central thread of the theoretical scheme. This approach enabled the researcher to reduce the number of properties. The conceptual model was further refined according to the ongoing analysis to reflect the salience of the developmental, sequential nature of participative leadership.

#### *Verification*

According to Creswell (1998), qualitative research is a quest for “. . . understanding, that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with informants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings” (p. 193). As indicated by Creswell (1998) and Dey (1999), the topic of verification is a subject of much discourse and debate. This portion briefly outlines the notion of verification primarily from the standpoint of trustworthiness as conceptualized by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This unit will also describe how the procedures of this study will address those criteria. In addition, a set of guidelines specifically developed for grounded theory research by Strauss and Corbin (1998) are presented as another form of verification for this study.

#### Trustworthiness

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the basic issues related to trustworthiness can be stated as:

How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of? What arguments can be mounted, what criteria invoked, what questions asked, that would be persuasive on this issue? (p. 290)

Lincoln and Guba (1985) conceptualized trustworthiness as including the terms credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to replace the traditional concepts of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. According to Creswell (1998), the central question is: "How do we know that the qualitative study is believable, accurate, and 'right'?" (p. 193). Creswell (1998) viewed verification as a process occurring throughout the data collection, analysis and report writing phase. Standards are defined as criteria imposed by the researcher and others following the completion of a study. As Creswell (1998) indicated, verification is a legitimate mode of inquiry in its own right within the framework of qualitative methodology.

In view of the considerable debate and dialogue regarding the topic of verification in qualitative research, Creswell (1998) recommended using at least two verification strategies in a qualitative research study. This study has adopted the strategies of clarifying researcher bias, peer review and debriefing, member checking, triangulation, thick description and an established audit trail. These strategies are described in the following discussion.

First, in order to improve the likelihood that the findings of this study will be found credible, four distinct procedures were followed. These procedures include clarifying researcher bias, peer review and debriefing, member checking and triangulation. According to Creswell (1998), the clarification of researcher bias from the commencement of study is critical. The researcher should comment on past experiences, biases and prejudices that have shaped the approach to the study. Chapter 1 of this study contains a description of the researcher's professional and academic experiences along with the worldview that impacted the interpretation and focus for this study.

In addition, a peer review and debriefing procedure was followed. As asserted by Lincoln and Guba (1985), this process accomplishes several purposes:

First, and from the point of view of credibility, foremost, the process keeps the inquirer 'honest,' exposing him or her to searching questions by an experienced protagonist doing

his or her best to play the devil's advocate. The inquirer's biases are probed, meanings explored, the basis for interpretations clarified (p. 308).

This study proceeded through working in concert with the researcher's dissertation advisor throughout the process of data collection, analysis and verification. Also, the chief research methodologist on the dissertation committee reviewed the coding and memoing process used in this study and provided insight and direction. Further, colleagues and cohort members informally provided input around issues that included conceptualizing the purpose statement, developing interviewing strategies, applying coding procedures and assessing methods for presenting the data. Overall, this group served as a means of debriefing and support for maintaining good judgment. As Lincoln and Guba (1985) attested, "Naturalistic inquiry is a lonely business. . . The debriefer who listens sympathetically to these feelings, defuses as many as possible, and assists the inquirer to devise coping strategies makes an important contribution to the quality of the study" (p. 308). Through the memoing process outlined above, written records were kept of the debriefing sessions and were used to establish an audit trail for future reference in data analysis.

Another strategy used to establish credibility is the use of member checking. According to Lincoln and Guba, (1985), member checking is the most important technique for establishing credibility. In this study, member checking included asking the presidents to review their transcripts for accuracy and confidentiality issues. Transcripts were mailed or electronically delivered to presidents to check for content errors. Telephone calls between the presidents and the researcher enabled clarification in the data when needed. Responses that took place during member checking was also addressed under the section describing the interview method.

Last, triangulation is a procedure recommended for improving the probability that findings and interpretations will be found credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Creswell (1998), triangulation involves employing "multiple sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence." In this study, triangulation occurred through the use

of data from interviews, professional vitae, newspaper articles about these presidents and articles and books authored by the participants.

Second, in addition to the need for credible findings, Lincoln and Guba (1985) addressed the need to establish transferability of findings. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Creswell (1998), Merriam (1998), and Miles and Huberman (1994), transferability refers to the ability of the researcher to transfer information and findings to other settings. These authors agreed that transferability is dependent upon rich, thick description. According to Creswell (1998), detailed description enables readers to transfer information to other settings and ascertain if findings apply to these settings due to similar characteristics. As stated by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 279), "We need to know whether the conclusions of a study have any larger import." Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that the researcher should include a significant range of information within the thick description, and that purposeful sampling is an appropriate technique for this purpose.

This study addressed the issue of transferability of findings by documenting detailed descriptions of the personal perceptions of participants. Further, use of purposeful and theoretical sampling generated richly descriptive accounts of the world these presidents inhabit. As documented in Chapter 4, the presentation of the findings exhibited the thick, rich description of the experiences of these presidents in leading their respective institutions. Chapter 5 portrays these information rich cases in a manner that also lends insight into the potential transferability of findings generated from this study into specific settings.

Third, dependability refers to whether the process of the study is consistent and if reasonable care has been taken by the researcher (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) recommended the inquiry audit in which an auditor authenticates the process of the research. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a pertinent issue is whether forms of peer or colleague review have taken place. This study addressed the issue of dependability by utilizing the peer review process cited previously. Further, the researcher established an audit trail that will allow others to trace the steps taken by the researcher to verify or replicate the findings. Although

original audiotapes were destroyed, interview transcripts have been retained which contain pseudo names and changes in locations and other potential identifiers. Field notes used to record the researcher's ideas, observations and impressions at the onset of the research have been retained. Written memos developed throughout all phases of the data collection and analyses process that were routinely provided to the researcher's dissertation advisor are also available for other researchers to review.

Fourth, confirmability refers to the issues of neutrality and freedom from researcher biases (Mile & Huberman, 1994, p. 278). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), a major procedure to meet this purpose is the confirmability audit. Thus, this study relies upon the audit trail described above by maintaining files containing verbatim transcripts, field notes, memos maintained during data collection and analysis, and materials related to developing instruments such as pilot forms, preliminary schedules and observation formats. Further, researcher bias was previously documented in an effort to describe the personal orientation that guided the interpretation process.

#### The Verification Process of Grounded Theory

As indicated previously, grounded theory is based upon rigorous protocol in which data collection and analysis overlap (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As Creswell (1998) pointed out, in grounded theory research verification is an active part of the research and occurs at various stages in the research. Also, the verification process becomes part of the standards used to evaluate the quality of the study. Creswell (1998) noted:

Strauss and Corbin (1990) pose the question, "Under what conditions (does) the theory...fit with 'reality,' give understanding, and be useful (practically and in theoretical terms)." This perspective underscores the importance of fit, understanding and utility. (p. 209).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) provided criteria for assessing the quality of the emerging grounded theory. In order to evaluate the quality of the emergent grounded theory of this study according to standards specific to grounded theory, the criteria presented by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 269)

are presented. Brief responses are provided to each of the criterion to address specific issues identified for verification within the grounded theory research mode. The responses provided below reflect earlier points and also lend additional insight into how the verification process unfolded. These seven criteria related to the general research process are:

1. How was the original sample selected? On what grounds?

As indicated previously, the original sample was selected on the basis of criteria specified within established procedures for qualitative interviewing. A list of potential participants was created on the basis of acquaintance referral (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). Potential participants were included or eliminated from this list on the basis of input from colleagues, dissertation committee members and persons who worked closely with these individuals.

2. What major categories emerged?

The open coding process produced 15 categories that were described according to properties and dimensions. The initial step included identifying concepts through labeling the transcripts. Eventually four axial categories emerged from this set of categories.

3. What were some of the events, incidents, or actions, (indicators) that point to some of these major categories?

As the analysis proceeded, several categories were characterized by considerable conceptual density. For example, the categories *participative climate* and *participative culture* contained data provided by all the presidents selected for interviews. The data was rich with accounts that signified the importance of constructing a climate and culture around participative ideals and purposes and as a major influence for creating an environment for participation. Another significant category that emerged during the open coding process was *games people play*. This category contained data with highly vivid, impressive descriptions of conflictive interactions within campus settings that typified the participative leadership process in the early stages of implementing the change process. Another key category, *implementing participative*

*systems*, contained numerous examples which testified to the importance these presidents placed on team based processes.

4. On the basis of what categories did theoretical sampling proceed? That is, how did theoretical formulations guide some of the data collection? After the theoretical sampling was done, how representative of the data did the categories prove to be?

The four axial categories that emerged during the data collection and analysis process provided the primary foundation for guiding sampling decisions. For example, the axial category, Re-visioning the Participative Organization, emerged from one of the original categories as a potential axial category. However, originally it lacked the conceptual density needed for the scope and depth of an axial category. Thus, according to the practice of theoretical sampling, focused interviews were conducted around the concepts of visioning and reflection as key sub-themes. Another example of theoretical sampling also focused upon the developing themes of trust, understanding, ownership and empowerment as conceptual linkages among the axial categories. Thus, the theoretical sampling process included presidents who were identified for their experiences in fostering these attributes of the organizational climate and culture as they implemented collective decision-making processes.

5. What were some of the *hypotheses* pertaining to conceptual relations (that is, among categories), and on what grounds were they formulated and validated?

As stated previously, the findings of this study were not stated as hypotheses or provisional statements. Rather, they reflect relational statements which are interwoven into an evolving theoretical conversation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Primarily, the emerging theoretical scheme reflected the importance of process or the flow of action and interaction and the developmental, sequential nature of the relationship among the four axial categories.

6. Were there instances when hypotheses did not explain what was happening in the data? How were these discrepancies accounted for? Were the hypotheses modified?

One of the most important indicators that some relational statements did not adequately reflect the experiences and perceptions reported in the data was related to the difficulties in naming and assigning data to the axial category, Web of Participation. This category is by far the most complex and dense of the categories and presented a formidable challenge for developing its specific processes. Initially, the researcher viewed this category in a somewhat mechanistic fashion, perceiving its primary theme as centered around building teamwork environments for collective decision making. However, after additional data collection and analyses were undertaken, the significance of the institutional climate and culture came into sharp focus. This insight enabled the researcher to shift the coding strategy so that data from subsequent focused interviews were coded primarily according to process. Further, this perspective also facilitated theoretical understanding of the interdependent nature of the axial categories as cornerstones of the developing conceptual model. The use of analytic tools such as diagramming and developing memos were critical tools during this process.

7. How and why was the core category selected? Was this selection sudden or gradual, and was it difficult or easy? On what grounds were the final analytic decisions made?

As described previously within this chapter, the selection of the core category was one of the most difficult aspects of this study. The core category was treated as the central theme or central idea that inter-connected the other categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Several tentative core categories were considered and eventually dismissed as potential candidates since they failed to represent the depth of the data and analysis which was being generated. Although identifying key concepts or ideas was a relatively simple endeavor, the core category contains properties and dimensions, just as other categories have this characteristic (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Identifying properties and dimensions of the core category was a reciprocal process of analysis among the core category, the axial categories and the open coding categories. The researcher discovered that it was not until the last drafts of the findings were being produced that the final analytic decisions



could be made. Once the core category was refined and the properties and dimensions were finalized, the researcher developed much greater confidence in the emergent conceptual scheme.

#### Summary

This section described the methodology that was employed according to the purpose of this study as stated in the central research question and sub-questions. The issues of research design, participants, data collection, data analysis and verification were addressed through their applicability to the qualitative mode of inquiry and according to the purpose and logic of grounded theory. This section has demonstrated that grounded theory was the appropriate methodology for the study of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### Overview

This chapter presents the findings generated through this grounded theory study. The overall intent of this study was to develop greater understanding of the participative leadership process as it reflects the emergence of participative governance in the American community college. Specifically, the purpose is to contribute to the development of a grounded theory on participative leadership as understood within the literature on leadership and governance in the American community college.

This study was guided by a central research question and several sub-questions. The central research question is: What are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? The sub-questions are: What are their experiences? What is the meaning of participative leadership to these presidents? What social interaction issues and broad conditions were present? What strategies do presidents employ as participative leaders? What are the consequences of employing such strategies?

### *Organization of Data and Findings*

The presentation of data gathered from the interview process is presented according to emergent themes which are framed within the four categories which arose from the axial coding process. Findings are presented within the categories in order to locate implications drawn from the analysis within the context from which they were derived. Each category contains phases which conclude with findings specific to that aspect of the category. In addition, each category concludes with a section describing the role of the core category, Visioning Participative Environments, as the organizing thread of the emergent grounded theory. This section is titled "Summary and Application to the Core Category."

### *The Core Category: Visioning Participative Environments*

The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, underscores the notion that participative leadership may be understood as a highly interactive, dynamic process characterized by continual movement within and among institutional environments. The focus is upon the developmental, reciprocal nature of the move toward increasing levels of participation within institutional contexts. These contexts consist of sequences or stages that are systematically represented by the four major axial categories linked within a theoretical framework. These categories or sequences are Envisioning the Participative Organization, Participative Passages, Web of Participation, and Re-visioning the Participative Organization. In this sense, process forms the central or core category around which the data is organized. Thus, the core category captures the essence of the participative visioning process and provides an analytical device for analyzing the character of the transformation toward a participative organization.

The term “visioning” refers to the process of conceptualizing, perceiving, and imagining. The notion of “environments” refers to the contextual aspects or sets of structures, circumstances and situations in which phenomena are embedded. Environments provide the context in which relationships among people, processes, structures and systems co-exist. Environments may be fluid, dynamic, rigid, static, hostile, supportive or conflictual. The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, indicates that participative leadership both creates and responds to the structure or set of circumstances characterizing environments. In one respect, these environments can be viewed as “snapshots” of reality in that they are a pictorial representation of different perspectives and happenings. At the same time, through the emphasis upon the sequential nature of the participative leadership process, the analysis is more like a moving picture in its focus upon how action and interaction evolves.

The visioning process is the driving force that moves the organization through the participative change process and impacts institutional environments directly and indirectly. The

visioning process reflects the perceptions of these presidents, provides the foundation for leadership action and becomes manifest in the transition of the organization from one sequence to another. Thus, from the standpoint of this study, participative leadership is a multi-dimensional, highly interactive process located within and among environments. It consists of a set of purposefully directed strategies, actions and interactions and routine responses that result in intended and unintended outcomes.

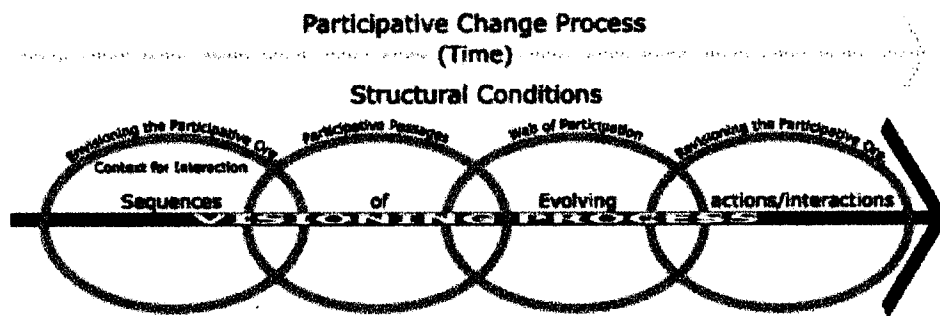


Figure 4.1. Linear Representation of the Participative Leadership Process.

*Relationship of the core category to the axial categories.*

As represented in figure 4.1, "Linear Representation of the Participative Leadership Process," the axial categories, Envisioning the Participative Organization, Participative Passages, Web of Participation and Re-visioning the Participative Organization are linked by the visioning process, the central notion of the core category. The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, is the organizing core or connecting thread around which the major sub-processes are presented. The four axial categories represent the sub-processes for carrying out the broader process of visioning. Within each of the categories or sub-processes are conditions, actions and interactions, along with consequences that convey how processes unfold. Through viewing the categories as environments in which actions take place, the analysis demonstrates how structure and process are inextricably connected, and reveals the dynamic, evolving nature of participative leadership.

The centrality of the core category is also graphically depicted in Figure 4.2, “The Participative Leadership Process Interfacing with Multiple Environments.” The core category, Visioning Participative Environments is the central, organizing concept. The participative vision is continually informed and impacted by these distinctive environments.

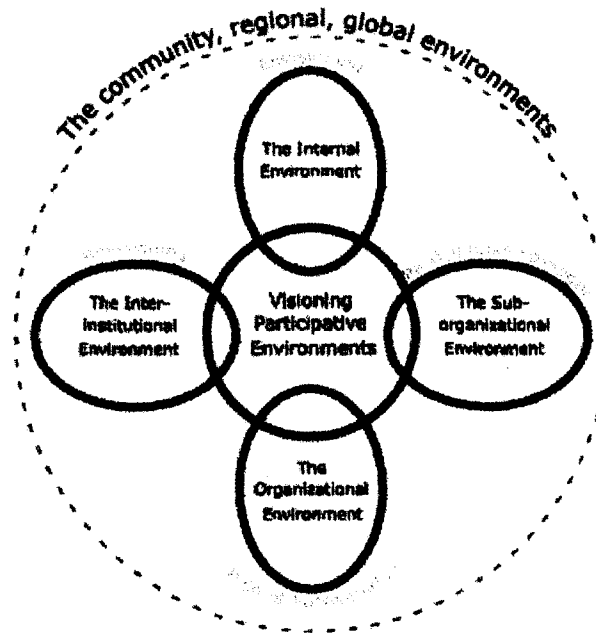


*Figure 4.2. The Participative Leadership Process Interfacing with Multiple Environments.*

By organizing the data around the central process and sub-processes that are specifically named and described, the analysis reveals the fundamental importance of the visioning process as the key inter-locking force or catalyst that underlies participative leadership. Participative leadership is revealed as a set of actions, which takes place within participative settings characterized by continuous activity, with one sequence of actions and interactions flowing into another. The overall outcome is the transformation of the institution into a participative organization that is presented within the theoretical framework discussed in this analysis.

These data and analyses demonstrate that the core category is linked to the axial categories through the properties or key attributes that emerged in the course of this study. These

properties characterize the core category and are expressed within each of the axial categories, demonstrating how the core category integrates the data generated within each of the axial categories.

From the standpoint of grounded theory, through delineating properties, a category may be differentiated from other categories and given analytical precision and clarification. As the findings presented in the section demonstrate, properties characterizing the core category are linked with categories. In effect, properties characterizing the core category are also attributes of each of the axial categories. This demonstrates the interconnectivity among categories and further substantiates the view that the core category is the central, organizing idea or concept around which the data may be analyzed.

#### *Definition of Key Terms*

This analysis demonstrates that environments, as the contextual basis for building a participative organization, are characterized according to purpose, focus, nature and outcome. These properties are operationally defined to facilitate the presentation of findings. As discussed below, properties are represented throughout the narrative according to titles of the categories (environments), key processes, sub-processes and strategies. The narrative also contains reference to changes in institutional structure, climate, culture and role orientation. These properties were generally organized according to level of abstraction and their usefulness for describing the emergent theory. Properties were identified during the axial coding process of this study and dimensions were specified as representing the location of a property along a continuum. Properties were given fuller definition and alignment between the core category and axial categories as a result of coding for process. Through describing the axial categories by identifying its properties and dimensions, the patterns of actions underlying participative leadership began to emerge. This approach demonstrated that the environments varied in terms of purpose, focus, nature and outcome (the properties of the core category).

First, purpose refers to the overall aim or objective of the visioning process as represented in the title of each category. For example, the first category, Envisioning the Participative Environment, reveals that the purpose of the visioning process within this environment is related to imagining, planning, dreaming and designing. The overall purpose of Participative Passages is to lay the foundation for the participative organization. Within the Web of Participation, the overall purpose is to establish the primary forms of organization, particularly the climate and culture of the organization. Re-visioning the Participative Organization is distinguished by its primary emphasis upon recommitting the organization around its mission or fundamental purposes.

Second, the term focus refers to the notion of orienting action. Each category, along with the delineated phases within each category, is characterized by a key process, sub-process and may include reference to a set of strategies. In general, focus indicates the direction for orienting action and reveals how action takes place. The key process is broken down into sub-processes. Sub-processes are primarily methods for accomplishing the key process. Key strategies illustrate the more inclusive concept represented by the sub-processes. In some contexts, strategies tend to be more concrete, providing specific examples of leadership actions taken by these presidents. Focus also relates to how interaction takes place within varying levels of analysis such as the personal, institutional and broad social context.

Third, the term nature underscores the change process that takes place within these environments as the visioning process unfolds. Nature refers to the evolving change in the character of the organization, primarily changes in climate and culture. This term captures the notion of changes in scope in emergent qualities of trust, empowerment, ownership and understanding. The range in scope is from restriction to expansion.

Last, the term outcome refers to results or consequences of actions taken within the set of circumstances or structure of the environment. Each phase ends with a specified outcome, indicating how the results of one set of actions and interactions feed into the context and become

part of the conditions surrounding the next set of actions and interactions. As well, each axial category is likewise described as having an outcome, thus becoming part of the conditional context influencing the next set of actions and interactions.

### *Presentation of Data and Analysis*

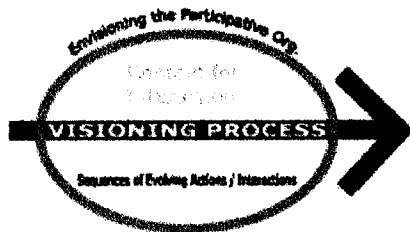


*Figure 4.3. The category Envisioning the Participative Organization.*

### **Envisioning the Participative Organization**

#### *Overview*

The category Envisioning the Participative Organization examines the key factors which characterize the backgrounds of the presidents selected for this study, reflecting perspectives that originate from personal, institutional, and external contexts. This category reveals how personal experiences and perceptions regarding the presidential role provide the underpinning for shaping the presidential vision for the participative organization.

In the context of this study, the term “envisioning” refers to the process of imagining something which has not yet come into being. Envisioning implies conceptualizing a desired outcome which expresses a deeply held conviction or ideal. Thus, the emphasis is upon the structure or set of circumstances which gave rise to these presidents’ sense of the participative vision and how conditions have shaped their notion of the visioning process as it takes place within the context of this category.

This category contains three distinct phases that illustrate how the envisioning process unfolds. Phase one, *assuming the participative role*, discloses that perceptions of the participative



president role are grounded within their personal value orientations and belief systems. Phase two, *assessing the community college context*, reveals that concepts of the responsibilities and expectations of the participative presidential role are linked to conditions existing in the current environment in which the comprehensive community college functions. The third phase, *response to the changing environment*, indicates that the core elements of the participative philosophy reflect experiences and perspectives documented previously. Thus, personal and professional experiences, perceptions of the current context surrounding the community college, and the core features of the participative philosophy become interwoven into the presidents' dreams of the institutions they hope to create. Thus, this category discloses that these participative presidents are keenly cognizant of the significance of value and belief systems that provide the foundation for decision-making at the personal, institutional and social levels.

#### Phase One: Assuming the Participative Role

The key process of phase one, *discerning the conditions of role entry*, underscores the influences perceived as critical to undertaking the role of participative president. These presidents identify factors that influenced the decision to assume the role as participative president within their respective institutions. The sub-process, *examining the institutional context*, illustrates that these presidents undertook actions that enabled them to determine their congruence or fit with the organization. This phase underscores the importance of assessing circumstances from a multi-focused perspective.

These presidents are introduced according to length of time as presidents within their respective institutions. The analyses and findings generally indicate that these presidents trace their entry into the role as participative presidents through perceptions that encompass their personal and professional backgrounds.

## BOB

As the following commentary illustrates, Bob, who is currently retired, spent an extensive number of years with one well-known community college. Bob traced his experiences in various administrative positions within this large institution:

First of all in terms of time, I worked in community colleges for thirty-five years in administrative roles starting as assistant to the President in an institution that was only two years old at the time and grew to be one of the largest in the country. I served as the President for twenty years in terms as a district President in a multi-campus district and we used the title of President rather than Chancellor at this institution.

I was Executive Vice President for ten years and then President for twenty.

Bob commented on the conditions under which he decided to advance his education:

In terms of the reason, I go back to the time when I was finishing my Master's Degree. I'd been drafted in the Army and had come back and I was teaching in high school at the time. I read about what was happening in terms of development of the community college—this is 1959—and the tremendous growth and the opportunities through there and admissions that the college had, this appealed to me. Then I found information about the Kellogg Foundation supporting programs that were preparing community college administrators during the decade of the 60s and decided that this would be a good direction for me to go and wound up going to the University of Texas program in 1962. I was there only fifteen months. I finished in 1963 and came back and went right to work as assistant to the President.

Thus, the extensive growth in the community college that occurred during the 1960s and the resulting opportunities were important factors for encouraging this aspiring president to attain the preparation for advancing within his institution.

## ERIC

In the following account, Eric provided a brief account of his professional background:

I was president of Lake County Community College from the mid-seventies to 1998. Other roles were adjunct professor, Dean of the College and Associate Professor in a university. My background also included work in a high school setting. I currently head a consulting firm with projects that have included organizational development, staff professional development, leadership program development and particularly, conflict resolution.

In similarity to Bob, Eric is also retired and spent his career as a president at one community college. He continues to be active through heading a consulting firm, emphasizing services which focus on conflict resolution.

#### FRED

In this commentary offered by Fred, distinct reference is made to his personal values and belief system as primary influences for his decision to take on the role of president. Further, Fred specifically links his vision for the institution as rooted in his early professional experiences:

It is probably more in my instance more happenstance, maybe, than having it as a career path . . . it's always been kind of a thought in my head. . . it really wasn't a career path that I was contemplating or that I was really planning at the time.

When I became President of the campus it was always a desire to have a campus that was well respected, that had high quality learning; that had high quality faculty, that we were a caring institution. That probably comes from a background of ten years in retail.

Fred traced the origin of his belief that having a campus focused on "quality," and "caring" is grounded in prior experiences:

Providing high level customer service was a mandate and that was something you did and you had no choice but to do that, and if you didn't you worked somewhere else. So for ten years it was drummed into me that treating people as customers was the way you conducted your business. And that is not compatible with the way some people view higher education—that students are just that 'thing' that annoys everybody at the campus rather than being than being people and someone to take care of.

From Fred's perspective, the "mandate" for high quality service for customers is not necessarily shared throughout higher education.

Further, Fred specifically referenced the influence of his values on his vision for the institution:

So when I talk about the vision, one was customer service, caring about people, being student centered, all those concepts you can say—but it is all back to treating them well and treating them as people and making sure they got the service they needed.

Making sure we had high quality programs, making sure we had well qualified and well trained faculty who provided high quality instruction and with an emphasis on them doing it in a humane and caring way with the students.

## APRIL

April's description of the factors influencing her entry into the role as a participative president also centered upon her values, stressing her dedication to the common good:

Well, my professional career started as a teacher of junior high, and I taught junior high for eight years and then during the summers I worked with migrant farm workers. During that time I must have learned a lot about overcoming some of the values that I had been taught as a child. We had African Americans who worked in our communities and we were very much protected from them, not allowed to go to town on Saturday night, for example, three blocks away. But I found in working with migrant farm workers wonderful relationships and rich additions to my life. Then when I quit teaching I became a Vista volunteer and worked with migrant farm workers full-time for two years helping them to resettle out.

The values that I developed about the common good and about helping people who needed access started, I believe, there.

You can tell I started at the community college at the very bottom with my feet hanging over.

April continued:

I participated in 300 hours of this group process training, research utilizing problem solving, and general group process skills. These group process skills have shaped me in all my decision-making. It has shaped my teaching—it has shaped everything I do. It shaped the way I run a meeting. After that I enrolled in a master's degree program and got this job as the secretary of a church. It was a wonderful experience and I think going through group process training helped me develop this skill.

As April emphasized, her preparation for the role of participative president was significantly influenced by her experiences with group process, "shaping me in all my decision-making."

## JOYCE

In similarity with Bob, Fred and April, Joyce likewise stressed the impact of her personal value system and early professional experiences as significant influences on her career path. In the following commentary, Joyce referenced her experiences on sports teams, faculty senate and as a new administrator:

I think for me to be participative and to carry that through my presidency probably started quite a long time ago. As a kid I remember my mother always telling me that "two heads are better than one." And, as a kid I didn't really know what that meant, but it sounded good. I participated on sports teams when I was in high school and college. And I think

that is when I learned the value of teamwork and making sure that everybody contributed and realizing that you can't go out and win a basketball game if you have one star and nobody else. That was my first and early experience with teamwork and what it meant to get other people involved.

As Joyce commented above, during her early years she learned the value of team work and getting people involved so that "everybody contributed." She commented further:

I also think I didn't really ever think that I had all the answers and that I knew everything. As I went through my professional career I remember as a faculty member that I liked it when somebody asked my opinion. I realized as people started asking me my opinion and as I started getting involved in the college process through the faculty senate and those kinds of experiences. There was a lot that I didn't know. I think that opened up a lot of doors for me, and it became very exciting. I then realized that I was a very small piece of the big picture. But I liked to be a piece of it and not being on the outside looking in and seeing how decisions get made. I liked being a part of it and having a voice.

As Joyce remarked above, due to her involvement in institutional processes, doors opened for her, she had a sense of her place in the "big picture," and appreciated having a "voice." Next, she described how her experiences with generating ideas through group process influenced her as she "grew up as an administrator:"

I think I have always remembered that as I have gone through. Then as I became a department chair people asked to be able to have meetings once a week and we would sit down and do that. I just realized then as a new administrator that I might walk into a room thinking I had a great idea and throw it out there for the group. And by the time I walked out of the room a couple of hours later there was a part of my idea in what we came up with but everybody else picked it apart and added their thing. We really came out with something that was a whole lot better.

I think you go through processes where you learn to trust that process and you learn that if you come up with something and when you do walk out, it is that different idea, it looks totally different. If you allow the process to work, then that idea turns out to be really good because everybody has some input. I have learned that way as I grew up as an administrator.

Joyce also remarked on the importance of gathering input from others:

Then of course as you get to go through and be a dean and a vice president, I think when you get a new position you realize there is so much you do not know that you tend to rely on others. There are people around you that have a lot more experience in their particular areas. I think it was just a natural thing for me that having grown up that way and always being a part of people saying "Well, what do you think and how do you fit in" that you learn by doing.

In the comments below, Joyce emphasized that she drew upon her experiences with others who expressed a similar value orientation to her own, contrasting them with “mean administrators:”

I also will not say that I had the pleasure. . .but I was able to as I got to be an administrator. . .to watch other administrators, people who I either admired, probably because they had the same values that I had, but there were a few others that were very cut throat and very what I would call “mean administrators.”

I knew that I did not want to be like them and I watched them. I watched the reaction of the people around them and they were able to accomplish just as much as I was. They were able to do great things but they killed a lot of people along the way. They demoralized people and they were leaders through intimidation and I never wanted to be that way. I do not think my personality would...I do not think I could ever do that. So for me it was comfortable to be participative and team oriented and you get great results.

As Joyce remarked below, she developed a desire to replicate her experiences with teamwork with others as her career evolved:

And then the thing that I realized early on is you get the buy in. I noticed, that for myself, when people asked for my opinion, then I was a part of a team to make that happen, whatever we were working on, I had the buy in and I wanted to make it succeed. So I would work extra hard and do extra things to make sure that it succeeded. So I think that as you become an administrator and you become a president you remember those kinds of things and you want to have other people have those experiences as well. I think that is basically how I got there. It was a lot of trial by error.

Last, Joyce asserted that she made a very conscious effort to “step back” from her previous leadership style as a paramedic:

The other thing I remember is that when I was a paramedic you ended up having to tell people what to do because you were in charge of a medical team. For awhile I got into that mode of “All right, you need to do this, this and this, you do this, you do that” and you pretty much tell people what they are going to do. So then when I got into community colleges and I became a department chair I had to very consciously get out of that mode. You could tell people what to do at a medical scene and you had to get moving with it. . . you had to get to the hospital and you had some things that had to happen very quickly.

Joyce reported recognizing that she was operating in a “different environment” when she became a community college administrator:

So I was on that track when I first started as an administrator saying, “Okay, we need to do this, you do this, you do that.” I had to really step back because I had been in that mode for so long and say “Wait a minute, I am not getting results now that I want

because this is a different environment.” I just very consciously remember that. I just think it is engrained in me, and I like that sort of thing.

DAN

At the time of the interview, Dan had been in the presidency for approximately one year. He briefly reflected upon the circumstances through which he entered the role, describing it as an evolutionary process:

The factors leading to my getting into this job were just kind of the natural evolution of where I would go next as the Vice President for Instruction at the college and now, the President. I had worked in higher education as Vice President of Instruction for probably fifteen years before that in other institutions, at state level institutions, and in system institutions. When I took the job at this institution as the Vice President, the circumstance was such that it just kind of evolved into my becoming the President.

JERRY

Like Dan, Jerry had been in the presidency for approximately a year at the time of the interview. Mirroring Dan’s portrayal of his career path as an evolutionary process, Jerry described his entry into the presidency as a process of events that unfolded over time:

I actually first got into teaching about twenty some years ago when I had this fear of public speaking. I decided that to overcome that fear of public speaking I needed to force myself to get in front of groups of people and speak. What better way to do that than to teach, so I started as an adjunct faculty member at a community college, did that for a year. . . I helped out with sort of an interim role as the Vice President for Instruction, it was kind of shared with another person. I was fortunate enough to get a job as an Executive Vice President, which oversees both the instructional area of the college and the student services side of the college.

Jerry continued:

I decided that I could do the Presidency too and decided to apply for the Presidency and fortunately got the appointment. At all these levels it was never really my intention ever to move up and become a president of a college. . . it was just kind of like things just fell into place and I never dreamed I would be a President of a college. The other day my wife said, “Can you really believe that you are the President?” I said, “No, it blows my mind.” That is how I got here.

These accounts demonstrated that these presidents included in this study generally viewed their entry into the participative presidential role as reflective of their personal value orientation, professional background, work-related experience and circumstances surrounding the role.

In addition to factors characterizing the personal context, these data and analyses also disclosed the significance these presidents placed on the institutional, community and broad social context surrounding their entry into the presidential role. In general, the following commentary indicates that their awareness of the institutional context provided the foundation for shaping their decisions to assume the presidential role within their respective institutions.

First, Bob recalled the broad social setting of the 1960s as significantly affecting the institutional setting prior to his entry as president:

Well, basically, if we go back to the time when I came to that college which was a small beginning institution in 1963, there was very much the whole country in a missionary zeal. The college embodied the whole idea that I think we had, the biggest, strongest consensus that I remember in my life in the country in terms of believing that we had to do something to help people who had not previously had opportunity, to get opportunity. And that was reflected in as much as what was happening in America and certainly in the whole concept of community colleges.

As Bob remarked above, the “missionary zeal” within the country was reflected in the foundation of the community college. Below, Bob reflected that this institution of higher education was formed within a spirit of commitment:

In addition to that, it was all go, go, go. Communities were proud to have these new institutions in the early 60s. If you remember, over a six year period we built more higher education facilities than had been built in the previous history of America. Community colleges were opening every eight days. It was just a very committed time, and it was in that spirit that the institution was formed.

Bob recounted that this spirit was shared within the institution:

Well, I didn’t bring it in, it was there. The people who came to work in the college, the President who preceded me was a strong advocate of opportunity as were most people at community colleges at the time and belief in everyone having opportunity. I got on board with everybody else.

Thus, Bob emphasized that he and others were dedicated to a belief that everyone should have opportunity. Further, Bob remarked on the importance of a stable working environment focused on access:

And the people who decided to come and work in the institution, I think we were very fortunate to have, particularly that early group of people, full-time people who came and



stayed for their whole career at the college, that had this very strong belief that grew right out of the American consensus that we needed to do things for people who hadn't had opportunity and that education was the way to do it.

As Bob remarked, the American consensus was reflected in the internal environment of the campus. He stressed below that the most important outcome of his career as president of the institution was sustaining this spirit of commitment:

The job later on was just saving it. That is, I think the thing that I am proud of over my history, more than anything else, it was sustaining that commitment, and the understanding of the college that the most important thing that we did was to help people who otherwise wouldn't have opportunity to succeed.

As this testimony by Bob has demonstrated, a highly significant factor surrounding his role as a participative president was his sense of congruence with the culture and climate of his institution. His emphasis upon the extreme importance of "sustaining that commitment" as a key feature of his presidential role implies that Bob focused on creating and maintaining the institutional value system over an extended time period.

In the following commentary, Eric also stressed the importance of the institutional setting as a primary factor at role entry. Eric traced the evolution of his perception of the expectations surrounding his role through describing the evolution of the culture of the institution:

At Lake Community College when I arrived, this would be 1975, there was a very strong faculty union. There were very adversarial relationships between the faculty and the board, between the faculty and the administration. So I inherited this culture that said that the president should be very strong on the management side, that you really needed to keep the faculty under control, and if you didn't they would rob the store so to speak. So, I, as a new president, I felt I had to live up to that role.

Eric continued:

The labor disputes and tensions that had existed in the past really continued during the first four or five years of my presidency and then we hit a point where we had some real difficulties during negotiations. First, we had an extended impasse and then finally we had a short strike. After that strike both the union and the administrative leadership got together and just said, "We just cannot operate this way. This is not really who we are."

Interestingly enough, the union president wasn't an adversarial type of person at all either, and I was definitely much more interested in a more participative approach to decision making.

As Eric indicated, at the time of entry, his role as president was to manage a culture of conflict.

Yet his fundamental value system, based on a non-adversarial approach to leadership, contributed to developing a participative approach to institutional decision-making.

Fred also spoke to the significance of conflict within the institutional context, emphasizing how the linkage to the community was a critical factor affecting his entry into the position:

When I became president at Morris Community College, I was recruited by the community at a time when it was really in a great state of turmoil and especially under significant financial stress.

The student enrollment had declined significantly, and the reputation in the community was very negative and very few of the local high school graduates would actually enroll in the college. In addition to that, it had very low faculty salaries and very low salaries for all professional staff so it made it very difficult to keep and to recruit new staff to the college.

Fred stressed the importance of community support in the following remarks:

And so I accepted the presidency under those conditions. If the community hadn't come to me and asked me if I was interested I would never have applied for the position, just because it was never on the radar screen and it really wasn't something I had prepared for.

As this commentary indicates, Fred perceived the support from the community as indicating the community's confidence in him to lead the institution. Thus, this commentary reveals that being perceived as trustworthy is regarded as a significant factor for assuming this role. Further, this commentary indicated that a primary aspect of assuming this role was the expectation and willingness to act as change agent for the institution.

This notion of trustworthiness as a key characteristic of assuming the presidential role is further corroborated by April. In the following account, she spoke to the importance of fit with the institution by describing the support that was demonstrated from the search committee, board and college. She reported that her fit with the college was "a kind of magical thing:"

I began to apply for presidencies, and when I applied at this college a primary objective they had was that the person be collaborative and be able to demonstrate collaboration.

It was kind of a magical thing, my coming here. The consultant who led the search here said that they did 160 searches. In that 160 searches there were only three instances in which the person who was number one on paper was the number one on the search committee, was the number one of the college and was the number one with the board. And I was one of those.

So I think that things had gone well in my application process and my interviewing and people wanted me and they trusted me because they wanted things to change, and they wanted things to be good and they decided to trust me. It was a gift of trust. So they just did it and it's worked.

As April commented the "gift of trust" was intertwined with the expectation to be an agent of change. Further, she commented that the people at this institution simply "fit who I am."

The people were just open and they were –it's not that they were so friendly—they were just passionate about what they do. They were willing to sort of lay themselves out and talk about things and be open in a way that was very appealing to me and I think fit who I am.

Next, data provided by Joyce reveals the importance of institutional context as affecting her ability to accomplish institutional goals reflective of her own values and belief system. This passage reflects her view of the distinctive differences between East Coast Community College and Lincoln Community College:

I remember the first time that I was on a team, not a sports team, but a team that was actually working on something in the college. We accomplished something and it was really good. It was such a camaraderie and it was such a team effort that you didn't want to leave it and you didn't want to stop. I remember that feeling and thinking, "I want that again!" And then trying to figure out as I got to be more in leadership roles, how do I get that for everybody and how do we experience that and have people experience that so they want it again. . .because it's just such an incredible feeling to try to get your institution to that point.

It was just so much fun at Lincoln Community College because it was sort of like that, we still had some pockets. . . but for the most part it was like that. I remember sitting back one day in my office going "Jeez, I just walked into something so nice here," and we were able to really move it along and get it to that point. To think that I had been at East Coast Community College and it was so hard. And then to be at Lincoln Community College where it was just so totally opposite...it was progressive and people really thought of the college first. I even had people come in and say "I want to do this in my area and here's how it benefits the college."

Joyce stressed:

To me that's what it's all about because then we do become excellent and we do have the quality. Anything that you do along those lines benefits the students.

Like Bob and Fred, from Joyce's perspective, the extent to which the institutional values reflect a consensus focused upon serving students, the greater the likelihood that high quality services will be delivered. The implication is that these presidents have a results-oriented perspective, viewing participative decision-making as a critical aspect for producing desirable outcomes.

Next, Dan also referenced the institutional context at the time of entering his role, emphasizing community linkages and the broad social context. Reflecting comments reported above on how institutional context directly impacts service to students, Dan stated:

Well, I think the community college has a very important role now, and I think that their role in the future is probably even more important. I say this, for I guess, one reason—that there's an awfully big population in our country and our state and even in the region here of young people, and I do speak primarily of younger people.

I'll talk about non-traditional students, that really have no expectation to go to college—and this is going to sound strange, but if you think about that, no expectation. In fact most of them have no expectation, period. They come out of high school and they're not sure what they're going to do. Are they going to go work at a job that's not going to pay very much? The prospect of this population of people having a very satisfying life is not very good without education beyond high school.

There's just a whole range of dimensions that describe the youth. There's a lot of people like that, so I'm optimistic that the community college role in doing something to help people in this population is just unlimited and that's what this community college is about.

In the following commentary, Jerry referenced the conditions surrounding his entry into the institution by highlighting the importance of administrative stability:

The two Presidents who proceeded me did a great job of building the physical facilities and the technological infrastructure at this college, so equipment wise and facilities wise the college is in very good shape.

Jerry continued:

One of the issues, though, is there has been a lot of changes in the administrative structure over the past several years. One of the things that I was concerned about was bringing some stability in terms of having an administrative team that was working

together and was going to be here for awhile and to really work with the faculty and the students now that we have the facilities to bring in more of the human side. . .to focus on human resource now and help the faculty grow and expand their horizons, help the staff grow, and in particular help the students. For example, because we are a traditional community college, we don't have much interaction, many social activities with students to interact with faculty and staff.

Mirroring Bob's comments regarding the importance of stability within the administration for fostering commitment to the institutional mission, Jerry perceives the need for constancy in the leadership through heightened interaction among students, faculty and staff.

### Findings

As this section has demonstrated, the presidents selected for this study identified factors characterizing their professional background as substantially impacting their entry into the role of participative president. Regarding length of service, the presidents included in this sample have been in presidencies from approximately one year to 27 years. The retired presidents, Bob, Eric, and Fred, served at one institution from 17 to 27 years, indicating commitment to the institution and the ability to sustain the participative presidential role.

Several presidents traced their personal value orientation as a highly influential aspect on their role as participative presidents. For example, Fred commented on the impact of his prior experiences with customer service, emphasizing the importance of treating people in a caring, high quality manner. Bob and April expressed their commitment to the common good, accenting the values of access and service. Joyce specifically spoke to the influence of her personal values which included respect for others. Both Joyce and April placed high emphasis upon their experiences within group-based decision making as a critical factor in their career.

Additionally, these presidents also identified institutional context as a strong contributing factor surrounding entry into the presidential role, indicating a sense of fit with the organization. For example, Bob, Fred, Eric and April specifically indicated that they perceived support originating from various sources, including the search committee, board, college, and community. The data suggests that these presidents perceive that the role that they have assumed is based on

trustworthiness. April spoke to this circumstance most directly by stating she had received the “gift of trust.” Fit with the participative role was referenced by Dan according to serving service area students. Jerry emphasized addressing the “human side.”

Another key finding is that all presidents in this sample perceived themselves as change agents. For example, Bob noted that he was “on board” with the spirit of the sixties, a “very committed time.” Eric and Fred referenced the need for confronting conflict and turmoil within the institution, Dan focused on meeting the needs of service area students through addressing the issue of access, and Jerry emphasized the need for achieving administrative stability. Both April and Joyce related that they entered institutions which were characterized by a need for change.

In general, the data and analyses reveal that these presidents may be described as highly committed to furthering the institutional mission and vision. Thus, this awareness of contextual factors relative to conditions characterizing the situation they encountered as incoming participative presidents laid the foundation for how they will eventually craft their evolving role as they build their respective institutions.

#### Phase Two: Assessing the External Context of the Community College

Phase two of this category reveals the significance placed upon evaluating the external environment of the community college. The key process, *scanning the changing environment*, reveals that the presidents consider the broad social context in which the community college functions as a significant factor for participative leadership. The sub-process, *identifying the challenges*, indicates that these presidents express a keen awareness of how changes within the external context affect the role and mission of the institution. This section reveals that the primary conditions identified by this sample include a decline in resource availability, demographic changes, pressure for partnership arrangements, and the availability of advanced technology. These factors constitute challenges as well as opportunities for an expanded role for the community college.

### *Decline in Resource Availability*

As the following commentary provided by Bob and Jerry indicated, a key factor in the current context is a decline in resource availability. Bob commented below:

Well, I think I'll start by saying. . .let's start with the leadership end of things. The job's a lot harder. There are more constituencies who want to participate, not only within the college but within the community. The funding has really deteriorated in twenty years. Mainly you look at it and in terms of the resources needed to do the job, we are further from it today, and have gradually gotten there over a long period of time.

As Bob stated above, more constituencies desire the opportunity to participate, both inside and outside the institution. Jerry agreed that pressure from outside constituents for increased accountability is tied to deterioration in funding:

I think right now funding is critically important and that's because of the economic crisis we're in throughout the country. Funding is tied into both enrollment issues and accountability issues, because increasingly states and even federal government are demanding more accountability from higher ed in general, part of this assessment process that's going on around the country.

Bob specifically noted that increased participation by boards has resulted in a more difficult, complex role for the president:

This has generated a great deal more participation by boards. We have more board members in the country today, many more who have their own agendas that they want to push. It's just a lot harder job.

Further, Bob contrasted the social conditions of the 1960s as affecting the consequences of leadership actions related to funding processes:

One of the things I point out to people is that in the 1960s, those are my early years, the way the colleges were funded you turned in your enrollment, somebody at the state took care of it, you got your money. Because they were growing so fast and you couldn't keep pace with facilities. Most of your faculty were at the bottom end of the salary schedule starting out, so your mistakes got buried in additional money. So mistakes weren't as important. Today, the reverse of those situations is the case, mistakes are magnified. That makes it much more difficult. As I said earlier, if you want to make progress, you've got to make mistakes. Now, I don't mean you make mistake after mistake, but there are going to be things that don't go well. I think it's a much harder job today.

As Bob noted, progress requires risk-taking, and within the current social climate the emphasis on accountability around financing results in a heightened awareness of errors made by

community college officials. Thus, the presidential role is much more difficult within this era of accountability to various constituencies.

*Demographic trends characterizing the student population*

In the following section, Bob and Jerry remarked on the demographic factors that underlie current and future trends for the community college:

Bob stated:

In terms of trends, I see—well, let me start by saying I don't think there's any doubt, despite the rhetoric about not as many students, etc, which you hear a lot of. I've heard a lot for a lot of years. Fundamentally, you can't look at the change and the nature of work in America and the change in our way our lives work without understanding that increasing numbers of people are not only going to have to go to post secondary education but are going to have to come back over and over.

When you look also at the wave of baby boom echo kids coming through, on that end of things there's no doubt that we're in for a very large expansion of post secondary education. And an expansion in numbers of students at a time when money is going to be tight.

As Bob indicated, through an analysis of changes existing in the nature of work-related activities within the context of American life, he forecasted that an increased number of Americans will be attending higher education at various points in their lives.

Jerry likewise remarked on how changing demographic trends impact the student population of the community college:

I guess the classic way of looking at this is that at the community colleges a lot of time students come with very good intentions of being full-time students and completing degrees and certificates. But they're older students, they have families, they have full-time jobs and they don't realize the time commitment and the energy that is going to be involved in going to school. So it takes them longer to succeed and sometimes the time limits that are placed on colleges in terms of accountability measures create difficulties.

*Pressure for Partnership Arrangements*

The commentary below contains data provided by Bob and Jerry that discloses the perception that increased demand will be placed upon community colleges to forge partnerships with a variety of educational institutions. As Bob remarked below, the focus will be on "what's right for the student:"



There's going to be increasing pressure on institutions to work closely with each other, but also community colleges working with high schools and community colleges working with universities, simply to remove some of the institutional prerogatives and deal with those transitions on a basis of what's right for the student.

The state level, the legislature and gubernatorial leadership is talking K-16. I think everybody is talking K-16 and many are talking about universal K-14. These trends are there.

If you look at the picture I've painted earlier, I think we're very much at a parallel to the 1960s when there was a tremendous increase in enrollment in higher education. It has to be done with relatively low resources and in a flexible type of system and the country turned to the community colleges to absorb most of that growth. It's going to happen again. There simply is neither the time nor the money to accommodate that growth other than with community colleges.

As Bob remarked above, his vision for future is reflective of the "picture I've painted earlier," emphasizing the lack of resources for a growing student population. Bob commented further that resource scarcity combined with larger numbers will result in a continually expansive role for the community college:

The notion of what it would take to accommodate. . .for example, in Texas we're talking about a half million more students, Florida 375,000 more, California three quarters of a million more. The notion that there's going to be enough money coming into our system to do that in the four year structure to accommodate that growth is simply unrealistic. It's not going to be there and it'll have to be community colleges because of the enormous difference in cost.

Secondly, in terms of the way universities work and four-year colleges work, there will be no way to provide the facilities to accommodate that. Community colleges have been much better over the years simply finding a way to do it, making more use of their facilities and using rented facilities and whatever else it's going to take... It's very much like the way I perceive the 1960s, I see that happening again.

Like Bob, Jerry also expanded on the theme of increased pressure for partnerships, providing an example of a developing partnership between his institution with the local school district:

How community colleges interface with the communities in terms of economical development is going to continue to grow, and meeting those needs and responsibilities doesn't always generate revenue that can be reimbursed from the state.

As an example, here in this community we have a tech academy that is operated by one of the school systems, it's a very high tech high school that's being forced out of it's current location where it's in a factory. And the company that owns the factory needs

the space. Those two local school districts are interested but that takes two or three years to build so in the meantime they've got to relocate this place.

As Jerry commented below, community partnerships help build alliances for the future, yet the funding for these relationships is generally not available when they are initiated:

Well, we are trying to find a space on this campus so we can house the high school here in one of our buildings on a temporary basis and then hopefully build a high school hereby. So we will help the students be a natural conduit to us for the future. Having them in one of our buildings doesn't generate any revenue for us. It takes up space but it's not going to generate any revenue and yet we are serving the community. So that's an example of where it would be nice if the state would be willing to recognize that and give us some additional funding so that we could temporarily help out.

Jerry continued:

Again, as I mentioned earlier, with my response to the economical development studies, as a community we are going to have to spend a lot of time trying to look at our curriculum and the needs of the workforce in this community and trying to bring that in line with the workforce. That's not something we get a lot of revenue out of initially.

It takes time to make those changes, it takes money to make those changes, do the research and eventually it will pay off, hopefully, in terms of increased enrollment. But again, as funding for state colleges shift from enrollment to performance, again we've got to come back to that whole issue of are they going to measure us on what we really do or are they going to measure us on the more traditional college standard? Those are some of the biggest challenges I see.

#### *Availability of Information Technology*

The impact of information technology is identified by Bob as a significant trend characterizing the current environment. As Bob commented, the increased capacity of information technology provides educators with additional techniques for advancing service delivery to students:

Beyond that, there's no doubt that the exploding and geometrically advancing capabilities of information technology are going to provide very different ways to deliver education, particularly much greater individualization.

The fact, for example, that we could have a diagnostic assessment of someone's needs, what they know and what they need to know and that there would be a way to provide a learning path built off that diagnosis. I think that's very much going to be possible. There is much more capacity for students to move through courses faster, slower, with more intensity, with less intensity rather than everybody having to move in a lock step. The capacity to do those things is simply there.

As Bob indicated, technology produces the capacity for variation in intensity and speed in the learning path. The implication is that much more flexibility is required for course delivery.

*Legislative responsiveness to community college issues*

As the commentary above has demonstrated, the external environment is characterized by significant trends that give rise to significant challenges for the leadership of the community college. In the following commentary, Jerry and Bob referenced the need for legislative awareness of the unique role of the community college and the conditions under which it functions.

Jerry expanded on the need for legislative understanding in formal accountability measures:

I think one of the biggest challenges is getting legislature and leaders in the states to understand that community colleges are different than four year institutions and using the same criteria to judge two year colleges on the terms of their success versus four year colleges is not always the best way to proceed.

Jerry continued:

For example, in this state they've put the graduation rate after three years at community college with students that start as first-time, full-time students. Well, a lot of those first-time, full-time students start with good intentions but they quickly realize they can't continue to go full-time, so they drop to part-time and it takes them longer than three years, especially if they have to take developmental education their first year.

So is it realistic to hold community colleges to a three-year time frame when four year colleges are held at a six year time frame? Somehow I think if, you know if you have two years after your supposed end of your degree to succeed. But community colleges are just given one year and so for me it should be the reverse almost. So that's just one example of what's facing or confronting community colleges.

As Jerry indicated, increased understanding among legislators regarding retention issues is a critical factor for improving their approach to evaluating community colleges. Jerry expanded on this theme through encouraging recognition of factors that constitute successful student outcomes:

Another thing is a lot of times people go to community colleges maybe intending to get a full degree and then they realize they can get a certificate and still do some of the same things. So they become more skill oriented and take just a few courses and they realize they can get a certificate and still do some of the same things. So they become more skill

oriented and take just a few courses. They've got the skills they need and they don't need to go anymore. They're not interested in getting a degree. Now, even if that person goes and leaves and goes out and gets a job and is very successful and makes a lot of money, the college may not get to count that as a success.

And yet the college did exactly what the community college is supposed to do, just train people so they can go out and get jobs. I think having a better understanding of the roles of the community college and how they serve students is important.

Bob expressed the view that an improvement in legislative understanding will increasingly

characterize the political scene:

Finally, I think there's a dent going to be made in election discussion approaches as to fundamentals in our institutions. It's going to take time, but that's going to become the only way to do it.

### Findings

This section has demonstrated that these presidents perceive the contextual conditions in which the college currently functions as characterized by several significant trends. First, the decline in resource availability is linked to increased expectations for participation by community constituents. Second, demographic changes include increased numbers of students to be served both currently and in the future during a time of increasing financial constraints. The consequence is increased pressure on community colleges in terms of accountability measures. A third trend is the increasing pressure on institutions to work together in partnership arrangements. Fourth, the availability of advanced technology has produced the capacity for variation in intensity and speed in learning path. This situation indicates that much more flexibility is required in community college delivery. These trends are comparable to 1960s when an increase in enrollment occurred along with financial constraints. This era is marked, however, by an increased emphasis on accountability and expectations for participation from various constituents.

Thus, resource scarcity, demographic changes, increased demands for inter-organizational partnerships and the presence of information technology are producing the opportunity for a more expansive role for the community college. A critical need exists for legislative understanding of the role of the community college and how it serves students. This

phase has demonstrated that the participative president must perceive linkages from the past to the present to the future. Thus, the visioning process is multi-directional in order to provide purpose and direction.

### Phase Three: Response to the Changing Environment

Phase Three of this category illustrates how the contextual factors cited within phases one and two become incorporated into a philosophical frame for action. The key process, *framing the participative vision*, underscores the importance of constructing the visioning process around the values, beliefs and principles underlying participative leadership. The sub-process, *delineating the tenets of the participative philosophy*, reveals how the philosophical stance for the participative organization provides purpose and direction for advancing the institutional mission and vision. These tenets are expressed through selected comments that concentrate upon building the participative vision and represent emergent themes that are examined within the categories presented later in this study. These tenets indicate that the participative philosophy focuses on access for students, participative principles and values, collective involvement in decision-making, results-oriented action, and shared responsibility for the change process.

#### *Access for Students*

As stated in the following commentary, Jerry remarked on the centrality of access as a major focus for the community college:

Access is going to be very important. With fewer dollars from states and the federal government to operate, colleges are going to be increasing demands to increase tuition. And students who typically go to community colleges can't afford high tuition, so access is going to be very critical.

Dan concurred with this view, expanding upon the mission of the community college and the need for dedication to student access:

So my view is that probably the major role of the community college is to recruit these people, to say to them, "We are looking for people who have no expectations for college, because we think we have the programs, the services to help you have a more satisfying life, not just financially, but socially and psychologically."

Dan continued:

Now, if you think about that, for a minute, just concentrate on the 18 year old kids coming out, there's a lot of them like that. But then you kind of project and you think there's people that have been graduating from high school forever that didn't seize the opportunity at that moment in their lives that now are 25, 35, and 45 years old, same situation, they can benefit. So I think that there's just a tremendous opportunity. I think it goes beyond the financial benefit for the community college.

As Dan remarked, the purpose of the college is to provide an opportunity for improving lives:

It goes to the fact. . .this is the main reason that they exist, to give people a chance to have a more satisfying life.

Dan cautioned that the community college must maintain a sharp focus on the importance of access:

You know, I think many times our community colleges just kind of get side tracked. They want to do too much, they want to be key players in economic development, and they can do that, but it should be through education. A community college shouldn't be the main driver of economic development in the community.

Dan indicated that the role of the community college is to be an "active participant:"

A community college's job is to be an active participant. I mean, our major function and purpose is to educate people and educated people will do good things. They may stumble, but they'll do good things. There are other areas where we get into where sometimes if it really detracts, detracts is not the right word, distraction maybe is a better word, from what our main purpose is, which is to provide education so people have better lives.

Dan continued regarding building expectations:

I think in many cases what you have to do is to create, help people create expectations that are different. If you have no expectations, I mean, you're obviously not going to accomplish very much.

So when you begin to communicate with this population you need to understand that part of the role is to build expectations. You know, "Maybe you didn't do so well in high school, but we have tutorial services we can get you started on." Obviously, it always takes effort on the part of the student but there are other things we can do to help them get started.

Dan commented:

Ultimately, I think the goal is that this population will be able to fly on their own without the jump-start that we do. But you have to start some place, and I think there's just really a lot of people who can benefit from that.

Dan stressed:

In my view, that's the major, major role of what we try to do. It's education, it's driven in improvement through education and it does affect people's lives.

Bob also referred to the importance of access by referencing the current direction of society and the expanding role for the community college. As Bob remarked below, the direction for society continues to create circumstances that will lead to an expanded role for the community college:

Basically, what was very clear and if you look at any of my writings, you'll see what's still reflected today is that the continued direction of this society all the way from the beginning of the Twentieth Century to today, is the move from unskilled to high skilled work. That migration of jobs continues and we have a very large population that is not prepared for those jobs and for those positions. Therefore, they are not prepared to live successfully in this country and contribute to not only their own welfare but the country's welfare. That conclusion continues to come up, but it was one of the things we started with.

Still there today is that more and more under-prepared people, particularly in this community, with the shift in population here, to great numbers of minority people and greater numbers of immigrants was going to produce more people that would not be prepared when they begin to reach adulthood. . . would not be prepared to be successful.

Something else that came up was obviously a role that was going to grow and the institution was going to become bigger.

Bob drew a parallel to the mission of the 1960s and the current mission of the contemporary community college in the following remark:

The critical mission of the community college was to help those people to become successful.

As Bob remarked below, fostering access through becoming increasingly focused on students is critical:

Beyond that, I think trying to become student-centered institutions as opposed to faculty or administrative centered institutions is very much a movement that's going to make progress. We simply must get better at doing things that make sense for students and building our policies on that.

*Guiding principles and values for directing the decision making process:*

As demonstrated in the following commentary, establishing guiding principles and

values is an essential feature of the participative philosophy. Fred directly linked the need for guiding principles to the decision-making process:

Probably the most significant thing is—does the organization have guiding principles and some clearly stated values to guide the decision making process?

And if you do, then while people will sit down and buy a car, they may come home with a yellow station wagon. But, it will still meet the values of the institution if the values are safety, good mileage and able to carry several people—then they may have met the criteria.

Now if someone else had gone down it might have been blue and it might have been a SUV or something like that, but you still are operating within the values of the institution, and with that, the guiding principles.

In the following commentary, Fred and Joyce provided examples of the key values which underlie the participative philosophy. These ideals include valuing understanding, people, and diversity. Fred addressed the prominence of valuing understanding in the following statement:

I think the very first value you have to have in the institution is everybody there has to value learning. That is the beginning point of everything.

Further, valuing people is highlighted. As Fred commented:

And then some of the values would relate to the perception of people—that we value people, that they are important to us and we are there to enhance people, not to destroy people.

Joyce corroborated this view by referencing the importance of respect:

I think the other thing is that you have to respect people. You have to realize that everybody has value. . . and if you have that basic concept and that basic ideal, then I think that no matter who the persons are sitting around the table, they have something to offer.

Closely related to valuing people is the emphasis upon diversity. Fred remarked:

A value of accepting differences, and that we also value differences. By that I mean we want people to bring differing views to our discussions, that we don't want to like-think in making decisions because that just means that one person might as well make the decisions if we all come together that way.

I would say the ideal college is having a group of tremendous diversity in the faculty and staff, having people who were active learners—meaning that they were engaged in the learning process and everyone is engaged in the learning process beyond their own narrow disciplines.



Fred emphasized the importance of diversity and involvement in the decision-making process:

So there is a need to value diversity in its broadest sense, meaning that you want all different types of people on your campus and to be involved in the decision-making process.

Joyce also advocated valuing diversity as evidenced in the following remarks:

Everybody has something to offer. If you really truly believe that, then you can bring people together and say "Alright, here is an idea, or we have a problem, or there is an issue and we need to figure it out. So let's put it on the table." When you get those different perspectives, you come up with something that is so much better than something that I could come up with on my own because I don't have all those perspectives.

Last, Joyce and Fred identified valuing interactive processes based on integrity:

Joyce stated:

I think honesty is important...you have to respect people and you have to be up front....you have to be accepting as well.

Fred also remarked:

That we have the value of fairness and honesty and openness with each other.

#### *Involvement in institutional decision-making processes*

The third tenet is a focus on involvement in institutional decision-making processes as explicated by Fred, Dan and April. Fred described his approach to involvement in decision-making as a "learning process:"

I would approach the task of making decisions as a learning process, we gather data, we analyze the data, we find out what it is we have learned, our decision is that we have learned.

Fred also indicated that the decision-making process would be driven by a high quality information system:

I would hope the campus would be drowning in assessments and data and that the data then would be reduced and analyzed into ways that are useful.

So that would mean that there has to be people. . .I am not talking about the traditional researcher that sits off in an office. There should be a living, dynamic process where a faculty member says, "Hey, this group just isn't going right. It is not perking along like I would like it to. I need some people to come in and do some observations." And we will sit down and have a discussion. We will see if we can improve the learning environment instead of waiting until the end of the semester and giving out two thirds F's

and one B and one C—fix the problem early on instead of waiting until that process hurts students.

Fred further commented on the linkage of data to the decision-making process:

If there is data available, they would demand that the data be brought to them so that they could look at it and review it as part of that process, as it related to their decision.

Fred remarked that while the campus will have the appearance of the traditional institution, the decision-making process will be non-traditional in nature:

I guess the campus would in many ways look traditional. But I would hope that the inter-workings of the campus would be very untraditional in the way it went about accomplishing making decisions and how it went about promoting the learning process and how it brings students actively into the learning process.

Fred's emphasis on improvement of the learning environment is echoed by Bob. While Bob does not report success with direct student involvement in the decision-making process, he stressed the importance of the student role in developing the curriculum:

Well, I don't think participative governance is very different from what I suggested in terms of something that has broad representation. The involvement of students, frankly, I've found not too successful. Maybe someone else has done better with that.

But, basically, I think there needs to be a way for students to get information into the decision process about their interests. In terms of the program, the students are going to shape the program. There are just too many alternatives easily available for students to come and do the way we've been doing for the last century. Think about the volume of students who come in and identify on their own two or three courses they need that will help them. They take the courses and that's it—sort of a self-designed curriculum.

#### *Results-Oriented Action*

As April, Joyce, Dan, and Jerry remarked below, a strong emphasis within the participative philosophy is placed on shaping action toward organizational outcomes. In the following commentary, April stressed that actions directed toward outcomes are reflective of commitment and the institutional belief and value structure:

It's a commitment, it's a belief system, it's a value system. So that even people who wouldn't naturally be that way, like myself, must be that way. . . because that is what gets the best results.

Joyce also expressed the view that involvement produces “a great result:”

I think that when you get a lot of people tackling a problem you come up with a great result. You come up with more ideas, more perspective.

Further, Dan pointed to the importance of the institutional environment in producing desirable outcomes and the impact on student success:

It’s a kind of environment, if you feel part of an organization, you’re obviously going to speak positively of it. That’s what we want our students to be able to do when they’re finished. They say, “Yes, I went to X and that was a great place, that place helped, that place did this for me and I want to see them continue to help others. I’ll help financially, in recruitment, or whatever other ways.”

Dan emphasized:

I think the test is, you know, what really happens to those students? Are those students willing, years after graduation, to associate, to be involved in the college and activities?

Jerry also commented that the institutional focus would be on learning outcomes:

First of all, I would like to have a college that’s more focused on learning and outcomes of the students. Therefore, the faculty would be into assessment, developing standards and objectives and competencies. There would be increased flexibility in terms of how they deliver classes instead of the traditional format, being more a combination of online courses, lecture courses, hybrid courses.

#### *Shared Responsibility for the Change Process*

The last key tenet underscores the importance these presidents place upon creating conditions which foster a collective commitment to the participative organization. The commentary below reveals that participative leadership is focused on both the internal and external environment of the organization, and that the participative vision provides the focus for change.

As Fred commented below, a common belief system provides the foundation for the participative vision, enabling the campus to move in concert toward a commonly desired future:

I think what I would say from my experience would be that when you go on the campus, and if you bring a group of people together and they are going to deal with an issue...is there commonness in the belief system that they bring to the problem?

Fred emphasized the need for inclusiveness in the common vision:

By that I am addressing...do they have, is there a common shared vision for the campus so that everybody knows where we are going, what we are trying to accomplish?

Fred commented that values which underlie the vision shape the decision making process:

There have to be shared values and then there needs to be some general consensus on what the possibilities are for guiding the campus.

April also stressed the essential place of a common value system as the under grid of the participative vision:

It's what helps you to implement new changes in a very short period of time. I think that most people would say that the changes we implemented at this college are pretty astonishing and why? Because everybody is involved and engaged. Everybody.

Building upon April's emphasis upon an environment in which "everybody is involved and engaged," Dan and Bob stressed the need for a structure which builds commitment.

Dan stated:

Well, again, I think the ideal form of participative governance comes back to the idea of structure of the organization, and I think, you know, you build your structure and you've got to recognize traditions, you've got to recognize the individual strengths and weaknesses of the people. One structure, one organization, doesn't fit all. I think we all understand that.

Bob directly linked the changing context for decision-making to building commitment and involvement for decision-making:

That's one side of it; the other side of it is participation. As I looked at all of my years in working in—the 35 years at my institution, and now the six years since retirement. Where I continue to work on a national scale with community colleges, one of the things that's happened in the whole society that's reflected in community colleges is more and more people want to participate and expect to be able to participate in decisions that affect them.

That has been very much a change over the years so that a completely top down type organization is no longer going to be acceptable to people—and you're not going to have real commitment and involvement if that's the way you operate. While I think perhaps that was always true, the difference today is it's not even acceptable.

Thus, the organizational context for decision-making is undergoing change. Since people increasingly expect to participate in decision making, the traditional hierarchical form is no

longer satisfactory. The participative president must respond to this condition in order to achieve “real commitment and involvement.”

### Findings

This section has illustrated how the contextual circumstances described in the previous two phases have led to the creation of the participative philosophy. This philosophy is expressed through tenets that concentrate upon fostering access, participative principles and values, collective involvement in decision-making, results oriented action and mutual responsibility for the change process. This philosophy underlies the change process and guides the flow of interaction in the following category.

### Summary and Application of the Core Category

As indicated in Figure 4.1. “Linear Representation of the Participative Leadership Process,” the core category, Visioning Participative Environments, links four categories or environments (sequences) that provide the context for actions and interactions taken by these participative leaders. The category, Envisioning the Participative Environment, is the first sequence within this chain of evolving activity. In the following discussion, a description of how the visioning process described in this category fosters participative leadership is presented by addressing the properties of the core category. These properties include purpose, focus, nature, and outcome. This analysis reveals that the primary theme of this category is describing and delineating the conditional context within which participative leadership is situated. These conditions shape the perception of these presidents as to how the participative role as institutional leader will be enacted within the institutional context.

Purpose references the aim or intent of the visioning process. Within this category, the primary function of the visioning process is imagining, dreaming, reflecting, anticipating and planning. These data and analyses have revealed that these presidents are highly articulate regarding their sense of circumstances and the possibilities for the envisioned participative organization.

Focus is revealed as an essential process through which activity is directed as described under phase one. In the sense that focus refers to how decision making is shaped through directing attention, the data reveals that these presidents have assessed conditional aspects through discerning the factors surrounding entry to the presidential role. These data and analyses disclose that these presidents have primarily identified highly significant factors surrounding the conditions of role entry. Conditions include professional background, personal value orientation, and institutional context.

The property focus continues to unfold within phase two. Data is presented which indicates that these presidents perceive the current context of the community college as characterized by important aspects such as decline in resources, demographic changes, increased demands for inter-organizational partnerships and the presence of information technology. The analysis indicates that the visioning process is multi-focused, involving a willingness and ability to scan and evaluate a complex and changing environment at the personal, institutional and broad social level. The primary outcome is that the origin and foundation of the participative vision has been established.

Nature is another property that begins to take shape within this category. Primarily, nature refers to the character or quality of the environment within which process occurs. As demonstrated in phase three, the response to these factors is the construction of a participative vision embodying the need for a change process oriented around a core of humanitarian values. The data reveals that being perceived as personally trustworthy is a critical issue for these presidents. Thus, an imagined, ideal organization is conceptualized around a set of participative principles and values.

The implication is that these data and analyses reveal that the role of the participative president is guided by a vision reflective of a complex, challenging external environment. This vision is multi-directional in that it incorporates linkages from the past into the current context, providing direction for the future. It is based upon a philosophy that implicitly underscores the

critical importance of institutional change. An important finding is that presidents view participation in the institutional decision making process as a key aspect of the participative philosophy. The overall consequence of the sequence, Envisioning the Participative Environment, is that this philosophy underlies the approach to the envisioned organization. This philosophy is a critical force in shaping the presidential role in terms of purpose and direction. It establishes the foundation of the conditional context in which the next sequence is presented, Participative Passages.

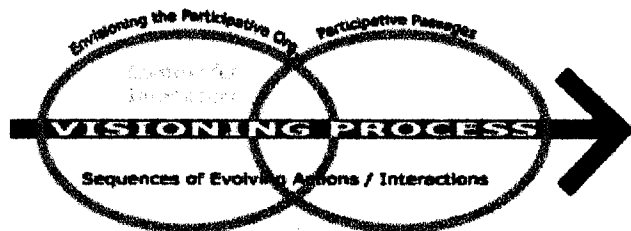


Figure 4.4. The categories Envisioning the Participative Organization and Participative Passages.

## PARTICIPATIVE PASSAGES

### Overview

The category Envisioning the Participative Organization demonstrated that the perception of the presidential role emerged within contextual conditions that are located within personal, institutional and broad social perspective. The analysis demonstrated that the presidents articulated a participative philosophy that formed the guiding core of an envisioned organization. This foundation provides the conditional context of the second sequence in the flow of action and interaction, Participative Passages.

From the standpoint of the participative visioning process, the concept of the beacon reveals that the participative philosophy continues to guide the flow of action and interaction. Within the previous category, the beacon ranged from past to present, and projected into the future through its focus on the conditions and dynamics characterizing the community college. In

contrast, Participative Passages demonstrates that the beacon is firmly focused within the internal environment of the institution, shedding light on the internal workings of the organization. As this category demonstrates, the beacon can be viewed as a means for exposing difficulties, conflict and lack of cohesiveness, and as a source for initiating change. Although the participative philosophy is more implicit in this category, it underlies and sustains the movement into the change process. As illustrated in figure 4.4, the overlap in ovals may be considered corridors from one sequence to another. As environments, they enable the analysis to center around the conditional context in which the leadership process unfolds.

The category Participative Passages emphasizes the interactive nature of participative leadership and the organizational dynamics which link the participative president and the campus participants within the institution. The emphasis is upon the internal environment of the organization during the early implementation of the participative change process. The analysis indicates that these presidents are very cognizant of the affective domain of the organizational setting and place considerable importance on impacting the climate of the organization when launching the change process.

The overall intent is to move the organizational climate from one characterized by a sense of separateness to mutuality, thereby laying the groundwork for building a participative organization. The term passages underscores the idea that participative leadership may be understood as a series of sequential steps which involve movement from one stage to another. This emphasis upon process indicates that when mutuality in the organization apparently exists, a developmental sequence has taken place. In effect, these participative presidents can be viewed as managing the dynamics of the institution so that the organization “passes” through specific stages of interaction.

As this analysis proceeds, an ongoing effort will be made to demonstrate that in order to conduct the strategies that occurred within the context of participative leadership, these presidents confront an inherently problematic aspect. Essentially, the president and the participants



within the institution come together within a hierarchical structure characterized by unequal power relationships. In order to bring the organization to a point whereby mutuality is apparently achieved, presidents must construct an atmosphere which gives rise to the perception that more egalitarian relationships have been created. At the same time, they must focus on maintaining their position of power and authority as the campus leader. Thus, the fundamental dilemma faced by these participative presidents is the necessity of contending with the intrinsically asymmetrical nature of power relationships within a hierarchical organization.

In this sense, the category Participative Passages reveals that the interactive context in which participative leadership occurs is fraught with tension, disconnects and conflictive exchange. As we shall see, the leadership process is carried out as a skillful set of maneuvers, subtle responses and with considerable adroitness and finesse. Thus, the beacon casts its flame upon the more informal aspects of the organization and enables the visioning process to move forward despite formidable barriers.

The category Participative Passages consists of four distinct phases: Encountering the Resistance to Participative Governance, Combating the Resistance to Participative Governance, Building the Climate for Participative Decision-Making, and Mutuality.

#### Phase One: Encountering the Resistance to Participative Governance:

In this stage the president must contend with the natural resistance that occurs when bringing the institution into the change process. The key process, *assessing the institutional landscape*, indicates that these presidents perceive participative structures and processes as being highly important to the success of their respective institutions. The sub-process, *identifying deficiencies*, indicates how this focus is applied. The analysis indicates that as the change process unfolds, these presidents perceived the internal environment of their institutions as characterized by structures and processes that are non-participative in nature. Accordingly, the analysis also reveals that these presidents viewed campus members as resistant to their efforts to begin the participative change process.

Several presidents remarked on the importance of participative structures and processes in order to achieve organizational success. Fred commented on the environment he intended to implement:

The environment I was trying to create was one of a high degree of participation, allowing people to have access to the information about the campus such as enrollment, budget, how we were spending money, what the money was being spent on. It was to be a very open process that would allow basically anybody on campus to share their expertise and their thoughts and recommendations about how we should conduct the business on the campus on a day-to-day basis. Some people call it a shared governance process.

Fred continued:

So the intent of the process was to create an environment in which theoretically anybody on campus could offer suggestions. It would be heard at the higher levels in the campus and we wouldn't be shutting people out, people's ideas and suggestions out of the process.

Fred's statements indicated that the environment he intended to create would be designed to encourage input. Further, institutional processes would enable those suggestions to be "heard at the higher levels of the campus."

April also remarked on the value of participative processes in achieving organizational goals:

We just did so many really wonderful things together, and I did it all with good process. For example, the first proposal that we wrote was the student services one. I just invited to one campus the student services staff from all the seven colleges and I said, "Let's think about all the things that ought to be in the very best student services support system," and we just brainstormed. Then after they brainstormed I divided it all into categories and then we took the categories and we put them into chronological order and we had a beautiful program that got funded by the Feds.

As April comments, with "good process," they were able to do "so many really wonderful things together." In concert, Dan expressed his perspective of the successful participative process by speaking to how it creates greater understanding of the college and perceptions of others:

I think you can have that participation and get off the table a lot of the objections that will come out after a decision. I think that my view of the successful process, and that's once the decision is made, people were willing to pick up whatever that decision is and move forward together, regardless of whether they think it was the best solution, that they feel that they had their chance. More than likely they're going to pick it up and realize,

“Okay, maybe this is the best interests of the college,” or can understand where others are coming from and they’ll do it.

Dan commented on an unintended consequence of a failure to establish participative structures and processes:

Whereas, if they don’t have that opportunity it can fester, and fester and fester, and it is very difficult to heal those wounds.

Bob also remarked on the critical importance of participative structures and processes:

Well, we had a governance structure that provided broad participation simply enough, and despite the fact that we had a number of years when funding wasn’t very good and therefore we weren’t able to do the things with salary we would like to do. This is the time when unions will say, “Look, we can do better for you.” People stuck with us because of the participatory processes we had.

As Bob commented, despite conditions under which faculty would be attracted to unions, they continued their support for the organization “because of the participatory processes we had.”

As these statements indicate, these presidents demonstrated a strong belief in the purpose and usefulness of highly participative structures and processes. Under conditions in which a high level of participation exists within an institution, campus members can share their expertise and express reservations about potential decisions. Moreover, highly participative processes may enable the institution to avoid potential threats such as unionization of the faculty. In short, the significance of highly participative structures and processes is that the institution is sustained.

At the same time, these presidents are resolute in their perspective that resistance to the implementation of participative governance is expressed in the perception of campus members. For example, April referred the response of those with whom she worked to create a program proposal that was eventually federally funded:

They said at the end of the meeting, “You had it all in your head and you just made us come up with it.” I said, “That is absolutely wrong—I know nothing about student services.” And I must say that this is a recurring statement to me because people don’t understand how things can come together in a group process. They feel like you must have known it all along and you just manipulated them into the decision.

Thus, from April’s perspective, campus members lacked understanding of group process and perceived that she manipulates them into making a pre-determined decision. Moreover, this

reaction is a routine response within the organization or “recurring statement,” since apparently people in general lack understanding of the group process in decision-making.

Fred also commented on the failure of campus participants to perceive the value of involvement in decision-making processes as he began the change process:

Well, probably the biggest resistance was just that they participated at a lower level than you would have liked to have seen and do, and that basically means that they didn’t begin it in a wholehearted way when they started on it. I guess, maybe, because that’s the way we had to do things.

Fred continued:

I don’t think that the faculty and staff saw the possibilities of it the way that I did when we were setting it up—that this would be a process for them to have truly meaningful input into the process rather than having two people present an idea and then you have a vote to see who winds up winning.

As Fred commented, the initiation of the change process was marked by lack of “wholeheartedness,” and campus members did not perceive the opportunity for “truly meaningful input into the process.”

As April remarked in the following passage, resistance to the change process directly reflects the level of participation that exists in a decision-making process. This condition will contribute to not perceiving the opportunity for substantial involvement referred to by Fred previously:

It’s just that old chart, or graph that you graph out. You have the vertical bar and the horizontal bar. The vertical bar is how long a decision takes to make versus how long it takes to implement. The longer you take to make the decision, the less time it takes to implement. The shorter the time it takes to make the decision, the longer it takes to implement because people don’t do it.

Thus, a failure to engage people in participative processes creates conditions that will significantly inhibit implementation of an institutional decision.

### Findings

The data indicate that during this initial stage, these presidents described the contextual conditions for a successful change process as requiring organizational structures and processes

which support high participation. These presidents viewed the need for participative governance from a perspective that embraces the value of inclusiveness into institutional decision-making structures and processes. These presidents described the value of highly participative structures and processes as “open” and one in which “anybody on campus could offer suggestions.” Participation provides opportunities for voicing objections that may otherwise come after a decision has been made. Also, participatory processes may ward off potential unionization of faculty.

Further, these presidents perceived resistance to the change process in the responses from campus members that took the form of deficiencies. For example, campus members were seen as lacking sufficient understanding of group process, leading to the perception that the president engages in manipulative actions to produce a pre-determined decision. The data indicates that campus members are viewed as failing to perceive the potential of the change process. The overall implication is that as the change process begins, these presidents must contend with differentials in understanding, perception and experience that characterize the traditional organization. Thus, the need for participative leadership is framed within the presidents’ perspective as addressing insufficiencies within the institutional context.

#### Phase Two: Combating the Resistance

I wouldn’t be surprised at how things go to the press. I preempted potential negative press by taking it to the press myself. But I felt strongly that it was the right decision and it was within my rights as, according to the process, we had agreed on together.

- April

In this phase, the presidents perceived campus members as engaging in game playing responses in reaction to presidents’ effort to impart a new form of organization. The data indicate that gaming is conducted relative to non-participative structures and processes and takes place within interactive settings. The key process, *exposing the gaming process*, demonstrates that the focus of the action is directed toward revealing and confronting the gaming behaviors of organizational members. The sub-process, *engaging the saboteurs*, provides data disclosing the

strategies through which the presidents attempt to transform the gaming process into participative forms of interaction.

Accordingly, the data reveal that the focus of presidential strategies is to construct an agreement with campus members concerning the conditions for participative decision-making. This section illustrates how strategies including defining the presidential role as analogous to the best interests of the institution, managing expectations for involvement in decision making and constructing rationales serve to affirm the positional power of the presidency. By managing perceptions regarding the super-ordinate position of the president in relation to the position of campus members, participative strategies perpetuate the hierarchical structure of the organization.

In the following section, the concept of gaming is described as a form of non-participative interaction. Fred provided an account of his own experience in a non-participative process:

I know, I have participated in one. There was a group who got together, a group of instructors and some other people, and we were supposed to be dealing with cheating. A group was put together to develop strategies and talk about how we deal with cheating. There were discussions going on and you could just tell all the cliques, cliques, cliques throughout the group. It finally dawned on everybody that if he didn't get his way, we would be there for fifteen years discussing it. He was going to have his way or no way.

Fred describes how people will "play the games," indicating that games are played with institutional structures:

It is those kinds of structures that are in place and people play the games with. I mean that they go to the meeting, they bring their coffee, they bring their work, they do their thing, they sit, they listen. And if the opportunity comes up, they may say something here and there. There are a few people who love that process and learned just to hear themselves chatter. And the leader chitchats an awful lot during the process and eventually they make the decision they were supposed to and the meeting is over and everybody leaves.

April also referred to ways campus members "play the games" with non-participative structures and processes.

They don't tell you they're not doing it, they just don't do it. It might take a long time for the President to discover it is not being done. That's malicious compliance.

April expanded on the notion of “malicious compliance:”

Well, I expect it to happen when I make a decision by myself. I have done it, I think, three times now in nine years and each time there has been some malicious compliance. People stalling, dragging their feet, people not getting things done, people not understanding what it was or not wanting to understand or refusing to understand, people blowing up.

Thus, according to April, “malicious compliance” is an example of gaming in that it describes the passive nature of this type of resistance.

Jerry described a second example of passive resistance in reference to his experience with a faculty group:

There have been times when this has happened and I have gone to the faculty council and they said, “We knew this was happening, anyway.” I am sitting there going, “I haven’t slept in two nights because I dreaded coming and telling you this. And they are all sitting there, “Yeah, we knew that.” They have better sources than I do sometimes.

Fred shared a third example of passive resistance. He referred to this response as “benign neglect:”

The fastest way to just derail something is just benign neglect. They could go through the motion of doing it—they change their language to the language of whatever the new vogue words are, they start incorporating that into their process, they do window dressing type of things to make it look like they are doing something. But in reality they are doing nothing different, and so they just do that.

In contrast to “benign neglect,” Fred pointed to another response:

Then the other side of that is the open defiance, the open opposition to the President. Then it becomes, “I’m not going to do it; make me do it.”

Furthermore, in the following passages, presidents demonstrated awareness that their own actions can also be the basis for non-participative interactions. For example, April described the conditions under which “malicious compliance” occurs:

Well, I think malicious compliance happens when you vote or when a leader just makes decisions and issues things through a slot in the door. People don’t implement “things.”

Jerry’s comments indicated agreement with April’s remark that “people don’t implement things,” remarking that people might “really screw it up royally:”

Because sometimes people have, if they don’t have the ownership, they tend to do a couple of different things. They either tend to blow it off, hoping it will go away, they

tend to do it the way they want to do it which is not necessarily the way that I and the group that worked it out, or they tend to want to really screw it up royally so that I'll give it to somebody else.

Fred also described the impact of lack of ownership in institutional decision-making:

It is my belief that if you have very many of those processes in your campus and everybody quickly learned the rules of the game, they know that they are to 'participate,' they know that their input is an insignificant part of the decision, the decision is already made, they discovered what the administration really wanted to do, and when we do that when everything will, we can get out of here and move on to something else.

These comments indicate that when non-participative processes are widespread throughout the organization, campus members have "learned the rules of the game," and they will appear to conform to the expectation to participate. Further, when the belief of campus members is that their input is insignificant and decisions have already been made, they will engage in only a pretense of participating.

Fred referred to these responses as ways they "play the game" and "sabotage the process."

And like I said before, if the president is a control freak and every decision has to be their decision, then participation is just a sham and the people quickly learn that. So they play the game, they learn how very quickly to play the game, and then the whole thing becomes how can they sabotage the process. You know, they drive some of the administrators nuts, instead of actually putting their energy into providing innovative leadership and directing their energy toward the betterment of the campus and students. Rather, they're fighting and bickering and doing the things that happen on other campuses.

As Fred remarked, when campus members learn that "participation is just a sham," they will engage in opposition rather than focusing on leadership for improving the institution and serving students. Thus, gaming results in energy being directed toward activities which are not beneficial to the campus or the students.

These comments indicated that these presidents identified non-participative strategies as actions that further compound and complicate the change process. They also identified lack of ownership as a serious hindrance to implementing the participative change process. The implication is that although campus members are being provided an opportunity for ownership,



the gaming process reveals that this offer is being declined. Rather, campus members decide to engage in resistance and thus become saboteurs to the participative change process.

Furthermore, as the following data indicates, some actions taken by presidents have unintended and undesired consequences. For example, Fred remarked on the damage resulting from trying to force participation in response to open defiance to the president:

And you know that system, if anybody gets caught in that one, then that is a no-win situation. You can't make anybody, you know, it deteriorates into possibly a disciplinary action or dismissal of somebody. It brings with it all of the baggage and the morale problem and everything else that affects the campus. It basically is a no-win situation for anybody who is trying to make somebody do something. They just don't make the campus do that—it just doesn't happen.

Fred continued:

And then the other thing that keys into that is that the administrator or President takes any action like that and a fear factor happens that gets drilled into the campus that permeates everything. People are then afraid to talk to each other, afraid to suggest ideas. They become robots performing their tasks. Basically, their minds are in neutral or on vacation and their body is at the campus. So you are really not getting. . .the campus is not getting the benefit of the full potential of that employee they tuned out a long time ago.

Thus, according to Fred, when there is open defiance, and the president attempts to enforce participation, a no-win situation develops. The “fear factor” emerges and employees become robot like and their “minds are in neutral.” The consequence is that the campus will not realize the potential of the “tuned out” employee.

This analysis has demonstrated that from the perspective of these presidents, non-participative structures and processes characterize the situational context within which the president approaches the participative change process. The data indicates that the context is viewed as characterized by interactions in which campus members “play the games” with non-participative structures. These responses are described by terms such as “screwing it up royally,” “malicious compliance,” “benign neglect,” “open defiance” and “sabotaging the process.”

Thus, analyses of this data revealed that these presidents perceive the climate of the organization as characterized by conflictive exchanges and divisiveness. As the following description indicates, these perceptions guide presidential actions to counter this form of

resistance. The overall intent is to address the organizational climate through strategies that are designed to confront the game playing responses of campus members. The focus is upon constructing an agreement regarding the conditions for participative decision making. This agreement defines roles and responsibilities of the president and campus members. Strategies include linking the presidential role with the success of the organization, managing expectations for involvement in decision-making, and constructing rationales that corroborate agreements for participative decision making.

Dan illustrated his approach to building a climate for participative decision making by describing his role as the chief institutional leader within the decision-making process:

Now, again, I think another way at coming at this or another dimension is that people, you know, in the decision process there's always the business of, "Is this good for an individual and is it good for the organization?" And I think that sometimes one of the most difficult things is to actually say to a person, "Look, this may be the best thing for you, but it's not the best thing for the organization. And my job is to look out for the best interests of the organization, so please accept that and we need to go on."

Dan commented:

Sometimes the ideal situation is when both the interests of the individual and the organization are the same. Many times that's not the case, and I think the principle and the willingness to communicate the principle is essential to my job. Any administrators' job is to look out for the best interests of the organization. "Hence, this is the decision. It may not be the best for you, but you were a part of this and we can go on together now – maybe next time."

This passage indicates that this president viewed the organizational climate as reflecting a lack of unity among members in terms of perception of organizational needs. Significantly, this passage discloses that this president perceived his role as analogous to the "best interests" of the institution, and "willingness to communicate the principle" is central to his role. Yet, the interests of campus participants are apparently viewed as distinct from those of the organization. The role of the president is perceived as confronting the tension between the individual and the organization.

To illustrate, Dan provided an example of how a decision was conveyed to a faculty member who was being informed that his office was being relocated:

Well, I think, you know, we talked a little bit earlier about space and of course, office space, classrooms, you know, I've been in a situation where, of course, you've decided that for the organization you need to move people around. And of course, you have a faculty member now who's been in this office for sometime and is pretty comfortable. So you say, "We're going to take over this area of the campus. We're going to make it a learning center and we need this space to do that and your office is going to have to...and this is not the beginning of the conversation. This is the end."

Dan continued:

Of course, the faculty member can understand what we did, but really can only see that "I'm losing my office, my view, my window" and everything he was very comfortable with here.

Again, Dan emphasized the centrality of the presidential role within the organizational decision-making process:

The bottom line is "I'm deciding to do this, I think it's in the best interests of the college and the students and we sure need to have this service available at this location."

Dan described the response of the faculty member:

Of course, you know, I think in this particular example that I'm using, eventually the faculty member said, "Oh, I really don't like this, but I can understand why you're doing this."

There was some pouting but it's over. And I think the person has accepted it and does see....the neat thing about it is the prediction for success of the learning center is probably a little bit conservative. It's been wildly successful in its new location with the kind of space and other amenities that go with it. The faculty member said, "I can see that now, but I still like that office."

This commentary illustrates that in order to sustain the goals of the organization, the president must uphold the super-ordinate position of the presidency. In this context, the presidential role is to seek understanding of why the decision was made and thereby gain acceptance so that they "can go on together." Similarly, the super-ordinate nature of the role required that this president assume the responsibility of carrying out his role as group member in arriving at the decision to relocate the faculty member by delivering the decision to other constituencies. In effect, the super-ordinate relationship presidents occupy relative to campus members does not relieve them of the responsibilities connected to that role.

Jerry also spoke to his role as acting in the “best interest of the college” by a strategy directed toward managing expectations for involvement:

Well, first of all, I always have to keep in mind what is in the best interest of the college. So there are times when I refer projects to committees and they come back with some very good ideas. Assuming that we have the resources, both human and financial to implement those, then normally I accept them and try to implement them.

On the other hand, if they come up with a recommendation that is just so far off the wall that it is going to cost us a fortune or create situations where people are going to have to lose jobs or be reassigned or something like that, then we have to be very careful about how we review those recommendations.

Jerry emphasized that he defined expectations for the role of decision-making groups:

I do tend to always make sure that committees and task forces understand that their role is advisory. . . and that the fact that they give us advice or give me advice does not mean that I will always follow their advice, but it means that I will listen to them very carefully, analyze it and reflect on it.

In addition, several presidents describe their use of a “rationale” when unacceptable recommendations were made.

Jerry commented:

Typically when I decide to go against what they recommend, which has been very seldom, I tend to give them a reason with a rationale as to why we can’t do that and also some data to support it if it is appropriate or available. And I kind of explain why and most of the time that has been very effective...as far as I know, it has worked.

Like Jerry, April described using a rationale in confronting a search committee that failed to follow institutional procedures:

The participation goes like this. . . whenever we do a search committee for someone who reports to me, the search committee’s job is to screen the applicant and select the top ten and maybe interview those top ten by telephone and then selected the top three or four for the search committee to interview. Then my staff and I interview and then they give me the pros and cons, the strengths and weaknesses of each person and I say to them, “Do not rank order these people. I want to know their strengths and weaknesses from your perspective.” Often we’ll have the chair of the search committee sit in with us as we do our deliberations, but at no time do I want them to tell me their number one choice.

April described the actions of the search committee:

So we did this with our technology consultants but they got it all mixed up. They let me know very clearly who was their number one choice and it was not my number one choice. I have a lot of reasons and I spent a lot of time, and they had gathered information in their reference checks that I was sure was not accurate. So I had our purchasing agent

call a lot of references for their top choice and my top choice. He cleaned up all their mistakes and got accurate information from everybody.

April described how she relied upon her rationale:

And I laid out my rationale, my criteria. We had agreed on the criteria and then I laid out the two groups as I interpreted their relationship to the criteria and I kept reminding them....“remember, this is my decision to make. I get to make this decision and I want you to be able to live with it. I do not want malicious compliance to this decision.” So the purchasing agent director shared his reference checks and he said essentially, “They both have strengths and they both have weaknesses and either one can do this job.” And so I made the choice.

According to April, despite her efforts to lay out criteria and re-assign responsibility:

It was accepted by most, but there is a group that is doing malicious compliance. They create a lot of trouble at the ICT meetings. I finally had to start attending meetings. I didn't necessarily talk, I was just there so they couldn't act up and get away with it. These are like “Mommy was present and daddy was present, mommy and daddy took turns going.”

However, according to April, responses to her use of a rationale resulted in achieving only partial acceptance of her decision. Through attending the meeting, she was able to intervene in a situation in which some members were engaging in “malicious compliance.” April described another strategy she has employed when campus participants have resisted a participative approach:

I just deal with it head on. I get a knot in my stomach, you know. There is no way to convince somebody who thinks that you just intimidate people into decisions. So I think you just have to let it play off and in time people begin to understand.

Fred's comments demonstrated agreement with April's comment that “you just have to let it play off.”

One of the things that you can do is basically just ignore it. It is not to get into confrontation with them over an issue unless it was something that was absolutely detrimental to the campus. It is better to ignore it and let them go on their own way. Then try a new strategy or new process or some other way to get where you want to go.

Thus, avoiding confrontation is another useful strategy, setting the stage for another strategy or process for advancing the change process.

## Findings

This section has demonstrated that these presidents perceive campus members as engaging in actions that inhibited their attempts to create participative processes and structures. Campus participants apparently “play the game” through actions referred to as “malicious compliance,” “sabotaging the process,” “benign neglect,” “open defiance,” “blowing it off,” “disregarding the wishes of the president or the group” and “screwing it up royally.” In response, presidents strike agreements with campus participants regarding the conditions for participative decision-making. These strategies include defining the presidents role as serving the “best interests” of the institution, managing expectations for involvement in decision-making and using rationale to foster acceptance of decisions.

Thus, this analysis also indicates that these presidents perceive campus participants as engaging in actions which consist of various forms of “playing the game,” thereby undermining efforts to implement the participative change process. Secondly, these presidents demonstrated their awareness of non-participative presidential strategies that may create further hindrances to their efforts to impact the institutional climate. Third, these presidents also described the serious impact of unintended consequences of presidential actions taken that impair efforts to impact the climate. Thus, these actions call for responses from presidents that result in affirmation of the positional power of the president. The implication is that these strategies focused upon managing perceptions regarding the centrality of the presidential role within the institutional decision-making process. At the same time, the role of campus members in the decision making process is restricted. The consequence is that the hierarchical structure of the organization is maintained.

### Phase Three: Building Relationships for Participative Decision- Making

In this stage the presidents continue their efforts to build a climate for participative decision-making. The key process, *fostering social interaction*, reveals the emphasis placed upon creating the context for a desired set of inter-personal relationships within the organization. From this standpoint, the focus is upon the institutional milieu in which campus members function and

includes the notion of tone, atmosphere and tenor. The sub-process, *reducing social distance*, indicates that action is directed toward strengthening the sense of affinity among institutional members. As this analysis will demonstrate, the president engages in strategies intended to bring about the perception of greater closeness and unity among campus participants in order to alter the contentious environment described in the previous stage. As the data reveals, in order to build a context that fosters relationships consistent with the precepts of a participative organization, these presidents engage in activities for building a climate that is characterized by high interaction, a high comfort level and a sense of ownership. Jerry commented on the need for increased social interaction among faculty, staff and students in the traditional community college:

For example, because we are a traditional community college, we don't have much interaction, many social activities with students to interact with faculty and staff. And one of the things I did this fall was had the officers of the student senate out to my house for dinner. And I said, "You know, I really want this year to have a lot of activities where we are working together, competing against each other even if necessary, to kind of get some kind of interaction."

So we started off with a flag football game in the fall where the students beat the faculty and they thought they were pretty hot and so the faculty and staff came back and beat them in basketball in January. Last week we had a bake-off between faculty and staff and our culinary arts students. The students beat us at that and then we turned around on Saturday and had a miniature golf match and the faculty and staff beat the students at golf. The next thing to come up is volleyball in a couple of weeks. So we had a lot fun activities throughout the year where we have had a lot of involvement with a lot of people.

Jerry commented on consequences of this approach:

And that has brought the students together, and now I think there is more of a bonding there that is going on. That is one of the things that I would like to see is more interaction.

One of the things that I have always heard is that the people at this college are kind of a family, and they are because a lot of the people have been here a long time. But the administration is new and the students are new and they change a lot.

Further, Jerry related the importance of interaction to involvement of faculty and staff for building a sense of cohesiveness:

And so I would like to get the administration more involved with faculty and staff at a more comfortable level, not just, as you know a we/they kind of situation but more of a, you know, working together, kind of as an us-team.

This notion of “working with,” a “comfortable level” and “ownership” is underscored by

Dan in the following remarks:

I think maybe the most important ingredient in working with faculty and staff is getting them to feel ownership in what’s going on at the college. I think without that you’ll have a really difficult time in providing the high level of education, a high level of support that is going to make the students successful.

Dan continued:

Involvement of the faculty and staff, participation of faculty and staff at least in providing advice about college policies, change in college policies, new areas of instruction and new areas of support. I think without the involvement and the ownership, I guess – without the ownership it makes it very difficult to provide high quality services.

Dan likewise commented on the significance of feeling a sense of comfort in the process of creating ownership:

I think there’s really at least two ingredients in creating ownership. One of them is openness and willingness to communicate. Some people have to feel comfortable in communicating their ideas.

These comments reveal that Jerry perceived that increased interaction will have clear benefits for his institution, creating a bond to build a sense of an “us-team” and promoting involvement of faculty and staff. Dan commented on the need for ownership and to “feel comfortable” in order to facilitate participation. In effect, this commentary reveals that these presidents acknowledged the importance of reducing the social distance that characterizes traditional organizational relationships.

Jerry expanded on his efforts to increase faculty involvement:

I have been very fortunate here at this college to have a group of faculty that are very understanding and just very good to work with. They are willing to step forward to help out when it is necessary. On the other hand, I have made a very concerted effort to reach out to them and make sure that I share information with them.

These comments also imply that this president was attempting to address the centralization of power according to position that typifies hierarchical organizations. Further, a



strategy to “reach out” to faculty means that he will “share information.” However, the statement that he is “pretty up front and honest” implies limits on the extent to which information can be shared.

April also provided an example of “reaching out” to a campus vice-president whose actions were inconsistent with establishing a climate for participative decision-making:

We had a vice president who was a very good vice president. I mean, Harry helped to create the legal and the statutory and all those things that make a college function in an ethical matter. He made all those things happen at this college, he and the other vice president. He tended to be a person who did it by intimidating people and if they didn't do what he wanted he could find a way to get them. If it was a faculty member it would be their assignment, they might have to teach on a Friday, but there would always be something. So people were afraid to cross him. One day I talked with him about it and he got very upset and threatened and started to make things happen that were very unpleasant for me.

April reported that her strategy was to “focus on the positive:”

So I began to worry about that and I woke up in the middle of the night one night and just got out of bed and pulled this book off my shelf and I sat down at three in the morning and began to read. And what I read was—and I have never been able to find this quote since—but what I read was that when you are having a conflict with a person, sometimes what you need to do is just focus on the positive about that person and then that is what you will get from that person.

April continued:

So the next day we had our holiday party for the office staff. And I went up to this person and I touched his arm and I just began to talk about all the great things he was doing and how much I appreciated it. And then Harry took me by the elbow and steered me to the side of the room and he said, “You feel differently about me and I feel differently about you, too.” And I just kept doing that all the rest of the year. When it came time for his evaluation he said, “You know, I need to tell you, this is the first time in my life I have really loved my job. I like working for you and I don't know what happened.”

April's story is a powerful reference to a strategy that in effect countered a key administrator's resistance to establishing a climate for participative decision-making. However, April expressed caution regarding over estimating the extent to which individuals will respond positively to this approach:

At the same time I believe there will always be a percentage—I mean, the research says that there will always be a percent or so of people who are the seekers who get on board with every new thing. Then there are twenty or thirty percent who after a year say, “This

is a good idea, I'm going to do this." And there is another twenty to thirty percent who say, "This is a fad, but we better do it." And there is always going to be five or so percent who will never do it. They will never get heart.

They are too much in turmoil in themselves. It has nothing to do with the college. I don't think we have any of those. I don't think we have any. We have some who are curmudgeons, you know, who are very critical but they are engaged as teachers and they are committed to students and they go along with what do at the college.

Eric also provided a method for reducing the social distance which typically characterizes organizational relationships:

Well, in fact, one of my friends suggested, and it's something that I've used for quite a long time. That is, when you're a president you're moving from meeting to meeting and sometimes you almost forget who the people are at that meeting. You've been at a meeting at 7:30, 9:30 and 10:30 discussing different topics. He gave me a technique. Before I went into a meeting, I would sit down for just a minute and just say to myself, "Who is going to be at this meeting and how do I attend to them as individuals?"

Eric described how "attending" impacted his perspective:

I think it just gives you a perspective that this wasn't just about the topic, that it was also about the people that were there.

Eric provided another technique for encouraging sharing:

One technique, and I still use this in my consulting, at the beginning of the meeting, is to have a check-in. The idea is to ask people to, "Share what's on your mind this morning that might affect your work today or your work in this meeting. Is there something happening in your personal life that you want us to know about, or something good that happened to you, something that's occupying your attention?"

Eric commented:

Here is this person that said, "Well, I took my son to the doctor this morning or to the hospital." It just changes how you approach that person because now you know something that's on their mind that you wouldn't have known otherwise.

This passage indicates that by encouraging campus members to "share what's on your mind," the interaction has been personalized. According to this president, by accessing personal information a change in perspective takes place and may result in shifting his approach. The implication is that this change in approach produces a sense that parties to the interaction stand in closer relationship to one another. As the data has demonstrated, given the dynamics of status and

position, the initiation of this action is located with the president, thereby subtly confirming the positional power of that role.

### Findings

In this section, these presidents described activities directed at creating increased interaction within the organization. These actions reflect their perception that in order to increase receptiveness to participative decision-making, increased interaction leads to greater involvement in decision making.

These strategies reported are located at both the inter-personal and group levels involving interactions between the president and campus members. Strategies directed at the group included creating activities to increase social interaction among students, faculty and staff. These presidents also described strategies that focused on inter-personal interactions which include references to “sharing,” “reaching out,” and “attending.” Such interactions take place in the context of dyadic encounters or within group settings. This analysis indicates that these presidents approach these interactive situations with care and sensitivity, exercising adroitness and a keen sensitivity to the subtle aspects of building a receptiveness to an inclusive decision making process.

### Phase Four: Mutuality

The fourth and final phase of this category is entitled *mutuality*. In the context of this analysis, the notion of mutuality refers to the affective dimension of participative relationships. Specifically, *mutuality* is used to refer to the idea that at this stage in the participative change process, participative relationships are perceived by presidents as moving toward a sense of mutuality. The focus of this analysis is to assess the latent meaning of the notion of mutuality by examining how reciprocity exists within participative relationships. Reciprocity implies the concept of social exchange in which there is a return in kind or degree by each regarding what is given or demonstrated by others. Thus, a thing that is offered calls for a thing in return.

This analysis demonstrates that when the organization is said to have a climate of mutuality, the interactive setting is characterized by a frame of relations between the president and the campus members in an atmosphere of mutuality. Mutuality implies that the role of the president and campus members interact within a setting characterized by “working together” and “trust.” The groundwork for the climate of mutuality was constructed by these presidents through work accomplished in previous stages that required the president to contend with resistance to the change process. A critical dilemma is that the president simultaneously constructs a situation in which the position of the president is affirmed, and yet the participative change process is grounded in the rationale that inclusive decision-making arrangements will extend power to a broader base.

The following remarks demonstrate the emphasis these presidents placed on mutual involvement or “working together” toward organizational goals. Jerry commented:

Well, I think what participative governance means is that when colleges are dealing with problems or issues or having to develop policies to address problems and issues, there are extreme ways of looking at things. There is one extreme where the President and/or the Vice President and cabinet makes decisions, and that is the policy and it is passed on down and everybody has to abide by it. On the other extreme, you have faculty, councils or senates or whatever name they call themselves, you know, have to okay everything and make all policies and rules and procedures. I really look for something, kind of a cross in the middle.

Jerry stated:

When issues arise my style is, I take the issues to the faculty council and say, “Okay, this has become an issue for whatever reason now. How can we best work together to resolve this? And if that means you sign up to a committee as faculty council, that is fine. If you want our input and suggestions, if you want a model or template or some guidelines that we as an administration would like you to see, we can give you those. If you would like to work on your own, come up with your own set of thoughts that is okay, understanding that, you know, that we want to work together.”

These comments indicate that Jerry is seeking a sense of agreement regarding how he and the faculty will “work together.” Significantly, Jerry emphasized the conditional nature of the transaction when he addressed the faculty council:

“But if you just come back with something that just isn’t going to be practical for the college, then we will have to talk about that and discuss ways in which we can make your suggestions more practical and reasonable.” So far that has been pretty successful. I think the faculty appreciated that kind of openness. I have appreciated getting the feedback from the faculty as to what they see as the true issue and what the solution is.

Likewise, Dan spoke to the conditional nature of involvement in the organizational decision-making process, emphasizing the idea that people need to “feel good” about their involvement.

A meaningful sense of involvement means the persons themselves feel that they have made a contribution, so I think that’s probably the main ingredient, that there’s some kind of way of saying, “Hey, what I’ve said made a difference,” regardless of whether we did exactly what I thought or even close to what I thought. That I feel it was worthwhile on the part of those who have made the effort to communicate with the group or the next level of the administrator. “I feel good about it and I don’t have the negative feeling of I wasted my time, this is worthwhile for the organization. My participation was worthwhile to the organization.” Now, that doesn’t always translate into, again, “They did what I said we should do,” But they felt they had—it was a contribution.

The following section demonstrates that building trusting relationships is critically important to establishing a climate of mutuality. In the following account, Jerry explained the incisive need for creating trusting relationships within the organization:

I think as a President you have to develop trust in your top-level administrators. If you don’t have that trust, your life is going to be very miserable—not to mention you could get yourself into possible legal problems and other issues.

Fred also spoke to the crucial nature of interpersonal trust and how interaction impacts interpersonal relationships within the organization:

Boy, that is probably the most crucial one, and trust can be lost in a minute that took ten years to build. I suppose as a new person going in there’s a certain trust people have of you along with distrust and your interaction with them either reinforces the trust or the distrust. Over time, they decide if they can trust you or not.

Jerry commented:

I think one of the most important things that the Presidents will look at when they are hiring people is not necessarily the credentials of the person or what they have accomplished in the past as much as it is the personality and the fit that that person is going to have in terms of working with the President.

In the following passage, Jerry emphasizes the reciprocal nature of trust regarding relationships between the president and top administrators:

Because if the President can't trust that person, and if that person can't trust the President, I don't care how good they are, I don't care how smart they are, how much they have accomplished in their previous lifetime—that relationship probably isn't going to work. It isn't going to survive. I see that as a much more critical issue for Presidents when they are interviewing administrators or when they are trying to work with administrators.

Jerry speaks to necessity of having to make a “tough decision” when trust does not occur:

If that trust cannot be developed, then I think as the President you have a tough decision. You have got to decide what to do with that person and it may take some time to restructure or reorganize or whatever you have to do to get that person out of that position. Or it may come down to the point where the President just has to say, “Look, this isn't working and we need to change and I think you need to look at where you are going in your career and make a decision. If you are not willing to make that decision then I will have to help you make it because we can't continue to operate this way. It is creating too many problems.” So I think trust is particularly important with your upper level administration and administrative team.

Fred's remarks indicate concurrence with Jerry regarding invoking sanctions when trust with a vice-president was not established:

Looking back, I don't think I probably used sanctions as often as I should have. I think there should be more of an accountability built into the process and not allowing people to basically ignore what the campus was trying to do.

When people like Don came in, I don't know if you call that charisma or what he had, but he had a way of working with people, but it wasn't necessarily a participatory process. It was more of a benevolent dictator process or style, and that can be very confused with being participatory, but it is really not a participatory process.

This statement indicates that a “benevolent dictator style” is not congruent with a participatory process and such actions required firm action by the president in the form of a sanction. In the following passage, Jerry commented on establishing expectations as a strategy for building trust:

It has taken me some time as it does with any President to learn who I can trust and go to and things will be done and who needs a lot high maintenance to make sure that things get done and get done the way they are supposed to get done. There are some people that are very good about reporting back to me, “It's done, don't worry about it.” And there are other people that I never hear anything from them. If I didn't call them up and say, “Have you done this,” they always say, “Yeah, it is done, no problem.” “Well, okay, I wish you would let me know because I was going to meet with this person and I didn't know whether you had done this or not.” That just comes with experience. I have to kind of coach these people and let them know what my expectations are because they may have not worked with me before and they worked with someone else that had a different style.

As these presidents have indicated, inter-personal trust must exist between the president and others within dyadic relationships. As the following comments reveal, reciprocal trust must also be developed between the president and organizational groups. Jerry commented:

I think trust is also very important in another sense in that the faculty and the staff have to feel that they can trust the President and the students have to feel they can trust the President.

If the President says that he or she is going to do something then they need to follow through and do it and not just say, "Okay, yes, I am going to do it," just to get them off your case and get them out of your hair temporarily, because that will come back to haunt them as President.

Jerry described a dilemma he faced:

I am involved in a situation right now where, not only myself but another President that I know committed to the faculty to do something and we found out later that that is not the direction that our board wants to go.

So now we are trying to work with the faculty to understand that things have changed and you have to be very careful about that. Those are the challenging times as a President –to try to maintain that trust and that integrity and yet live up to expectations that either the President's board, or the community has of the President.

This commentary demonstrates that when conditions changed, the commitment made by the president to the faculty must likewise be changed. Therefore, the implication is that commitments made by the president are conditional from the start. Yet, the president must continue to maintain an atmosphere that fosters mutual involvement:

Sometimes you get lucky as a President. Sometimes you have to get on bended knee. I have done both. I have gone to faculty and apologized and said, "You know, I am sorry, I really, really thought this was the direction we could go and that we should go; however, some things have happened since then that have prevented that from happening."

Jerry explained:

If there are times I can't share with them what those events are I will just be honest with them and say, "You are going to have to trust me on this one. I can't share with you what exactly has happened because it is confidential. But I can share with you that I am going to try and work with you to still do the best we can to try to get to the level we wanted to go to. It just may take us a little bit longer to get there and we may have to go a different path, but I still want your input, I still value your input and we are going to try and work on this together. Now, how can we get around this or work on this together to make it happen?"

These comments indicate that Jerry has honored the confidential aspect of the situation. In addition, this passage disclosed the conditional nature of agreements that exist between the president and campus members. This commentary has demonstrated that this president has undertaken strategies to sustain mutuality by approaching the faculty “on bended knee.” At the same time, he has essentially converted the agreement from that which was originally established. While this president apparently intends to maintain the commitment that was initially established, the agreement has been reworked around the issues of time and means to the goal.

Jerry recounted another situation that also illustrates the conditional nature of agreements:

I will give you a very specific example. I normally do not believe in direct appointments to positions but we had an opportunity to make some changes in late December and early January where some key upper level administrators were leaving. Through some minor restructuring, I was able to move a couple people into those positions and not replace them in their old positions which therefore was going to save the college about \$160,000 which at the time—it is very important next year with our budget situation the way it is. So I did direct appointments instead of opening it up for interviews and a normal search and screen.

Jerry described the response of the campus:

Then I heard through the grapevine that there were some people on campus that were really perturbed about that—that they didn’t like that idea—direct appointments. So I sat down and said, “You know, I understand that some of you may have concerns about doing direct appointments but I want to reassure you that that is not my style and these two particular cases I was able to do this in a way that we got competent, qualified people into those positions. At the same time we are going to be saving the college a substantial amount of money which will actually help retain everybody’s position next year. If I had gone outside or done a normal search and screen there is no guarantee that I would have been able to save any money and there was no guarantee that I would have been able to save positions out of next year’s budget.”

Jerry further described his remarks to the campus:

“I want to reassure you that from now on, I will be doing open searches and screenings, although in all honesty, a lot them may be internal searches and screenings. We won’t go outside the college for awhile until our budget gets straightened out” – and sent that out to people.



This passage demonstrates that mutuality requires that agreements among the president and campus members are continually renegotiated and rest upon conditional terms and must be clearly communicated.

Further, April provides an example of a strategy she took to establish a relationship of mutuality with a particular faculty member:

This particular person has been a thorn in everybody's side from the very beginning, when she left the all campus team, she had been the chair of the faculty senate, college wide senate. She is one of the people who represents the faculty at these meetings, and she is very faithful. She really works at getting to the meetings and she works on her contributions. And when she left, I asked if she'd talk with me for a few minutes.

April provided the following account of their conversation and how this led to a strengthened relationship:

I said, "Do you know who Herbert Simon is?" And she said, "No." I said, "Well, he's the man who created artificial intelligence at Carnegie-Mellon University. At Carnegie-Mellon, whenever there was a major decision to be made, Herb Simon was never on the committee, but before the decision got made, there was a line of faculty outside his office to talk with him one-on-one because he was so wise and thoughtful and people trusted his perspective. That's how I see you. I would like it if I could continue to come and consult with you and ask you for your perspective of things." She said, "Absolutely." So, yes, we have a good relationship and I haven't done anything to mess it up. I came close.

April's comments reflect how presidential actions include gathering perceptions of campus members and actions taken to shape perceptions. This data reveals that April constructed a relationship of mutuality based on working together and trust. April's remarks further substantiate the reciprocal nature of mutuality:

So, I believe trust is a gift and you give it until you are betrayed, and then you pull back and change your behavior. I don't believe trust can be earned.

April explained her comment regarding not being able to earn trust:

Well, I think it's a gift. Trust is something that happens inside a person and nobody can really earn anybody's trust. What does it mean to earn trust? What do you have to do in the beginning to earn trust, how long does it take and how far does it have to go and what does it look like? I just think that no matter who it is, in the end, even if you say you've earned it, it's a gift. I choose to trust. You choose to trust.

These comments reveal April's perception that trust in this sense is located at the intrapersonal level and reflects individual choices. Moreover, from her perspective such choices constitute a

gift to another. The implication is that a gift that is given could later be retracted. This commentary raises issues regarding conditions under which trust arises in a bureaucracy characterized by status differentials.

### Findings

*Mutuality*, the final stage of the category Participative Passages, has demonstrated that these participative presidents engage in a set of strategies designed to move the campus from a climate of separateness to one of mutuality. The climate of mutuality rests upon a foundation depicted by the notions of “working together” and “trust.” This analysis has shown that such terms imply the existence of a cooperative association among the president with individuals and groups. However, their conditional nature reflects the presence of an asymmetrical relationship between the office of the presidency and other campus members.

The asymmetrical nature of this relationship is revealed through examining the roles of the president and campus members within the institutional setting. In an effort to move the organization to a sense of mutuality, the presidents must develop an atmosphere of “working together.” The prevailing message is that for the organization to accomplish its goals, members must feel a sense of belonging to an “us/team.” Moreover, they must “feel ownership” and be involved at a “more comfortable level.” The presidential role is to construct a sense of mutuality characterized by “working together” and “trust.”

### Summary and Application of the Core Category:

As illustrated in Figure 4.4, the category Participative Passages evolves from the primary outcome of the previous category. The overlap in the ovals reveals that the consequences within the first sequence, Envisioning the Participative Environment, have become part of the conditional context in which the next sequence, Participative Passages, is located. The following discussion indicates that the properties of the core category, Visioning Participative Environments, shape the dynamic and evolving nature of the participative leadership process. These properties are purpose, focus, nature and outcome.

This discussion describes some of the more salient examples of how these properties are expressed through the four phases of this category. Conceived as environments or settings for interaction, within each phase the key process and sub-process illustrate where action is oriented. The processes and sub-processes are broken down into strategies and routine actions that comprise the larger act, undertaken in response to a certain condition or set of circumstances. The data and analyses reveal that the focus for leadership action is aligned with the overall purpose of the category and is replicated within the four phases described in this category.

First, at the general level, the primary outcome of the previous category or sequence, Envisioning the Participative Environment, is the participative philosophy, characterized by a strong emphasis on principles and values and the importance of involvement in decision-making. This development provides the setting for a shift in the actions and interactions characterizing Participative Passages, as illustrated by the overall purpose of the category. The overall intent of Participative Passages is to lay the groundwork for the participative organization, guided by the core aspects of the participative philosophy. The overlap, or intersection between categories, leads to a variation in context and adjustment in interaction that maintain flow. Thus, the purpose has shifted from imagining, dreaming and conceptualizing the participative organization to actions which are designed to begin constructing an organization around the participative philosophy. This provides the foundation for the overall purpose of Participative Passages, laying the groundwork for the participative organization.

Second, the property focus has undergone a significant shift within the category Participative Passages. In alignment with a change in overall purpose, the focus for action has moved to the internal environment of the institutions in which these presidents have assumed their roles. In the sense that focus involves orienting action, the titles of the key process and sub-process reveal how that these presidents direct energy toward crafting a climate congruent with the aims of the participative philosophy.

Third, the property nature takes on a significant meaning within this category. Nature refers to how conditions within the situational context are expressed within the climate and culture of the organization. During phase one, the key process involved assessing the institutional landscape and deficiencies and inadequacies were identified. Presidents emphasized the importance of participative structures and processes, yet the nature of the non-participative organization was described as lacking essential characteristics such as understanding, ownership and trust. This set of conditions led to identified responses by individuals and groups within the organization. For example, April commented that lack of understanding of group process led to the perception of manipulation by the president. The absence of ownership was identified by Dan, Jerry and Fred as a critical inhibitor for advancing the participative organization. Lack of trust was also identified by Jerry and April as another barrier encountered within the participative leadership process. Thus, the property nature illustrates that the conditions surrounding the initiation of the change process created a setting characterized by an atmosphere charged with contentiousness, divisiveness and disunity, and that this condition is correlated with notions about trust, ownership, and understanding.

Fourth, the property outcome refers to the consequences of actions and interactions taken within the set of circumstances or conditions characterizing the situational context. The movement of action within the category can be traced by examining how the consequences of each phase lead to the conditional context for the following phase. For example, the outcome of phase one becomes the conditional context underlying the setting for phase two in that it centers on confronting resistance to change. The focus is shifted to exposing the gaming behavior of organizational members. In general, leadership actions taken in response to this situation were oriented toward affirming the positional power of the president, essentially engaging members within a gaming context characterized by divisiveness and conflict. Presidents perceived the actions and responses of members as engaging in “malicious compliance,” “open defiance” and

“screwing it up royally.” The data indicates that some actions taken by presidents, such as attempting to “force participation” may further aggravate this situation.

Further, the property of outcome also demonstrates how the results of phase two created the context for the following phase. The overall purpose of phase three, Participative Passages, reveals movement through the change process as presidents engaged in actions based upon the affirmation of the presidential position, the outcome of phase two. As reflected in the purpose of phase three, the action shifts to building interpersonal relationships around the guiding concepts of participative decision-making. The focus is clearly on the interpersonal dimension of organizational relationships. Action is centered on fostering social interaction through a variety of strategies. For example, the sub-process “reducing social distance” is accomplished through the strategies of “reaching out” and “attending.” The outcome of phase three is that relationships are becoming increasingly constructed around the precepts of the participative philosophy.

Accordingly, the outcome of phase three leads to the conditional context for the fourth phase, mutuality. Thus, this analysis has shown that presidents must contend with shifting conditions, and commitments made by these presidents are conditional and may be subject to change. The climate of mutuality rests upon an arrangement in which campus presidents are the originators of conditional commitments, and campus participants are the recipients. This arrangement may be regarded as a special aspect of the social interaction within the institution in that the president apparently always remains the most powerful party in the participative relationship.

In summary, Participative Passages has demonstrated how an evolving set of actions and interactions taken within varying contexts has led to consequences which take the form of changes in the structure and process of the organization. The overall outcome of the sequence, Participative Passages, is mutuality. Mutuality refers to the assignment of roles and responsibilities within the evolving organization. Since the president occupies a super-ordinate

position and has the initiative in constructing the participative setting, the relationship is not symmetrical.

This analysis has demonstrated that the presidents are assigning campus members a specific role within the organizational framework. Mutuality does not mean that the president and campus members work together in a set of egalitarian roles. Mutuality also does not mean that these presidents refrain from exercising the responsibilities of chief decision-maker. Rather, within the climate of mutuality an agreement must be reached between the president and campus members regarding how roles will be carried out. These data and analyses indicate that the participative leadership process demonstrates the ability of these presidents to respond to and shape the situations that have arisen within an evolving context. Thus, the climate of mutuality expresses a way of working that frames the context of the next phase, Web of Participation.

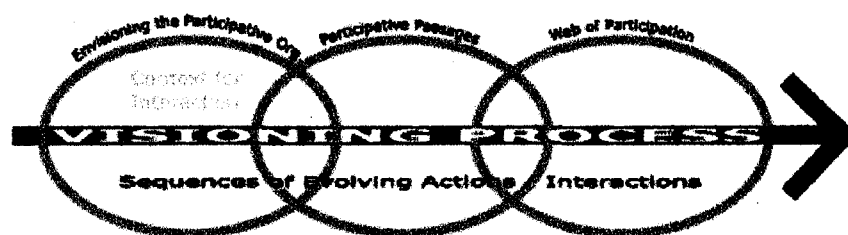


Figure 4.5. The categories Envisioning the Participative Organization, Participative Passages, and Web of Participation.

## Web of Participation

### Overview

The category Web of Participation emphasizes the transformational process that occurs as an institution moves into an increasingly participative form of organization. This examination reveals that as the change process unfolds, the organization undergoes a transformative process. The transition is from a hierarchical, bureaucratic form into a more open, integrated and organic organization. The overall intent of the participative leadership process is to move the organization through changes in the climate and culture of the organization.

As evidenced in figure 4.5, this analysis demonstrates that the categories or sequences, Envisioning the Participative Organization, Participative Passages, and the Web of Participation are linked together in a processual arrangement. The Web of Participation, like the previous categories, contains identifiable phases connected through the properties of the core category. The common thread linking the categories and the phases within them is the core category, Visioning Participative Environments. The Web of Participation naturally follows Participative Passages in that it builds upon the contextual aspects of the previous two categories. Whereas Participative Passages revealed the importance of structures and processes along with initial attempts to build participative relationships, this section deepens and extends the analysis as to the root characteristics of institutional change. Thus, the beacon is directly focused upon the internal structures and processes of the organization. It is thus a systemic force for transformation in that both structure and process are reconfigured.

The term “web” provides the analytic frame for unraveling a complex set of conditions, strategies, and outcomes that characterize the participative leadership process as it unfolds against the backdrop of the institutional environment. The architecture of the web provides an organic, holistic perspective that portrays participative leadership as a way of designing and constructing an envisioned environment through altering and modifying institutional structures and processes. The term “participation” signifies the determination exhibited by these presidents in achieving intensive, continual engagement in the decision-making process by individuals and groups at all points in the organization.

As the analysis of this category demonstrates, these participative presidents must contend with a contentious campus environment that is embedded in traditional organizational structures and processes. The hierarchical form, emphasizing position, boundaries and divisions, is perceived by these presidents as the essential obstacle to a participative organization. In this sense, the primary focus of the participative leadership process as represented in the category Web of Participation is to overcome this obstacle through a series of leadership actions. The

intention is to achieve a transformed institution that will require a fundamental change in terms of access to institutional vehicles for decision-making. This change reflects a redefinition in institutional roles at all levels of the organization. The role of president is moving from manager of conflict to that of shaper of a new foundation for organizational relationships.

#### Phase One: Opening the Hierarchical Landscape

I think what you do is take it one step at a time, start out slow. And I think where I've seen it fail is where Presidents have tried to come in and say, "Okay, we are going to make all these changes and we're going to do all these different things all at the same time," without really laying the groundwork.

-Jerry

These data and analyses disclose that the purpose of the visioning process within phase one is to open the landscape of the hierarchical organization. The key process, *laying the groundwork for web*, is the initial step for moving the organization toward a webbed organization. The sub-process described in phase one is *establishing participative agreements* that form the foundation for initiating the participative change process. Four distinct strategies are disclosed by the presidents for establishing participative agreements. These strategies include assessing the readiness for change, formulating principles for participative relationships, eliminating the dual operating system, and responding to the centrality of the faculty role within the academic environment.

In this phase, the presidents must contend with the resistance to implementing participative governance that is deeply embedded in organizational structures and processes. The hierarchical landscape is perceived as characterized by rigid, long-standing forms that foster deep divisions within the organization. In order to contend with this resistance, the data indicate that these presidents maintain a sense of vigilance regarding opportunities for initiating the change process. The prevailing governance structure is viewed as reflecting the implicit assumptions of the hierarchical form of organization. As the president begins the participative change process, the traditional bureaucratic structure, with its embedded hierarchical relationships, is viewed as permeable by these presidents.



## Assessing the Readiness for Change

As the following commentary demonstrates, prior to formally initiating the participative change process, these presidents focused upon assessing the institution's readiness for organizational change. As these presidents indicated below, this strategy required evaluating the prevailing organizational culture, climate and structure. These data and analyses revealed that these presidents viewed the organization as characterized by a culture of resistance, a climate of separateness, and adversarial relationships that exist within a caste-like structure typically associated with the traditional hierarchical organization. The intent of these presidents is to open up the institution so that the hierarchical frame is fractured, thus enabling the change process to unfold. This section reveals that the role of the president evolved from the manager of a contentious environment to that of negotiator and shaper for the new participative organization.

In the following commentary, these presidents described their approaches for assessing organizational readiness at the initiation of the change process. First, Eric described the nature of the organizational culture at Lake County Community College:

At Lake County Community College when I arrived, this would be 1975, there was a very strong faculty union. There were very adversarial relationships between the faculty and the board, between the faculty and the administration. So I inherited this culture that said that the president should be very strong on the management side, that you really needed to keep the faculty under control, and if you didn't they would rob the store so to speak. So, I, as a new president, I felt I had to live up to that role.

As this passage indicated, Eric's presidency began with an organizational culture characterized by adversarial relationships between the faculty and board. This condition required that he begin the presidential role by stressing the managerial function in order to keep the "faculty under control," or "they would rob the store." These comments indicated that the role of the president prior to initiating the change process was to manage conflict, reflecting a culture characterized by divisiveness and discord. Eric further described the culture of the institution:

I think when I first arrived, the administrators, for example, felt they had more of an attitude, "If you don't like it grieve it." I think the faculty felt in a sense duty bound to resist the administration, that somehow if it was an administrative matter then it was not good, as if they couldn't be seen as being supportive of the administration.

As Eric remarked, the culture he inherited included administrators who were inclined to encourage use of the grievance process, and the faculty “felt in a sense duty bound to resist the administration.”

I would say the whole culture evolved around collective bargaining and the rights of the faculty as union members. That’s not saying that they weren’t good teachers, they were. They were committed to teaching.

As described by Eric, the institutional culture was characterized by administrators and faculty who resisted the administration of the institution. While faculty were portrayed as committed to their role as teachers, they apparently lacked a sense of identification with broader organizational goals. Moreover, the implication is that the faculty were viewed as so untrustworthy by the administration that the president had to focus upon overseeing relationships of power and control within a hierarchical, bureaucratic system.

Eric continued his story of how the institution moved to a more participative approach:

The labor disputes and tensions that had existed in the past really continued during the first four or five years of my presidency and then we hit a point where we had some real difficulties during negotiations. First we had an extended impasse and then finally we had a short strike. After that strike both the union leadership and the administrative leadership got together and just said, “We just cannot operate this way, this is not really who we are.” Interestingly enough, the union president wasn’t an adversarial type of person at all either, and I was definitely much more interested in a more participative approach to decision-making.

Eric commented below on the importance of creating a sense of trust among members of the organization:

But as far as the way we worked together, that was more the spirit. I think that the idea emerged that we could trust each other, that we could work together, that we didn’t have to use the contract to solve problems, that there are other ways to solve problems than to grieve them. Just more generally a deeper sense of trust developed that we could work effectively together.

As this commentary revealed, a condition that existed early in Eric’s presidency included labor disputes for approximately four or five years. This tension in the institutional environment intensified and after an impasse, the leadership of the union and the institution came together.

This situation implied that as tensions in the conditions occurring within an institution deepen, a readiness for change may emerge.

Another condition for readiness is the presence of collaborative leaders in leadership positions. Eric commented that the union president was not an “adversarial type of person.” This remark suggested that another aspect in assessing readiness for change is the presence of leaders who are willing to engage in the participative change process. As Eric indicated, the spirit of “working together” evolved from reliance upon contracts to a more genuine sense of trust. Therefore, the movement is from relationships based on contractual arrangements to relationships based upon an association of mutual trust.

Further, Eric’s comments indicate that although the president may be interested in beginning the participative change process, he or she must move carefully, waiting until an opening in the structure of bureaucratic relationships comes into being. As Eric remarked, “The idea emerged that we could trust each other,” and that condition became a factor for further embarking on the change process.

As this discussion of the actions taken by Eric revealed, assessing the readiness for change involved concentrating upon opportunities to open the organization to a new form of involvement in institutional decision-making.

#### Formulating the Principles of Relationships

Eric continued by describing how this readiness for change at Lake Community College led to establishing agreements regarding involvement in participative relationships. Based upon a new sense of trust, the primary focus turns to creating understandings regarding faculty involvement in the decision-making process.

In the following commentary, Eric emphasized the utility of using the expertise of consulting firms:

So, we were just ready. We agreed then to change the way we approached faculty involvement in decision-making, how we approach collective bargaining, and we found a consulting firm that specialized in dispute resolution. So we actually worked with this

firm for two years to reach some understandings about the principles under which we would function. We even had a declaration of trust as we moved into this.

As Eric commented, when the conditions for readiness were in place, an agreement was reached that changed faculty involvement in decision-making processes. Significantly, this change occurred after four or five years in his presidency, and a consulting firm was brought in for two years to confront issues related to dispute resolution. Developing new understandings about the principles under which the organization would operate through use of a consulting firm was an essential strategy for creating new organizational relationships. Eric commented:

We worked together on these principles of relationship, and then we also started to work on the new governance structure, the new participative structure.

Reflecting Eric's decision to bring in a firm for dispute resolution, Fred likewise described how the use of a consulting firm in the early stages of implementation at Morris Community College assisted in establishing agreements regarding the new governance structure. As the following commentary indicated, Fred emphasized that the change process was legitimized through bringing in experts during the initial process of building agreements for participative decision-making:

When we began the team implementation process we bought a package deal from a sister institution and a part of that package was training for the college faculty and staff in teaming processes. So we actually had some formal training--we had a structure that we were putting in place.

And so I suppose from two perspectives- -one, you know, when you have an outside expert, somehow that makes it more legitimate, than if it is just something they think their own administration has dreamed up. The expert has more credibility for it and then the fact that they actually had some training in it.

As Fred remarked, an important strategy for legitimating the participative change process was to provide formal training regarding the new institutional structure. A consulting firm was employed initially to enhance perceptions that the change process was credible and to reach new understandings regarding the nature of participative decision-making.

As Eric and Fred asserted, creating understanding regarding the new participative structure at their respective institutions required a significant amount of preparation including

time and investment in a consulting firm. This strategy was oriented primarily toward creating a foundation for a new form of organizational relationships. Significantly, the emphasis is upon constructing a new form of relating which provided the context for participative governance.

As the following description indicates, the groundwork that was created by April for participative governance at Valley Community College mirrored the emphasis Eric and Fred placed on responding to an opportunity for change. In the following commentary, April described how her approach to an opening early in her presidency led to a new form of agreements regarding organizational decision-making relationships:

Then here is another story I want to tell you about consensus or getting people to participate. When I'd been here about two weeks the faculty senate came to see me. They had been working on a faculty constitution for five years and after two weeks decided I should approve it. So they gave it to me and it read like a union contract. We do not have a faculty union.

April continued:

So I asked to meet with them and we did and I said, "Look, this reads like a union contract and it's not the kind of relationship I want with you. This puts you as an advisory group to us. It puts you as a watchdog of the administration. I would much rather you participate with us in making decisions. What if you had three faculty members attend the administrative leadership team group, and two at college council, and two at the learning council and a couple at the board meetings?" They said, "Yes."

The outcome of this interaction is described by April as highly significant:

It changed the entire constitution. They trusted me, and they were willing to take a risk. And I think that's a key factor in participation, you know, that people are willing to face conflict and also be willing to take a risk.

This commentary describes how April reacted to an opening through creating an opportunity for dialogue regarding new agreements regarding organizational relationships. This example demonstrates how April differentiated between occupying an advisory position versus a participatory position within the institution. The faculty role has been distinguished from "watch dog" to a primary participator in the organizational decision-making process. Further, April asserted that this interaction resulted in building trust in the president. Significantly, according to

April, a critical factor in creating participation is facing conflict and taking risks, rather than attempting to elude contentious encounters and avoid potentially antagonistic situations.

This discussion regarding the strategies for formulating new principles for organizational relationships has revealed the importance these presidents place upon creating understanding of the new participative structures. These efforts include use of consulting firms for creating a context for discussion and engaging in dialogue in order to remodel the institutional decision-making structure.

### Eliminating the Dual Decision-Making System

In the following discussion, the importance of eradicating a dual system for decision-making is emphasized. Eric, April and Fred described actions taken to abolish the duality in the prevailing governance structure of their institutions.

Importantly, Eric commented that this strategy resulted in abolishing the myth that faculty leadership could be split between two decision-making structures:

One thing that I decided--some people thought the world had come to an end when I decided that I would not try to keep a distinction between the labor union leadership and the faculty leadership. There was an attempt earlier to keep this myth that you could have a faculty senate separate from a faculty union. Really, it just didn't work. The union was stronger than any type of senate that you might want to create. We just agreed that the faculty union would be the faculty leadership.

Fortunately, the union leadership was made up of three just excellent faculty members, very committed people. We were very fortunate in that respect. We then went ahead and formed the new governance structure.

As this commentary illustrates, Eric found it necessary to address the myth that an effective governance structure could operate with a dual system comprised of a faculty senate and faculty union. Despite the strong negative reaction from some organizational members, a crucial strategy in the process of laying the groundwork for the participative organization was abolishing this myth of separateness. This action reinforced the new principles for relationships described previously, thereby widening the path to construct the new governance structure.

In similarity to comments made by Eric, Fred also stressed the critical importance of eliminating the duality in the governance structure as a condition for beginning the participative change process:

I think it was possible to set up the teaming process because basically the campus didn't have any other structure. There was a shared governance process that was set up by the state for our campus. It was designed, in a way, like the teams that we set up.

In similarity to April, Fred commented on how the structure of the traditional organization leads to the build up of power around faculty leadership positions:

The way it evolved on most campuses was that you had a faculty leader that got in charge, somebody that got in charge of the college shared governance process. Then that became an owned position, which means that somebody served in it for a long period of time and they built up power around that particular position.

As Fred described, the build-up of power around positions results in a lack of openness in the governance system:

So it really wasn't open, it really just became another part of a normal power and controlled administrative system, but the concept was there.

As Fred pointed out, the governance process within a traditional organization is typically characterized as having an "owned position" by a faculty member who is able to serve in that position for a lengthy period of time. Due to the degree of power build-up around the position, the position is not open in the sense of access to leadership opportunities by others. Yet, as Fred remarked above, "the concept" of openness was in place. This condition enabled this president to initiate the participative change process at Morris Community College:

And so I guess you could think about this and in that light, the reason it may have worked on this campus is due to probably two reasons. One, we did not have former structures in place that people owned and felt invested in.

Thus, the opening within the current organizational context was the absence of an institution-wide decision-making structure in which campus members felt ownership. Further, as Fred commented below, a strategy based on recognition of this condition led to the establishment of processes according to "common areas of interest" as opposed to operating a dual structure:

Secondly, we had in existence on campus a process and then what we actually did then was broke that down further and allowed sub-units of that to be formed that represented common work areas and common areas of interest and those reported to a similar administrator. So from that angle that is probably why we, you know, could do it without having a dual operating system, because people do not give up that which they have invested in very easily. So you would have been trying to operate a dual structure and with the teaming process trying to co-exist with some kind of a current public structure.

Fred stated:

So if you are going to have a true participatory process, then that kind of a structure is counter to creating a participatory process. If you have one, you have to dismantle it in congruence with starting a participatory process. You have to have some way to make a decision. You can't leave, stop the day and start something else new tomorrow; that will just create havoc and chaos in an organization.

As this commentary indicated, once the participative change process is initiated and the deconstruction process has begun; the president must sustain this path and begin rebuilding the institution around the new vision of the institution.

#### Responding to the Centrality of the Faculty Role

The fourth key strategy is acknowledging the resistance created through the traditional role of faculty within the typical hierarchical organization. As described throughout the discussion of strategies one through three, Eric, April and Fred have emphasized the importance of developing new understandings with faculty in opening up the hierarchical structure. Fred offered detailed insight into the nature of this resistance by describing the traditional role of faculty as specialists within the work environment of the organization:

I think it probably has more to do with the fact that if you think about higher education you have a group of specialists at a community college. Almost everybody has a master's degree which means that people have specialized for that level. If you have many doctorate degrees that means that people have specialized even further in a particular discipline. So for these people, they can be described as a group of independent contractors who work together.

Fred stressed that faculty members may be viewed as authority figures within a limited realm:

So if you think of faculty in the same way, they have been highly trained in a particular area as they carry on their work for the campus. There really is not a great demand on them to collaborate, although they do have collegiate discussions and those kind of things. But there is really no pressure on them in a sense to compromise some of their thoughts and some of their beliefs about their particular disciplines with somebody else in another discipline to get something done. They are one hundred percent free to share



their views, their thoughts with their students, and at that point in time they are an authority figure in that particular area.

Further, Fred stressed that administrators who attempt a participative change process must recognize that faculty has a worldview which constitute a serious obstacle to creating a sense of unity within the larger context of the academic environment:

Then they wonder how the faculty got into that kind of a mindset and then it becomes an administrator's realm to supposedly compromise on some issues. . .to them in their particular world or in their view they should have absolute control over that issue.

As this commentary has revealed, a key strategy for implementing the participative change process is to acknowledge and respond to the opposition to a move toward participative decision-making that is deeply embedded in the hierarchical structure of the participative organization. Since the mindset or worldview of faculty is reflective of their sense of control over the span of their work environment, an engrained reluctance to move outside these traditional boundaries into a more collective decision-making process is in place.

### *Findings*

Phase one of the Web of Participation has revealed that the key purpose of this stage is to open the institutional landscape of the hierarchical organization. These data and analyses have revealed that these presidents perceive their respective institutions at the initiation of the change process as characterized by rigid, hierarchical structures, adversarial relationships and institutional processes which create a sense of divisiveness and discord.

The key process of this stage is *laying the groundwork for the web*. The sub-process is *establishing participative agreements* for the new organization that is described by four distinct strategies. The first strategy, assessing the readiness for change, emphasized the importance of maintaining an awareness of when an opening appeared and the ability to respond strategically. These data and analyses indicate that conditions which may lead to an opening in the hierarchical structure include an intensification in conflict in relationships and the presence of persons in

leadership positions who are receptive to a more collaborate, participative form of decision-making.

The second strategy, formulating the principles of relationships, revealed that a strong effort is made by these presidents to create greater understanding of a new form of involvement in decision-making. These presidents have utilized consulting firms and readily engage in dialogue in order to construct a new forum for decision-making relationships.

The third strategy, eliminating the dual system of governance system, is viewed as a critical step toward the new participative governance structure. The consequence of this strategy is to abolish the perception that effective decision-making can take place within a structural setting that separates key processes and decision-making groups within the governance structure.

The fourth strategy, responding to the centrality of the faculty role, reveals the awareness of these presidents that their ability to move the institution into a more participative form of decision-making must reflect the dynamics of power and control around key decision-making groups within the organization. Thus, the role of the participative president as change agent must be responsive to faculty perceptions of power and control in order to secure the groundwork for a more participative organization.

#### Phase Two: Constructing the Climate of Mutual Involvement

The first component is always to believe that there had to be a better way of making decisions rather than everybody getting into a room with baseball bats to see who won, who was the last person standing, so that person was right. There had to be a better way of conducting business.

- Fred

As portrayed in phase one, *Opening the Hierarchical Landscape*, the primary intent of these presidents is to establish a viable foundation for configuring the Web of Participation. The primary purpose of this stage is to establish and enhance the climate for mutual involvement. During phase two, presidential actions continue to build upon the frame of agreements for involvement in decision-making processes described in stage one. The key process is *shaping the*

*architecture of the web* to denote the importance of the structural aspects of the participative organization.

The evolving climate for mutual involvement reflects actions taken by these presidents which are directed toward creating new participative settings, reflecting the sub-process *establishing participative decision-making arrangements*. As the climate for mutual involvement is strengthened, a transition in the culture of the organization begins to appear. This analysis demonstrates that the movement is from a climate of separateness from the larger organizational mission to active participation within a system of participative arrangements. The key elements of these participative settings are commonality, flexibility, inclusiveness, and consensus-based decision-making. As these data and analyses reveal, the evolving climate of mutual involvement is primarily characterized by a growing sense of ownership, trust, empowerment and understanding.

This analysis portrays the web as a structural arrangement for coherently organizing people within the institution and the work they perform. As a form of organization, the web provides the analytical frame for examining the structural or contextual elements in which actions and interactions take place. By conceiving the web as a pattern of organizational relationships, a context is established for examining how presidential actions lead to the existence of structures which are continually created, altered and sustained.

#### *Commonality*

As the following commentary reveals, these participative presidents emphasized the importance of establishing commonality across organizational divisions. The data indicated that in creating a de-centralized structure for decision-making, the focus is upon breaking down barriers that typically exist in hierarchical organizations. By creating commonality, these presidents perceived that the perspective of campus members broadened to include an expanded view of the work of the organization.

In bridging connections among persons and groups, the organization also evolves into a less hierarchical and rigid form. Through forging significant points of meaningful involvement through the decision-making process, an increased sense of members' control over the purpose, direction and content of work emerges. The sub-strategies for achieving commonality include establishing inter-dependent teaming processes and using the language of participation.

In the following commentary, Fred described the purpose of establishing a participative governance process:

We set up what we called a teaming process. Some called it a shared governance process.

The teams were set up to represent a particular work area on campus and that means that the teams were created to serve a common area of the campus. So the purpose of the teams or the purpose of the process was to group people together in a teaming process that had shared interests, that worked in areas in common.

As Fred stated, the purpose of the teaming process was to group people together according to collective interests, who worked in "areas in common." Further, Fred described the structure that was implemented:

The instructional areas were broken up into teams that represented the academic disciplines, those that represented the various vocational programs. They were grouped together so that they had things in common and they met together and they discussed their issues. And there was also a linkage between these people and to supervisors.

This commentary indicated that the strategy of grouping people together promoted a linkage among group members and also with the supervisor. Further, Fred explained that the work-area teams were linked in a broad based campus-wide team:

But the way the teams were set up was not only to have what I call "working leadership teams," but we also had these teams feeding into a campus-wide team and each one of the individual teams elected a representative to the campus.

The intent of that was that if somehow things that they were wanting to see happen didn't get a proper hearing in the leadership teams at the program level of the campus, then there was a way for those concerns to be voiced at another level on campus.

This linkage among teams created a cross-functional connection that unified the teaming process at a higher level of campus so that issues could be expressed beyond the work-area teams. Thus, in referencing the ability of the teaming process to establish common connections across the

institution, this president has asserted that this approach promotes social integration of the institution. Further, Fred commented on how the teaming process served to de-centralize power arrangements within the institution:

So the supervisors for the campus actually worked directly with the team and the teams actually worked directly with their supervisor. And the supervisor was a member of the team, but not the leader of the team.

So this was another attempt to not have somebody in a power position directing and overseeing the agenda items, the items up for discussion and actually having the traditional form of control over the decision-making process. Now I would be remiss if I didn't say here that anybody who understands, I hope, that if you're in a position as Vice-President of Dean, or Associate Dean and you are leading a team, that person always has a greater influence on the team and on the decision-making process.

As Fred stated, this was an effort to transform the hierarchical form of organization in that "the traditional form of control over the decision-making process" was modified to create a change in the flow of interaction within the institution. This shift also reflected a change in the relationship of supervisors to organizational members as well. The implication is that by establishing a sense of commonality within the institution through redefining the work of the institution around web-like structures, this circular arrangement allows for new kinds of interaction around the work of the institution, rather than positional power. Thus, this redistribution of power strengthened the egalitarian aspects of the culture since the flow of interaction has been redirected.

In accordance with Fred, April likewise expressed the crucial importance of creating commonality within the institution. First, she described the significance of using language reflective of the precepts of participation to shape perceptions of credibility for the change process:

I forgot to tell you I wrote my doctoral thesis on quality circles. So I did a lot of research about it and, you know, that you could use the stuff that Deming and Ouchie wrote because it's all research based. I looked for the factors that make quality circles succeed.

After I finished that dissertation, I decided that wherever I went, I would implement quality circles but I would never call them that. I would never use the jargon of quality because that was the factor that inhibited its success on all three sides—I did a

corporation, a human service setting and a community college. So when I got here, you know, I talked that language and had many things to describe.

This commentary reveals that April purposefully avoided using corporate terminology to encourage positive responses to the change process. In addition, this commentary also disclosed that April's academic and professional background provided a resource for her as she began the implementation process.

April commented on how commonality was established at an institution she worked at prior to her presidency at Valley Community College:

At one of the colleges we had many quality circles. I always called them constituent groups. So we had a continuing ed constituent group, an instructional constituent group which I met with every month and a student service constituent group I met with them every month. So they had never come together before across these 23,000 square miles to talk to each other and share with each other. It was very wonderful.

Further, April described the structure she later implemented at Valley Community College. As April indicated, commonality was established by use of the term "constituent groups" and by establishing a structure so that groups could gather for dialogue:

So then I came here and they had never met across campuses. Now this is a 12,000 square mile service area and the group that had made all the decisions was the President's staff. So the first thing I did was create several decision-making groups. The college council is the group of deans and vice-presidents and they make campus decisions. Then we have all the people who provide central services to the whole college—all seven campuses are here in this building. So we have one registrar, one human resource director, one financial aid director and one admissions director, so that group and the deans and the assistant deans of student services meet.

In similarity to Fred, April established decision-making groups that linked people according to common work areas. For example, deans and vice-presidents from various campus sites formed the college council and made campus decisions, and the central services staff from all seven campuses were located in one building in the central office.

April described the institution-wide decision-making model that is similar in purpose and function to the all-campus leadership team described by Fred:

That's 35 people who meet every month and that's the group that makes the college's decisions. They make decisions about the pay plan. They make decisions about adding new positions to the central office. They hear all the reviews of task forces. They review

all the information from task forces and make decisions about their recommendations. They are the decision-making committee.

As these commentaries by Fred and April have disclosed, a key characteristic of participative settings is the establishment of commonality across institutional divisions. This commonality is located within the context of decision-making structures which create areas in common, thereby establishing interaction among persons who are oriented around a sense of shared interest in the overall welfare of the institution. A primary outcome is the creation of a collective sense of ownership over significant decision-making issues, problems and challenges facing the institution.

These examples demonstrate that significant decisions are made at various levels of social interaction. Whereas some decisions are made at the perimeter of the web, others are made within the context of cross-functional teams that enable broader access to decision-making. Commonality may be viewed as characterizing groups of people who interact with one another on a regular basis at the micro and macro levels of interaction. Social groups have been created which share a mutual set of values, expectations and identity within the organization. Commonality can thus be regarded as a key aspect of these participative decision-making settings since it produces stable patterns of interaction within the architecture of the web.

### *Flexibility*

Flexibility is also a primary characteristic of participative settings. The primary contention is that flexibility in the structure of the decision-making process enabled more effective decisions to be made. These firm but malleable structures allow decision-making to be located in the context in which meaningful participation can be created. Flexibility in the structure creates the context for interaction and provides these presidents the freedom to include all affected people within various decision-making groups. Thus, flexibility can be considered a means for enhancing the sense of ownership of decisions which builds and strengthens the climate for mutual involvement.

These data and analyses disclose that rather than concentrating decision-making according to positions of power and authority, these participative settings tend to function at various points throughout the organization. This data indicates that flexibility produces the option of localness. Localness refers to extending control and power over decisions from the top of the institution into the outer sphere of the web. Localness indicates that decision-making capability is transferred down the organizational hierarchy so that those occupying positions at various levels encounter the dilemmas and issues surrounding decision-making situations. Localness builds ownership by providing those most affected by the impact of the decision opportunities to assume responsibility for the decision-making process.

In the following commentary, Eric stressed the importance of creating flexibility in a participative governance structure. First, he described how Lake Community College was initially characterized by a new decision-making process which was overly complex and rigid:

We then went ahead and formed the new governance structure. We went through some phases of different models that we put into place until we finally evolved to one that we really felt worked for us. At first we were just to elaborate, too structured, too many standing committees because we wanted faculty, support staff and administrators involved in every single decision area. Our theme was that every area of the college would be covered by a governance committee.

Eric indicated that eventually Lake Community College adopted a decision-making structure which avoided over involving institutional members:

After we tried that and found that it was just so cumbersome to keep going, we then moved to a much more flexible approach where did have standing committees but we had more ad hoc committees that would take on the project, finish it and then disband.

Eric emphasized below that this move to a more flexible decision-making structure had a significant impact on increasing the sense of ownership of the institution and decisions:

We also then agreed on a new approach to win/win bargaining. In fact, since that time the labor negotiations at Lake Community College have gone very smoothly, even up to this day. The governance structure that we created and that evolved really did change the culture. That is, we moved away from adversarial relationships not only in collective bargaining but in really all areas of the college. The culture itself became more participative and people felt more sense of ownership of the college and the decisions that were made.



As these comments indicate, a critical strategy in the implementation process at Lake Community College was moving to a more flexible approach that included both on-going decision-making groups as well as ad hoc groups for accomplishing the work of the institution. Flexibility in models of participative governance facilitated the ability to adopt multiple approaches depending on the type of issue. Therefore, increased decision-making effectiveness was achieved. Moreover, flexibility in the approach to decision-making facilitated the move away from adversarial relationships in all areas of the college. The outcome was an increasingly participative culture with higher levels of ownership of the institution and outcome of decisions.

Reflecting Eric's emphasis upon the significance of flexibility for placing decision-making in the relevant context, Fred described how flexibility characterized the process through which the work of Morris Community College was accomplished. Fred referred to the significance of flexibility as a tool for creating a sense of "meaningful participation" through localizing decision-making in the work area:

Well, probably the first level of meaningful participation is to be able to have the freedom to make decisions that affect people in their work area. That means being able to make decisions that are about their work environment; how they do their work, how they accomplish it, they can rearrange their office or their setting if it is what they feel they need to do to be more effective.

Thus, effectiveness in decision-making is facilitated by the ability to make decisions within various work situations. Further, members tended to perceive their participation as "meaningful" since they are involved within the context of the work group. Thus, the notion of meaningful participation indicated that the closer the arena for decision-making is to the work area, the more likely a group will feel a sense of ownership for the outcome of the decision. As Fred remarked, the "first level of meaningful participation" is having the freedom of decision-making within the context of the work area.

Bob also referenced the importance of freedom to make decisions at the level of the work area:

I think the other important thing was a distributive decision process. While we had goals for the institution and we knew what we valued in terms of what we were trying to achieve, we worked hard to give people chances to make decisions about how to achieve those goals. Not only to get their ownership of them, but to get the good ideas that came when you did it that way.

As Bob indicated, a strong emphasis was placed on giving people opportunities to make decisions about the means for accomplishing institutional goals. The intent of this strategy was to produce ownership and enhance their contributions to the organizational decision-making process.

Importantly, Bob indicated below that the ability to participate in decision-making settings was conditional upon the decision-makers having a high understanding of comprehensive institutional goals:

Well, basically, again, if people understood, which they did, what the goals were, understood that's where the college was going and the measurement of their activity was the degree in which they moved toward those goals, then the decision on how to get there—we did not make them at the top of the organization.

An example of flexibility in the structure of decision-making is offered by Bob who explained that high variation in delivery methods existed on various campuses:

This illustrates, for example, our approach to English as a second language, or rather I might say, to second language students. It was different on each of the campuses and even in some of the centers within the campus because different people had different ideas. And then we would make an effort to share information amongst people as to what seems to be working and not working. Basically, we didn't try to say to everyone, "Okay, this is our way to work with under-prepared students to get them to this end." But we said, "Here's the end, here's how much resource you've got to get there. You figure out how you want to do it."

Bob stressed:

Basically, we simply did not try to standardize delivery of services.

As Bob's commentary demonstrated, this distributive decision-making process required high understanding of institutional goals. When high understanding is present, decision-making is located within the context of those who are responsible for conducting the work associated with the outcome of the decision. This circumstance facilitates ownership and the important contributions of campus members, and therefore, increased effectiveness is accomplished. The role of the participative president is to foster understanding by sharing information regarding

effectiveness of various strategies, provide guidelines regarding resource availability and facilitate commitment to institutional goals. The implication is that when broad understanding is absent or begins to decline, flexibility would enable the president to locate decision-making at another point within the organization.

Further, Bob's example is a concrete illustration of how presidential leadership contributes to the climate of involvement by building a sense of empowerment among institutional members. As a result of their involvement and contribution within the decision-making process, those who have participated in creating the means for accomplishing a goal are also those who have the responsibility for carrying the agreed-upon decision.

Closely related to the ability to locate decision-making on the basis of understanding of broad institutional goals, flexibility also allows a wider scope for problem solving since the institution is freed from strict limitations on how decisions are made. In the following account, Eric offered a powerful illustration of how flexibility enabled the faculty at Lake Community College to meaningfully participate in the process of resolving a highly contentious issue. As Eric related, this example demonstrated how participative leadership fostered the climate of mutual involvement through honoring the faculty sense of ownership within a problem-solving situation:

One transaction that I think of is when we were trying to decide where to locate a new building. We had a site planner, and he came up with ten or twelve different sites. There was a faculty group that was very strong on environmental aspects, that basically we shouldn't touch a single tree on campus. On the other hand, we had to look at questions like proximity of this new building to other academic buildings which might mean that we would have to go into one of our wooded areas to have it be positioned close to the other academic buildings. So we had this dilemma.

Eric described how this interaction led to an "exquisite decision:"

One of the people involved—this also ties in with this idea of an exquisite decision. We had a mental picture that we had to find a vacant spot on the campus. One of the participants came up with the idea, "How about if we tore down the old powerhouse and rebuilt that somewhere else and put this new building where the powerhouse was?"

We hung in there, because at some point we could have just said, "Well, this building is going to have to be located at such and such place." But, we were trying to accommodate that faculty group that was very interested in the environmental aspects or the basic idea of keeping the campus as green as possible.

Once that idea came up, we did that research and discovered that a new powerhouse technology would be such that we could put the powerhouse in the basement of a building that we were just then planning, not the same building, but another one. This meant that we could go ahead and tear down the powerhouse and build the building there. I would say that would be an example in the sense that we were committed to accommodating the faculty interest, but at the same time we wanted to accomplish some other objectives too, and that's the way it worked out.

As Eric indicated, under conditions involving a dilemma in which a faculty group feels ownership, trust can be developed through creating conditions for meaningful participation. Trust was developed through leadership actions that honored the faculty sense of being able to participate meaningfully around an issue that they perceived as significant.

Given the flexibility in these systemic structures, decision-making was situated according to the group that had a high stake in the outcome of the process. This flexibility enabled the president to step in and out of the decision-making process according to the type of issue and the relevance it held to a key decision-making group. As Eric asserted, as a result of the presidential commitment to resolve an issue reflective of a strong sense of ownership by a faculty group, an "exquisite decision" was reached through balancing the perspectives of both parties to the interaction.

Thus, participative leadership involves flexibility in terms of adjusting and adapting to continually changing circumstances in the institutional environment. This example demonstrated how the climate for mutual involvement may be enhanced through joint problem solving activities around issues perceived as meaningful by those who view themselves as legitimate parties to the situation. The climate and culture of participation is enhanced as increased trust within the organization takes place. Flexibility in these participative settings allowed a wider scope for problem solving since the institution is liberated from strict limitations on how decisions are made.

### *Inclusiveness*

In addition to commonality and flexibility, inclusiveness is also viewed as a key feature of these participative decision-making settings. From the perspective of these presidents, inclusiveness widened the scope of access of people to the decision-making process. Through broadening involvement of people in the overall process of the organization, including those who may have been under-represented, these web-like structures produced a heightened capability for accomplishing the work of the organization. Inclusiveness in the decision-making process facilitated development of the climate of mutual involvement and contributed to the creation of a culture based on participative characteristics.

Within the category Participative Passages, Bob commented on the importance of participative structures and processes. This commentary is repeated in this section to elaborate on the importance of inclusiveness:

Well, we had a governance structure that provided broad participation simply enough, and despite the fact that we had a number of years when funding wasn't very good and therefore we weren't able to do the things with salary we would like to do. This is the time when unions will say, "Look, we can do better for you." People stuck with us because of the participatory processes we had.

In the following remarks, Bob indicated that the environment he created contained a high level of ownership in decisions that were made:

Yes, I would say that that was evidenced by the fact that faculty here did not feel that they needed a union to represent them. We were the only non-union institution of education in the south half of the state.

For years we were apprised that the union people wanted to gain entry, but I think what we had in place, people had more confidence in that than what could be provided by the union.

Bob has described a concrete example of how inclusiveness in the governance structure through broad participation resulted in strengthening the climate of mutual involvement. As Bob remarked, the faculty did not perceive that a union was needed to represent them, suggesting that climate can be viewed as having an attitude of ownership and a sense of empowerment over decision-making impact.

Further, from Bob's perspective "people stuck with us because of the participatory processes we had." The implication is that the climate of mutual involvement enabled the organization to engage in group-based problem solving over a period of time and facilitated reconciliation of conflict between the needs of a faculty group and the administration. Since faculty members tend to exhibit loyalty to their profession or sub-culture, this example indicated that organizational cohesiveness was strengthened due to a climate characterized by a collective approach to problem solving. Thus, the socialization of group members to the broader, overall organizational culture is perceived by Bob as crucial to the continued development and success of the institution.

Bob further commented on the notion of inclusiveness by remarking on the significance of including people from all points in the organization in decision-making groups:

Well, I think the most important thing regarding the governance structure and faculty to make the processes work is mixing the personnel. Each of us sees the world from the base of life experience and role, so if you get all of the faculty members just dealing with faculty members, their view is not complete either. All of our processes attempted to set up decision arrangements where there was multiple type representation in groups.

Thus, according to Bob, "mixing personnel" is an essential strategy for effective participative decision-making. Since we each perceive our reality from the basis of our background experiences and role in society, it is important to have an inclusive membership in decision-making groups so that a more holistic, diverse perspective is achieved.

Mirroring Bob's perspective regarding the importance of multiple representation, Fred also spoke to the importance of inclusiveness within decision-making groups:

When we created the all-campus leadership team, we brought all kinds of people into that process—classified people, with the faculty to lower level administrators.

Fred further remarked:

Sometimes they wonder, you know, how do these goofballs ever arise at this conclusion? I always thought it was valuable for classified staff, a secretary or somebody else, business office clerk to sit in on that process, just so they got a glimpse of how the campus worked as far as participation.

So, when they were making decisions, participating in a decision for their work area they could at least have appreciation for the fact that there were other parts of the campus and that sometimes what they thought was very limited had a scope way beyond their work area.

As Fred commented, bringing campus members from the periphery of the web into the circle of decision-making enhanced their perception of the scope of decision-making issues. From Fred's perspective, this experience would then translate into increased awareness of how work-area decision-making impacted other parts of the institution. Further, Fred remarked on the type of involvement that occurred in the all-campus leadership team:

Basically, what that did is for some of them—they really didn't participate in the process but it was a learning experience for them just to sit and listen and see the types of things that are discussed. They got to see the process that we went through to reach a decision.

As Fred stated, the all-campus membership team was comprised of some members who "really didn't participate in the process." This comment suggested that the team process has duplicated the differentials in power positions which characterize the hierarchical form of organization. The status differentials in higher education favor faculty as occupying higher level status within the organization relative to "classified staff" and "lower level administrators." Apparently this structure was replicated within this team process and these two groups tended to defer to the faculty.

Furthermore, Fred asserted that by being able "just to sit and listen and see the types of things that are discussed" a learning experience in decision-making occurred. From Fred's perspective, this learning experience benefited both the organization and the members themselves:

I always felt another part of it was just that they got an appreciation for the complexity of the campus and the interrelatedness of the decisions. Then I suppose another part of it is that, you know, it looks like a decision was made out of thin air when you sitting in the fifteenth level of the organization. But when you actually see it made, you can see and understand that, okay, this is how it got down from the various parts down through the organization.

Through exposure to the broad based ramifications of the decision-making context, the consequence of “sitting in” is an expanded perception of those who tend to be marginalized regarding the inter-connectedness of the decision-making process. Fred’s perspective indicated that a benefit of inclusion is to address the segmentalism of the traditional organization through a learning process which enhances perception of the inter-relatedness among various parts of the organization.

This example demonstrates that whereas the strategy of inclusion within groups that are diversified on the basis of status differentials, increased understanding of the decision-making process may be achieved. However, these data and analyses indicate that enhancing understanding of the decision-making process does not necessarily indicate that equality of access within the dynamics of the decision-making context has occurred. Thus, broadening the scope of access only suggests that a sense of empowerment has occurred among all parties to a decision-making context. The complexity of the empowerment process in relation to the problem of inclusion is further discussed under phase four.

#### *Consensus based decision-making processes*

I think it’s been important to have an agreement about what consensus means—that it doesn’t mean that everyone fully agrees. It means that people can live with the decision and that they will not do “malicious compliance” as I call it.

- April

The fourth key characteristic of participative decision-making settings is the process of making decisions through consensus. These data indicate that these presidents place a very high value on establishing an institution-wide process for decision-making reflecting consensual principles and procedures. Consensus building underscores the significance of the process aspects of participative governance. In describing the contextual conditions within which consensus takes place, this analysis demonstrates that these presidents accentuate the importance of strategies regarding establishing agreements for consensual decision-making, fostering true representation, and honoring recommendations.



These data and analyses reveal that establishing agreements regarding consensual processes focused upon constructing a context for dialogue. Sub-strategies included defining the meaning of consensus and outlining procedures for decision-making. The concept of true representation referred to the significance of actively representing the views, perceptions and opinions of constituent groups and feeding that back into the decision-making process. Key sub-strategies included the role of consultation and maintaining open information systems, and role requirements and expectations for various members of the institution. Honoring recommendations referenced the notion that the president and members of top-level teams were generally expected to support and accept recommendations which emerged from group based decisions.

The notion of consensual decision-making as multi-layered and conditional upon the interactive context provides insight into how these presidents responded to specific decision-making encounters. Further, consensual decision-making, as a process of reciprocity, indicates that participative leadership is a process that actively creates, maintains and responds to conditions that enable reciprocal relationships to unfold. Reciprocity is thus a form of interaction that both creates and rests upon the assumptions of shared responsibility for the formation and outcome of decisions among all parties to the transaction. Building empowerment, understanding, trust and ownership within a climate for mutual involvement enables the extension of the authority and power of the president within a context that has clearly defined expectations for behavior. When these expectations are violated, the president actively intervenes.

In order to capture the richness of the data within these participative settings, this analysis will focus upon leadership actions of April, Fred and Eric as they evolved within their respective institutions. These presidents were selected since their presidencies at their respective institutions spanned a significant number of years, thus providing the backdrop for examining these processes as they unfolded within mature, participative organizations.

## Valley Community College

### *Consensual Decision-making Agreements at Valley Community College*

As the following commentary disclosed, April emphasized the significance of establishing agreements at the initiation of the consensus process.

We have some “leadership behaviors” we call them, and we agreed on them at our first retreat together nine years ago. One of them is “facing conflict with courage,” and we still talk about that constantly.

As April commented, these “leadership behaviors” were agreed upon at the first retreat she conducted at the beginning of her presidency. In the following commentary, April provided an illuminative example of how agreed-upon principles guided consensual decision-making at Valley Community College. She emphasized that her primary strategy was to facilitate dialogue so that perceptions are expressed:

But I do often go around the room, Native American style, talking stick style and I ask each person. Just because what happens, of course, in a participative setting is the same people talk all the time and you get a very strange perception sometimes of what’s happening—so when I sense that, I ask them to go around the room and have everyone speak. It takes quite awhile for 35 people to speak. But I encourage them—if someone else has already said what they wanted to say—then they just say that instead of saying it over again. They are usually willing to be brief and it has made a huge difference in some instances.

As April describes, her role within a participative setting was to provide opportunities for everyone to contribute. Despite the length of time this effort required, April asserted that this approach had a very beneficial impact on the outcome of the decision-making process. In the following narrative, April provides an in-depth illustration of how facilitating dialogue within a group-based decision-making setting effected the outcome of a significant institutional issue:

For example, recently I wanted to give in-district tuition to the Apache Indians, some of them are out of state. Our out-of-state tuition is \$295 a credit and this is Apache territory, this is their home, and I want them to come back to their home and to feel welcome here.

So we have been working to develop, have them help us to develop a curriculum. We have a three-year plan with them and it includes developing an Apache history curriculum, Apache culture, Apache language and then inviting them to come here to go to school. In the meantime, we’ve been building a relationship with all three tribes. There is one in Ignacia, the Southern Apaches and the Northern Apaches.

We met and formed the agenda. We had a proposal and I had shared it several times with the campus leadership team but I did not have time to share it with my vice president. But he and I had talked extensively about what we thought we needed to have. He felt it was important that there be some kind of payment. I said, "What about a reciprocity agreement like states have, where we do certain things. We provide in-district tuition and they give us services—like they help us create the curriculum, they become an advisory committee, they help us develop a mentor program, you know." He said, "That's a good idea."

So we had our purchasing agent actually work on this contract with the Apaches. Now working with Native Americans is very, very delicate. They don't trust us; they test us.

As April has described, in her role as a participative president, she focused on building relationships with three tribes of the Apache Indians. She worked to include the vice-president in forming a reciprocity agreement modeled after those used by state entities. April noted that consensus-building with this group required careful handling since the association was marked by an absence of trust. April continued her story:

This took a year and half. Finally, we brought this proposal to ALT, the 35-person group. I hadn't had a chance to talk to my vice president about this particular rendition of the proposal. He didn't feel that there was enough coming from the Apaches. He wanted them to pay more for this. He wanted them to teach for free. I said, "This would destroy our trust with them." There were several others that were very vocal and they controlled the conversation.

Then all of a sudden a timid voice from one of the campuses, she has a very high, very thin voice, raised her hand and she said, "I think this is a moral issue." And she made the most profound statement about our responsibility to the Apache Indians.

Then I went around the room and every person spoke and only five people disagreed, the five people who were doing all the talking.

So we took it to the board and I shared the story with the board—that there were people who disagreed but that as a group we wanted to go forward with this.

So the board did agree and we just were up at the Northern Apaches this past week, Monday, and I guess Wiley Springs is flooded with Apache calls. It is wonderful.

April concluded her story:

That's an example of how there can be a consensus but people don't speak it—as much as we talk about the importance of facing conflict. People are still afraid to speak up in the face of disagreement. So the courage of this woman was very great.

This example provided several significant indicators of how participative leadership took place within a participative setting. First, April described her role as a consensus builder through facilitating the group process. She emphasized the importance of encouraging all group members to contribute to the dialogue in order to produce a comprehensive perception of the issue. Through this strategy, April was able to bring in “a timid voice” who was able to speak in opposition to the dominating voices of a vice-president and others within this group. As April remarked, “there can be a consensus but people don’t speak it—as much as we talk about the importance of facing conflict.” Further, this example also suggested that the culture of this institution had embraced the value of responsibility, since the “timid voice” had spoken eloquently regarding the institution’s ethical responsibility to this group of marginalized people.

Second, this story provided an example of how developing trust is intertwined throughout the consensus building process. April’s story provided insight regarding how the participative leader builds trust both within the institution and through establishing a participative relationship with a constituency group. Thus, the climate of mutual involvement had been extended within and outside the institution.

Third, there is an implicit respect for the diversity of perspectives since consensus at Valley Community College included those who disagreed with the outcome of the decision. Thus, this example of consensual decision-making demonstrated how the egalitarian aspect of the culture was strengthened through the climate of mutual involvement.

In the following commentary, April described the agreement process in terms of procedures for voting and how this impacted her role within the consensus process:

But when there are issues on the agenda where I have very high stake, I have a facilitator lead the meeting so that I can be a powerful participant. We have an agenda that says – this is the agenda topic, this is the outcome we want to achieve, this is who is going to facilitate this agenda item, this is who is going to record it and so on, so that’s all worked out in advance. That’s been very successful.

I facilitate most of the meeting if I don’t have a stake in it. Otherwise, the other people get exhausted. I may as well be the one to get exhausted—it’s an exhausting thing to facilitate and record and also help the group come to a consensus. We do operate by

consensus. We have a definition of consensus that we've always used. But in this last round where people would describe me as intimidating the deans in decision-making, I found an even better definition of consensus.

The definition we are following now is one that works in case of a deadlock. It helps us to make a decision without exploring every possible compromise. I "never ask, does everyone agree?" or "Does anyone disagree?" A typical statement might be, "My sense is that we are in agreement on. . ." The onus is on the person to voice a disagreement."

Further, April expanded on further aspects of agreements regarding procedure:

We also have an agreement that in all these decision-making groups that if there's a tie, which almost every decision, if we were to vote at this college, almost every decision would be a 25 to 24 or 5 to 6 depending on how many people are in the group. So the agreement is if there is a tie and it looks like we can't agree, I will make the decision.

### *True-Representation at Valley Community College*

In addition to establishing agreements regarding campus procedures for consensual decision-making, April also asserted that the second key strategy for developing the consensual decision-making process at Valley Community College was determining that those who participate must "truly represent people."

It has to be organization wide so that there has to be a broad representation and for us it is very broad representation—and they have to truly represent people. That is always a challenge, when people serve on a task force or when they serve on a decision-making group, for them to remember that they are not just there as a representative of themselves. They represent their constituent group, whether it is faculty or student service staff or the learning council or the campus—that's who they represent.

As April commented, the type of representation is broad in scope and it is challenging for members to genuinely represent people. Further, she distinguished between a "task force" and a "decision-making group" and indicated that each required people to represent their constituent group. April described the role of the representative as involving various forms of consultation:

They must consult with them in advance and look at the agenda in advance, consult with their campus or their group. There are people who report to them. Then they come to the meeting and then we discuss it and then they take it back to the group and if they don't, it doesn't work. Things go on and you make decisions but things aren't working because people feel left out of the institution. So we talk about that a lot—the importance of making sure that happens.

As April has commented, members are expected to engage in a high level of consultative activities, and a failure to perform these actions will lead to an unsuccessful outcome. Importantly, decisions will be made but some will feel left out of the process. The implication is that creating and maintaining feedback loops is critical to the consensual process.

*Honoring Recommendations at Valley Community College*

A third key strategy identified by April is that the process is designed so that recommendations are honored by the president. As April commented, honoring recommendations is based upon an established procedure:

When a committee makes a recommendation you have got to honor their recommendation. So how do you do that? I have given every decision-making group a copy of the standard problem solving procedures which comes from my research utilized in the problems solving program that I took thirty years ago. It is you know, you write down the problem, you state the problem, you gather data about the problem, you analyze the data, you generate potential solutions, you analyze data about each solution and then you select a solution and you evaluate it. And I assure every task force and committee, if you follow this procedure, you can be almost positive we are going to accept your recommendation.

If you just make a decision, if you talk for months but it's all from your gut. . . you don't read anything. . .so periodically when there's a task force taking a long time, I check in with them and make sure that they've done some reading—that they are not just operating out of their guts. That they are actually using this process to make a decision—that's essential.

April concluded:

You can't have people making decisions and then not accepting their decision.

April described an example of a "firestorm" that erupted when the process was not followed:

We just had an example of that. The committee did not use the process, and they came with their recommendation and there was this firestorm. I asked them if they'd used the process and they said, "No." Anyway, I handled the decision and said, "My proposal is that we do this, and the message is unless you do this, this is not going to work." The group agreed to do that and that's what they did. It has to be open.

As April commented, the use of standard procedures for consensual decision-making is a critical component of this model. When the president perceives that group members are not adhering to the process, active steps must be taken to intervene and may result in the president making the decision. Thus, this passage demonstrates that established procedures do not permit the president

to avoid responsibility for overseeing the consensual process. In effect, the president stays attentive as the process unfolds and must be sensitive to the need to be actively involved in re-focusing the dynamics of the process. An important implication that despite the high level of involvement by members in the decision-making process, the president remains accountable for the process and outcome of the decision.

Further, April commented that “honoring recommendations” may result in a decision that is counter to that which was originally proposed by the president:

The leader has to be willing to have some very dear things go bye bye. It doesn't happen very often. I mean, I am a persuader. Do you know that John Geier instrument? The DISC stands for dominance, influence, steadfast and compliance. Well, I have a very, very high “I” influence and then they have three different categories. How you see yourself, how others see you and how you act under stress. Everybody has a different profile for each one—not me. I am a persuader in every single instance. When things are tough, what do I do? I just persuade more. So if people don't feel very strongly about something, they don't put up much of a fight.

April provided an example of how her willingness to work within a consensual process required that she honor a recommendation from the campus decision-making group, although she and the board of the institution preferred a different outcome:

For example, I wanted to go out to ask the voters to release us from a state mandate and the board wanted to do it. Joe, one of the vice presidents, engineered an agenda item. Anybody can put anything on the agenda they want. So he put on this agenda item to ask each of the Deans to speak one at a time about how they felt about going off of the state mandate and they all said, “No.” So I went back to the board and said, “Look, I want to do this, you want to do this, but the rest of the college does not, and I highly recommend that we do not do it.”

April described the resolution of this issue:

They agreed. Because the board had actually written into their policy governance statements that they were collaborative and that they were participative and that they wanted the college council participants in board meetings. Deans come to board meetings, and they are invited to speak. They sit at the table with the board. We got rid of the big long line and the white cloth and the board facing everybody.

April remarked that the potential impact of a new board may be to abolish the participative approach that has been in place:

I now have a board that might not institute that and they may invite the deans not to attend because they have taken this collaborative participative language out of their policy.

It's a whole new board. I have three new elected members and two of the old members have become new. We had a consultant come in and they listened to the consultant. The consultant is sort of, I think, very rigid in his interpretation of policy governance and they went along with it. So that's an interesting dynamic that will be unfolding and I'm sort of waiting and watching it unfold.

Consensus-based decision-making exists within a context in which the president works to create a reciprocal state of relationships. The key strategies for group-based consensus decision-making provided by April include establishing an agreement regarding guiding principles on how the process will take place. In order for the process to work effectively, the role of the president is focused on creating opportunities for dialogue and building relationships both within, across and outside campus interactive settings. The role of the members is to actively participate by "truly representing" their respective groups. This requires that they actively consult with various parties, follow established procedures and rely upon feedback loops for information exchange.

April's story regarding the importance of "honoring recommendations" underscores the dynamic, multi-dimensional, and interchangeable nature of participative leadership as a means of creating reciprocity. April's account demonstrated that in order to honor recommendations, established procedures must be created and upheld. The role of the president requires that intervention take place if a group violates this understanding. Further, the president was able to honor recommendations of the college decision-making group due to the support of the institution's board. In effect, the board honored the recommendation of the president. Apparently, the web of agreements that existed on campus spanned the internal and external institutional environments.

### **Morris Community College**

In similarity to April, Fred also speaks to the key elements of consensual decision-making as establishing agreements for guiding principles and procedures for decision-making, true representation, and honoring recommendations.



*Consensual Decision-Making Agreements At Morris Community College*

Fred likewise highlighted the importance of establishing a frame of agreements for consensual decision-making. In describing the group-based decision-making process at Morris Community College, Fred stated:

This was designed to be a process of consensus--that you had discussions; you sat down with people, you carried on a conversation and a discussion until you reached some elements of common agreement. Then we would build on those and move forward to create the process to reach the decision we were striving for.

It was a way for broad diversity of views to be heard. And yes, in the end, you had to reach a consensus and make a decision, but it was a very open process and to allow a lot more discussion and input to actually take place on campus.

As Fred stated, the consensual process was based on "some elements of common agreement" which members would build upon in order to reach a decision through dialogue. The design was based on openness to foster a wide diversity in perspectives to be expressed. Fred noted that this consensual process was also based upon stated agreements for team procedures:

We created ground rules and agreements for a team. We set up processes for team ground rules and agreements for them to operate by a structure. They were expected to meet so many times.

Also resembling April's account, Fred likewise described procedures for consensus building:

They turned their minutes into the President's office so that we could stay informed about what is happening in their meetings and how it related to the campus and the decision-making process.

Fred commented on the contradictory impact that voting can have on creating a climate for mutual involvement:

It is the confrontations that I think are a waste of time. . .it doesn't get anybody anywhere. Now, I guess if you are in a voting situation, yes, you can get a three-four vote and then you can get it switched to the other side to a four-three vote the other way and change the decision.

But, when you do that you really haven't changed the climate. . .you haven't done anything. You still have a group of people that are one hundred percent against what you are doing. You have got some that went along because they need to go along and a few that are sold on the idea.

As Fred stated below, genuine consensus required a sense of ownership:

The concept is where if you can get consensus and get some to buy into it then at least you have more people pulling the load than you do sitting on the load taking a free ride.

Procedures for consensus-based decision-making at Morris Community College did not include voting as a means of coming to an agreement on issues. Rather, the intent was to bring people into a process through dialogue so that more were “pulling the load” than “sitting on the load taking a free ride.” The implication is that in similarity to Valley Community College, diversity was honored through allowing for various dimensions of agreement. Ownership is essential for broad-based implementation of the decision.

#### *True Representation at Morris Community College*

In the following commentary, Fred described how active representation occurred at his institution. This account provided insight into how a redefinition of roles of the vice-presidents, team members and the president allowed for new kinds of interaction. By implementing decision-making structures that encouraged empowerment of those from the periphery of the web, the climate of mutual involvement is strengthened. A significant aspect of true representation at Morris Community College was the high emphasis placed upon opening the informal systems of the institution. This action led to increased understanding among institutional members of important factors for consideration within various institutional contexts. Fred described the process of true representation as follows:

We brought members of the teams, representatives of each team into the budgeting process which means that they got to not only, I guess they didn't get to participate individually, but their representative participated in the teaming process. That individual then took the information back to the individual teams to be discussed, to be revised and to be brought back to what we called the all-campus team for additional discussion and then to be considered by the all-campus team. I think all of that contributed to the development of the campus climate.

As Fred asserted in similarity to April, a key aspect of true representation is effectively consulting with various groups. This process encouraged the development of the institutional climate. Further, Fred described how representation took place in terms of the role of the campus vice-presidents and team members:

It had to do with the fact that as the President I met with the Vice-Presidents and we had discussions and then the Vice-Presidents took those concepts out and those ideas and those concepts out and had interactions with their teams.

And this is an environment, remember now, this is an environment where the Vice-President is a member of a team, not in charge of the team, so that just the very organization of the team you hoped made a difference in how people perceived it.

Hopefully, they weren't seeing it as being the Vice-President there on a mission on behalf of the President and he would break their arm if they didn't do something. It was more that this was what we were thinking about—"we need input, we need your suggestions, you can discuss, and you don't need to make a decision in three minutes. This can take several meetings with your Vice-President or you can share it with your representative of the all campus team." And so there were two ways to bring it back into the campus discussion.

This reference to the input needed and sharing of information points to the crucial importance of information access for enabling true representation to take place. As Fred commented in the following narrative, opening up the informational systems was a significant strategy:

And along with that was the fact that we opened up the computer system and basically on campus anything I had access to on the computer, everybody on campus was given access to the same information. We had a system you could get into and get reports and information and real time reports about student enrollment. For example, how many students were instate, how many students are out of state, how many hours are students taking, how many part-time and full-time, all of that information was available to the campus.

Fred specifically linked opening the informational systems to the creation of a climate for involvement:

The budget was available to the campus, anybody could go in any time they wanted to and look at the President's budget and see how much I spent on travel, how much was spent on various items and they could do that to everybody else on campus. So basically it created a climate for involvement.

We opened up the information systems of the campus which included finances which is the one most people hide and there is always some question as to whether you have more money than that.

Fred described how the climate for involvement evolved, emphasizing openness and trust as key aspects of the normative system:

All of that together I think created a climate of openness. I hope we created a climate of trust, where people, even if they didn't go look, just the fact that they knew they could look meant there was greater trust in the figures that were presented during the budget planning and all that. When the year was over we would share what everyone spent, if there were overages or money left over at the end of the year. That was shared. Everybody knew how much that was, everybody knew how much our income was going to be, our projections based on what the state was going to allow us.

Fred concluded:

I don't think I can point to any one thing. I think it was a combination of items and the reiterated openness of the teaming process, the fact that they could talk and discuss.

Fred remarked below on how the movement toward the climate of involvement which included

“trust, respect and camaraderie or collegiality among everybody facilitated openness:”

And what I hoped to happen was you developed a sense of trust, respect and camaraderie or collegiality among everybody. So while we didn't agree, we could have friendly disagreements and know at this point in time we compromised.

But the next time you came to the issue then it would be open again for discussion. At that point in time you might be ready for additional compromise further in the same direction or even shifting and moving in another direction.

Fred commented on how the broad role of the president reflected the change in the campus climate:

Now, as a President did I relate to people differently? I don't know as I did, but I think probably what happens, what I think happened was that just the general climate changed. As President, I didn't feel as compelled that I was trying to sell something to people as I was a colleague discussing with them, trying to accomplish things as a campus.

Fred further addressed the transition of the role of the president within this consensus-based interaction:

The president sat in on the campus leadership team and actually chaired it. This opened an opportunity for people to bring any issues that they felt hadn't received an appropriate hearing at another level of the campus to where it could be heard and discussed there appropriately. But probably more likely it was going to be referred back to the team with them knowing then that the President said that it was something he felt should be heard and discussed again and then forwarded back up through the decision-making process.

As Fred stated, the role of the president on the campus leadership team was to open opportunities for people to bring any issues that they felt hadn't received an appropriate hearing at another level of the campus. The issue could be discussed with the campus leadership team or redirected back to the work level team with the president's comment that additional dialogue should occur.

Fred expands upon this reference to the presidential role as opening opportunities in reference to the notion of an open dialogue. In similarity to April, this passage indicates that the presidential role requires active involvement in the consensus process by facilitating dialogue at various levels. Fred commented:

Hopefully, you know, when somebody came up with an idea, as the President you weren't saying, "Oh, no, you can't do that, you've got to do this, this is my idea and this is the way it has to be." It's more an open, ongoing dialogue, exploration, discussion, and then we can achieve consensus. And while not everybody is happy with the consensus, it is still a starting point and then you continue on. If you think of continuous improvement as being a process and then you revisit it frequently and continue to improve, it is not a one-time decision that is made and it is never discussed again.

As Fred stated, "it had to be an open, ongoing dialogue...and then we can achieve consensus."

This commentary has provided insight into the linkage that exists between presidential action and building a climate for mutual involvement. The climate change flows directly from presidential actions involving expanding information access within the institutional setting to achieve. Greater understanding of institutional factors such as resource allocation, spending patterns, student enrollment data is fostered. Thus, shared responsibility for decision-making rested upon shared access to institutional information. By empowering campus members through increased access to the institutional information systems, the intent was to build a climate of increased levels of trust, collegiality and respect. The context for mutuality is being created and strengthened through enhancing equality of access of all parties to the decision-making situation.

#### *Honoring Recommendations at Morris Community College*

Resembling April's emphasis upon responding to team recommendation, Fred made the following comments:

As far as I know, there were never any reprisals from the president's office on what instructors came up with and suggestions they made. And we didn't overrule decisions, unless—I don't remember doing this—but the only time we would have done it was if somebody was trying to do something illegal or immoral, then we would have had to step in and dealt with a decision that has been made.

Fred further commented on the response of the upper administration to team recommendations:

But I do think that through the teaming process and because we didn't have, we weren't trying to sell them something, it was actually, even going beyond what I would call a good faith effort. It was an earnest effort to allow them to make the decisions that were appropriate at their level. It was an earnest attempt to accept and consider and, if possible, implement suggestions that came out of the teams.

As Fred stated, this was a sincere attempt to accept recommendations that emerged from team processes. Once accepted, the implementation process began. Fred's commentary has provided a strong account of how true representation can be accomplished through a redefinition of roles within a consensus-based decision-making structure. This theme is continued in the following example of how faculty roles evolved within a consensual decision-making situation.

#### *Consensual Decision-making at Morris Community College*

In the following account, Fred concluded his remarks with an illuminating example of how consensus can be achieved within a mature climate for mutual involvement. This example of group decision-making regarding a campus renovation project portrayed the transition in faculty roles as based in actions that are much more collaborative, broadly focused and reflective of high problem solving ability:

And basically we had in the meeting almost all faculty and a few administrators. They were sitting there and each one got to explain to the architect and to the project manager their space needs, how they wanted the campus set up, or how they wanted the building space allocated, and what their needs were for that particular thing.

Fred noted the response of the architects to the approach taken by the faculty group:

I noticed when we went away from the meeting that the architect and the project manager afterwards just couldn't believe that a group of people could sit down and that quickly agree on what their needs were, what the space needs were without getting into some kind of squabble over space, "how much mine is going to be, how much yours is going to be, you got more than I did" and those kinds of things. I don't think that is necessary when—it wasn't necessarily a teaming process but it was people who had been involved in teaming processes that came together and basically formed a new team.

Fred remarked on the effectiveness of the faculty's problem solving ability:

How quickly they could sit down, articulate what their needs were and they could do it without taking away from somebody else or getting into a space argument about "I need this and you don't need that and therefore I should get more and you should get less."

Further, Fred commented on his response to how consensus was achieved:

I know as president, I was amazed at how quickly they could articulate and how effective they were in defining their needs. Basically we didn't come back, other than just for minor adjustments. We didn't make any adjustments from what they had proposed and when they came back we didn't have people saying "No, that isn't what I said."

They were very articulate and precise in letting the architect and project manager know what their needs were and they didn't overstate their needs, but yet they didn't understate their needs.

Fred remarked below that the efficiency, fairness and effectiveness in coming to consensus was the consequence of building the institutional climate:

So it seemed to be a process that I often think about, in fact, I have written about it. I believe that was a result of their experience they had on various teams on campus and so they were well versed and knew what they needed to do, they didn't waste time, they came in, got to work, did their tasks and they were done with it. They didn't have to spend fifteen days to figure out what they were going to do and then another fifteen days trying to do what needed to be done.

As Fred concluded, this process was a strong indicator of the broad institutional climate:

I think this probably is a reflection of the total climate that we developed on campus.

As Fred asserted in the following remarks, the faculty were distinguished in their ability to achieve consensus, although they are generally the most difficult segment to work with. Fred also commented that despite the existence of a climate centered on involvement, not all groups in the organization functioned at the level of the faculty:

The sad part about all of that is some of our teams were much more effective than others in developing their teams. The group we were working with were primarily from instruction. And they did a very good job of working together. They had experiences, they had dealt with issues and refined their skills in problem solving. And it is very significant that it is almost the most difficult group on campus usually to bring together.

This example of how role expectations evolved within the climate for mutual involvement is also a central theme in how consensus based decision-making operated at Lake Community College.

## **Lake Community College**

A thrilling moment I think that would be where this consensus approach actually worked. I mean, really, there was just this moment when you said, “My God, this is just exactly the way things should be” or that “peak moment.”

-Eric

As Eric described in the following commentary, consensus-based decision-making at Lake Community College is likewise based upon agreements that guide the consensual process, true representation, and honoring recommendations. This example demonstrated how the transition in roles within a participative organization is created through clearly defined procedures which emphasize the scope and dimensions of participative decision-making.

### *Consensual Decision-making Agreements at Lake Community College*

Eric describes the consensual decision-making process as based upon agreements that were formally developed as a part of the foundation of the new governance structure. The campus leadership teams monitored these agreements:

We agreed on a document on the governance system. We actually signed off on it and so everybody had a copy of what the model was and, of course, the leadership teams then monitored our progress.

As Eric related, a cornerstone of the agreements for consensual decision-making was based upon four levels of decision-making:

The four levels of decision-making – this was one of the agreements we reached as we were forming our new governance structure-- and there were four levels.

As Eric related in the following descriptions of true representation and honoring recommendations, the agreements provided the foundation for how consensual decision-making was conducted through clear delineation of the roles and responsibilities of all parties to a decision.

### *True Representation at Lake Community College*

As Eric related below in describing the levels of decision-making, true representation at Lake Community College is based on a systematized process that specifies specific actions that are to be taken throughout the decision-making process. This account provided a clearly



articulated framework in which responsibility is progressively assigned based upon the type of decision. This example also emphasized the importance of consultative activities for maintaining feedback loops. Thus, the focus is upon the role requirements of administrators and their accountability within the consensual process as well as the responsibilities of group members as decision-making progressed to consensus-based involvement. Eric described the levels of the decision-making process:

The first level was notification. That's the decision where the administrator already---and by the way we always identified who the final decision maker was and that would always be an administrator, that is, we made it clear the governance structure was one where the faculty and the rest of the staff would be involved in decision-making, but that there was an ultimate decision maker.

As Eric remarked on these different levels of decision-making involvement, the governance structure required faculty and staff involvement in decision-making. However, there was a clear delineation of responsibility for the decision in an administrator.

As the following comments indicated, information access guided the decision-making process across the various levels:

The first level would be notification and there the decision-maker already has really all the information that he or she needs. Notification means that a decision has been made and it's going to be implemented. But as you know, administrators make decisions, and they don't even notify people. So that would be the first stage and even that would be an improvement over where a situation where maybe people weren't even notified.

Eric describes how "consultation" took place:

The next level would be consultation, and that's where the decision-maker feels that he or she can make the decision with just some additional information from others. Maybe they'd want to have meetings or conduct a survey. And so basically they are saying, "What are your thoughts on this issue before I make a decision."

Next, Eric commented on how recommendations are considered:

The third level is collaboration and that is where the decision-maker says to a committee, "I would like you to study this matter. I will accept your recommendation, but I am going to spell out what the criteria are and if you make a recommendation that fits my criteria, then I will accept it."

Last, Eric depicted the meaning of consensus:

The fourth criteria is consensus, and that is where the decision maker says to a group, “Here is the problem, you handle it, if you can reach consensus then you can tell me what you deliberated about, what the majority would be in favor of and then why did the people who weren’t in favor, opposed.” And then the decision-maker makes the decision.

This commentary provides how consensual decision-making can be described within a concise, systematized frame, focusing upon very clear, precise definitions of the meaning of consensus and the responsibilities of the decision-makers. Eric expanded on the responsibilities of the administrator regarding the “spirit of the agreement” in the following comments:

The idea is that the decision-maker has the responsibility of trying to move the mode of decision-making up. So if you had an administrator always using notification, well, then, they are not living with the spirit of the agreement. They should try to be moving up to consensus all of the time. The main outcome really is that the decision-makers know that they are expected to do that and also that the faculty and staff know that that’s the expectation.

As Eric commented, the expectation is that the decision-making should try to be moving upward to a consensus-based decision. Further, an aspect of responsibility of campus members is to respond when the essence of the agreement is violated:

So, they would not accept notification or at least they would make it known that they don’t think it’s in the spirit of the agreement if an administrator used notification where it really seemed as if they should use consensus. That would be part of the administrator’s evaluation, too, that is, the extent to which they were becoming more and more participative.

True representation at Lake Community College involved delineating responsibilities for consensual decision-making that included team members as well as administrators who were directly accountable for the decision outcome.

#### *Honoring Recommendations at Lake Community College*

In the following account, Eric emphasized that a key aspect of the consensual-based process was that recommendations made by decision-makers should be honored:

When we formed the committee, and that is one of the risk-taking areas that people were worried about early on. When we formed a committee, the faculty appointed the faculty members, the administration appointed the administrative members, the secretaries

appointed the secretaries and so on. And so you took the risk that the faculty might appoint someone who had some biased point of view of something.

The fact was that the faculty was very responsible in terms of who they appointed to committees. They also had that power to name people to the committees and people were expected to come into meetings knowing what their colleagues' thoughts were. We weren't asking them to just act on their own.

As Eric commented, the key decision-making group consisted of representatives who were appointed by the members of various groups. As the above commentary indicated, honoring recommendations of the faculty conveyed a sense of trust in their integrity as decision-makers. Further, this commentary clearly indicated that honoring recommendations is reflective of true representation in the feedback process.

### *Consensual Decision-making at Lake Community College*

Like Fred, Eric concluded with an in-depth example of how the consensual decision-making enabled the campus to come to a resolution regarding a critical issue. This example provided a frame for illuminating the notion of true consensus as based upon the notion that while all parties to a decision may not fully agree, there is a sense of acceptance for the decision.

I am thinking of one example here. We were selecting a new information system and this was several years ago, and it involved spending about six million dollars so it was a very substantial commitment. So, the group studied, the committee that was assigned this responsibility, studied all the different possible systems, but the day came when we had to decide on which system to go with. There is about 25 people in this group, we had people from every part of the college because everybody would be impacted by an information system.

In similarity to April and Fred, Eric described the meaning of consensus as being able to "live with" the outcome of the process:

One of the ideas was that consensus meant not that you won on every point but that you could live with the solution. We went around the room; the ground rule was everybody had to actually say that they could live with the solution. In other words, they couldn't just sit there silently; they had to actually speak up.

And if you went around the room and three people said they couldn't live with the solution, the idea was, "Okay, we're going to try again." Sometimes it didn't work out, you just had to accept that that person was never going to change, but we went around the room on this idea then, because people had advocated for different solutions. We went around the room, 25 people and every single person said, "I can live with this solution."

Eric described his response:

It was just this thrilling moment. My God, people have all sorts of different opinions about this. And now here we are sitting in one room together and they are hearing each other say, 'I can live with this.' And it really gives everyone in the room faith that this process can really work.

Eric's account of a "thrilling moment" resembled April's narrative of how consensual decision-making led to expression of a "timid voice," as well as Fred's story of coming to consensus regarding the campus renovation project. These presidents have expressed the perspective that achieving consensus is often a very difficult endeavor due to the complexity of issues and the diversity of perspectives which surround any given decision. Whereas a strong effort is made to include persons from various parts of the organization, this strategy requires leadership that is focused upon constructing and reinforcing the critical aspects of the consensual process. The implication is that as boundaries for decision-making are expanded to include the voices of all participants, participative leaders must be alert to the obstacles and difficulties that require the strategies that were discussed in this section.

In summary, phase two, *establishing the climate for mutual involvement*, provided the frame within which the consensual decision-making process took place within these various participative settings. Reciprocity was established in the form of agreements that were created at the initiation of the decision-making process regarding established procedures for conducting dialogue, information sharing and resolving issues. Mutuality is exhibited in terms of the shared responsibility for all parties within the agreement process. This commentary provides insight into the transition in the roles of administrators and team members. Further, the role of the president as consensus-builder was to provide opportunities for dialogue, maintain systems of accountability, and encourage resolution of issues.

#### Findings

The second phase of the Web of Participation, *constructing the climate of mutual involvement*, disclosed that the key purpose is *shaping the architecture of the web*. The key

process of this phase is *configuring the architecture of the web*. The underlying theme of this central process is the high importance these presidents placed upon addressing the structural aspects of constructing a participative organization. An important outcome of this process is that a more de-centralized structure for decision-making is created. The key sub-process is *establishing participative decision-making settings* through a series of four key strategies that are accompanied by respective sub-strategies.

The strategies for phase two are presented as key characteristics of these participative settings. The first strategy, commonality, revealed the significance of creating a sense of unity based upon decision-making arranged around shared interests. The key sub-strategies identified by these presidents included establishing team-based decision-making units at both the work levels and cross-functional levels of the institutions. Commonality was located within the context of decision-making structures which created areas of shared interest, thereby establishing interaction among persons around decisions affecting both the work unit and the broader levels of the institution. The primary outcome of actions to create a sense of commonality is that the social and structural integration of the institution was strengthened, thus facilitating development of the climate of mutual involvement.

The second strategy, flexibility, was also viewed as a key characteristic of these participative settings. These presidents asserted that flexibility in the structure of the decision-making process enhanced the likelihood of more effective decision-making outcomes. Flexibility enabled decision-making to be located in the context in which meaningful participation occurred, thus enhancing the sense of ownership of decisions that were made. Flexibility produced the option of localness which indicated that decision-making power and control may be transferred to the outer sphere of the webbed organization. High understanding of work to be performed and of broad institutional goals was a condition for a participative decision-making process. Another important finding is that flexibility led to a sense of empowerment among institutional members as their sense of meaningful participation within the decision-making process took place. A

primary outcome is that through enhancing a sense of trust, empowerment and understanding through meaningful participation, the climate for mutual involvement is fostered.

The third strategy, inclusiveness, is also viewed by these presidents as a key characteristic of participative settings in that it also enhances the organization's ability to make effective decisions. Inclusiveness is viewed as a means for widening the scope of access of various parties to the institutional decision-making process. Inclusiveness, the primary means for increasing the range and diversity of parties to decision-making contexts, broadens the involvement of people in the overall process of the organization. Since a wider diversity of perspectives accompany decision-making situations, increased effectiveness in decision-making is accomplished. Broad-based participation is perceived by these presidents as strengthening the climate of mutual involvement as an increased sense of trust, empowerment, and ownership emerged.

An important finding is that inclusiveness diversifies membership within decision-making groups on the basis of status differentials and may lead to increased understanding of decision-making processes. However, this data and analyses disclosed that status differentials that differentiate key organizational groups tend to be replicated within decision-making groups. Thus, broadening the scope of access to decision-making situations focused on broad institutional issues does not necessarily lead to an increased sense of empowerment for parties occupying positions at lower levels of the hierarchy. The issue of empowerment and the complexity of inclusiveness in team-based decision-making is further analyzed under phase four of this section.

Last, the fourth strategy, consensus-based decision-making, is presented as the final key characteristic of participative settings. The data and analyses disclose that consensus based decision-making accentuated the process aspects of participative settings. The primary actions associated with this strategy included establishing agreements regarding consensual principles and processes, true representation and honoring recommendations. Establishing agreements included defining the meaning of consensus and specifying procedures for decision-making. True

representation referred to actions directed toward conveying the perspectives of constituent groups within the various contexts of the decision-making process. The concept of true representation accented the critical importance of a highly operative feedback process for continually fostering informed decision-making. Honoring recommendations is considered an important action that related the importance of general acceptance of team based decision-making outcomes by administrators.

This discussion of consensual decision-making discloses that this process is multi-dimensional and contextually based. This analysis indicates that consensual decision-making is based upon a highly interactive, mutually reciprocal process that rests upon a foundation of shared responsibility and authority for decisions. Consensual decision-making provided the context in which empowerment, understanding, trust, and ownership provide the foundation for engagement within the climate of mutual involvement.

This discussion of the four key characteristics of participative settings has concentrated upon the Web of Participation as an arrangement of systemic structures that enable the institution to conduct its work within the everyday life of the organization. These newly formed structures were discernable in terms of examining these key aspects within the actions and interactions of these participative presidents. Through fostering empowerment, understanding, trust, and ownership, movement toward developing the climate for mutual involvement has been accomplished. This context forms the conceptual foundation and impetus for the next phase, Strengthening the Culture of Commitment.

### Phase Three: Strengthening the Culture of Commitment

Phase three emphasizes the notion of the Web of Participation as a context for developing and sustaining the culture of the organization. The purpose of the visioning process in this phase reflects action directed toward configuring the organization around the key principles and values that characterize the participative culture. The key process of phase three is *reinforcing the fabric*

*of the web* to signify the need for continually nurturing and strengthening the organizational culture.

Whereas the sub-process of stage two emphasized implementing structures to encourage interaction within participative settings, stage three emphasizes establishing and maintaining critical institutional processes which provide a solid foundation for enhancing the system of shared values and beliefs. The sub-process is *fostering critical institutional processes*. This phase illuminates the concept of organizational culture as an integrative force that contributes to and interacts with institutional structures, processes and members. Thus, the Web of Participation constitutes a series of networks that re-enforce the notion that all members have the potential to be strong contributors to the institution.

These data and analyses illustrate how these presidents established and maintained processes within the Web, which surround and sustain the context for participative decision-making. The key strategies include modeling the organizational culture, implementing institution-wide systems for recognizing and celebrating the achievements of individuals, groups and the broad organization, providing training and education around institutional goals, and maintaining systems for performance review. These strategies reinforce the values of the institutional culture through leadership actions that are enacted at the personal, inter-personal, and institutional levels of interaction. Further, this analyses reveals how the role expectations of these presidents and others within the organization are shaped through the processes described below.

The function of the visioning process during this stage is to provide the direction and frame for guiding behavior toward organizational goals. The participative leadership philosophy, which reflects the values and belief system of the organization, provides the underpinning for the organization's vision. The vision provides the backdrop for tightening the sense of identification among members to the purpose and goals of the organization.

In this regard, the participative culture can be viewed as an integrative process that increasingly brings members into the values and belief system of the organization in accordance



with the institutional vision. In perceiving the institution as a culturally integrative organization constructed around a system of jointly developed agreements, the intent is to continually foster the development of a common belief system. The intention of these presidents is to foster a culture of commitment characterized by trust, understanding, ownership, and empowerment. The strategies described throughout this section revealed that fostering openness, as an aspect of participative leadership within various interactive contexts, is an important response made by the these presidents to issues and problems that arise.

### *Modeling the Organizational Culture*

In the commentary presented below, Eric, Bob, Fred and Joyce described how presidents model the participative culture through actions located primarily at the inter-personal and broad institutional levels of interaction. As this analysis indicates, a primary emphasis is upon developing trust throughout the organization. This analysis also discloses the importance these presidents place upon the role of upper level administrators for modeling the participative culture.

In the following remarks, Eric described his role in modeling the developing participative culture to develop trust:

It was a very conscious process. We studied the literature as far as management of the culture. Then I tried to model that new structure. I tried to make sure that the people around me modeled the culture that we were endeavoring to create, trying to make sure that our actions and our decisions communicated that this was a new day, and that faculty could rely on our word.

They could trust that if we said they would be involved in a meaningful way, they would in fact be involved that way. I think my idea was that we needed to show a lot of consistency in acting the way we said we were going to act for a good long time so that faculty members would begin to trust that when we said we would do something in a certain way, we would actually do it that way. I would say it was a very conscious effort in my day-to-day work to try and model this new culture.

As Eric has indicated, modeling is a very purposeful process for this president and involves studying the literature regarding "management of the culture." Thus, the culture of the organization is viewed by this president as an entity which is manageable and can be modeled through leadership actions for the purpose of developing trust.

Further, Eric indicated that as president he worked to model the participative culture and the people with whom he worked closely were likewise expected to model this new culture. The intent was to demonstrate that this was a “new day” and that faculty could expect to be meaningfully involved in institutional decision-making processes. Thus, the development of trust rests upon creating a perception of faculty that they could “rely on our word” and that they would view their involvement as beneficial to their interests.

These comments reveal that the role expectations for the president involved living out the values, norms and belief system contained within the agreements for the participative culture. Significantly, these expectations for modeling the culture were extended to the upper-level administrators. As Eric remarks, consistency was important over a lengthy period of time for trust in the administration to evolve. The implication is that under conditions in which constancy in the leadership of the organization is present, the movement of the culture is from contractual relationships to participative agreements reflecting shared assumptions, values and norms. The data also indicate that trust within organizational relationships is a key aspect of the evolving participative culture.

As Eric described below, he placed strong emphasis upon encouraging those who worked closely with him to model the new culture. This strategy is significant since these upper level administrators occupy positions that provide them with the ability to meaningfully involve others:

Well, certainly all the people that reported to me, I worked with in that way. I saw my role, actually I saw the other senior administrators also playing that role of working with people to improve.

Eric reflected upon his interaction with a new vice-president:

I remember bringing in a new Vice President for Instruction and he had potential but he had some rough spots. I worked pretty hard with him the first year or two to be more open to the faculty. I think new administrators sometimes feel they have to prove that they're strong administrators. They are afraid of making it a more personal thing.

Eric described below how he advised this vice-president to interact with the faculty in a more open way:

I worked really hard with him for two or three years as he began to pick up the idea that, sometimes I think that the way an administrator grows and learns is that you actually let the faculty teach you how to be a good vice president. It sounds kind of strange. You can't come in thinking, "I know all the answers," because you simply don't. I was able to get him to slowly kind of relax and start valuing the faculty more, seeing them more as colleagues. And well, today he's a community college president himself. Of course, he contributed a few things himself, too, but yes, I think that would be an example.

As these comments indicated, Eric's work with a vice-president involved encouraging this individual to interact with faculty in a more open, personal manner. The vice-president was encouraged to perceive the faculty as having more value, thereby modeling a culture in which relationships are based on a more egalitarian model. Eric encouraged this vice-president to gain better understanding of his role as a key administrator by assuming the perspective of the faculty. In encouraging the vice-president to broaden his viewpoint by being more receptive to faculty perceptions, the vice-president would be required to open himself to a new way of thinking and responding. Thus, openness is a key aspect of the participative leadership process.

This example illustrates how this president sought to instill the values of the institution into role expectations for this vice-president in order to enhance his ability to meaningfully involve faculty in decision-making processes. In effect, this passage illustrates presidential actions directed toward moving the evolving culture into a more collegial, collaborative pattern of organizational relationships.

Resembling Eric's perspective that presidential leadership requires portraying the organizational culture, Bob also asserted the importance of leadership in modeling institutional values. In this passage, Bob related a story regarding how his predecessor encouraged him to exemplify the values of the organization:

And we had a history here starting with my predecessor of giving people room to try things. I have to tell you a story about my predecessor when I was Executive Vice-President. And I said, "Gee, look at this person that 'X' campus wants to hire as a Dean. It doesn't look like there's sufficient background." He said to me, "Maybe he doesn't know what he can't do yet."

The point was he wasn't going to second guess the campus president on making a decision. That was our philosophy. The other thing was, let people try things. I have enough experience with ideas that I thought weren't very worthwhile working out pretty

well. If good people that I trust had ideas, we tried to see if we couldn't let them try them. We worked in the college, by the way, from the board down on trying to have resources that would give people a chance to try good ideas. That is also a part of the philosophy in the college from the beginning.

As Bob indicated, a primary aspect of the value system of his institution was affirming risk-taking, thereby avoiding actions that demonstrated lack of confidence in leadership actions. This philosophy was enacted through the leadership approach of Bob's predecessor who sought to permeate the values underlying this philosophy throughout the institution. This passage indicates that a significant learning experience for Bob prior to assuming the role of president was gaining awareness of how values become manifest through leadership actions of key administrators. This account also demonstrates the importance of trust in others and that leadership involved providing resources to support valid ideas generated within the institution.

In accord with Eric and Bob, Fred likewise emphasized the importance of modeling the values and principles of the organization by "walking the talk:"

When I talk about a president being truly participatory I mean that by example and being sure that the interaction that the president has with the vice presidents and the people that report to him or her is to be sure that they are demonstrating the values and principles and basically walking the talk.

Fred stressed the importance of actually practicing these underlying values and principles since the culture of the organization must be sustained:

It's so easy to just talk and then when you are dealing with people, everything reverts back to the other process. That's probably the easiest because that's the one; the known quantities are history, where we come from, our prior enculturation into an organization. When there is any stress that's probably where people are going to head back to because that's their comfort zone. As soon as the president does that then, you know, that takes away the credibility of trying to create a participatory process.

As Fred indicated, simply talking about participative values and principles is counter productive, since prior en-enculturation will cause people to return to previous patterns. The result is that the credibility of the participative change process is diminished.

In similarity to Eric, Fred asserted the importance of ensuring that the upper level administrators are enacting the principles and values of the participative philosophy:

So it's really if you are going to do it, then it's to walk the talk, and be sure that the people the president works with, the direct reports, are actually allowing people to participate.

Now as anybody knows, different vice presidents are going to do this differently. There has to be somewhere a process to evaluate that so that the feedback process includes where they are or aren't being participatory by those that they are working with on a day to day basis.

It's how you do it and then it's always the feed back loop that's critical, if people get feedback through the process.

If their day-to-day actions are modeling that which they want the organization to have, it's great to talk about it but to actually put it in place is the most difficult part of the process.

As Fred has indicated, the feedback process is critical for ascertaining if the day-to-day actions of vice-presidents are modeling the organization's values and goals. The fabric of the web is fortified through actions by presidents and upper level administrators who continually model the values and principles of the participative philosophy.

Last, as the following commentary provided by Joyce demonstrates, participative leadership captures the notion that modeling includes maintaining an effective flow of information. These data also revealed that participative leadership requires a very high level of information exchange. In order to achieve high visibility, Joyce adopted practices that included "walking around," responding to questions, and demonstrating interest in others. In effect, by creating a perception of greater access to her as the president, Joyce opened the path to greater communication and information sharing. Increased trust, understanding, empowerment and ownership were developed and maintained, thus strengthening the participative culture.

Joyce stressed the importance of communication in the following remarks:

I do not think people realize how much it helps the president to be able to get feedback, opinions and ideas. It allows me to connect people, to be able to say "Well, Janet is thinking about doing this and Joel over here is thinking about something similar. Maybe we ought to get those two together." A lot of times we do not get out of our areas to go find out that other people might be having similar thoughts and ideas and maybe we can pair folks up.

Joyce described her approach as “walking around” which often resulted in responding to questions and following through on issues which emerged:

I do a lot of walking around and including people in the very beginning and I think that helps develop trust. But again, you do what you say you are going to do. If you can do that and include people, I think you can develop trust fairly quickly.

Open communication, I walk around and I talk to people and I answer any questions that they have and I do it honestly. And if I do not know the answer to something I will go back and find out or I will get somebody hooked together and let them talk about the issue.

Further, open communication included written notification regarding events at the presidential and board level:

I send out a “Now and Then” which is basically every now and then when I have got something that I think everybody needs to know, what is going on at my level or with the trustees. I will send it out so that they can stay informed. I try to do a lot with communication and certainly tell people, I get so many emails and for me to be able to email everybody back, I can’t do.

Joyce emphasized below that interacting on a face to face level is her preferred method for keeping people informed and establishing and maintaining an effective means for communication:

I like the interaction and talking to people and face to face contact so very rarely will I email back unless it is just “Can you attend this meeting? Yes, no, whatever.” But I will either spend my late afternoon going around talking to people or I will call them on the phone. I think people appreciate that...that I would call them and I expect them to call me too. If you have any questions call me and then they email and I say, “Why didn’t you call me?” and they say, “I would not call you, you are too busy.” So I say, “Well, you are busy too. Let’s just talk it over on the phone and discuss it.”

As Joyce described in the following remarks, modeling open communication required that she establish trust through demonstrating her personal interest in contributions made by individual members:

I think establishing trust is showing that you are interested in what other people are doing. We had a man at Lincoln Community College who is an expert in the area in which he teaches. He does a lot of research on it, he takes off every summer and goes and does his traveling. I went over and spent an hour with him in the lab one day and he got to show me all of his research. He was one of my best buddies from that day on because I just took an interest in what he was doing.

In addition to interacting with others on an individual basis, Joyce remarked that developing trust also includes maintaining contact on the basis of work areas:

I will go around to develop trust and I will go to each department or division during the first year and have lunch with everybody. It is just a brown bag lunch, but I like to do that sort of thing. I will have monthly meetings with all faculty, anybody who wants to show up. I do that with staff as well. It is a chance for me to just keep them informed and to let them ask me questions. There are a lot of rumors that go around a college, as you know, and for people to be able to come in and be able to ask me personally about a rumor or about something they heard, or about the budget, that helps develop trust.

Joyce also routinely attended various meetings and campus events:

I go to meetings...I will go to faculty senate meetings, sports staff meetings and student government meetings. I may not stay for the whole thing but I at least stop in and if people have questions and if I need to participate in something, I certainly will do that. I go to events on campus. We have always had sports teams, so I go to those. I go to the music performances and the theatre and anything that I can pull off the calendar that I can fit in, I'll go do that.

Joyce noted that it is essential that members perceive the president as genuinely caring about their contributions to the institution:

I try to do that kind of thing because I find that there are so many things that I do not know about in so many areas that I like to learn all that stuff too.

That helps develop trust because people think that you do care, and you do. It is your college and you want to go to those things and you want to be a part of them.

As this commentary by Joyce demonstrated, it is highly important that participative presidents demonstrate interest in the contributions made by members and to show recognition that they value their perspective and efforts. Through modeling a highly visible style of interaction, participative leadership reinforces the view that the leader is highly engaged in the everyday life of the institution, thus strengthening the sense of trust throughout the organization. The culture of commitment is reinforced since the expectation is established that the president will continue interest and appreciation, thus establishing the responsibility of members to strive continually to further the aims of the organization.

### *Institution-wide systems for recognition and celebration*

This section also demonstrates the significance these presidents place upon developing an institutional setting that supports reinforcement of the values of the organization. These data and analyses demonstrate that these presidents implement and sustain institutional level systems for rewarding and celebrating actions that correspond to the value structure of their respective institutions. This strategy reinforces the fabric of the web through systems which underscore the achievements of individuals, groups and the broader organization, thus reinforcing commitment to the institution.

In the following remarks, Bob asserted the importance of the institutional recognition and reward system for reinforcing the organizational culture:

We worked on that, both my predecessor and I, worked on that in terms of what we recognized, who we rewarded, what we had to say and continued to work on in our publications everything else to embody that concern into the fabric of the college. It was, I truly will tell you, we, both of us thought about that everyday in terms of that. . .when a book was written about the college by John Roueche, in which it had been declared by him "the best community college in the country" based on a survey, and they spent some time here writing about one thing that they found consistent was the full understanding of the college, what it was about, why it was there and what we valued. That, I think, is the foundation that helped the college in its achievement, particularly working with under-prepared people.

As this passages indicates, Bob expressed his perspective that systems of recognition and reward for furthering understanding of the goals of the institution was designed to "embody that concern into the fabric of the college."

Bob further commented on how celebration and reward processes bolster commitment to broad organizational values. As Bob remarked in the following passage, faculty commitment within the higher education setting tends to be narrowly focused upon their disciplines:

Now the other side of higher education is that the people tend to be committed to their disciplines and the natural way to go is to just really want to deal with the best and the brightest. And to get people to understand that while we certainly want to do that at community colleges, and I think we did a good job of providing special programs on that end of things, that there are plenty of people doing that. The most important contribution we can make is to deal with those who otherwise will not make it.



Bob asserted the importance of focusing celebratory processes upon the key values of the institution:

Even when we celebrate our successes we tend to celebrate the person who became president of a college who started under-prepared or the person who is a politician or mayor or whatever else. And that's important, but more important is the breadth of people who we were able to help to get to the point where they are self-sufficient. That's the real measure of the quality of what a community college does.

Bob emphasized:

What we do is to be sure to recognize the work of the people who work with under-prepared students and the value of that.

As this passage indicated, the broad institutional value of access was affirmed through recognition and celebration. Moreover, the scope of systems for recognition and celebration is broad so that all campus members who participated in this effort receive visible institutional recognition. This illustrates the importance of the participative vision in reinforcing the values, goals and principles of the participative organization. Further, Bob emphasized the importance of the feedback process:

What we do is continue to report back and tell people about the successes of students and to tell people about what faculty is doing to help under-prepared students. When we recognize excellence in teaching, to recognize those who work with the lower prepared students.

When we give recognition and promotions, when we permit people to go to conferences, when we help people with publications, all of these things that indicate what the place is about and what's important is what you deal with to get people to understand what it's about.

So it's both deeds, which I've been talking about, but it's also words and what you talk about and what you report on and what you have valued and what you bring before your board to talk about. All of these things, and what you bring before your community, and what you go for funds for and whether you use grant money. All of these things, it's basically being that. . . in words and deeds and not letting that become something that sits in the back of the agenda, but rather is in front of the agenda.

As Bob asserted, a primary purpose of these systems for recognition and celebration is creating broad understanding of the overall goals of the organization. Understanding is thus a key aspect of the culture of commitment, since understanding leads to a sense of the priorities and objectives of the institution.

In accord with Bob, April described a comprehensive recognition and reward system at Valley Community College that serves as an integrative mechanism in fostering a sense of common purpose around key institutional values. April's account is reflective of the importance Eric placed upon openness as a characteristic of the participative culture. In this regard, April described how she shaped the perception that openness within interactive settings was a key institutional value:

And as one consultant said to me, "You know, April, somebody in the institution has to be corny." So I have decided, it's me. I have to be that way first and so we do corny things. We have a celebration day coming up next week and one of the things I created were two different kinds of awards—this relates to participative governance or leadership. I decided to create – our logo is the eagle flying over the mountain—so I had a pin made of a beautiful stylized eagle, sterling silver, and another sterling silver pin of a bear.

April described the eagle and bear awards:

Anyway, I have these two awards and when I give the eagle, I give them to teams. The eagle award is for teams who have been successful and gotten great results. We use the concept of the team being the eagle, which is a symbol of leadership and potency and that is lifted on air. It is the wind beneath my wings and that they are the wind—whoever gets this award is the wind beneath the wings of Valley Community College, and I play that song and make them sing it.

We're at this picnic ground and we are in the open air and we have a great sound system because they play music all day. But the only rendition of, maybe you can help me, the only rendition of this tune is the Bette Midler rendition from "Beaches" and it's way too high. But people do it, they sing. I get all the people who have gotten these awards to stand up in front of all the rest and they stand there while we sing it to them. So last year I let them sit down and I got all the administrative leadership team to come up and we did the can-can and sang a song to them.

April stressed the significance of sustaining the "heart in an institution,"

I think that's an important thing, for keeping heart in an institution is to be able to speak with heart and do things that come from the heart and encourage everyone else to speak from the heart. I use that quote from Peter Senge all the time. I have it on the overhead projection, and I use it at every presentation. I make and I use it with the college all the time—that "True participation comes from allowing everyone in the institution time to speak from the heart."

As April has described, a colorful, festive celebration had become part of the rituals of this institution's cultural life, whereby team members are visibly honored for group-based results. In honoring high performing teams, these symbolic gestures reinforce collaborative, team-based

activities, thereby reinforcing the values that maintain an institution with heart. This comment also indicates that this president drew from experts on participation such as Peter Senge that assisted in creating understanding of the philosophical basis of this approach.

Further, April's account depicts how this recognition and celebration system served as an integrative mechanism for merging inter-personal interaction with interaction that takes place at the institutional level. As the reader may recall, under the category Participative Passages April described how she worked to ameliorate a vice-president's resistance to establishing a climate for participative decision-making. April described how Harry intimidated faculty and others and when she confronted him, he responded with hostility. Eventually, April was able to build a more collaborative relationship with him through reinforcing the positive aspects of his leadership. As April had explained previously, she approached him in an open manner, thereby creating a context for mutual discussion around this conflicted relationship.

In the following account, April described how the apparent resolution of this conflict with Harry became part of the cultural lore of the institution:

Does this story have to do with participation? Yes, it has to do with how you get people to function with heart.

So I went to an ACCT meeting that fall and it was in Santa Fe and I was wandering around looking for something lovely to take home with me from all those shops. I went into this shop and there was this necklace, it was a bear necklace, very, very expensive, all turquoise. I kept putting it on and then I'd put on cheaper things and I would put that back on and on and off and on and off.

Finally, the owner came up to me and said, "You want that necklace." And I said, "Yes, but I can't afford it." And he said, "I'm going to sell it to you at cost." So I got it for a song and then I thought, I need to know more about the bear, so I went to the museum up the street and bought a book on native American symbols and found a story about the bear as a symbol of unconditional love.

April related that she asked Harry's permission to share the story of how the conflict in their relationship was resolved:

So at Christmas that year I gave everyone on the administrative leadership team a bear of some kind—a silver necklace, pendant or a sculpture for their desk or a bracelet or something. And then I asked Harry if I could tell this story and he said, "Yes," so I told the story. I said, "This is what I believe we need to be about, unconditional love."

This account is a vivid description of how the apparent resolution of an antagonistic inter-personal interaction between the president and a key administrator became woven into the cultural fabric of the institution. Through developing and maintaining symbolic representations of the developing participative culture which encouraged recognition, acknowledgement and resolution of conflict, this president encouraged members to share and embrace the values of this institution. Moreover, April described how the bear award, as a symbol of unconditional love, became further institutionalized into the organizational culture:

Then I created this bear award to award people who made the college community a family, not just a place to work. So somebody who has done something wonderful, like last year there was a person who was injured very badly in a car accident, she will never walk or move again, they had an incredible fund raiser for her and raised \$50,000 for her family and we gave an award to the entire campus for that work and that kind of thing.

April remarked on additional criteria for presenting the bear award:

Or the person who does some kind of healing within the college community or demonstrates unconditional love –healing an emotional situation, facing conflict. So I think that's another example of ways to create heart and to get people to revive their heart.

As April indicated, in one instance the bear award was given to an entire campus for its work in constructing the college into a family-like setting, rather than a customary work place. The bear award was also given to an individual member who exemplified values of the campus culture by demonstrating “unconditional love.” Thus, the organizational culture was created and maintained through leadership designed to “create heart and to get people to revive their heart.”

April's account provided insight into how the art of storytelling reinforces the symbolic aspects of the values and beliefs of the institutional culture. This account is also a compelling example of how openness in organizational relationships was exemplified through presidential actions and interaction. Thus, this recognition and reward system served to integrate the campus around a common belief system at the inter-personal, group and institutional levels.

*Providing education and training around key institutional goals*

In the following section, these presidents emphasized the importance of education and training experiences that encouraged understanding of and commitment to institutional goals. Since, these opportunities were extended to a broad cross-section of the organization, these experiences reinforced the fabric of the web through fostering increased understanding and broader empowerment.

April described some aspects of the leadership programs she implemented at Valley Community College which fostered the value of being “a leader with heart.”

The thinking of Margaret Wheatley is very important to me. And as a matter of fact we have created a leadership program—this college has many leadership programs, but the most recent one we’ve created is a region wide one, based on the principles of the *New Science* created by a man named Joe Jaworski, called the American Leadership Program. We are part of a national network. Joe Jaworski has written the book called *Synchronicity*, very much the same concepts and principles as Margaret Wheatley. They reflect his own journey and helped create this program based on Margaret Wheatley’s life. It is based on participative leadership, collaboration and not so much the skills of leadership, not so much what you do, but who you are. Again, being a leader with heart.

This passage reveals that this leadership program was focused upon developing the person, rather than acquiring specific leadership skills. Further, this leadership program linked the institution to the external environment and provided a comprehensive context in which leadership development took place. April also noted that the college had implemented a training system for leading teams:

We have trained facilitators throughout the college now and we need to train more.

Thus, April’s comments demonstrate that training and education were focused upon institutional values that underlie participative leadership. Leadership training and education at Valley Community College were based on institutional priorities such as personal development and team based decision-making.

Like April, Fred also emphasized the importance of ongoing training and education. Fred’s account is significant since it disclosed the consequences to the institution resulting from inability to provide an adequate level of education and training.

Probably the most frustrating part of the whole process was that the campus couldn't afford to have ongoing staff development related to the teaming process and that was the one that was probably the most disappointing. It was too costly for the campus to continue that ongoing professional development in that area.

Now we did have people attending conferences and things like that. We tried to bring people in and hire people and get them training so that they could become our on-campus professional development person related to teaming processes. Just as soon as you got them trained, they took off and went somewhere. So that was a losing process as I said.

In the following account, Fred asserted the importance of providing ongoing training for reinforcing understanding of participative decision-making:

We just couldn't afford to bring in consultants because of the expense. But probably the most disappointing part of it is a sobering realization was that if you are going to have any kind of an ongoing teaming process and an on-going training like that you have to have professionals coming in.

It has to be an ongoing process of training and retraining and just giving people refresher courses in what is going on. There are always a lot of people coming and going at any campus. You have to have a process for those people to be trained because they come in from other organizations, and they have no idea what a teaming process is. Some of them look at it and say, "That is not the way to do it. You need to change it back to 'The president makes the decision, and they say 'yes.''" So you need to bring those people into the process.

Fred spoke to the importance of training processes in terms of personal values and guiding principles and how that impacts the decision-making process:

So to do it differently, one would be that we would just have to find a way to devote resources to having ongoing on-campus and frequent training in the teaming process. That would include everything from people understanding about different personality types, how they make decisions, that people see the world in different ways, and that we come from different backgrounds. We have different values, we have different guiding principles in our own personal lives and that we bring that baggage to the campus.

And then we are trying to bring a group of people together in a teaming process to make a decision, everybody comes into that from a different background, a different value structure and with basically differing expectations.

Fred referenced the importance of language in the construction of meaning:

Another part of that is we all speak the English language but we do not view the same words as having the same meaning attached to the words. So there would be a tremendous amount of in-service training, with people being involved in those kind of processes so that they could improve and then understand the teaming process and become more effective at that.

Fred commented on how an ongoing support system could involve exchanges with a peer institution:

The other thing that would be needed is a peer institution that you could do exchanges with and have people traveling, getting together and just discussing the process.

Fred stressed that much greater potential could have been reached for his institution if greater resources had been available:

My guess is that if we had done that over time, and if we had brought somebody in, then they would have recognized the full potential of the teaming process.

Fred related below that his biggest regret was that he had not found a method for funding ongoing training and education:

We probably would have had an even more dynamic process with many more ideas flowing in and out of this process if we could have provided them with the training and support systems that they needed, so that is probably my biggest regret. If I ever tried it again, that would be the one thing that you would have to find a way to do, be sure that there is an ongoing support system.

These data and analyses have illustrated the significance these presidents placed upon an ongoing system of education and training centered around strengthening the cultural orientation of the institution. The focus of these support systems was on creating and deepening understanding of the impact of guiding principles and values in the professional lives of individuals. The intended outcome was to create a context in which the meaning of participative decision-making was continually created and enhanced within the value structure of the institution.

#### *Maintaining systems for evaluating performance in alignment with institutional goals*

This section reveals how systems for evaluating professional performance are constructed within the institutional framework of these institutions. These data and analyses reveal that through establishing a context for evaluating performance in alignment with institutional goals, strategies for empowerment were skillfully managed. This analysis also reveals how the sanctioning process sustained adherence and commitment to the norms, values and belief system of the organization.

Fred related his perspective on the empowerment process as providing a “manner to participate” within the context of achieving the work of the organization:

I think of empowerment as being several things. One is you get people some control over their environment which they work. This is an empowering process and the empowering process gives them a manner to participate in the things that are important to them on a day-to-day basis.

The second part of the empowerment process is that you could hope then that there are people in those settings that as they have more interaction with and control over others, that they contribute.

In the following passage, Fred described his perspective on how the promotion process within a participative organization may be viewed as a form of empowerment. This commentary provides insight into how the realignment of power relationships within the organization can be implemented:

Then there’s a learning process. Maybe then they are ready to move on to another level of empowerment, which may be what we always thought about a promotion. This is a different way of saying it. Through empowerment they get to develop their talents and skills, and then that means that they are ready for another level in the organization.

Then if they do, then the empowerment has to get redefined again because it’s not the way it was before. This is a different level and different empowerment. This person now has to let the new person who comes in be empowered in the respective role in which they were before.

In some ways the president has the most and the least empowerment of anybody in the organization.

Fred linked ownership to the empowerment process as an indicator of investment in pursuing institutional goals:

The ownership aspect of this is that it really comes down to when you have ownership of something you are willing to invest time and energy into it. People who don’t have ownership go through the motions. The person who has ownership is interested in improving, perfecting, doing better, expanding what’s going on, making it more relevant to whoever is out there. That’s the difference between the person who has ownership and the one that doesn’t.

This commentary on the empowerment process within a participative organization indicates that it is viewed as a series of reciprocal actions in which mutual exchange occurs. As the empowered person interfaces with the organization through interaction and influence over others, a learning



process should occur. Increased understanding of the philosophy, principles and goals of the organization lead to empowerment at another level of the organization. As the contribution of individuals to the organization increases, the higher the level of empowerment. This is an expanding, self-reinforcing process for individuals, groups and the organization.

Further, this commentary on the empowerment process within a participative organization illustrates how these presidents perceived the allocation of power and control within a participative organization. First, the concept of empowerment is situated within settings in which people are able to participate meaningfully. In other words, it applies to contexts in which members perceive that they have influence within their everyday work life. It refers to those aspects they feel are important to them and the institution. Second, empowerment is viewed as an interactive learning process regarding the issue of control and contribution within the work area. Third, empowerment is conceived as a developmental process so that an increase in talent development and skill attainment becomes translated into a higher level of control within the organization. At the same time, the concept of empowerment extends beyond the concept of control, since the empowered individual is increasingly accountable and responsible as empowerment levels increase. Fourth, empowerment means not only taking on a more influential position within the institution, but also letting go of expectations and requirements of the previous role so that another can move into this role without interference from his/her predecessor. Fifth, this president specifically ties the notion of ownership to the empowerment process. As Fred has commented, whereas members who do not possess ownership tend to give the appearance of participation, those who experience ownership are actively engaged within the institution. The implication is that in an empowered organization, a president has both “the most and the least power” compared to that of others.

In contrast to the concept of empowerment as a means of enhancing the influence of individuals for the welfare of the organization, Fred also spoke of the importance of sanctioning.

In the following account, Fred linked sanctioning to the issue of accountability. Fred described circumstances under which top-level administrators, whose actions are incongruent with institutional values and norms, should depart the organization:

I think in the future, doing it again, there'd be a point in time where the people who report to the president would either do it or have to exit the organization and go somewhere else if they don't like the style that's going on in the organization.

Fred specified the conditions under which this form of sanction would be indicated:

But to do that you've got to have support from your board, you've got to have support from the rest of the campus and all those things. I think that there's somewhere in there that there's a point in time where people get to sit back and play their games and sabotage what is going on. But there is a point in time where you just say, "that's it" and of course they've had warnings and they've had directives and various thing that they know it's coming.

Fred asserted the importance of using this extreme form of sanctioning in the following comment:

They don't get to mess up the organization, they don't get to ignore it, they don't get to thumb their nose at what's going on. They have to be a part of the process.

As Fred asserted below, the day-to-day actions of vice-presidents are critically important as a means of integrating the culture throughout the organization:

The key to the real integration of it in through the organization is from the vice presidents' level down. The president sets the tone and works with the vice presidents, but what they do on a daily basis tells people whether it's a true participatory process or whether it's just the latest flavor of the month that's coming around, "We'll wait through this and then it will be called something else next year, next week, or we just have to wait for the next president to come in and things will change and we're back to normal."

As Fred observed, a system for sanctioning actions inconsistent with participative values and norms is a significant aspect of the organization. Further, Fred emphasized that the actions of vice-presidents are critically important to creating a perception of the credibility of the change process since they should serve as an integrative force within the everyday life of the organization. Under circumstances that support the removal of an administrator who fails to demonstrate accountability and responsibility, the ultimate sanction should be undertaken by the president.

Fred's perception that the performance evaluation system should be closely tied to the culture of the organization is also corroborated by Eric. Eric provided a description of a performance evaluation process tightly linked to the institutional value system that centered on professional and personal development:

At Lake Community College we had annual planning and performance review for all staff groups, administrators, faculty and the board staff. It was an annual planning and performance review with the emphasis being on the development of our people.

Eric commented that the performance evaluation system reflected the institutional vision:

Faculty also were required to do annual plans, what were the curricular improvement they were going to undertake, what teaching improvements, what institutional service. Of course, the administrators also had their annual plans based on the vision, based on the strategic plans and then the support staff had a different kind of evaluation structure.

Another aspect of this system was that institutional resources were allocated in accordance with professional goals that were consistent with the institutional philosophy:

Even there, in the case of office professionals and the administrators there was a merit system. Ninety-five percent of the emphasis was on the development of our staff.

In fact, we had a professional development budget and professional development programs so that when people indicated what their priorities were for the year, with the faculty, for example, the deans then worked on a budget to allocate to faculty members who were undertaking projects requiring financial support.

At the same time, this system included a point of departure in which the individual was regarded as failing to perform in alignment with expectations:

It also included a trigger, where now we are no longer focusing on the professional development of the person, but we are recognizing that this is an inadequate performer. Then that trigger said now we are moving into progressive discipline.

Eric specified the specific steps that were followed in order to encourage improvement in performance:

The first step would be to warn the person that if they don't improve then we'll move to the second stage and so on. It worked very effectively with all three groups because we made sure that the annual planning and performance review itself was intended for personal growth. So they didn't have to worry that if they participated in that somehow it was a "got you" situation, where we are just looking for something to criticize them for or to discipline them for.

Actually, the main intention was for their professional development. Progressive discipline kicked in only at the point where the administrator said, "This person is just not responding and we are going to move into progressive discipline."

As I think again, the spirit of it had to be that it was about professional development. If people thought that was just a cover for disciplining them, they wouldn't cooperate, or at least they'd be much more guarded in what they said they would do.

As this passage indicated, the focus of the annual planning and evaluation was on professional and personal growth. This process evolved into a disciplining situation only when indicators disclosed that the individual was failing to perform satisfactorily. This example substantiates the perspective that a participative organization must create and maintain a system of accountability that is reflective of a culture which encourages professional and personal development.

This data reported by April also reveals the importance of achieving accountability through the performance evaluation system to address conduct that was incongruent with the cultural orientation of the institution. April provided a descriptive account of actions she undertook to counter the actions of a faculty member who failed to abide by the key value of access at Valley Community College. This chronicle demonstrates the importance of creating a trust-based context for problem-solving, need for a highly interactive approach to gathering and sharing perceptions and information, and how a conflictive situation can provide the opportunity for developing a performance evaluation system that is consistent with the participative philosophy and vision of the institution:

I guess it was three or four years ago. Our faculty have rank, and they have emeritus status. A person who was here when I first got here had written this outlandish report about the over emphasis of administration at this college. He had gotten data from our office and what he did was divide his data into faculty and non-faculty and he called all the non-faculty administrators.

So I began a report about the student service staff, the librarians, the cooks and the custodians and all, you know so I could put direct services to students, indirect-services to students and then administrative services which, you know, took it from 50% to like 1.8% of our budget. I began to share that with the faculty and the public. Because this was in the newspaper, it was a big deal.

April remarked below that the context in which she addressed this highly public issue reflects an initial approach she took as she began her presidency. This was a commitment to the faculty senate that the number of full-time faculty would be increased:

Their goal was to get more faculty. So I made a commitment to the faculty senate that we would increase the faculty by one full-time person a year, because we have a 70% part-time to full-time ratio because we have these little sites all over the mountains. There is not a large enough collection of people for economy of scale that are full-time biologists or full-time historians at every one of our sites. We really depend on our part-time faculty to help us have a well rounded curriculum. But I said, "In those areas where the student FTE warrants a full-time person, we will start adding one a year." Well, when I got here we had 60, and we now have 85 full-time faculty. So I think that helped to build trust.

As April commented, since the number of full-time faculty had increased, this outcome had helped to build trust with the faculty. Further, April described how this faculty member violated the value of access, a key component of the institutional culture:

This particular faculty member who had written the report retired. He asked for emeritus status, and he was known to be a curmudgeon. We base emeritus status—you get paid more when you are emeritus so that's a big deal, when you can keep teaching. He had to be of service to the college and to the community and advising of students—who you are teaching and it's based on student evaluations. So they brought me his student evaluations for, you know, he taught at the college for almost 30 years and the first half of his career he got very high evaluations from all the students. The last half of his career he got high evaluations from the good students and very low evaluations from the poor students. He got sick of helping the poor students to succeed, so he just left them in the wake. So, I thought, I cannot give this man emeritus, he's lost his heart for the people – the reason we exist.

Next, April described how the context in which this problem evolved became politicized through involvement from the community:

He had people, I mean, important people from all over the community send me letters, such as politicians. He's had a lot of people in his classes and for those people he was an ideal teacher—he was a wonderful man, essentially. But I knew that if I didn't give him emeritus status – and it was up to the President to give it—that's how it was set up. We had a very weak approach to determining faculty promotions and rank. I knew that if I didn't give him emeritus, it would be in the paper that the reason I didn't was because he had blown a whistle. And so I went to the faculty senate.

In the following account, April described how she approached the faculty senate regarding institutional process for awarding or denying emeritus status:

First of all, I felt we had to clean up this whole emeritus status—what it means, how you get it and the rank. So I went first to the college wide faculty and said, “Look, I know that we’ve had a very good relationship up until now and you’re probably wondering why I want to mess it up.” And they said, “Yes, the thought crossed our mind.”

But I gave them my rationale for why I thought that first of all, I wanted to do away with rank. I said, “I think that rank is something for an elitist institution. It is not something for a community college, where we want not only all students to have access to the best, but why not have all our faculty have access to the best? At the university which is based on elitism, their goal is to keep people out of the full professorship.” The faculty senate said, “You better go to all the campuses and talk about this because people are really riled up.” So, everywhere I went, to seven campuses, I met with the faculty senate at each campus.

This passage demonstrated how April’s strategic approach to advancing the participative change process focused on achieving greater understanding of the factors surrounding this issue. She fostered a sense of mutual trust, thereby strengthening commitment to the participative vision. In effect, she grounded this effort within the value system of the institutional culture which revolved around access for students. She then translated this commitment into increased access for faculty into higher levels of the reward structure. She also contrasted the value system of Valley Community College to that of the university which she described as elitist. Further, April described the foundation of the new jointly developed agreement as embracing the values of inclusiveness and access for both students and faculty:

... I was still in the process of “this is what I want to do, this is what I would like you to support, but give me your input so I know where to go.” Then I went to the campuses and the same thing happened. “Well, we wondered why you wanted to mess this really nice thing up.” But it all happened with humor and when I told them my concerns, they could understand my concerns and in the end we decided to create a committee to review emeritus and faculty rank. And what we agreed to do was to make the whole thing more inclusive and model it on our whole concept of access for students.

In addition, April further described how the “open, inclusive process” for faculty performance came into play:

So they created a mentor program for new full-time faculty, to help them develop their portfolios for associate and full time professors. They cleaned up their act and, I also said, “I do not want to make the decisions about emeritus. I think it should be your decision.”

So they changed all that and they made this open, inclusive process that will make it possible for everyone to be a full professor and with great excellence. They will help monitor the quality, and they’ll help everybody get to that quality. And this year, as

a matter of fact, had the best set of portfolios, ever, with faculty and rank changes upward in mobility.

April described the conditions under which the agreement process evolved over time regarding the role of the president:

So then after they had the new emeritus status in place, this faculty member, by the way, had not followed the old policy for requesting emeritus status. It was supposed to go through the faculty and administration at their campus and he had done it himself. So that bought me the time to do this other work. So then he sent it in again and I don't remember the exact timing. I think he sent it in after they had the new emeritus created which took it partly out of my hands. Somehow, it was still in my hands when it came in the second time.

So then I sent it to the college wide faculty senate and I told them, "Look, I am just going to be flat out honest with you, and I need it to be confidential, but this is my dilemma." I told them the whole story. I told them who it was then I told them my concerns about the evaluations and his teaching approach. I told them about what I perceived might happen and that I needed their support and their help.

April's approach built understanding regarding the dilemma she faced:

And they said, "We understand." Now I said, "The question is, should I make this decision or should you make this decision?" And in the end they said I should make the decision given whatever the circumstances were. But, they would support it and two of the people were from his campus—they were crucial people. So, I denied it and it went to the newspaper and he complained. I got a few letters from people in the community but it did not become the full-fledged trauma that it could have become because of his willingness to go public and things like that.

As April has continually emphasized, gaining understanding of her perception was critically important to the eventual resolution of this contentious situation. Her perspective emphasized the need for speaking honestly with the faculty, sharing her rationale and perceptions within a variety of interactive situations, and ascertaining the impact this situation could have within the internal and external environment of the institution. This successful resolution was undertaken within a context in which trust had been initially developed with the faculty.

This account illustrated that an environment of trust was continually re-created and sustained through presidential actions throughout this complex and lengthy transaction. The resolution of this conflict included an empowerment strategy that enabled faculty to participate

meaningfully in designing, implementing and managing the faculty performance evaluation process.

### *Findings*

Phase three, *strengthening the culture of commitment*, underscores the notion of the Web of Participation as a context for configuring the organization around the key principles and values which typify the participative organization. The culture of commitment is characterized by increased levels of trust, empowerment, understanding, and ownership. The key process is *reinforcing the fabric of the web* through the sub-process of *fostering critical institutional processes*. The key strategies advanced the participative vision through continually creating and reinforcing active commitment to the philosophy, goals, beliefs and value system of the organization. These key strategies for strengthening the culture of commitment are modeling the organizational culture, creating and maintaining system for recognition and celebration, providing broad based education and training, and maintaining systems for performance evaluation in alignment with institutional values and goals.

First, this analysis reveals that these presidents regard the process of modeling the culture of the institution as highly significant to effectively implementing the participative vision, emphasizing the development of trust. The analysis also indicates that the actions of vice-presidents are viewed as an extension of the president and great emphasis is placed on the congruence of their actions within the values and principles of the culture. Actions undertaken by participative leaders included “walking around,” responding to issues with candidness and follow-through, and demonstrating interest in others.

Second, this analysis also discloses how institution-wide systems of reward and celebration served to strengthen the culture of the institution. The data indicate that these celebratory processes take the form of ceremonial practices that are routinely observed within the institution. Thus, these presidents recognize the significant of symbolic cultural activity for



assigning meaning within the institution, thus strengthening a sense of ownership within the institution.

Third, these presidents also emphasized the significance of opportunities for education and training around the core participative value system. The findings reveal that these presidents advocated education and training programs that focus on shaping understanding of the factors surrounding participative decision-making and the importance of the role of personal value systems. These findings also disclose that inability to provide adequate education and training inhibited implementation of the participative vision. An important outcome is that understanding of the institutional mission and the participative approach is enhanced.

Fourth, the findings underscore the importance of creating and maintaining systems of professional performance review that are congruent with the cultural orientation of the organization. These systems provided a method for achieving accountability of members, promoted alignment with the goals of the institution, and provided a context for empowering and sanctioning individuals on the basis of a shared value and belief system. These data indicate that these evaluation systems referenced the institutional vision as a framework for assessing and providing feedback on the performance of individuals.

#### Phase 4: Facing the Challenges

##### Overview

As documented in phases one, two and three, these presidents have focused upon constructing an organizational climate and culture which has given form, meaning and purpose to the participative organization. In this phase, data and analyses are presented which expand upon the general findings documented within each phase, concentrating upon the challenges identified by these presidents. The key process, *untangling the web* signifies how the complex aspects of a webbed organization may be identified and examined. The sub-process, *revealing the dilemmas of the participative organization*, outlines how these presidents have faced problems and dilemmas within the organization.

This section is based primarily upon focused interviews conducted with Fred and Joyce who contributed their insights and experiences to a more in-depth examination of the salient aspects of building and sustaining a participation organization. This analysis discloses that these focused interviews affirmed the findings of the first three phases of this category and also served to highlight significant issues which have emerged in this study of participative leadership.

In order to frame the presentation of the challenges, the transition from a hierarchical, bureaucratic organization described in phase one to a more webbed structure is briefly described. As described within the category Web of Participation, organizational characteristics have emerged which serve as devices for tracing the transition to a webbed organization. These characteristics are the organizational climate, culture, forms of involvement, processes and role requirements. These concepts serve as devices for describing and evaluating the actions taken by these presidents in leading their respective institutions.

This analysis has demonstrated the overall webbing process as a means of achieving social and structural integration within the institution. This outcome was achieved by actions which have created a climate of mutual involvement characterized by high levels of ownership, trust, empowerment and understanding. The culture of commitment was likewise portrayed by high levels of ownership, trust, empowerment, and understanding. These presidents have described team-based forms of involvement, and institutional processes based on broad communication networks and information systems. As well, role requirements have also evolved for faculty, staff and presidents.

Guided by the participative vision, these presidents have implemented and sustained the change process so that increased integration in organizational structure and processes took place. As a result, the organization has evolved from closed systems to more openness, from an emphasis on chain of command and preoccupation with turf to a more systemic, organic orientation, and from concentration of power according to position to a more decentralized form

of organizational relationships. In effect, the leadership process has centered on creating an environment for participation. The key challenges for leading the webbed organization include those pertaining to trustworthiness, teamwork and empowerment. Each of these aspects will be examined according to the chief problem areas that have emerged in the course of conducting this study.

### *Trustworthiness: The Soft Side of the Web*

In this section, the issue of trustworthiness is examined as a key characteristic of the webbed organization. As these data and analyses presented during phases one, two and three reveal, the presidents placed great importance upon developing a climate and culture of participation in which trust became infused throughout the organization. The following discussion discloses that organizational trust is a multi-dimensional concept and strategies associated with creating a trustworthy organization may be examined at the personal, interpersonal and organizational level. Further, the specific challenges include the difficulties associated with openness to others, obstacles in conducting the sanctioning process, and the problem of sustaining the climate and culture of trustworthiness.

### *The Problem of Openness*

The importance of the concept of “opening” has been described by these presidents in describing the movement to a webbed organization. The reader may recall that the purpose of phase one was to open the hierarchical landscape with the intent to establish a climate for mutual involvement. This effort was directed toward developing the underpinning for a climate in which participative decision-making could operate effectively. For example, Fred stressed the importance of open information systems under phase two. Also, in the discussion regarding modeling under phase three, Eric recalled how he encouraged a vice-president to develop a more open relationship with the faculty. Joyce also indicated that having open communication was a top priority for her as she modeled institutional values.

Joyce and Fred contend that establishing trustworthiness as a president is a fundamental strategy for creating a climate and culture for participation. Their comments substantiate the findings presented in phase two which demonstrated that creating trust is a matter of relationship building between and among others and takes place within an interactive context. Later, Joyce and Fred describe how responsiveness to others may result in a problem of openness. Joyce remarked:

I go in and the first thing I do in a presidency is go in and just walk around a lot and get to know people. I think a lot of it depends on the relationships you build with people and just the fact that you need to be able to go in and quickly develop trust, but also realize that trust develops over time.

You have to prove to people that you are trustworthy and you have to show them through example that you are going to do what you say you are going to do, that you follow through on it. If for some reason you can't, then you do not just go off and not take that fork in the road but you go back to them. You talk to them about why you can't do something that you said you were going to do.

As Joyce commented, trust must be developed quickly, and the president must demonstrate trustworthiness through example and follow-through. In other words, the integrity of the president is a key issue during the initial stages of the trust building process. Further, Fred asserted in the following passage that in order to establish trustworthiness, the president must be a "trusting person:"

The president has to be a very trusting person to do participatory processes. You have to have a strong belief that people have the best interest in mind for the organization and that they are going to make decisions that are good and they will do the best that they can to make decisions that are perfect for the organization.

These people that want everything in writing just can't do it, they can't relinquish the control. The ideal is that it will result in greater trust between those that work there in the organization and various administrators that are a part of the process.

As Fred noted, trustworthiness is based on the belief system of the president, and the ideal outcome is more trusting relationships throughout the organization.

Joyce expanded on the issue of developing trustworthiness by referencing the importance of encouraging people to "open up:"

I think just building the trust is what is difficult at first because they have had experiences where they have not been allowed to do any of that, they have not been encouraged to and it is difficult for them to open up.

However, Joyce remarked on how actions and interactions to create trustworthiness can result in problems associated with “opening up:”

The other thing is it really does open you up when you tell people that you want them to question things and to give their input. It can open things up to the people criticizing quite a bit too so you have to go around and make sure you talk, share and communicate.

In addition to the need for the president to continue to converse and share with others, Joyce commented on the importance of the team structure as a means for addressing this form of openness:

And if you have an idea that gets thrown out there and people start griping about it, you have got to make sure that you have a good team structure to be able to handle that as well. Once people start questioning then it is real easy for them to get into that mode to continually question. Once you go through that experience you build the trust. I think that is a key when you walk in, is you have to have trust and you have to be trustworthy as a president. Once you have established that, then it opens up. Believe me, word spreads so quickly.

This commentary reveals that the trust building process may result in an environment in which significant levels of criticism, questioning and faultfinding characterize interactions.

Joyce’s remarks indicate that as presidents open up opportunities for input, they should initially be prepared for interactions characterized by discourtesy, disrespect and contention. Ironically, actions taken by the president to create a trustworthy environment characterized by mutual regard may initially create opposite responses. These responses indicate that trust building involves establishing a context for shedding resentments and concerns from the past. Key strategies for addressing this set of circumstances is a reliable team structure and the internal strength of the president.

This commentary on trustworthiness and the problem of openness indicates that a fundamental condition for addressing this issue is achieving the perception that the president is a person of integrity. Further, as Fred indicated, only presidents who are able and willing to trust others are likely to relinquish the control that opening up requires.

### *The Problem of Sanctioning*

As described in phase three, a key institutional process for strengthening the trustworthiness of the culture of the webbed organization is maintaining systematic processes for performance review. Fred elaborated on the issue of sanctioning by speaking of the difficulty of attempting to measure “soft issues” regarding trust-based relationships:

You will have some who will be a pain in the neck to work with. . . . Now what we don't have and what makes all this more difficult is the fact that we don't have a definitive measures of a lot of these soft issues and relationships between people.

Regarding the issue of assessing the extent to which an individual has violated trustworthiness within an interpersonal relationship, Fred elaborated on the problem of attempting to quantify the “soft issues:”

The damage that a controlling person does in an organization is almost impossible to calculate. It is almost impossible to collect data on that. It's your presumption, it's the way you feel you've been treated, it's all soft things.

You can't go out and say that on a scale of ten we were four yesterday, we're five now and tomorrow we're two. There is no way to get that feedback. So until there are better ways of collecting the data then you probably can't measure what's really going on with the organization.

In the absence of tangible measures of “soft things,” Fred referenced his reliance on an “instinctive feeling:”

I think this is one of those things that you have an instinctive feeling regarding trust. It is interesting that over the years, usually when something is going on, you just have a feeling it's going on. You're not sure what it is that's going on but you just know something is...it's just something in there that's not quite how it should be and pretty soon it bubbles up somewhere. But at that point in time there isn't enough data and information that you know what's going on it just has to move on to another level before you can do that.

In the following passage, Fred commented on the actions and interactions required to systematically evaluate the trustworthiness of an individual:

It would take time, commitment, a tremendous amount of documentation. You are documenting stuff that is very hard to quantify. You can't pin it down. It's that soft side of an organization. We do not have measures yet to easily gather the information.

Now if you get enough people together, enough people together talking. . .but that's the only way you are ever going to find out about it and that gets back to the trust issue.

They have to have enough trust in the person that they are talking to that it's not going to get back to this person and that person is not going to harm them. Those are some issues that get in there and just make it very, very difficult.

As Fred has indicated, contesting the trustworthiness of another within the context of organizational relationships points to the issue of vulnerability. In order to address the perception that a violation of trust has occurred, a candid discussion is required in which a person who may feel vulnerable feels secure in sharing concerns with another. In this sense, the extent to which an interpersonal situation involves issues of distrust can be effectively addressed is conditional upon the nature of trust-based relationships with another. The implication is that trust is based on underlying assumptions regarding the nature of organizational relationships. Paradoxically, when distrust apparently characterizes a relationship, trust with another is an essential ingredient for resolving dilemmas surrounding the distrusted individual.

A further implication is that the decision to trust another to address a relationship problem with a distrusted individual is based on the expectation about the outcome of an uncertain event. This issue is critical, given a sense of personal vulnerability within the organizational context. The decision to approach the trusted individual with the issue is based on the perception that interaction with this individual will enhance the likelihood of a positive outcome of this problematic situation. Thus, the decision to trust another is apparently guided by a sense of personal vulnerability as well as the expectation that this interaction will in some way be beneficial or at least not detrimental.

The participative president is challenged to create the perception that the president is trustworthy as an individual and that the climate and culture are characterized by a normative system in which violations of trust are recognized and addressed within a supportive environment. As a diffusion of power takes place according to increased interaction in the decision-making process, the institution moves toward increasing receptiveness to acknowledging

and resolving issues related to trustworthiness. Thus, the egalitarian aspects of the culture are reinforced as those with non-positional power take a larger role within the institution.

### *The Problem of Trust as Process-Based*

In viewing trust as process-based, the focus is shifted to the notion of decision-making as based upon an arrangement of relationships that collectively exist within a social system. As illustrated within phase two, the climate of mutual involvement reflected the impact of strategies designed to create effective decision-making through active engagement in participative decision-making settings. A key theme is that trust in the decision-making process is conditional upon high levels of input and the perception that careful deliberation takes place.

In the following passage, Joyce related the difficulties of creating trust by comparing the problem solving approach of the high trust environment of Lincoln Community College to the low trust environment characterizing East Coast Community College. Joyce described trust in the process at Lincoln Community College as:

There were some problems that we had to tackle but the way that the process worked...there was a process that we went through and people learned to really let the process work even though they didn't quite know what it was when they were going through it. It just evolved. You could trust that you would get through this process.

When I came in I said, "This will work, trust me, I've been through this process before." "Well, we don't know how that's going to work." Well once it worked, you'd hear people going around, "We're going to go through this." And people would say "Well, how is this going to work?"

And they would say, "Just trust us, it'll work."

Joyce contrasted this environment to the low trust environment of East Coast Community College:

At East Coast Community College we could never get to that point where you could just trust the process to take you through because it had to be very deliberate. It would always go off on these side roads. Pulling it back on the main road to keep it going forward was just hard, very hard.

Creating trust in the process of addressing issues is very formidable within a highly political, distrustful environment such as that which characterized East Coast Community College. This condition required Joyce to remain continually watchful and take careful actions to maintain the



direction and momentum of problem-solving processes. Thus, vigilance is a key aspect of the participative leadership process, especially when the situational context is contentious and laden with conflict.

### *The Problem of Reversion*

In viewing trust as reflective of the participative change process, the emphasis shifts to the challenge of building and sustaining a climate and culture characterizing the webbed organization. As illustrated throughout this category, these presidents continually engaged in actions directed toward producing organizational change in alignment with the participative vision. The discussion below reflects the notion of climate as a snapshot of the organization, or the state of attitudes, feelings, and perceptions prevailing in the college environment that are unique to that particular institution. Culture is portrayed as a more enduring aspect of the organization and less subject to direct efforts for change.

In reflecting on her experiences at East Coast Community College, Joyce elaborated on the challenges inherent in creating the movement to a more trusting climate and culture:

It is so hard to change a climate in a college. If you get to walk into one that has a great climate you are so much further ahead. You do not have to work on the basic things, you can work on the more advanced things.

If you are stuck on the basics then you really have problems. It is so much harder to build trust because everybody is looking for the bad in everything versus just assuming that everything is good. In a positive climate, when something breaks people kind of rally around to fix it.

As Joyce remarked, being “stuck on the basics” means that the president is highly challenged due to a climate of negativity, and therefore the problem solving process is impeded. In the following commentary, Joyce remarked on the dynamics of the change process, asserting that the climate must be changed before attempting to modify the culture:

You have got to have a climate that will grow and foster trust and then I think that eventually turns into the culture of the college. That is just the way it is. . .that you do trust people. It becomes a shock when something happens where somebody is not trustworthy. I think that you have to have a climate that allows that to begin with.

I will go back to my first experience. It was not a trusting environment at all because people were saying one thing and doing the other thing. There is no way that anybody is going to trust somebody that way. You have to allow the climate to change and to try to fix that climate before it becomes a part of everyday life.

Again, if you can walk into a culture that is trustworthy and that they've had really good experiences, they've been allowed to explore and they've been allowed to fail and that's okay. . . then I think you have that climate that allows the culture to be that way.

Joyce spoke to the problem of relapse and how quickly the climate and culture can revert to a state of negativism:

If you walk into a really tough environment where people are negative it just takes one thing of not going the way they think it is going to go to be able to put them back into that negative mode. "Well, see we told you." That is hard to break out of.

I am really fortunate, I think, that that was my first experience as a president. I really had to struggle to come up with how I was going to deal with all that. You talk about a glass being half full or half empty, my glass is always three-quarters full, so to have to deal with negative people and try to break out of that really threw me for a loop. I'm thinking "Oh my gosh!" You just have to keep chipping away at it.

Again, it is developing trust, it is recognizing people, respecting people and saying, "Well, they've had it hard. We need to help them get better and look at things more positively." It happens, it's just that you have to be very tenacious about it.

As Joyce indicated, breaking out of the mode of negativity is very challenging and required that she be very resolute in her efforts to address this issue. This passage indicated that she focused her actions on positive approaches such as respecting others, fostering empathy and encouraging optimism.

Joyce commented further on the problem of reversion within a non-trusting environment and the importance of "nurturing" so that the climate and culture remain focused in a positive direction:

Once the climate changes then it doesn't take long for that to happen if you have leadership that doesn't pay attention to that. It takes nurturing to keep that kind of a climate.

But once that climate changes back your culture will change very quickly. It is very quick and easy to go in a negative direction and it takes a long time to build and go in a positive direction. That is just what you have to spend time on, if you walk into one of those climates that is not as positive. You cannot really get things done if you have a negative culture and an unhealthy climate.

In summary, the challenges of creating a trustworthy organization are multi-fold. This analysis indicates that building and maintaining trust can be examined through focusing on the personal, interpersonal and organizational dimension.

### *The Challenge of Team Based Decision-Making*

As illustrated under phase two of this category, the primary form of involvement within the web is group-based decision-making, primarily referred to by these presidents as teams. These presidents have emphasized that participative organizations accomplish a high proportion of productive change through creating teams for individual and group contributions to the decision-making process. The consequence of arriving at decision-making through teamwork is to foster a sense of trust, ownership and empowerment, and understanding throughout the organization.

In this section, the challenge of using effective teams for encouraging active involvement in decision-making is described. The problem areas which arise consist of (1) inadequate understanding regarding teamwork; (2) team deployment; (3) true representation within the teaming process; and (4) divergence in team focus.

### *The Problem of Inadequate Understanding*

As indicated within phase three of this category, establishing formal training programs is a significant strategy for creating and sustaining the participative culture. Joyce also maintained that lack of understanding regarding the nature of teamwork is a critical problem. Joyce contributed additional insight on building increased understanding and acceptance of the teaming process by describing a more informal approach to this issue:

What I have noticed, and people have given me feedback, is a lot of times when I come in, and start talking about teams, they do not know the difference between a team and a committee. And they do not sometimes know what to do when I say "Okay, it is going to be your decision." They struggle with that. If they have not had that before, because they do not really know what to do with it. That is when I jump on the team too and try to help them with that experience. Because once they go through that they really love it, and those are the same people who come back and want to participate some more.

You have to have avenues for them to be able to participate, whether it is the teams that I call, whether it is the teams that the vice presidents and the deans have in

their areas, whether it is through the faculty senate or association, it just starts spreading throughout the institution.

Joyce expanded on the notion of enhancing understanding in referring to the importance of “talking about teamwork:”

When I walk into a college, I start talking about teamwork and how we are going to get people involved. It depends on the college culture as to what kind of reaction you get.

But sometimes you have to spend a lot of time training administrators to think that way and to become participative. Often times they have either had a leader before who had not operated that way or they do not have those skills. Sometimes it takes a long time to get people to really think about bringing others in and to automatically ask the questions “Who do we need to involve? What do we need to do? What is our timeline? What do we want to accomplish?” And to put all those things on the table instead of just jumping in by themselves and tackling it.

Responsiveness to actions taken to encourage receptiveness to teams is dependent upon the culture of the institution. Thus, efforts to build awareness and acceptance of team-based decision-making should reflect the history, value system and everyday life of the institution. In the following passage, Joyce commented on the consequence of implementing team based decision-making as a vehicle for creating a participative environment:

I can do one little team, and I did this when I first started. I was in an environment where people did not know what teamwork was at all. As soon as we had our first successful team experience, I could go walk around the campus and people knew exactly what had happened and would talk about it. They would bring it up in conversation, and that is when you know that you have made some kind of a difference and that you are kind of on the verge of developing that trust.

Joyce stressed the importance of how understanding fosters commitment to the participative process:

It is something that you have to work to get but once people have it, they understand the impact that they can have on the institution. They can see down the road that it really has made a difference to the institution and their students. It is phenomenal.

Then they do not ever want to go back to the other way. I think, from my perspective, that is good. It might not be from the next leader coming in. If they are not a participative person they may not like that a lot, but I just think that is exactly where an institution needs to be.

### *The Problem of Team Deployment*

Closely related to the need for enhancing understanding of team-based decision-making is the problem of developing clear guidelines for utilizing teams. As indicated under phase two, these presidents rely upon team-based decision-making to foster a sense of ownership for decisions. As the following commentary indicates, there is considerable variation in conditions, level of input and in the decision-maker regarding the type of decision-making approach that will be used.

In the following passage, Joyce remarked on how she has gone about determining when and how to use a participative approach and specifies the implications for team use. This passage indicated that assessing conditions surrounding the scope of impact on the institution is a key aspect. As Joyce indicated, the key factors are complexity of the problem, level of controversy, degree of participation at the periphery of the web and time frame. These circumstances lead to strategies regarding the type of involvement that is needed, ranging from informally seeking input to establishing an explicit group-based decision-making process.

In terms of the complexity of the problem, Joyce points to the level of difficulty in finding a resolution to the problem and need for generating ideas:

I think a lot depends on what you want to accomplish, if you really need and want the buy in then certainly you are going to want to include people. If it is not an easy solution to a problem or if you need to generate a lot of ideas you certainly need to go out and ask people.

Second, Joyce observed that the level of controversy regarding the issue should be examined:

A lot of times when I am thinking about something, I will walk around, I do a lot of walking around on campus, so I will walk around and go to particular people and say "We are thinking about this, what do you think?" If they start generating a lot of ideas off of that or they say "Oh, God, that is a horrible idea," I think that is a good clue that you need to get people together to at least discuss issues.

Third, Joyce spoke to the issue of institutional impact regarding the extent to which the decision could result in altering the direction of the institution:

I do not know that I have a set criteria but there are times when I can remember at Lincoln Community College we would sit in a cabinet meeting and we were going through some pretty nasty budget cuts. We had to come up with how we were going to cut this, this and that. Some of those things we could do very easily at the cabinet level and other things we had to pull teams together. It is just a matter of how far reaching it is going to be within the institution.

Joyce noted that a key indicator of impact on the organization is when budget issues are involved:

Other times it is going to have far reaching effects on the institution for years to come and you certainly want to get people together because they are pretty weighty decisions sometimes, especially if you are dealing with budgets and where you want the institution to go. So I think that kind of thing lends itself to having teams.

Fourth, Joyce indicated that she also assessed the extent to which participation in decision-making is occurring at the periphery of the web in determining whether a team should be created to address a specific issue:

It depends on whether your administrators are participating with their folks and sharing information and getting input and feedback. A lot of times you can do that at the cabinet level because they will say, "Well we met with everybody and this is what we came up with." And then you hammer it out at cabinet.

Last, Joyce also evaluated the time available for making the decision:

You can just call a couple of people for input, you can call the faculty senate leader and the support staff leader and those folks and say, "Look, you know we have a time crunch here, we need some input from you," and you can go that route.

There is high variation in level of input into decision-making as revealed in Joyce's comments regarding how to "do teams:"

You can do teams in a variety of ways. There are so many different ways that you can go to include people without having to get a group of people together and sit and meet. With the technology we have, it is so easy to get input. You can put something out on the web-site and just say "we need input on this" have at it and take that. There are so many that you can do that is so easy to get input without slowing things down.

Further, Joyce remarked below on the variation of presidential involvement in participative decision-making. The data reveal that presidential involvement in team decision-making outcome ranges from low to high. Joyce spoke to the importance of who actually makes the final decision,

the need for clarity regarding accountability, and how flexibility in determining the final decision-maker encouraged involvement in team-based decision-making:

Personnel issues you never go out and do a team approach on those kinds of things. There are some other things that you make at the cabinet level. There are some decisions that I make. But, typically I am the kind of person who will go out and at least get input from people. But I also tell people how decisions will be made and that can also change through the course of an issue or a problem. Sometimes I tell folks that I am looking for input, and I really want to gather as much input as I can.

There are other times, it's the teams and, "You figure out what you want to do and just keep me involved in it. I do not necessarily have to go to all the team meetings but keep me involved and informed. You make a decision and let me know what that is." I like that a lot too.

There are other times when it goes to the cabinet, and they make a decision. There are times when it does not go anywhere, and I make the decision. I think it helps when you are trying to help people be participants that they know how things are going to work. There are times when I have walked in and said, "There is so much information around this issue that it would take a month to bring everybody up to speed. So let's work through it, but the final decision is going to be mine, or the cabinet's or your vice president. We are just working through an issue."

There are other times I have gone in and said, "How do you want to deal with this? Do you want me to make the final decision?" Because there are a lot of times people do not want to make decisions. I found that a lot of people do not participate on teams if they feel like they are going to have to make decisions. So you have to go and get them and bring them in if you think they have the expertise. Let them figure out if they want to make the decision or if they want to give it to somebody else.

As these data and analyses have indicated, the type and level of involvement in decision-making varies according to circumstances surrounding the type of decision. Under conditions in which there is likely to be a high level of impact on the direction of the institution, high level of complexity and high degree of controversy, a team-based decision-making process is indicated. Team decision-making is also indicated when the level of participation at the margins of the organization is low. In contrast, when there is a restricted time frame for making a decision, presidents may seek input informally rather than engaging in a group-based decision-making process. A strategy for encouraging participation in group-based decision-making is allowing flexibility and encouraging input regarding who assumes accountability for the outcome of the decision-making process.

This account also referenced the variety of uses of the term “team.” According to Joyce, the term “team” was used to refer to various forms of involvement including being asked for input by email or telephone to active participation and accountability in the decision-making process. This analysis reveals the importance of preciseness and clarity in the language of participation within the organizational context.

### *The Problem of True Representation*

As illustrated in phase two of the Web of Participation, a key aspect of establishing consensus-based decision-making is to establish a context in which participants authentically represent their constituents. According to April, this is a challenge for participative leadership since people must actively consult with others and provide feedback so that a broad range of perspectives is fed into the process. In agreement with April, Joyce also commented on the importance of actively representing constituents and offers insight into the obstacles she has faced.

The other part of that is they sometimes want to have the ability to make the decisions but they do not want to do the homework associated with it. That has been an issue at one of the colleges because they never had this kind of participation. I said, “If you are going to make a decision then you have got to take all of this information, you have to learn it, you have to go out and ask questions and get input from others.”

I always thought that was a little bit strange at East Coast Community College because they wanted to have the input but then I said, “You have to go out and share the information and ask people questions and bring it back.” They did not want to do that. “Isn’t this just a little bit strange that you want it but you do not want to do it for other people.” So you have to get that moving.

Joyce emphasized the importance of active engagement in the feedback process:

You find out pretty quickly who the good key participants are, versus who the people are who just want it so they can say “I participated on this team” and put it on their resume. The people who don’t go get feedback, they just show up for the meetings and they’re not prepared.

Those people get weeded out pretty quickly because the other folks really do hold people accountable. If I spend an hour in my office before this meeting working on things, and you come in and you’re not prepared and you didn’t get input so we can’t move forward because you’re not prepared, I’m not going to want to serve on a team with you again. People start weeding themselves in and out of that too.



As this commentary has demonstrated, a key condition for conducting a consensus-based decision-making process is that input into group dialogue takes place. Merely attending meetings is insufficient since team participants must understand the information pertaining to an issue and feedback must take place.

The following comment illustrated Joyce's perspective of how the president can assess the extent to which true representation characterizes the teamwork process:

Typically what I have found is when they get so involved in dealing with those issues they will go out and be ambassadors when they think they have come up with something really good. They will go out and sell it to the other constituents in the college. That is when you know you have really reached the teamwork phase in your college because people will do that and they get real invested in what they are doing. Then it makes it easy on me.

As this discussion regarding true representation has demonstrated, a key strategy for presidents is fostering true representation within the consensus-decision-making process. This account has emphasized the importance of establishing a context in which ownership permeates the involvement of campus participants. When this condition takes place, the "teamwork phase" of the college has been reached. Further, Joyce noted that the expectation is that team members will demonstrate accountability. Thus, an important strategy for presidents is to oversee the representation process so that feedback mechanisms are created and sustained.

#### *The Problem of Divergence in Team Focus*

As stated within phase two, a challenge of participative decision-making is developing a clear sense within the institution regarding the focus of team efforts. As April described previously, a team which becomes overly cohesive may lose its sense of relatedness to the larger context. In order to address this issue, April found it necessary to attend meetings in order to regain the team's focus on its goal. As the following commentary reveals, Joyce also identified the issue of divergence in team focus and her strategies for addressing this issue:

A lot of times I would meet either with the administrator on the team or the team leader because there were times when something would go off out into left field. Then I felt they were getting away from what I thought the mission was of that particular team, and I

wasn't quite comfortable with it. So, I wanted to try to either find out what their thinking was or bring it back.

Or, it wasn't really heading where I think was going to benefit the most people or something came up that I wasn't comfortable with. So I think you have to be clear that if it's going off somewhere that you tell them that you are going to step in. You're going to want some input into that, whether it's just to discuss and then again let them go or change the focus.

Sometimes it's hard. There are some pretty major issues, and sometimes it's really hard to stay focused on that without going off on different tangents. It's not uncommon for a team to go off somewhere and get focused on something else, which means maybe you need to have them working on that, too.

A challenge of team-based decision-making is that a team may withdraw from the rest of the organization and lose its sense of how it fits into the larger context. Since the focus of the group is drawn away from the original mission of the team, Joyce assessed the situation by gathering input. The outcomes of the strategies range from engaging in discussion with team members to changing the team focus.

### *The Challenge of Empowering the Organization*

As these data and analyses presented in phases two and three have disclosed, the culture of commitment rests upon establishing empowerment through a climate which encourages ownership of decisions at various levels of the organization. The following discussion builds upon the previous analysis of the importance of team-based decision-making within the organization, emphasizing the notion of shared responsibility. Problem areas include those related to inclusion and establishing expectations for shared responsibility.

### *The Problem of Inclusion*

Closely related to the problem of true representation is that of inclusion. As stated previously, true representation refers to the actions and interactions that are required for consensus based decision-making to take place and emphasizes the importance of a comprehensive feedback process. Inclusion refers to the notion of bringing campus members into the decision-making process since all are perceived as having the potential to make meaningful contributions to the institution. Since inclusion is regarded as a key characteristic of the

participative organization, the following discussion lends depth and insight into how the presidents included in this study guided the empowerment process within their respective institutions.

Throughout phases one through three, these presidents have articulated the importance of facilitating interaction regarding the problem solving process of their respective institutions. Their intent was to encourage the entire campus to feel involved and valued and to take pride in the process since everyone is viewed as having the potential to contribute to the organization. Inclusion refers to bringing individuals from various points in the organization into the decision-making process, thereby resulting in a diverse range of perspectives for problem solving. The focused interview with Joyce affirms the findings under phases one through three and adds greater depth and detail to how the empowerment process unfolds. Inclusion constitutes a critical challenge for presidents due to the issues of sub-group allegiance, team design, and multiple representation.

#### *The Issue of Sub-Group allegiance*

As Bob and Fred emphasized in phase two, inclusiveness broadened the scope of access of organizational members into the institutional decision-making process. The importance of these presidents' ability to implement inclusiveness as a key characteristic of participative governance is further reinforced by Joyce in the following example:

I think that when you get a lot of people tackling a problem you come up with a great result. You come up with more ideas, more perspectives. And, again, I look at so many different things that I have done. When I reflect back and I look at something that we accomplished at the college or a problem we solved or an idea we came up with, there are many times that I will sit there and think, "Where did we come up with that?"

If you do put people together you get this great product. It is so much better than what any one of us could ever come up with.

As Joyce indicated, by bringing people together in a problem-solving situation more ideas are generated along with a broader perspective. The end result is a "great product" which results

from a collective problem solving approach. Further, Joyce also noted below that it is important that the president deliberately recruit those who typically are not involved in decision-making in order to expand the circle of decision-making throughout the institution:

I think you have to go back and consciously make sure that you involve people. Typically you'll find that there are a lot of people who are involved in everything and then there are a whole lot of people out there who aren't involved at all. So I think you need to consciously go after them.

Joyce further remarked on the importance of the "total picture" and the need for including people who are experts in a particular area:

I think everybody has great ideas. I think you just have to figure out how it fits in the big picture. Then when you bring people together you get the folks that have value who can add value to whatever you are working on and you certainly do get a much better product. That total picture that you get at the end, I just do not ever think that you could come up with that with just one or two people.

We want to get buy in from people, we need peoples' perspectives, we need people who are experts in that area. I do not know very many presidents who are experts in every single area. There are a lot of areas that I rely very heavily on with the people in that area to tell me what they think and how they think something ought to be handled.

As Joyce has indicated, inclusion in the decision-making process requires bringing in a broad range of perspective into the process as well as those who have expertise in a particular area. As Joyce noted, presidents are rarely experts in every area affected by a problem-solving situation. In acknowledging that she places high importance on the perceptions of those she considers experts, Joyce has indicated that this willingness to rely on others implied that they are an extension of the office of the president. Given the significance placed upon the perceptions of others, it is critical that they experience a sense of "buy-in" or ownership of those whose expertise is needed. As this commentary has demonstrated, a key aspect of inclusion is bringing those who best understood the issue together to engage in the problem solving process.

In the following account, Joyce commented upon a key dilemma within the community college setting related to bringing those with expertise into the problem-solving situation:

There were some people at East Coast Community College that I thought had great expertise. But if there was an administrator involved in anything, they weren't going to be involved in it. So some of the deans and then I as well went out and said "Why don't

you come sit on this team. We really need your help.” You sometimes have to physically go out and meet with people and do that and convince them to be involved.

As Joyce remarked, attitudes toward those outside the sub-group within an institution may inhibit the empowerment process. This circumstance may require the president to actively seek out those with expertise and persuade them to join others in the problem-solving process.

### *The Issue of Team Design*

In addition to the problem of creating a receptiveness to being involved in problem solving situations, Joyce also spoke to the complexity of determining the composition of teams designed to address institutional areas. In the following remarks, Joyce expanded on her perspective of how the issue under consideration impacts the team-building process:

If you’re building a team it’s looking at what the issue is that you are working on. If you’re coming up with a new idea or new approach or solving a problem, it’s looking at what kind of people you need on a team...the expertise that they bring, the value added, the personalities involved and the skills that they have to bring to that. It’s that kind of inclusion, that you want to make sure that people are represented and that then that team member will go back and include others.

Joyce referred to the impact of involving team members in the inclusion process as a “ripple effect:”

It kind of is a ripple effect. We’re including folks on a team to tackle this problem...now their responsibility is to include others to bring back for the team and do that sort of thing. It’s a way to try to involve as many people through...I mean a team is not good if you get up above eight or nine people. You turn more into a committee. But it’s that ability to say, “Here’s what we’re working on and go at it any way you possibly can and pull people in who you think need to be pulled in.”

As Joyce has emphasized, a team should consist of a limited number of people or it may become a committee. Moreover, in the following passage, Joyce indicated that a characteristic of inclusion also includes the option of establishing sub-teams.

An aspect of inclusion that I think you need to look at when you’re building a team is that you only have five or eight people on a good solid team. If you need to have sub-teams then you’ve got those but you need to make sure that’s a comprehensive team. If you need a sub-team, create a sub-team to work on a particular issue or whatever...I think there’s that part and then again it’s just on being a team member and participating.

In addition to the “ripple effect,” Joyce also commented on another aspect of inclusion, rotating team leadership:

A lot of times you’ll see leadership on the team rotate, based on what particular part of the issue they’re working on. You may have expertise in that area so you take over that leadership role, probably informally. Nobody is saying, “Well, Jan’s the leader now.” You informally take over that position. I think it’s just the fact that you’re using your expertise to help the college. It’s that kind of inclusion.

Added to the issue of rotating team leadership, in the following passage Joyce remarked on how the scope of the issue impacts team composition:

If it’s strictly a student issue that has to do with something in humanities department, faculty may decide to have all faculty but if it’s something that we’re doing within the institution then I think that you’ve got to make sure that you have all sorts of people involved. That’s going to include at least a support staff, at least a faculty member, at least one administrator so you have different perspectives that way and it might include somebody from the union whether it’s faculty or support staff.

As Joyce observed, a relatively narrow issue could indicate that a team would consist of a particular group such as faculty, whereas an institution-wide issue would require a diverse assortment of campus members from various areas of the organization. Furthermore, this passage indicated that there are situations in which group members decide who to include, whereas in other situations the decision is made by the president.

Moreover, the scope of the issue may result in including team members from outside the institutional context. In the following remarks, Joyce commented on expanding team composition into the community, cautioning that the presidents’ primary concern is involving campus constituents:

It might include somebody from the outside from the community. But I think you have to be pretty concerned with, especially when you’re starting, you’re brand new, with what kind of people and who they represent so that it is comprehensive and they do represent from within so you don’t lose somebody. You might have a group sitting out there and they’ll say, “Well, we don’t have anybody included.”

As this commentary has revealed, an effort to include those outside the institution could inadvertently result in excluding a group from within the institution with significant ties to the

issue. Thus, the president is challenged to balance team membership in terms of number of participants, scope of the issue and relationship of key groups to the problem-solving process.

### *The Issue of Multiple Representation*

Last, Joyce emphasized that another key area which presidents must address is that an empowered organization will lead to the perception that individuals represent multiple areas. In the following passage, Joyce commented on how the transition into a environment where people feel a sense of empowerment facilitates multiple representation:

But the other thing that I've seen happen is when you get to the point where people feel secure in this environment they'll say, "Well, we really ought to have somebody from faculty." And then they'll say, "Well, so and so over here is support staff but she's adjunct faculty too, and she could probably represent the faculty." So you look at the group you're representing, too, and then try to pick the person that can best represent them and also have the skills and the expertise.

It becomes pretty clear as people get involved and you get to know them a lot better and you can say almost immediately, "Well I know that Mary is the perfect person for this and she represents the faculty and she represents the union." So you've got all of that covered and you do need to be aware of that and you do need to make sure that you are very inclusive in that way.

As Joyce pointed out, as the institution progresses to an empowered organization, the president should be aware that individuals may be perceived as representing multiple areas within the organization. Therefore, these presidents are challenged to maintain sensitivity to the evolving nature of inclusion and its benefits and challenges for the webbed organization.

This discussion of inclusion has illustrated some key difficulties associated with implementing inclusion within the webbed organization. As the focused interview with Joyce disclosed, dilemmas related to sub-group allegiance and team design provided special challenges for these presidents. Strategies were described which were intended to provide opportunities to all members to contribute in significant ways to the fabric of the institution.

### *The Problem of Establishing Expectations for Shared Responsibility*

As presented within phase three, Fred spoke to the notion of empowerment as a process for strengthening the culture of the organization. Fred described the how the promotion process may be used for re-allocating power and authority based upon the contribution of individuals to the organization. These data and analysis indicate that giving control to others is an empowering process and should reflect the extent to which the individual contributes to moving the institution forward.

In the following remarks, Joyce builds upon the notion of empowerment as a means of strengthening the climate and culture of the webbed organization by applying this concept to team-based decision-making. As this commentary illustrates, Joyce described empowerment primarily as constituting expectations for shared responsibility among all members of the organization. The central challenge for the president is constructing the empowerment process so that a genuine form of commitment comes into being. In contrast to an environment in which participation is viewed as enforced, empowerment within the web is a process of gaining greater understanding of the nature of participative decision-making. As Joyce's commentary demonstrates, empowerment is viewed primarily as a process of creating understanding of the key aspects of the decision-making process and the role requirements of campus members. In effect, empowerment is viewed as a continual learning process.

This discussion reveals that the empowerment process is a highly interactive, dynamic process that requires the president to remain actively involved. The key issues include establishing clear expectations regarding the meaning of participation, establishing information access, fostering the ambassador role, adhering to decision-making standards and encouraging team based sanctioning. As these data and analyses reveal, by establishing expectations for participation, the president shapes role requirements for all campus members, especially the president. The outcome is a set of boundaries that reinforce the climate and culture of the webbed organization, thus providing a context for empowerment to take place.



### *Establishing the Meaning of Participation*

First, the following commentary reveals that the president must convey clear expectations regarding the meaning of participation within the context of the institution. Joyce observed:

I think you have to have clear expectations that what you want people to do is participate. If they're not clear on what a team is or what participation means, you have to help them understand that. At East Coast Community College it took five months before somebody asked me what the difference was between a team and committee. They had committees for a lot of things. So I was able then to be able to have that teachable moment where you could talk about that.

Joyce expanded on the notion of the "teachable moment:"

I didn't want to jam it down anybody's throat and say, "This is the way we're going to run the organization." I just started talking about teams. I said "We need a team for this. We need a steering team. We need a team for that." People would say, "Okay, we've got a committee for this and we've got a committee for that." They said, "We want to include all these people." I said, "We need to include people that have value to add, not just somebody out there who knows nothing about what we're working on."

Joyce further remarked on "talking the teamwork:"

So I just was pretty tenacious about talking the teamwork and saying, "Okay, we need a small team, we need five to eight people." I would go through the dynamics of it and I would just do my little educational thing. I would just talk that way and I did wait for people to ask. I thought, I'm doing it and I'm living it right now and I am trying to change their way of thinking. And we needed to go through a couple of teams where we made decisions and we followed through on those decisions before people said, "Oh, we can trust what's going on."

As Joyce has indicated, tenacity and follow-through were important to this process.

Understanding of the meaning of participation was also gained through written forms of communication as well as more informal means:

It was on everything that I wrote. It was in every presentation that I made. It was everything informal that I said and it just needed to click with them so that they could ask about it.

The following commentary demonstrated that creating understanding of the meaning of participation also included facilitating a context for inquiry:

You have to let people know how they're going to be involved and what your expectations are for that. Again how a decision might be made, whether they're getting together to solve a problem, come up with input or to actually make a decision and that sort of thing. I think there's a lot of questioning and clarifying. If it's something that's very major, I might participate on the team, or I might not. I still want to be involved.

What I have found that as a president when you talk about things enough people will start questioning and asking you about it. So if you really want something out there you spread it out as far and as wide as you can and then it will start coming back to you.

As this commentary has illustrated, in her role as president Joyce actively communicated with organizational members through continually articulating the meaning of participation through verbal and written communications. The intent was to create an environment in which active dialogue occurred, thus providing a solid foundation for the empowerment process to take hold.

#### *Information Access*

A second key issue is establishing a broad system of information access. This issue was specifically identified by Fred in his description of true representation at Morris Community College as a critical factor for encouraging empowerment throughout the organization. As Joyce explained, information access is essential in order for the empowerment process to unfold:

I think you need to be sensitive to that kind of thing and then just make sure that people have a voice. I think that you can go out and do all those things and again make sure people understand that they are participating for a reason and that they have all the information.

I think that's a key when you have people participating is to make sure that they have access to whatever they need so that they can make good decisions. They can go and they can ask anybody within the institution. They don't need my permission to go ask somebody in the budget office for budget information. They should be able to make a phone call and just say "We need this for the team we're working on," and that information should be provided.

As this commentary indicated, the empowerment process required that members have a voice that reflects understanding of the reasons for participation and easy access to relevant information.

Joyce emphasized that her job was to ensure that the doors to information access were open:

I think that's part of my responsibility and the administrators' is to make sure all those doors are open. I can't expect people to participate and make good recommendations and good decisions if we haven't given them all the information that they need. Then it is their responsibility, and I talk about that too, they have responsibility.

### *The Ambassador Role*

A third key aspect of building expectations for shared responsibility is awareness of the role of the ambassador. For example, April emphasized that true representation cannot take place unless people actively engage in taking on the responsibility for the feedback process. Echoing April's statements regarding the importance of true representation for fostering input, Joyce remarked:

If they are going to participate, and I want them to participate, then they've got to take the responsibility for it, they have to be ambassadors and they have to go out and get input from people and they have to bring that back. Then, if we are trying to sell something to people or get the general support from folks that they've got to work on that too. They have to take the time to do it and do it right. That's a responsibility that comes with it if you want to make decisions.

As Joyce remarked, empowerment includes a willingness to engage in the feedback process which included an investment of time and effort.

### *Decision-Making Standards*

A fourth issue related to building expectations for shared responsibility is fostering adherence to standards for decision-making which include time-frame and thoroughness:

I don't like doing things half way. If we are going to do it, we are going to do it right and we're going to do it right the first time...that is my expectation. So, "be thorough with it, but you don't have to spend ten months on it, but be thorough, be quick."

Joyce emphasized the importance of being aware of the multi-dimensional nature of the outcome of decisions:

"Think of the consequences of the decisions that you're making, not just for you, not just for the team but the whole institution."

Joyce provided a technique for evaluating the impact of a potential decision:

The other thing that I always tell people is, as a participant you need to brainstorm, "What is the worst case scenario. What's the worst case scenario and if it's really, really bad, and we make this decision and it goes there, can we live with that, because if we can't then we're not going to do it. What's the best case scenario? Then realize that we're probably going to end up somewhere in the middle." But I always want to know what is the worst possible thing that can come from this. If we say, "Okay, we're going to try it anyway." And if that happens then we take the responsibility for it and we accept that responsibility.

Joyce commented that in the process of evaluating decision-making impact, there must be an awareness that decision-making implies an understanding of limitations, and assurance that the values of integrity and tolerance are upheld:

People have to take responsibility for their decisions. If you're not comfortable making a decision, that's fine, give it to the cabinet or give it to your administrator or whomever and let that person make the decision.

But if you make it or if you provide the input that goes into that decision have the integrity to stand up and take responsibility for it. And if it doesn't work, it's not the end of the world. There are so many things that we try that don't work and we have to have tolerance for that. I'm not going to cut you off at the kneecaps if you do something that just didn't work out.

We are going to take it and learn from it...that's how you come up with really great things. I think there has to be that component.

Joyce expanded on the significance of treating an unsuccessful outcome as a learning experience in the following commentary:

You have to have a failure somewhere in there on a team experience for people to trust that too, to understand that, "Wow that didn't work." I talk about that a lot, I'll go through and I'll say, "You know, I took this input and maybe I was comfortable with it, maybe I wasn't, but we did it and it didn't really work out. So let's go back and figure out what we need to do now to fix it or to go down a different road, and it's okay. It's alright, nobody died, we didn't lose millions of dollars, let's fix it now and come up with something else." And sometimes that's when you come up with what you really needed to come up with in the first place. You just didn't know it and that's okay too, that's what participating means.

#### *Team-Based Sanctioning*

The last aspect of creating shared expectations for participation likewise reflects the underlying theme that the empowerment process rested upon a sense of mutual responsibility.

Both Eric and Fred described the sanctioning process as a means of reinforcing the climate and culture of the participative organization. Both Eric and Fred addressed the sanctioning process within the framework of assessing individual performance. This commentary by Joyce adds additional insight by depicting how the sanctioning process is conducted within a team-based organization. Significantly, Joyce avoided formally censuring the team, yet clearly held the team and herself accountable for the unsuccessful outcome of a group-based decision:

That's what I always try to make very clear when I start talking about teams. When I get teams together, I say that with participation comes responsibility. It's my responsibility, but it's yours too. I'm not going to come back and point a finger at you and say, "Well you guys really screwed up." What I am going to do is say, "It's not working well and let's go back and figure it out. We'll learn from it and we'll all be better off." It doesn't mean that I'm not upset. I mean I can get upset with some things if we really weren't thorough and we didn't think it through.

As Joyce commented, her role involved reinforcing the idea that this unsuccessful outcome is a consequence of an ineffective problem-solving approach. She emphasized that this situation should be regarded as a learning process and encouraged re-engagement on the basis that all members of the institution will benefit. Further, she acknowledged that she might respond with frustration when an unsatisfactory outcome occurs.

Joyce observed below that focusing upon the decision-making situation rather than accusing the decision-makers was an effective approach, and remarked that egregious actions will call for a direct presidential sanction:

It probably wouldn't be at the people who were making the decision or who were doing it. It might be at the situation that it created. But very rarely will I ever...unless somebody does something really stupid, uncalled for or illegal, then they'll know about it. They'll know about it from me.

Again, Joyce remarked in the following commentary on the merit of constructing the empowerment process as a means of establishing expectations for shared responsibility. As Joyce commented, although the outcome of the decision may not be successful, an important learning process has taken place. As president, she acknowledged the limitations of team-based decision-making as well as limitations of the presidential role. Perhaps most importantly, team based processes do not relieve the president of the responsibility for exercising his or her authority when problematic situation arise.

As Joyce remarked below, despite the constraints and obstacles of team-based decision-making, there are clear benefits to those responsible for the decision-making outcome:

Other than that, you know, you work through all that stuff. People come out wiser on the other end of stuff that doesn't work out. I'd rather have a team that I'm working with and we really mess something up as opposed to me doing it, because the chances of me messing something up are probably a lot greater than if I had a team helping me. I realize

that and I accept that. That's the value of having a team because you can, if you do go down a road that's not the best, usually there are people who will be sitting there going, "Oh, but what if?" They are the people who add value to the team, because then it gets you to thinking, "Oh, that is something we need to think about." You might not have thought about it before. That's where for me the teamwork is so crucial.

As this discussion has disclosed, empowerment of campus members is a crucial aspect of an effective participative decision-making process. Joyce asserted that in order to implement the empowerment process, clear expectations must be established for shared responsibility. These issues included achieving broad understanding of the meaning of participation, assuring information access, creating awareness of the role of ambassador, building appreciation of decision-making standards, increasing sensitivity to the institutional impact of decisions and engaging in team-based sanctioning. The implication is that as the empowerment process becomes more widely implemented throughout the institution, increased commitment to the broad goals of the organization emerges.

### *The Challenge of the Hierarchy*

As the preceding discussion indicated, participative leadership means instituting a system of broad empowerment to provide opportunities for all employees to contribute in significant ways to the fabric of the institution. Participative leadership is an interactive process that involves shared expectations for involvement from all members in the institutional decision-making process. Thus, the participative president establishes a context in which all members have the potential to assume active leadership roles at various levels of the hierarchy. This section describes the specific problem areas related to the challenges for the hierarchy. These are the paradoxes of empowerment, "being in control," and participative processes.

### *The Paradox of Empowerment*

These data and analyses presented below underscore the notion that participative leadership requires cooperative actions at all levels of the hierarchy. In effect, participative leadership empowers members to take on leadership roles. From this base, empowerment provides a foundation for re-allocation of power and control throughout the organization. While

providing opportunities for assuming a stronger voice within the decision-making process of the organization, participative leadership also requires sustaining expectations for accountability which under-grid the empowered role. Joyce's commentary provides a thoughtful account of significant examples of some obstacles that may be encountered as empowerment is implemented within the organization. These data and analyses reveal the complexity and subtlety of the empowerment process and how issues of power and control require careful consideration.

The paradox of empowerment refers to the tendency to confuse the empowering process with removing the lines of authority and accountability. This situation requires the participative leader to confront the misconception or myth that empowerment of others from positions traditionally located at the outer edges of the web means that the hierarchy has been abolished. As Joyce described below, the role of the participative leader includes responsibility for maintaining a system of accountability:

There is a forum for that, there is a way to do it. There are times when I can remember people would come to me with a problem. I would say, "Did you talk to your supervisor about it?" "Well, no." And I'd say, "Why haven't you done that? That's the person who's probably going to help you out with it." "Well, it's just such a big issue, I wanted to come right to the president." "Well, it doesn't work that way."

So you still have, I guess you would call it a hierarchy, and a way that a process works before anything gets to me or before something gets decided or before somebody goes off and does something. I think it's the input and the feedback and participation that you look for before it gets to that point. I don't ever in an institution want people to bypass their supervisor, their dean, or their vice president.

Joyce's remarks indicated that the participative leader must be cognizant of how the precepts of empowerment could lead to misuse of the institutional reporting structure. This account also revealed that the hierarchy can be conceived as a process which includes multiple steps for input, feedback and information sharing within the decision-making system. In effect, Joyce's role was to maintain the official authority of those occupying supervisory roles within the decision-making process, while at the same time fostering a working environment that encouraged active participation spanning all areas of the organization. Thus, the role of the president required maintaining parameters for accountability around the decision-making process.

In the following passage, Joyce described a strategy for maintaining accountability of supervisors which revealed the negative consequences of a failure to effectively include those responsible for decision-making:

They need to know and have the ability to work an issue through or to tackle a problem or do whatever before it really should come to me. I expect them to do that. If they are not doing that, then I always go back and look at how they are working in their area.

Are they including people? Because a lot of times if they're including folks then I hardly ever see anybody from their area with a problem or issue or anything like that. When they're not including people then that's when people tend to make end runs around them. They exclude their dean and go to the vice president and that sort of thing. You can look at areas and almost tell how they're managing their area based on what peoples' reactions are to things and whether people feel like they are included and the questions that people ask.

Significantly, Joyce has asserted that her approach involved reinforcing the hierarchy by both emphasizing the importance of communication across organizational levels as well as evaluating the extent to which supervisors are effectively including people within the decision-making situation. Further, Joyce addressed the myth that empowerment implies that the hierarchy is necessarily flattened:

I'm not sure that it flattens the hierarchy often times like you read about. I'm not sure how I want to say it, but you can still have a hierarchy if you want it. You don't have to have it, but then you have to have a process that still includes the people. Because you don't want your vice presidents and your deans or other people, your department chairs, folks who need to be included in things all of the sudden be excluded. So you have to come up with a process that works everybody together.

The paradox of empowerment is that the process of broadening the scope of decision-making may at the same time result in intentionally or unintentionally excluding those in supervisory positions who also have responsibility for the decision-making process. Thus, the participative president is accountable for overseeing and sustaining the role expectations of members throughout the hierarchy within various decision-making contexts.

#### *The Paradox of "Being in Control"*

Second, closely related to the paradox of empowerment is the paradox of "being in control." This paradox rests in the perspective that presidential leadership within an organization



necessarily implies that this role requires a highly directive approach which is based on the positional power of the president. The assumption is that in order to produce commitment to the overall goals of the organization, the president must assume a dominant role as institutional leader. As the following commentary illustrated, the role of the participative president is upon fostering the climate of mutual involvement which evolves into the culture of commitment, rather than assuming a position in which participation is imposed or enforced. In other words, participative leadership is the process of channeling the organizational climate to create a culture of commitment around achieving successful student outcomes.

In contrast to a leadership approach that enforces involvement in organizational decision-making, participative leadership creates opportunities for meaningful participation. The paradox lies in the notion that control within the organization is achieved through releasing the form of control traditionally located in an authoritarian model and opening up the institution to interactive settings. This fosters another type of control based upon members' beliefs, attitudes and sense of dedication to the organizational goals. This kind of control is more organic and integrative, and requires the participative president to assume responsibility for implementing and sustaining strategies which encourage members to be genuinely involved in organizational decision-making.

This paradox addresses the problem that the language of participation may be misapplied and thus achieves the appearance or illusion of involvement within an organization. Joyce contrasted her approach to participative leadership with the actions of a regional president that relied on the language of teamwork. As she indicated, this strategy created compliance as opposed to genuine commitment:

Like I said in the very beginning, I have seen the other way of doing it. In fact, the regional president was very directive and said, "You will do it this way whether you like it or not, whether it's illegal or not, whether it's immoral or not...and if you don't do it, you're not a team player."

I'm sitting there thinking, "That's not what teamwork is about at all." You see the fear in people's eyes. You see everybody being fired and everybody does what they're told to do but you don't...nobody wants to participate.

Joyce further described the group's response to this president's attempt to impose teamwork upon the organization:

When he started looking for people to be on a "team" everybody was hiding under their desks. Again, he accomplished a lot in his time there but that's not the environment that I think will allow you to be great. Well, not you, but will allow your institution to be great. You will never have anybody putting their toe in the water because it's going to get chopped off if they make a mistake. You lose all the participation, and you lose all of the creativity.

As Joyce remarked above, this was not an environment that allows an institution to make great accomplishments since actual risk-taking is discouraged. Her description also indicated that the regional president was operating from a base in which allegiance was gained through instilling fear, avoiding accountability for legal requirements, and disregarding ethical issues. Further, the outcome of this type of leadership is the loss of true participation and the creativity of institutional members.

In contrast, Joyce asserted that rather than creating the appearance of commitment through imposing involvement, the role of the participative president is to create an environment which fosters commitment through increased interaction:

It's not that I have to lead necessarily, although that's my position as president. I have to be a leader and I have to be a strong leader, I think, and a good leader...but that doesn't mean that I have to tell people what to do. I have to create an environment that allows that. If it creates more interaction socially and more processes that work well with different kinds of people with different focuses, then I think that's the way to go.

Significantly, Joyce commented that through opening up lines of communication within an environment of mutual involvement, silos are eventually eroded:

So you don't have those particular silos that we talked about earlier. I think that's a neat thing because then it allows people to feel a little more comfortable. As you start participating around the campus and getting to know more people you tend to want to socialize with them a little bit more.

Joyce asserted that opening up results in higher potential for the organization:

I think that's a neat thing because that opens up all sorts of possibilities and that's where you get more ideas that are generated.

As Joyce further explained below, the commitment paradoxically emerges from opening up interactions within a participative environment through the climate of mutual involvement. This approach underscored the notion of social webbing or the need for affiliation within the organization. The implication is that in the context of connection with others through fellowship and relating, commitment becomes spread throughout the institution.

Joyce provided insight into the process of social webbing through a description of how interactions at East Coast Community College fostered a climate of mutual involvement:

I know at East Coast Community College, faculty very rarely went to the support staff to ask for their opinion because they were just support staff. When we started developing teams there was this attitude of "Well, why are they on the team? What do they have to offer?" Then when they found that they did have something to offer and that they had a perspective that faculty didn't have a clue about, they started paying a little bit more attention.

As Joyce asserted, through opening up the lines of communication, "the more informal web" comes into being:

Then, it kind of opened up more lines of communication. So if you can get the more informal web that you often read about, that it's okay. I go to people all the time and ask their opinion on things. I figure if I can do it, everybody should be able to do that. I think people realize then that people do have something to contribute. And if I'm a faculty member in the classroom and I'm having a problem with a student, then I can go over and ask somebody in student services for help or for feedback.

Further, informal communication is fostered which "opens up that road that takes down those roadblocks."

I think it just opens up the informal lines of communication. It's a lot easier then for people, whatever their role is in the college, to go over to somebody else who is in a very different area and ask a question or get some help or get some feedback. It just allows that. It opens up that road that takes down those roadblocks.

Last, Joyce remarked on the benefits of commitment:

It is just so rewarding when you get to that point because people feel involved and then I think there is a pride within the institution. People start taking on that philosophy and it

just grows. That is what is exciting. That is what I enjoy a lot. It takes a while to get to that point but it is well worth it.

The significance of the paradox of “being in control” is that the locus of control is shifted from the power situated in positions within a caste-like system to a bond that emerges from a strategy which emphasizes the value that all members have in collectively contributing to the organization. Commitment to the organization is gained through a process of social webbing that serves as an organic, integrative vehicle for carving paths that enable the web to adapt to continually evolving circumstances and conditions.

Last, Joyce commented that participative leadership may also mean a sense of being “out of control:”

Sometimes you feel like you’re out of control and flying in a million different ways, but that’s probably more the excitement of it and that’s when you come up with good stuff. It’s sometimes when you fail too, and that’s okay too.

Thus, the paradox of “being control” is that through a comprehensive process of opening up which spans institutional structures and processes, a participative environment is fostered which provides a powerful means for fully engaging people in the work of the organization. This bond provides the context in which people can make meaningful and productive contributions to the organization. As opposed to maintaining associations based on power and control, the focus of the presidential role is upon nurturing an environment reflective of supportive, mutually sustaining inter-dependent relationships.

#### *The Paradox of Participative Processes*

The third key paradox of the hierarchy within an participative organization is the paradox of participative processes. The paradox of participative processes is grounded in the prerequisite that presidents undertake purposeful actions for creating and maintaining firm institutional structures and processes, while at the same time, assuming a seemingly opposite stance in which processes are allowed and encouraged to self-create and evolve. As Joyce indicated in the following commentary, participative leadership requires that the president understand how the

hierarchy resides within any situation. On the one hand, this condition presupposes that some structures and processes are firmly anchored enabling empowered members to undertake their respective roles:

In terms of processes and structures and that sort of thing, you have to have structure and you have to have processes that you know you can depend on and that work well for me.

As Joyce commented below, participative leadership required that she have the ability to differentiate among situations requiring intervention as contrasted to those which indicated that she should refrain from taking direct action:

But it doesn't always work that way. You have to sometimes just let it happen and not shove it down people's throats because if you try to force things you're not ever going to make it the way you want it anyway. You might as well just let things happen and just try to manage as those things unfold and just be informed and be aware.

The implication is that participative leadership requires the capability to establish and maintain effective processes and at the same time to know when to allow processes to naturally evolve. As Joyce remarked below, an empowered organization is characterized by the ability of members to create their own processes:

As far as the process goes, you do see that people will come up with their own processes, if it is comfortable for them. It doesn't have to be mine and it doesn't have to be yours, it's just whatever works to be able to accomplish what you're working on.

Joyce offered a personal example of an interaction with her mother which provides a metaphor for how the freedom to accomplish a task according to varying processes can be beneficial:

I always joke with my mother because she has a very certain way of folding towels. So I'd go over there and I'd help her with laundry and she'd say, "Well, the towels get folded this way." I'd say, "Well, that's your way and this is my way and is your way better than my way?" She said, "It's the way I like it." And I said "But I like it this way."

So we go through this whole thing and finally we get to the point and I say, "Look, the towels are folded, they're in the closet. All you have to do is reach in and grab it, and it'll unfold the same way basically." This is just an ongoing thing we've had for years and years and years.

As Joyce noted below, processes do not have to be pre-scripted and take many "shapes and forms:"

The point is that the process doesn't have to be what I set up and it doesn't have to be forced. It doesn't have to be pre-scripted. It can just occur and it can take a lot of different shapes and forms. And whatever direction it goes, as long as you accomplish what you want to accomplish that's the main thing.

People come up with what's comfortable for them and typically they'll hammer it out at the beginning and say, "Well this is how we think we're going to do something" and it works. Personally I don't care how they do it as long as they come up with something that's effective and works well or a solution or a great idea or whatever it is.

In short, the paradox of participative processes is that they may take different and ever evolving shapes and forms and originate from dissimilar sources. The participative president must understand the nature of this unfolding and conduct leadership within a context characterized by such high variation. Joyce further stressed the significance of high variation in institutional processes:

I think that the more ways and the more processes that you can have within an institution, it probably brings more people in. It's just like learning. We all have different learning styles and ways that work for us. And if you incorporate all those styles within a classroom, you're probably going to touch all of the learners. It's the same thing within an institution. If you have a lot of different ways that things can happen then people will feel comfortable. That may be their style and they'll participate a little bit more, hopefully because it is more comfortable, or they have the ability to change a process that fits them as opposed to trying to fit into a process.

I think that as people participate more, they feel more comfortable with that. You'll see a lot of different things happening within an institution, and I think that's a good thing for everybody. I just think that as you progress in an institution, you allow things to flow and you don't try to manage it. That's hard sometimes because you feel like it needs to go in a particular direction.

As Joyce remarked below, the benefit of this approach is enhanced creativity that results from a participative organization:

If you need to change your focus then you have to step in and you have to know how and when to do that. Otherwise let people come up with what they need to do and be creative in their own way and I think they'll come up with a lot better stuff. To me, that's what it's all about.

As this discussion of the paradox of participative processes has disclosed, participative presidents must create and maintain stable processes, while at the same time allowing processes to be created by others. The key to determining the value of a process is the extent to which it

achieves institutional results. Further, the implication is that as the institution becomes increasingly participative, leadership is about “allowing things to flow.” The implication is that participative processes, both formally implemented and self-generated, provide the foundation for increased productivity around institutional outcomes. The presidential role is thus focused upon a results-oriented outlook when establishing vehicles for participation.

### Findings

Phase four, *facing the challenges*, indicates that the key dilemmas for leading the participative organization pertain to trustworthiness, teamwork, empowerment and the hierarchy. Each challenge was examined according to the primary problem areas which emerged in this study of the participative leadership process.

#### *The Challenge of Trustworthiness*

Organizational trust was examined as a multi-dimensional concept that was addressed at the personal, interpersonal and organizational level. The primary problem areas concentrated upon issues concerning openness to others, the sanctioning process, process-based trust and the problem of reversion. In regard to the problem of openness, the findings indicated that establishing trustworthiness is an essential aspect of participative leadership since the president must be viewed as a person of high integrity. However, responsiveness to others during the trust building process may result in an environment in which contentious behaviors such as discourtesy, disrespect and fault-finding emerge, especially at the initiation of the change process. A highly evolved team structure and the internal strength and sense of personal security by the president are key conditions for addressing this situation.

Another problem area associated with organizational trust is related to the issue of sanctioning. The data and analyses indicate that given the emphasis upon trust-based relationships, a difficult issue is attempting to quantify the “soft issues” surrounding the perception an individual has violated a sense of trustworthiness within a relationship.

Given the lack of tangible measure of “soft issues,” systematic evaluation of the trustworthiness of an individual is a very complex problem. It includes issues of personal vulnerability within the network of organizational relationships. The findings lead to the implication that as the institution moves toward increasing receptiveness to a climate and culture for directly addressing interpersonal trust, the egalitarian aspects of the culture are reinforced since trustworthiness becomes more infused throughout the organization.

In addition to the problem of trust as located in interpersonal relationships is the problem of trust as process-based. The findings indicate that the climate of mutual involvement described within phase two emerges in response to strategies directed toward building active engagement in the decision-making process. Findings indicate that when an institution moves from a low trust to a high trust environment, increased confidence in institutional processes has developed. Findings also indicated that a low-trust environment requires the president to remain continually vigilant in order to sustain the unfolding of the problem solving process.

The third problem area is the problem of reversion. Reversion refers to the challenge of sustaining the participative climate and culture so that they stay in alignment with the participative vision. Data indicated that within a low-trust environment, the institutional climate and culture can quickly relapse into a highly negative situation. The data also indicated that moving from a mode of negativity and attempting to sustain a positive climate and culture is very difficult and requires highly tenacious leadership action.

#### *The Challenge of Team-based Decision-making*

The second key challenge, team-based decision-making, was described within phase two of this category. The primary form of involvement within the web is group-based decision-making which enhances the sense of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding throughout the organization. The problem areas that arose were inadequate understanding of teamwork, team deployment, true representation within the teaming process, and divergence in team focus.



First, the implications of lack of understanding of teamwork are elaborated upon within this section. The findings indicate that the range of strategies for implementing teaming structures and processes can range from formal to informal, and requires specific training for administrators. Strategies for building understanding must reflect the climate and culture of the organization, relating to the way organizational members think and feel about their life within the organization.

Second, the findings indicate that the problem of team deployment must be addressed within the participative leadership process. Assessing the conditional context of the institution is highly critical for shaping the approach to issues through team-based decision-making. The key criteria are complexity of the problem, level of controversy, degree of participation at the margins of the web and time frame. The findings indicate that the level of involvement in decision-making varies according to circumstances surrounding the type of decision. For example, under conditions in which there are high levels of institutional impact, controversy and complexity, a team-based decision-making process is generally indicated. A restricted time frame may lead to strategies such as gathering input rather than formal team-based efforts.

Third, findings indicate that true-representation is another problem area identified within this section. This problem refers to the need for active consultation with others by team members so that a broad-based perspective flows into the decision-making process. The data indicates that true representation is a critical measure of the extent to which the institution is characterized by team-based decision-making. To the extent that true representation is in place, ownership for decision-making outcomes has been developed.

Fourth, an important problem area is that a team may lose its sense of direction and thus lose its focus on the original mission of the team. A challenge of team-based decision-making is that this divergence in team focus must be addressed. In order to refocus the team, the participative president must determine how and when to intervene in this situation. Strategies range from actions directed toward regaining team focus around its original goals to widening the team focus to include areas which emerged during the problem solving process.

### *The Challenge of Empowering the Organization*

According to the findings and analyses presented within phase one through three of this category, the emerging culture of commitment is fostered through actions that encourage ownership of decisions at various levels of the organization. Problem areas related to the empowerment process describe issues related to inclusion, and establishing expectations for shared responsibility.

The problem of inclusion refers to the difficulties of bringing campus members into the decision-making process so that a broad range of perspective underlies the problem solving approach. First, the findings substantiate previous findings that sub-group allegiance is an obstacle that hinders the president's ability to broaden the scope of access to institutional decision-making. Strategies include actively recruiting those who typically remain outside the decision-making process and those who are regarded as experts in a particular area.

A second difficulty associated with the problem of inclusion is the issue of team design. Team design refers to the complexity of determining the composition of teams for addressing issues. The findings reveal that the "ripple effect" may take place as the scope for solving the problem widens, and thus more people are brought into the process as contributors to the decision outcome. A challenge for participative leadership is to balance team membership or a team may evolve into a committee. A key strategy for addressing this issue is creating sub-teams around clearly stated goals. Further, the scope of the issue may also lead to including team members from outside the institutional context. The president is challenged to balance team membership in terms of number of participants, scope of the issue and the relationship of individuals and groups to the decision-making area. Further, as the institution evolves toward an empowered organization, inclusion may result in the phenomenon of multiple representation, indicating that individuals may be perceived as representing various areas.

The findings emerging from this examination of the empowerment process also reveal a second problem area, establishing expectations for shared responsibility. The data reveal that

these expectations include establishing broad understanding of the meaning of participation, assuring information access, creating awareness of the role of ambassador, building awareness of decision-making standards, increasing sensitivity to institutional impact and engaging in team-based sanctioning. A primary finding is that to the extent that empowerment is becoming increasingly routinized throughout the organization through establishing and enforcing clear expectations, the circle of leadership broadens.

### *The Challenge of the Hierarchy*

These data and analyses reveal that participative leadership involves establishing a context in which all members have the potential to assume active leadership roles at various levels of the hierarchy. At the same time, the president must maintain the positional power of the presidency in order to fulfill the responsibilities attached to the role. The findings disclose that the context for participative leadership is characterized by three problem areas, presented as the paradoxes of the hierarchy. These paradoxes include the paradoxes of empowerment, “being in control” and participative processes.

First, the paradox of empowerment refers to the misconception that empowering organizational members leads to abolishment of the hierarchy. The data indicates that the role of the participative leader includes responsibility for maintaining a clearly defined system for authority and accountability. The paradox is that the participative approach simultaneously requires maintaining the official authority of those who traditionally occupy positions of responsibility, while at the same time fostering inclusiveness from all levels of the organization.

Second, the paradox of “being in control” is grounded in the assumption that participative leadership requires that the president assume a directive, dominant role in order to create opportunities for meaningful participation. The paradox lies in the notion that the president gains more control through releasing the form of control traditionally located in the traditional hierarchical model. The control gained by the president through participative leadership practices is more organic and derived from a different kind of base. The paradox of “being in control”

means that the locus of control shifts from power in position to a form of power located in a bond emerging from collective contributions to the organization within the climate and culture of commitment.

Third, the paradox of participative processes is that the participative leadership process requires the capability to establish and maintain effective processes, and at the same time enable processes to naturally evolve. The benefit of high variation in institutional processes includes enhanced creativity, indicating a correlation between the magnitude of processes and institutional effectiveness. The key finding is that participative processes provide the foundation for increased productivity around broad organizational goals.

In summary, the phase *facing the challenges* has revealed the complexity and richness of the every-day life of the participative organization. As the data and analysis has disclosed, participative leaders face highly intricate, difficult situations in confronting the challenges of trustworthiness, team-based decision-making, empowerment, and the hierarchy. This section has provided a detailed, in-depth look at how participative leadership creates and reinforces the climate and culture of the webbed organization. As the result of data generated through the process of theoretical saturation, the more subtle and complex aspects of participative leadership have been illustrated.

This analysis has demonstrated that the transition of the participative organization constituted a movement from a hierarchical organization. The webbed organization is characterized by more highly integrated structures, and more organic, reciprocal processes. The organic nature of the web is revealed in its ability to configure at various levels within the organization and to evolve as a self-generative entity in response to environmental conditions. As the primary outcome of the category, Web of Participation, this set of conditions becomes part of the context of the next category, Revisioning the Participative Organization.

### *Summary of the Web of Participation and Application to the Core Category*

The category Web of Participation has evolved from the foundation established by the prior categories. The overlap discloses that the consequences of actions and interactions occurring within Participative Passages have become integrated into the conditional context of the Web of Participation. The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, is the dynamic, interconnecting link that enables the participative leadership process to unfold throughout the webbed organization. The properties of the core category include purpose, focus, nature, and outcome. They are the analytic devices for describing the flow of action/interaction taking place within the web.

This category is distinguished in that the concept of the web provides a special way of conceptualizing context, a key notion within this grounded theory study. The architecture of the web provides the frame within which people interact, revealing the settings within which participative leadership evolves. In this sense, the leadership process continually spins connective links through leadership actions as new structures and processes are constructed and maintained. The connecting agent is the core category, Visioning Participative Environments, since it is the dynamic, weaving force that shapes the organizational change process.

In presenting the web as both structure and process, it may be viewed as a vehicle for describing the sequential flow of action and interaction captured in the four phases of this category. These phases are *opening the hierarchical landscape*, *constructing the climate of mutual involvement*, *strengthening the culture of commitment* and *facing the challenges of the web*.

At the general level, the first property, purpose, takes form within the web as an overall intent to establish an organization around the participative philosophy. The primary movement is toward a climate of involvement and culture of commitment as characterized by the key characteristics of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding. These key factors were cited previously under Envisioning the Participative Organization and Participative Passages as highly

important for building a participative organization. This analysis is oriented toward describing how the participative leadership process facilitates the movement to a participative organization through actions linked to changes in structure and process. The most salient examples of this transition are presented to illustrate how leadership facilitates the way this process is enacted.

As portrayed in phase one, *laying the groundwork for the web*, the key intention underlying the visioning process in this phase is to open the hierarchical landscape. Through establishing participative agreements, actions and interactions are taken which lead to change in the structure of the organizational context. Essentially the hierarchy “cracks,” revealing its vulnerability to change in response to actions taken in accordance with the participative vision. Thus, the change in structure provides a shift in the context for interaction, providing a foundation for undertaking strategies fostering the climate of involvement.

The property of focus in the Web of Participation is now firmly oriented toward strategic actions for building a participative organization. During phase two, *constructing the climate of mutual involvement*, the focus of action is directed toward configuring the architecture of the web. In viewing the web as a structure or pattern of relationships, the notion of how change in structure leads to change in the flow of action and interaction is highlighted. Specifically, through constructing participative decision-making settings, webbing can be seen as a process of constructing a context for interaction driven by the precepts of the participative vision. These actions result in a set of key characteristics of these decision-making settings that include commonality, flexibility, inclusiveness and consensual decision-making. These structural aspects create the context for decision-making processes underlying the participative way of working. Thus, the role of the core category in phase two has primarily been to provide an analytic frame for tracing the emergence of the participative climate and culture according to identified changes in the institutional environment.

Third, the property nature provides insight into how changes in the situational context described above evolves into attributes of the organizational climate and culture. Since the

implementation of participative settings involves changes in both structure and process, the primary aspects of the organizational climate and culture undergo a corresponding shift. As documented within the categories Envisioning the Participative Organization and Participative Passages, the lack of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding were consistently identified. The notion of nature illustrates that in response to a change in the structure of the organization, namely, the establishment of participative settings, the qualities of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding have become aspects of the organizational climate and culture.

The following discussion centers on the notion that changes in structure lead to changes in action/interaction and can be traced by a corresponding shift in the climate and culture of the institution. First, commonality refers to the notion of establishing areas in common across institutional divisions, thereby establishing patterns of interaction which foster a sense of shared interest in the goals of the broad organization, thereby building ownership. Second, flexibility in the structure of the decision-making process enables decision-making to be located within the context of meaningful participation. Thus, it can be considered a tool for enhancing the sense of empowerment, trust, and ownership of the decision. Third, inclusiveness widens the scope of access to various parties to the web's decision-making processes. Broad based participation strengthens the climate of mutual involvement as an increased sense of trust, empowerment and ownership emerges. Last, consensus-based decision-making is a process that is multi-dimensional and contextually based. It is based upon a highly interactive, mutually reciprocal process that rests upon a foundation of shared responsibility and authority for decision-making.

The emphasis upon the procedural aspects leads to a context in which empowerment, understanding, trust and ownership can emerge within a carefully designed and monitored environment, thus becoming attributes of the participative climate and culture.

Further, the property nature reveals the importance of establishing broad processes within the organization for strengthening and sustaining the institutional climate and culture.

As described in phase three, *strengthening the culture of commitment*, the participative leadership philosophy, which outlines the values and belief system of the organization, provides the underpinning for furthering identification of members with the purpose and goals of the organization. Leadership actions include modeling; implementing systems for recognition and celebrating; providing opportunities for education and training and conducting performance review in alignment with institutional goals. Thus, the core category is expressed in phase three as a vehicle for sustaining the dynamics around the participative vision.

The property outcome demonstrates the complex, evolving nature of the webbed organization. A salient example of this property is the analysis presented in phase four, *facing the challenges*. Through findings gained from focused interviews, the analysis details the special challenges, dilemmas and obstacles encountered throughout the participative leadership process. The analysis disclosed that as the participative organization evolved during phases one, two and three, it has moved to a more open, organic orientation and to a more decentralized arrangement of organizational relationships. At the same time, the webbed organization is characterized by abiding problems situated within the dynamics of the organization. Thus, the core category is the force or catalyst for change and a means of sustaining leadership action around systemic factors. Thus, participative leadership is bound to the institutional context and understandable only in relation to the unique and evolving features of the organization

## RE-VISIONING THE PARTICIPATIVE ORGANIZATION

### *Overview*

The category Re-visioning the Participative Organization underscores the visioning process as a force for enabling the institution to move forward within a rapidly changing external context to accomplish its mission. The term “re-visioning” refers to the process of perceiving the institution with a fresh eye. The lens is widened so that the scope of the visioning process broadens extensively. The focus of this category is to force forward thinking through a highly



interactive, inclusive process which requires engagement in jointly creating the institution's future. The change in the role of the president emphasizes the significance of the assuming the role of guide to a future domain so that the organization moves to a higher, more expansive level. The participative vision is the beacon into a collectively designed organizational future.

Ideally, the primary outcome of the Web of Participation is the emergence of a highly cohesive, integrated organization grounded in forms of interaction which allow people at every level to participate in the broad scope of work. This means that members have the opportunity to make worthwhile contributions to the organization within the context of the everyday life of the organization. In effect, the implication is that significant progress has been made toward accomplishing the participative vision. The overall purpose of this sequence is to reaffirm and recommit the organization to the participative philosophy. In effect, action is focused upon keeping the dream of a participative way of working alive.

In contrast to the significance placed upon the accomplishment of daily work characterizing the Web of Participation, this category underscores promoting a long-term, future-oriented, comprehensive viewpoint. Relationships to relevant constituencies are defined, evaluated and eventually undertaken and reaffirmed. Participative leadership provides the corridor for transition from the personal visions of many into a single, unified vision for the institution. The participative vision becomes the vehicle for incorporating the interests of the broader environment into the institutional mission.

This category contains four distinct phases that portray the leadership actions undertaken by these presidents as the re-visioning process unfolds. These titles of these phases reflect the primary purpose of each stage of the participative leadership process. These phases include *opening the self of the president, shaping the vision, embracing the mission, and fulfilling the mission*. This category was developed from focused interviews with Eric, Fred and Joyce.

### Phase One: Opening the Self of the President

The first phase of Re-visioning the Participative Organization reveals that the primary purpose of this process is opening the private self of the president. These data and analyses reveal that examining the inner environment of the president is a condition for moving the institution into the re-visioning process. The key process of this phase is *building the personal vision* of the president in preparation for actions designed to create a shared institutional vision. The sub-process is *engaging in self-reflection* as a means for defining, rediscovering and re-creating the presidents' personal vision. These presidents reported several distinct strategies that enabled them to construct their personal vision. This phase reveals the importance of gaining understanding as a key feature of the participative organization as it relates to building an informed vision for these presidents.

As the commentary reveals, Eric underscored the importance of developing and maintaining his personal vision:

I think a president has to have a strong personal vision and should not hesitate in advocating that as part of the institutional vision. I think people want a president who has a strong personal sense of the future. I know for myself I always had this, just this, strong mental picture of where I thought the college ought to go, and I think it was my kind of beacon into the future. I think I was articulating that every single day as I talked with people. I was always going back to my own personal compass, my own personal vision.

As Eric indicated, his personal vision provided him a "sense of the future" and was a "strong mental picture" of the direction for the institution. In essence, it was his "beacon into the future."

This emphasis upon the personal vision as an anchor for guiding the institution's future is mirrored by Joyce. As the following data reveal, reflection is viewed as an essential process for creating and maintaining the personal vision. These passages indicate that reflection is viewed primarily as a learning process enabling these presidents to enrich their personal visions for themselves and their respective institutions.

For example, Joyce comments below that reflection is a learning process that allows her to integrate past experiences with her sense of the future:

You really have to reflect and you have to allow yourself time to not only think about how things went but to think about how you're going to do things in the future. You realize we all make mistakes and we might not do things the best way. I've reflected even on things years ago...knowing what I know now I can't believe I did it that way and that's a learning process. It's nice to go back and reflect on that because it does mean that you've grown professionally and personally.

Echoing Eric's notion of the personal vision as a "beacon into the future," Joyce emphasized that reflection provided her with a sense of a focal point for advancing personally and professionally:

It's like setting goals, if you don't set goals personally and professionally you're probably not going to get there because you don't have anywhere that you're really moving towards. Sometimes we do get lucky and we take a really good step and you grow tremendously and other times you take a step backwards and maybe you didn't quite get it right the first time so you're having to go through it again.

I think that if you don't reflect and you don't take the time to think about those things then you're not going to get any better. You're just going to stay as is. I don't ever want to be in that spot.

Thus, the absence of reflection indicates that the president will not be positioned to lead the institution in a re-visioning process. Fred substantiates this notion of reflection as a learning process:

The big thing that has to happen during all this time is that the president has to be continually learning and being involved in professional and development opportunities and being around other colleagues that are probing the frontiers of organizational development.

The following passages reveal that the reflective process is described according to several key strategies. These strategies include accessing the inner environment and engaging with the external environment. First, these presidents reported that in order to develop and sustain their personal vision, they engage in a reflective process which involves "stepping back" from their role as actively engaged in the daily work of the institution. For example, Eric describes how he drew back and reflected during his role as a president, stressing the importance of having extended time away:

As far as the techniques I used, I always took the month of July off as my vacation month. I think that's very important. I think a president or a leader that just tries to work 16 hours a day, day after day, week after week eventually just needs to re-charge. As I mentioned, we had a cottage up here and that's where we would go.

The other thing my board allowed, it's a university town and sabbaticals are a common thing, but they actually allowed me to take sabbaticals. Each time I wrote a book and that was very helpful, too, as a way of stepping back, studying an area. Of course it was always about community college leadership.

It was a way of reflecting on my own leadership role, what are some of the really emerging ideas about leadership in the community college more generally. I think that was very helpful to actually have some extended time away to reflect.

As Eric stated, "stepping back" is a key feature of the reflective process and involved extended time away from his presidential role through vacation periods and sabbaticals. Eric also viewed writing about community college leadership as an important reflective technique. Further, Eric indicated that "stepping back" included an opportunity to re-examine his sense of the spiritual aspect of leadership:

I also feel that there is a spiritual dimension to leadership. That's one of the books I wrote, it had a chapter on the spiritual dimension to leadership.

We have a view of our work that what we do transcends our own personality and our own time in history. Even so, it's our role to give the institution a sense of transcendence and not just functioning on a day-to-day basis.

We have a role in society that is in a sense sacred. For example, when you talk about an open door, that is much more than just a slogan, it should be the spirit of the place. I think a person having a personal faith is also a part of this. Not how you express it necessary, but I think having a personal faith that then becomes a part of you and that you express it in your day-to-day life is important, too.

Fred also conceived of building his personal vision as re-examining his spiritual orientation:

People are spiritual beings and there is no way. . .if you ignore that part you've left out part of your life. Spiritual people do not necessarily go to church. It's be sure your life is balanced, and you're developing the spiritual side of your life just as you are developing your intellect and all the other things. There is a balance there.

When you get into the visioning process the spirituality part of it is an attempt to connect with a huge universe out there, and not necessarily God, but to connect that which is bigger and greater and from whence we know we came. Try to understand and try to connect with that and to put it into a frame that hopefully is a continually expansive process. I know people "box it" and carry it home with them. But it just doesn't work that way for the ones. . .if you're truly growing and expanding your thinking process.

The notion of "stepping back" is also referenced by Joyce as an important aspect of the reflection process. In the following statements, Joyce remarked on how reflection allowed her to look inward and enabled her to challenge her own thinking and responses:

I think that if you want to get better at who you are and what you do, you have to take time to reflect and you have to take time to debrief. You have to take time to go back and kind of open yourself up for maybe doing it differently or having a different experience.

I like reflecting, I think it helps me grow. Sometimes I'll sit there and you know I'm out exercising and something will just hit me like I've been run over by a car. Other times I'm really trying to work something through and I'm thinking, "It's so hard and so much that I just can't get beyond it."

As Joyce stated above, reflection allowed her to open herself for change. Further, the reflective process involved the capacity to "step back:"

That's when you just take a step back and just let it happen. I think reflecting is really good.

Joyce further commented on how her techniques facilitated the reflection process:

For me, like I said, I think a lot when I'm running. If I'm working through something or trying to figure out how it went, everything is crystal clear to me when I go out and exercise. . . . It unclutters my mind a little bit and it allows me to just look back about the process and figure out if it was a good process, if it was something that just got stuck. Then I try to figure out how it got stuck, why it got stuck, and what I might have done differently.

As Eric and Joyce attested, "stepping back" involved gaining distance from the everyday role of the presidential position. For Eric, "stepping back" involved extended time away from the campus environment. Joyce conceptualized "stepping back" as engaging in activities that provide distance from a problematic situation. Both presidents have emphasized that allowing themselves to take time away from the pressures and requirements of the campus enabled them to re-energize and enhance their personal vision for themselves and the institution.

In addition to stepping back from the presidential role, another strategy identified by these presidents is actively engaging with the external environment. This approach requires the president to stay continually involved through reading and engaging with others outside the institutional context. In effect, these presidents report that reflection involves having an openness to collecting new ideas for developing their personal visions of how the institution should evolve and their role within the re-visioning process. For example, Fred referenced the notion of taking a "global sampling:"

The president has to take a global sampling of the new thinking, the new writings and literature and those kind of things. It requires the president to do a lot of reading, and it takes interaction with some people that are pushing the boundaries and not just in education. I mean this is anywhere in organizations, whether it's a religious institution, a social service type of organization, a business, it can be some kind of non-profit. All kinds of those entities out there are having to reinvent themselves.

Joyce also stressed the importance of reading as a way of expanding her ability to approach issues:

The other thing that I do is, I like to read a lot so that I can get ideas and maybe approach things differently.

Eric emphasized the need for presidents to remain continually attentive to new ideas for re-conceptualizing their personal visions:

I think probably the effective president is just always alert to ideas that may influence their sense of their personal vision.

In addition, Joyce highlighted the significance of maintaining relationships with persons outside the institution is an important source of input for fueling the reflection process:

I have a couple of people around the country who I feel I can call and ask them anything. I can ask for their ideas and just problem solving techniques and that sort of thing. Or, a lot of times if I've worked through something already I will call them and say, "Well, this is what I did and I didn't feel really good about it. Can you think of anything that I might have done differently?"

As Joyce indicated, reflection is a continual process of gathering insights from colleagues who have faced similar issues:

I try to reflect often. I will talk to colleagues if I'm working on an issue or if we've just gone through something and we get together. There are five or six of us around the country and we try to get together every year, and we just talk about stuff. It's a good time to talk about what we did, or what problems we had, or what's coming up and be able to get feedback or input and see how they've approached problems.

A lot of what you run into a lot of other people have gone through, so it's not reinventing the wheel. It's figuring out what they might give you as input in how to deal with things or reflections and insights that they have. When you say, "Well this is how I dealt with it," then they can say, "Well we went through that too and we did it very differently and this is the outcome we had." So, I get feedback through a variety of different sources and means.

While Joyce indicated that having a group of colleagues is an important aspect of conducting the reflective process, she emphasized that having a “safe environment” for reflection is particularly effective for her:

I have a couple of people around the country who I feel I can call and ask them anything. I can ask for their ideas and just problem solving techniques and that sort of thing. Or, a lot of times if I've worked through something already I will call them and say, “Well, this is what I did and I didn't feel really good about it. Can you think of anything that I might have done differently?”

Along with these trusted colleagues, Joyce reported that her family is a valuable source for reflection:

Then my family, I talk to my family a lot. I find that they know me the best of anybody and I can say, “I've got this problem” and they are very good about saying, “Well, what have you thought of so far? How do you think you might approach this?” Then they'll say “Well have you thought of” or “Have you thought about this approach?” or “You might change what you just said.” I tend to be a little bit more out there when I'm just talking to them, I don't flower anything.

That's extremely helpful because that's a safe environment along with the two people that I can call here in the country...that's a safe environment where I can just knock things around a little bit and reflect.

Joyce commented that having a “safe environment” fostered her ability to accept negative feedback, resulting in an expansion of her understanding of institutional matters:

I like people to help me reflect and I seek that feedback. I feel like somebody can tell me something awful and it's not going to devastate me. They could say “You didn't handle that well at all,” and that's okay, because the next time you go through that you'll handle it much better. It's a learning process and we all have those moments, personally and professionally and you just learn from it and move on.

Thus, the reflection process is greatly facilitated when a president is able to interact with trusted persons who stimulate inward thinking.

As the following comments indicate, these presidents perceived that the reflection process directly impacts their approach to leading their respective institutions. For example, Joyce stated:

How this takes action within the campus environment is I think it changes my behavior or it changes my approach to solving a problem or experimenting or trying something new and different. It allows you to be able to get out there and stretch a little bit. Again, I think that if you don't reflect on how you've done and what you've done and who you

are I don't think you then are comfortable with taking that next step. I think that's where you hit the status quo.

As Joyce indicated, her leadership actions are modified and risk taking may take place as a result of the reflection process. Fred builds on the notion of "stretch" mentioned by Joyce in referencing the connection between the president's vision and the institutional vision:

As the president learns, the institution learns. Just like a person in the classroom. You learn something and your ready to move on to the next level.

Further, Joyce commented on how reflection is directly linked to enhancing a president's ability to make the vision a part of the institution's ongoing reality:

Even if you have a vision for the college, if you're not capable as the leader to make that happen, it's never going to happen. You have to be the kind of person that your personal approach and your leadership approach have got to be able to move the institution. If you can't move the institution to accomplish that vision, I think you're not going to do great things. I don't expect that everybody is going to go out and do great things. I think you're lucky if you get to do something great in your lifetime.

As Joyce remarked below, the ability to advance the vision is a function of the leader's sense of personal security:

I think that you have to have the skills to be able to be secure with who you are and the kind of leader you are in the environment. You have to be able to make that vision a reality, and to be able to keep that vision alive and keep having it evolve so that people can know what that is. You have to be able to express that and to have people be a part of it. It's one thing for me to know what the vision is, but if nobody else knows what the vision is we're never going to make it.

Joyce further commented that reflection on the ability to communicate the vision may lead to recognition that re-visioning skills need enhancing:

I have to be the kind of person that can make that happen. If I don't have the skills, then I really need to go back and reflect and figure out how that's going to manifest itself.

This perception is corroborated by Fred, who spoke to the consequences to the institution if the president is under prepared to facilitate the re-visioning process:

If the president isn't learning or isn't expanding his or her understanding of organization in the world and the sciences and religion, then there's probably no way you can recreate a vision for the organization.

You can restate the current vision, you can do some tinkering with it, you can make minor adjustments. But to say, "Okay, we are here and then this is out here," the



president has to have had experiences that allow him or her to conceptually come up with another step in the process. I think what you get is, it's a gradual process. I don't know if it even dawns on you.

Last, in a compelling reference to the impact that the president's personal vision can have on an institution, Eric stated:

I was there for 23 years and one of the community people said to me, "When I think of Lake Community College I think of you," meaning, I think, your values now are just infused into the whole institution.

I think a president does play that role. Your values, your personality, your sense of what is important does get infused into the institution. So it's a heavy responsibility but also a fantastic opportunity that almost nobody has ---to not just shape the program of the institution but actually to shape the values and the culture.

As these passages reveal, the institution is perceived as becoming an extension of the president.

As Eric has commented, the effective president shapes not only the institutional program but its values, beliefs and identity.

### Findings

Phase one, *opening the self of the president*, revealed that the primary intent of the presidents in this stage is assessing the private self. The key process is *building the personal vision* so that presidents are prepared to lead the institution in undertaking the re-visioning process. These data and analyses indicate they place a very heavy emphasis on the importance of creating and maintaining their personal visions in order to guide their respective institutions.

The sub-process of this phase, *engaging in self-reflection*, is the means for continually sustaining and enriching the presidents' personal vision. The commentary indicates that self-reflection is primarily a learning process which involves looking inward to the presidents' inner environment as well as looking outward to the external environment. A key strategy reported by these presidents was "stepping back" from the demands and pressures of the position through distancing techniques. A second key strategy was maintaining an active receptiveness to input from sources outside the institutional environment through interactions with colleagues and trusted persons. The outcome is that these presidents are continually enhancing the intellectual,

interpersonal and spiritual dimensions of their leadership approach. Further, reflection is a reciprocal process which is dependent upon the president's capacity to engage productively with both the inner and external environments.

Thomas Jefferson said, "Every generation needs a revolution." And what he meant by that is that every generation needed to really be involved in the democratic process so they felt a sense of ownership. I think that's true of a community college.

- Eric

### Phase Two: Shaping the Institutional Vision

Phase two of the category, Re-visioning the Participative Organization, focuses upon building a common vision for the institution. From the foundation established within phase one of this category, the president's personal vision provides the bedrock for initiating and sustaining the organizational re-visioning process. The primary purpose of the visioning process within phase two is to shape the institutional vision within the climate of mutual involvement outlined in the previous category, Web of Participation. The key process of this phase, *building the collective vision*, reveals how re-visioning becomes an institutional process for producing a collective institutional vision. The sub-process, *uniting diverse perspectives*, creates a context in which various perspectives become unified through consensus around a single, unified vision. The key strategies are establishing and maintaining a context for inquiry and dialogue. The primary outcome of this phase is a sense of unanimity around the broad institutional vision. This phase demonstrates how notions of mutual trust, and empowerment, understanding and ownership are utilized in developing a compelling organizational vision.

In the following commentary, Fred emphasized the importance of re-visioning the participative organization through a metaphor that equated an entrenched institution to a "box:"

Basically an organization is a box, it's got its top, bottom, sides, fronts and backs and it's a little box. It is designed to keep everybody in the little box, to keep everybody doing their thing and keeping this little box humming in there.

The president has to get outside of the box, the board would need to be outside the box, you need to get as many of your people as possible outside the box so they can see there is a different world. People need to get out of the box and have different experiences. If you're staying in the same place, having the same experience, if you've

done it wrong for twenty years, you're going to do it wrong for another twenty years. You'll have no new frame of reference.

As Fred indicated, an organization may be portrayed as "a little box" which tends to resist change in order to maintain its focus on the everyday work of the institution. Fred maintained that the purpose of the re-visioning process is to re-portray the institution in a manner which has significance to those "captured" within the institution:

A vision should challenge all the boundaries that currently exist. When you're doing the visioning process is you're trying to paint a new picture of the organization. You're trying to do it in a way that will have meaning to those who are captured in the organization.

As Fred remarked, a vision must challenge the boundaries that are established within the institution. In the following commentary, Fred stressed that re-visioning is "stepping outside the boundary:"

I see the visioning process as being definitely stepping outside the boundary. Another way to think about the vision is that it's a vision you hope pulls people out of closets and to step out of their little box. If they won't step out, at least maybe they'll push the boundaries out a little bit from the box they're in. A participatory leader has to be very patient, if you're impatient don't bother trying.

He further indicated that visions must be a compelling image of the organization's essence:

It's interesting that the most powerful ones are the shorter the statement you can get. You capture what you it is you're trying to say in a powerful way. Visions aren't necessarily grandiose paintings of landscapes and 50,000 people showing up in the scene. It's just a powerful little one line, one word, two words, three words, ten words, probably never more than 10 of a vision of what you're trying to paint. The fewer words you use, probably the more powerful it is. . . if the right words are put together there.

Fred's description of the re-visioning process as creating a "new picture" of the organization and "stepping out" through an inclusive, purposeful process is echoed by Joyce in the following:

Part of creating the climate and culture is to make sure that people see those connections and they are then able to step outside of their particular area to see the bigger picture. If you can paint that bigger picture through a variety of means and you get people to participate so that they get to see the bigger picture and create that bigger picture, then I think they start breaking out of "I'm here just for me. I'm here just for my area."

As Joyce has indicated, when individuals begin perceiving the larger picture of the organization, they are enabled to "step outside" of their area for the broader welfare of the institution. Through

active participation in the re-visioning process, the scope of their understanding broadens so that they are able to conceive of a more expansive role for the organization. This passage also indicates that the capacity for organizational members to perceive linkages among various areas of the institution and to create the “bigger picture” is dependent upon a climate and culture supportive of this process.

As this commentary revealed, the re-visioning process is regarded as highly significant to the continued vitality of the institution. The following passages reveal the key strategies used by these presidents for addressing the sub-process, *building the collective vision*, are inquiry and dialogue. Inquiry enables the institution to explore institutional boundaries, and dialogue positions institutional members to redefine the boundaries of the participative organization. These strategies mirror the approach described under phase one, indicating that these presidents implement institutional activities that are derived from the presidents’ personal experiences.

Although the strategies of inquiry and dialogue are both characterized by high levels of information access, they are distinguished from each other through the commentary provided below. The concept of inquiry primarily references the organization’s capacity to be responsive to shifts in conditions within various institutional environments. In contrast, dialogue mainly references the highly interactive methods used by these presidents as a way of initiating and sustaining the institutional re-visioning process. Both inquiry and dialogue are grounded in the collective re-visioning process and provide the key methods for re-building the sense of commonality around the vision that permeates the participative organization.

The first key strategy, exploring the boundaries through inquiry, discloses the importance placed by Fred and Eric upon responding to shifts in the institutional environment. As a result of sensitivity to changes in the internal and external environment, the president discerns the need for the re-visioning process to begin. The inquiry process is viewed as reflective of the presidents’ learning process and also comprised of factors that characterized the external and internal campus environment. Fred commented:

And probably if you want to define it a simple way, it is just a learning process. As the president learns the organization learns. Just like a person in the classroom, you learn something and your ready to move on to the next level. It's similar to a learning process. It's collecting all the different ideas, information, externally, internally and internal to the person and all that comes together. And what hopefully comes out is a new re-visioning statement of the organization.

Fred expanded on this notion of inquiry as based on changes within various institutional environments:

I'd say it's probably two things. You as a president are growing, and also there are internal and external factors that you're dealing with.

First, Fred described these factors as shifts that may occur in the external campus environment:

Sometimes it's just an external phenomenon that causes the changes, like the budgetary crisis now that is going to produce fundamental change...whether that will be right or wrong nobody knows. Right now in colleges there is an opportunity for someone to make major significant changes in the way that the organization functions. A controlling organization can launch a change process that trickles down and has tremendous impact on the organization.

These shifts are basic things the institution has no control over. They are major things over which you have no control that have a profound effect on your organization. A lot of it depends upon where you are in the process. An organization going into a participative process that got hit with a major budget crisis could throw the whole thing off course, because you wouldn't have the dollars to invest in the growth and learning of the people who need to participate in the process.

Second, Fred related that shifts can originate within the internal campus environment:

Those shifts can be good because they do force change on the institution. They force it to do things differently. It is also an opportunity when those shifts come for the sifting out of some people who don't fit the mold. It may be a time for people to exit the organization. Sometimes there is an opportunity for new people to come in. So the shift can make a big difference. The leader in this whole thing is there, so you have a sense that there may be a major happening.

A second part of it becomes just the normal cycles within the organization. So every five years this issue emerges again and it's time to look at it. Our planning processes helped with this because we had a five-year plan. So every time a five-year point rolled around, it started that process working. Accreditation visits are another one that do that and are kind of a reality check for the organization.

Fred's reference to the impact of institutional planning cycles is also stressed by Eric:

Basically, I felt that about every five years we needed to develop a new vision statement. The mission statement might stay the same, but that the vision statement should change because conditions have changed.

Further, as Eric noted, the vision statement should change in response to changing conditions, and a five year span tended to indicate that a new vision statement was needed. Eric provided a specific example of how the vision statement changed in response to changing conditions in the external environment:

As staff changes and as conditions change, developing a new vision statement gives everybody a chance to feel that they have a stake in what it is and more of a sense that they own that vision statement.

For example, I mentioned the idea that our 1995 vision statement indicated that it included the words "staff success." Those words did not exist in the 1990 statement, and so the idea that we were an institution dedicated to staff success as well as student and community success evolved. I think, too, that this is reference to a learner centered, open door college. Remember that that was the period where we were starting to talk about the learning college and effectiveness. I think that statement is that we're learner centered and learning centered too, but we chose the word "learner" instead of "learning" and that was new.

That didn't exist that way in the vision statements before. It just indicated that conditions had changed. We needed to put more emphasis on the outcome of learning, not just on seat time or on the numbers of students, which I think most colleges really did focus on during the 80s or early 90s.

As Eric has indicated, the change in external conditions led to change in the approach to student learning. The institutional vision statement reflected the need to place greater importance on learning outcomes, and thus a change in institutional focus was achieved. The visioning process reinforced the participative climate and culture since a sense of ownership of the organizational outcomes was enhanced. Further, this commentary by Eric indicated that staff changes within an organization are a critical factor for implementing the change process, further disclosing the importance of ownership in establishing the vision. As Eric remarked:

Because when you say, "That's your vision," it puts it out there in front of people day after day after day. Yes, I think that by declaring, "That is the future that you're creating," then I think everyone knows that that is the mission, which I think is very important. And by the way, sometimes that as units of the college developed their vision statement you would find their statement included this reference. It showed that it penetrated the rest of the organization, perhaps not every single unit, but generally.

Third, along with shifts in the internal and external environment, presidents may also experience an "instinctive feeling" that the re-visioning process should be initiated. Referencing

his previous remarks on the instinctive sense that that triggered his awareness that the re-visioning process should be launched, Fred remarked:

I think some of it is instinct, just an instinctive feeling that it's time. I'm also guessing that if somebody had paid attention to, and I never did this, but if my presentations I made to faculty over an eight year period were available, all of them, and if you put them together, my guess would be you'd see the language changing over time. There would be a sense of using different words when you talked about various things, a different vocabulary that would have emerged on that.

I think a lot of it is, there's simply an instinct. Part of those instincts are that as you are going through this, you get feedback, you work with the organization, you just get feeling that now is the time to make a change.

Fred concluded by linking the experiences of the president to the institutional re-visioning cycle:

The last one is just the instinct that you have that the organization needs to make a shift if it's going to make it and grow. Part of that shifting and instinct is just a feeling about people. Okay, they've been having carrots every night for dinner and now it's time for them to have green beans. And that's just kind of the way it may work. You need to come up with some different language and different metaphors and do different things to try and help them internally do a re-visioning process of themselves and the organization. That's what your hope is. . .that there is kind of a re-visioning throughout the organization. . .not just the president.

As Fred and Eric commented, through ongoing inquiry the president and the institution must stay attuned to shifts within the organizational environments. Awareness of these shifting conditions, as well as established planning cycles, become the impetus for initiating an extensive re-visioning process. This discussion has revealed the importance of building understanding regarding both the content and dynamics of the various institutional environments.

The second key strategy, constructing a context for dialogue, discloses how the re-visioning process integrates the personal visions of many into a broad institutional vision. Further, this commentary demonstrates that the primary effort is to convert these divergent perceptions into a singled unified perspective representing the collective vision of the institution. In effect, the dimensions of the re-visioning process are grounded in the personal visions of diverse individuals and groups, eventually uniting in a common shared vision for the organization.

Dialogue is a method for bringing individuals from various levels of the organization into the visioning process. Eric described this approach as a process involving the sharing of personal visions:

I would say about every five years at Lake Community College we would go through some sort of process where we would work on a shared vision. We had a leadership group that included faculty, administrators custodial maintenance staff and secretaries, and they were the group that actually led the 1995 process. We called it "Lake Community College 2000," and the idea was that we were going to work together to really transform the college during a five year period. That is the group that sponsored various forums and workshops to get people to express their own personal visions.

Access to the visioning process included a diverse group, and the goal was to transform the college during this five year period. Eric commented below on how this process included interweaving the personal visions or "fragments" into a shared vision for the institution:

In fact, we used a process that was used in Sweden by a corporation there where people would share fragments, that is, their thoughts on what they wanted to see the vision contain. The idea was to try and come up with a vision statement where each individual could see his or her own personal vision expressed in that vision statement for the institution.

So we had various ways in which we got these fragments from people, including even having a story board up in the hallway where people could just add their fragments as they wished. We had a writing group who turned that into a statement that could be understood by our various constituencies.

In the following narrative, Eric described how the process of dialogue enabled the institution to "open the classroom door:"

I think that for most community college faculty, traditionally, I think faculty itself view the class-room as their sacred ground, that once you closed the door, administrators simply should not be able to walk in. I think one of the things that occurred in the transformational process is that we talked about institutional effectiveness and began to say that it's the measurement of student learning that really indicates how effective we are as in institution.

Eric emphasized:

We had to really open that classroom door because faculty members were asked to demonstrate in what ways student learning was in fact occurring.

In the following commentary, Eric stressed the importance of dialogue to the re-visioning process:



We had to have more dialogue about teaching and learning too, and not just about the budget or about buildings. . .but about the central function of the campus which was what happened in the classroom.

As this commentary by Eric has demonstrated, dialogue provided the method for establishing a common vision for the campus. The boundaries which separated the role of the faculty from the larger institution were diffused through dialogue among a diverse arrangement of individuals from all levels of the organization. The process of dialogue provided an arena for exposing organizational shortcomings and established a more relevant approach to addressing the primary purpose of the organization. Further, these passages indicated that in the same sense that personal visions are pictures or images held by individuals, the participative vision is a portrait of the institutional future shared by organizational members.

In the following commentary, the significance of dialogue is established by relating perceptions of how presidential actions contributed to creating the capacity of the organization to converge around the institutional vision. Fred underscored the role of language and how a change in word choice impacted perceptions within the organization:

My guess is that most of the time what's happening is we're using different language. When language changes, the new words are powerful and they create images. When you start changing the words, when presidents start changing the words that they use when they are having discussions and making presentations. . .I guess you can take it as one thing of it being a signal something's going on. But also those words create images in peoples' minds.

Fred compared the impact of shifting to a different language to the potential of having "turned on" a set of computers:

It's kind of like, if you turn on 100 employees you just turned on 100 computers. People have pushed different buttons and different things are going on. The act of pushing the button causes something to happen and they aren't necessarily all doing the same thing... they aren't all thinking the same thoughts. But what you hope is that in their minds now something new is floating around up there. You hope it relates to prior experiences they've had, and now they've maybe moved into a little different way of thinking.

Joyce substantiated Fred's perspective by providing examples of how she continually fostered dialogue through purposeful interaction with others. Eric's emphasis upon the personal visions for the institution as a foundation for the re-visioning process is also corroborated by Joyce:

I think that when you create a vision for the college you have to always go out and keep talking to people about that. You have to talk to them about we're accomplishing, what we said we were going to accomplish. A lot of it gets done through people's plans within their areas and their individual visions for their area. It's a process that I think you have to set up within the institution that means that we are all talking to each other.

Joyce related how she specifically developed a sense of ownership and empowerment for the collective vision by establishing feedback processes

I think by asking them, "What do you see the college looking like in five or ten years?" and giving that input, they feel they have been included. They have had some say in the outcome. A lot of times people want to vent, a lot of times people have great ideas that they have never been able to even talk about, or they have had great ideas that they tried and they have not worked and they just dropped them. So the president should be able to validate that and get their feedback.

Joyce further remarked on how the dialogue process is fostered through looping feedback from campus members into an established mode for exchange:

As you take in what everybody gives you, then you put it back out. You say, "This is what I'm hearing from everybody, give me some feedback on it. Are we on target? Is this all what you see the college looking like in five or ten years, given the plans you have for your specific areas?" You'll get feedback on it pretty readily. To me that's what visioning is all about, taking everybody's ideas. It's not specific to "this is what is going to happen in the health department."

As Joyce commented, collective input from individual areas into the visioning process enabled the organization to establish a joint direction for the institution:

But they have to have that vision of what they want their place to look like in five or ten years, it's got to be incorporated in the whole college vision in a broad sense. The only way I know to do that is to ask people for their input. I do want to know where health wants to be in five years, because if I don't know that, then I might miss a big portion of the big vision for the college. It also helps me then to say, "Okay, this is where we all want to go." Then if they know I've taken their information and it's a part of the college vision, then again you get that buy in.

Joyce also asserted that the re-visioning process required her to originate dialogue among constituencies external to the institution:

I think you come up with a much better vision for the college when you do that out in the community too. When I go to my first chamber meeting, I'll be just circulating around the room talking to people and saying, "Well what do you think about the college? How has it helped you and how does it fit into the community? What do you think it needs to look like in five years?" So you get that component as well, because business leaders will

have a very different impression not only of what the college is and whether it has helped them or not, but what it ought to be.

Joyce emphasized that the dialogue that occurs within the external environment may produce input which must be weighed in relation to the feedback originating within the internal campus environment:

You have to have that component. You have to balance that with the internal thinking and the external thinking to come up with a good comprehensive vision. You have to include the people from the state too. They'll have some ideas of what you ought to be doing

Joyce indicated below that her role in maintaining dialogue was to "float" and then "crystallize" the emergent vision:

So you just put it all together. And then again I do things more informally. I'll go out and I'll float it out there and say "This is what I see as the college vision and what we ought to be in five or ten years" and make sure I'm on target with it. Then eventually you get the feedback on it that helps you crystallize that and I'll put that out. "This is what you've all contributed. This is what I see." Usually people say, "We see that too."

As Eric, Fred and Joyce have described, dialogue is a highly important strategy for redefining the boundaries of the institutional vision. These presidents have emphasized the significance of grounding the re-visioning process within the personal visions of campus members through sustained interaction that is conducted in a formal and informal fashion. The boundaries of the participative vision are redefined, broadened, and balanced according to an established process so that people feel bound together by a common aspiration. High levels of input from various constituencies are gathered from within and outside the organizational environment. These presidents report that they are highly active in seeking feedback and very sensitive to the impact of language upon this process. The consequence is that the climate and culture of the participative organization are further strengthened by this emphasis on ownership and empowerment within the visioning process.

### Findings

Phase two of this category, *shaping the institutional vision*, disclosed that the primary purpose of the visioning process is creating a shared vision for the institution. The key process,

*building the collective vision*, reveals how re-visioning becomes an institution-wide experience involving contributions from all campus members. The sub-process, *uniting diverse perspectives*, demonstrates how consensus around a common vision for the campus may be achieved. These data and analyses indicated that these presidents placed heavy emphasis upon two key strategies, inquiry and dialogue. Through the inquiry process, these presidents maintained a sharp attentiveness to changes in the internal and external institutional environments. These shifts are considered triggers for stimulating presidential actions for invoking an institution-wide re-visioning process. Another strategy for facilitating inquiry is responding to an instinctive feeling that the re-visioning process should be initiated. Dialogue is a method for bringing divergent perspectives into the visioning process. Efforts to build the collective vision are grounded in the climate and culture of the participative organization, and thereby draw upon and reinforce the sense of trust, ownership and empowerment experienced by campus members. The primary outcome is a single, unified vision statement for the institution.

### Phase Three: Embracing the Mission

As the title of phase three suggests, the emphasis of this stage in the re-visioning process is upon a re-examination and reaffirmation of the institutional mission. This stage conveys how participative leadership fosters the re-visioning process through actions that reinforce re-commitment to the institutional mission. This phase further discloses the linkage between the visioning process and the institutional mission. The key process, *advancing the mission*, underscores how the visioning process focuses upon the values and principles of the participative organization. The sub-process, *maintaining institutional processes around the vision*, reveals how the act of re-visioning maintains a sense of direction for orienting action. This sub-process reflects activities described within the previous category, Web of Participation, emphasizing how broad based institutional processes foster and reinforce the visioning process.

The key strategies for reinforcing the values and belief system which underlie the institutional mission included: (1) conducting mission and vision review; (2) establishing

procedures for examining and evaluating planning processes tied to the vision and mission; (3) conducting debriefing and reflecting sessions regarding organizational outcomes; and (4) celebrating accomplishments tied to the broad vision and mission. The primary outcome of this phase is that these processes enable the institution to sustain an ongoing capacity of members to further the broad organizational mission. The sense of ownership of members for the organizational mission is strengthened, thus re-affirming commitment to the precepts of the participative organization.

In the following section, the concepts of mission and vision are described. As Joyce specified in the following commentary, the mission of the organization is representative of the purpose of the institution:

The mission is what you are there for. You are there to do the best education and the best training you can, and you've got that pre-scripted in there.

The vision is described as a "dream:"

I think the vision is a dream. That is how I look at it...it's just dreaming as to what will be while we are performing that mission, while we are working on that mission because the mission typically will not change much.

As Joyce indicated in the following narrative, it is essential that the institution conduct a highly interactive, inclusive process for continually reviewing and readjusting the institutional vision around its fundamental purpose:

It's a process that I think you have to set up within the institution that means that we are all talking to each other. As we start moving forward, we know that we can change and we can modify and you have to have that ability to feel good about that happening. . .and not that that's where we're going and we're not changing course, no matter what.

In community colleges things happen so quickly, and they happen all the time. There are so many outside influences and inside influences that you have to be able to adjust and recreate the vision. You need to tweak it as you go, because what we talk about happening now, five years from now changes dramatically. As we get a year down the road, there'll be new technologies. There'll be new things that happen. You have to readjust your vision, otherwise, you're going to end up somewhere where you don't want to be.

As Joyce indicated below, there must be ongoing processes for keeping the vision "fresh and alive" that will include refocusing the vision. Her approach included highly interactive methods

for continually ensuring widespread support throughout the institution for the mission and vision, along with a recognition that the vision is never fully reached:

I think it's just constantly changing and tweaking and modifying that keeps the vision fresh and keeps it alive...it's your interacting with all the constituents around the campus to be able to make sure that what everybody is working on supports that mission and supports that vision. And, then you just keep modifying it as you go. I don't see that you ever get to the point where you've reached your vision. You might in some instances if it's a very short vision...you might get there and say, "Well we've done that now we've got to move on."

Joyce remarked that the vision, or dream for the institutional future is the mechanism for charting the institutional future and this is an evolving process:

I see it more as an evolving vision that gets modified every year. We get a little bit closer to it, but you still keep it out there, so it's that dream. I don't know that I've ever been in a place where we've not gone back and just modified it every year.

These passages have illustrated the importance of maintaining institutional processes centered around the visioning process. Four key strategies for sustaining these processes were described by these presidents. The first key strategy, conducting mission and vision review processes, was described by Eric as a means for reinforcing commitment of members to the organizational mission. This account specifically demonstrates how mission review resulted in a greater sense of ownership among institutional members:

When we developed our vision statement, we ended up with a vision statement that said we are dedicated to student, community and staff success. Actually, the full wording I'm looking at it here in the document is, "Lake Community College is a learner centered, open door college, dedicated to students, community and staff success." I think it's important to notice that it says, "and staff success" because some people at the beginning said, "A vision statement shouldn't really talk about staff success, it should be about student and community success. Staff success is kind of secondary to that."

As Eric indicated below, the vision and mission statements strengthened the sense that the culture valued caring and commitment, thus making these aspects more meaningful to organizational members:

But we said, "No, an institution that is going to develop a culture of caring about people and being committed to their development has to also be committed to the development of their employees."

Further, Eric noted that the vision statement became the criteria for evaluating the relevance of new objectives:

So that's the way it ended up. Whenever we would be taking on some new initiative, we said, "Does it contribute to student success or community success or staff success?" So staff success objectives were just as important as community and student.

Eric's reference to the evaluating the relevance of organizational initiatives is related to the second key strategy, maintaining planning processes around the mission and vision statements. Joyce expanded on how planning processes became intertwined with the vision and mission statements:

A lot of your planning process feeds into that too, it's always combined and woven together. You have to make sure that the vision is very clear when you're going through the planning process and your mission is very clear so that you can support that with all the plans that you make. It's just something that you continually build and focus on.

A vision is a dream, but it's also concrete and you need to break that vision down and figure out how you're going to accomplish it. And that's when you can break it into components and you can break it into plans and you can start working on those things. I think as you start making progress on it you make sure people know you're making progress on it.

As Joyce pointed out, the vision gives a sense of a desired future, but it is also a concrete picture that must be divided into plans for action. Planning and visioning are thus "woven together" and provide a basis for moving forward toward a specific destination.

The third key strategy, debriefing and reflecting, also references the importance of creating processes that are tightly focused on the future. Joyce commented:

Part of that comes from working with the people and reflecting and debriefing with the people that you went through the process with. At East Coast Community College we were working through the process on accreditation. We did get back together after the team came back and we got our accreditation. We said, "Alright, we muddled through this. We had never had to go through this before. Let's debrief it." We actually set up time to debrief and those kinds of things.

You have to just let all of that come in whether it's good or bad and just try to figure out how, if you could do it differently, what would that look like. "If you have something similar in the future, do you want to do it the same way? Do you want to try a different approach?"

Joyce indicated that debriefing and reflecting may lead to increased risk-taking:

There have been times when I have been happy with an outcome. But I might have wanted to try it differently and you have to have the security, I guess, or the ability to try it even if you're not sure if it's going to work. I think you have to be honest with people that I'm trying something new. "I don't know if it's going to work, but let's give it a shot and then go back and reflect on that."

Joyce also identified the need for the fourth key strategy, maintaining celebratory processes, to signify accomplishments around the vision and mission:

I think that, again, you can accomplish components of the vision and I think that's when you need to take the time to stop and say, "You know, we've been working on this for three years now and we're there. We could see it five years ago and we've been working our tails off, we are there."

I also think you need to take time within the institution, not only personally, but within the institution to reflect and to celebrate. I think that's a part of it. You can reflect and say, "Okay, what did I do? What could I have done differently? Oh, I did a really good thing on that project or let's celebrate and let's say that we really accomplished something pretty spectacular."

Joyce noted that celebrating accomplishments provided a framework for continually revitalizing the visioning statement:

When you accomplish it, you celebrate it. Then go back and see if you need to redo anything and modify that and then you just keep on going. You talk about excellence in quality and you never really get there. I think that no matter where you are, you can always be better. We can always strive to do something a little differently and you have to try to branch off over here and try something new and make your mistakes so that you can have something that's a whole lot better.

Joyce cautioned:

I think you need to make sure that you don't just breeze on by because you're always out there trying to reach that next thing. You have to take time to tell people and make sure everybody knows that we all did this and that we made it. We accomplished whatever it was we had seen, and then you celebrate it. I think that's the thing that a lot of people forget.

We get so busy that we don't take the time to say what did we accomplish, and we're this much further ahead. Let's just pat ourselves on the back and each other. We say we accomplished this and just physically take the time to, whether it's a big cake or whatever you do, but at the end of the year you recognize people. You celebrate the accomplishments and then you go back and you reflect on those as well. "We did this...how's it working?" And you have all those reflections.



Joyce further stressed the importance of reflecting and celebrating for maintaining commitment to the long term goals of the institution. When the leader fails to establish processes for reflection and celebration, the consequence is disintegration of the organization climate and culture:

If you don't take the time to do those things and reflect professionally on those things and help people feel good about the fact that we did accomplish whatever we set out to do, then you know people aren't going to want to stay in there for the long haul. I think that's where your culture and your climate start to deteriorate.

Joyce concluded:

A lot of it is just keeping the enthusiasm, keeping the pride and the feeling of accomplishment. You're always looking to the future and saying, "Well, now we've got this problem with financial aid or we've got this issue with such and such or all of the sudden the state changed regulations and we have to adjust. So what we thought was our vision and what we wanted to look like five years from now isn't really going to fit. And you just keep modifying it. Again, it comes from talking to people every year and going back and just seeing if that's the right track to take.

#### Findings

The commentary provided in phase three reveals that the key process, *advancing the mission*, underscores the importance of a focus upon reviewing, revising and updating the vision and mission around the values and principles of the organization. The sub-process, *maintaining institutional processes around the vision*, embodies the significance of the visioning process as setting the direction for purposeful action. These data and analyses reveal that these institutional processes are carried out through strategies which include conducting formal mission and vision review sessions; formulating planning processes around the mission and vision statements; conducting debriefing and reflection sessions following significant institutional occurrences; and celebrating accomplishments directly attached to the vision.

The overall outcome is a reaffirmation of the climate and culture of the organization through a sustained, highly interactive, inclusive process for re-visioning the organization. The primary function of participative leadership is to create the conditions within which members are positioned to act in ways that maximize the ability of the organization to achieve its purposes. Thus, the sense of ownership and empowerment of institutional members is strengthened as they

assume a greater role and sense of responsibility and fulfillment in advancing the broad institutional mission.

#### Phase Four: Fulfilling the Mission

As disclosed within phases one, two and three of this category, these presidents concentrated upon building an institution-wide process for re-committing the organization around its broad purposes. The re-visioning process was directed toward fortifying the sense of commitment to what the institution purports to do through a visioning process which is firmly anchored within the values, beliefs and principles of the participative organization.

As illustrated in the final phase of this category, *fulfilling the mission*, the key process, *renewing the spirit of the participative organization*, provides the foundation for continually regenerating commitment to the mission of the participative organization. The sub-process, *re-vitalizing the vision and mission*, underscores the importance these presidents place upon the visioning process as a force for creating stamina and inspiration to accomplish the mission. The primary strategies include unification, universal focus and re-culturation. The primary outcome of this category is that the vision is continually re-defined, strengthened, and re-focused. Thus, it serves as a constant source of energy and direction for institutional change around the broad institutional purposes.

#### *Unification*

Unification, a key strategy for revitalizing the participative vision, reflects the significance of institutional members bonded by a sense of affiliation and connection to each other as colleagues assembled around a common purpose. As the following data and analyses reveal, unification is viewed as a critical aspect for continually re-vitalizing the vision.

As the reader may recall, under the category, Web of Participation, Joyce outlined the difficulties she encountered at East Coast Community College regarding its resistance to participative leadership. In the following passage, Joyce highlights the importance of establishing a sense of unification among members within the institution. By contrasting the climate and

culture of East Coast Community College to that of Lincoln Community College, Joyce provided an illustrative example of how the organizational vision and mission are impacted by variances in the values and belief system of different institutions. Further, Joyce asserted that a sense of purpose around these core principles and values is a critical condition for impacting the capacity of the organization to carry out its mission:

If I look at my first college and we look at the mission that we came up with and the vision...the vision was to fix the climate. We needed to fix the culture, we needed to do some of the very basic things to develop pride and to get people to want to do some things, versus a vision with one of the other colleges which was just leap years ahead. It's "We want to be working on all these great things that will enhance the learning opportunities for our students, and this is kind of what it looks like."

Well, we couldn't have even looked at that kind of a vision when I was at East Coast Community College because it was so far out of reach. That's not to say that they weren't doing great things at East Coast Community College because individually in their areas they were doing some remarkable things. But it was a group of people who were doing their own thing. It wasn't a college culture that you could really step out and say "Okay this is what we're about." It was a matter of pulling everybody together to be a college so that could go out and do things for others. They were so concerned with doing things for themselves. . . and they were very self-centered as a college.

Yet at Lincoln Community College it was, you know, "We're not self-centered, we want to go out and do all these neat things for the community and help our students do this and that. This is where we want to be with these things in place so that we can better serve our students."

As Joyce has indicated, the underlying effort of the visioning process is addressing the purpose of the institution. However, the ability of the organization to fulfill this role is conditional upon its internal values and beliefs structure. Her description of East Coast Community College as an organization which was very "self-centered" implied that this institution was restricted in its ability to move forward in a unified manner. Apparently this college lacked consensus around its organizational identity, thus reducing its ability to effectively serve its various constituencies.

There was no communication at East Coast Community College between the different areas. You couldn't even think about questioning somebody on something in their area. If registration wasn't working, "By God, don't you even question me as the vice president or the dean in that area, we'll take care of it. I don't want your input, I don't need your input." It got a little bit better, but I just noticed when I walked in that it was a very negative climate. It was very difficult to get people to think outside of their silos and outside of themselves.

As Joyce commented, she experienced serious obstacles in her effort to encourage people at East Coast Community College to “think outside of their silos and themselves.” In contrast, at Lincoln Community College, the emphasis was upon being “seamless” within a sense of “working together” as a campus:

Whereas at Lincoln Community College people knew that, “You are responsible for Student Services, and I’m responsible over here, but we better be working together. The student flows through all those areas, and we want it to be as seamless as possible for the information sharing and the visioning process.”

Joyce asserted:

I think you have a greater responsibility to a college than you do necessarily to your particular area. If everybody can feed into that vision of what it is you want to be, then you almost have to step outside of your area and be able to see how it all meshes together. . . how you can’t have academics without student services and you don’t need student services without academics. So you are married within the institution to a lot of different areas.

Joyce stressed below that a vision is shared when organization members have a similar picture and are actively involved in creating it:

If you can paint that bigger picture through a variety of means and you get people to participate so that they get to see the bigger picture and create that bigger picture, then I think they start breaking out of, “I’m here just for me. I’m here just for my area.”

As Joyce related below, unification is furthered when “everybody gathers around as a college” with the vision as the central focus:

And they can see that we are united in a sense in trying to make the college a better place to be. I think once you can get them to that point, that’s when everybody gathers around as a college. And we’re very proud of the fact that we’re a college, and that I’m very proud to be at such and such a college.

This notion of “gathering around” the values and beliefs incorporated within the vision is corroborated by Fred who speaks to the critical importance of establishing axioms for the organization. In speaking to the role of vision and mission as the central organizing focus for conducting the re-visioning process, Fred emphasized that broadly stated “axioms” or “over arching values” are essential for uniting people around a sense of a common vision:

The axioms or over arching values in the organization are: what kind of a life do people want to have in the organization? The second one becomes, what kind of relationships do

they want? This means do I want a boss telling me what to do or am I willing to put out enough time and energy to learn enough that I can participate in the process? The third one's about learning, that each person within the organization would be developing their minds and their talents and their skills to do that. The fourth one is what would be the legacy that people want to leave?

Fred remarked that these over arching values should be translated into value statements for the institution:

They need to be is placed as over arching statements about the college, such as in the strategic plan. They should be in the first few pages of the document because the values that you put in there become the guiding principles. This is eventually what becomes the reality for the organization.

As Fred stated, these guiding principles or over arching values provide the gateway for what eventually evolves into the "reality for the organization." Thus, when people share the vision, they are bound together by a sense of a common aspiration. Unification is strengthened and power emerges from a deep common caring about the shared vision. Thus, As Joyce and Fred have recounted, unification around a common sense of purpose for the organization is a critical process for positioning the college to continually renew itself and fulfill the mission.

#### *Universal Focus*

The second key strategy of the revitalization process is universal focus. Universal focus refers to the desire to create something beyond oneself in the service of a higher purpose. Through actions which focus upon the vision as setting the direction for change, participative leadership creates a sense of a desired future. As Eric commented in the following narrative, a key aspect of universal focus is:

...a sense that this is something we're working on here that has importance beyond today...that we are really carrying out a mandate, you might say, a mission, or even a calling. I just even say to the staff, "I think what we have here is much more than a job, it's a calling."

Eric noted that when the institution is permeated with a "sense of a calling," the result is a "sacred trust:"

We are democracy's college. And here at Lake Community College, we have a stewardship to take that idea of the open door college, democracy's college and do it in

such a way that it's better for our having been here. So maybe after infusing this sense of a calling that we have a sacred trust to advance democracy's college.

Eric stressed that people want to belong to something that is larger than themselves:

I think people want to feel they are something bigger than themselves. I think people do have a sense of the spiritual. I think they're inspired by feeling that they are contributing to something that goes beyond their daily life and even beyond their lifetime, whether they're helping to build a building or helping to develop a program. That impact might be felt still 20 and 30 years ahead.

As Eric also indicated in the above passage, people are also inspired by the sense that they are contributing to something which has a long lasting impact. Fred echoed this view in the following passage. Fred referenced his earlier comments regarding the role of legacy as one of the overarching values for the re-visioning process:

If you get people in the organization that start thinking about... what kind of a legacy do you want to leave, that means what are you leaving behind that somebody else is going to look at? And on the day you retire what will people say about the legacy you've left in the organization? What do you leave behind and what are you contributing and what differences have you made?

There are some very quiet people in the organization that have been there 20 years. When you talk about the legacy they've left, it would be a fabulous legacy that they have left behind, even if not talked about. Basically, that not only gets you to think about today and what you're wanting to change. When you look back, have I left wreckage behind me or is there something back there that's of value and has long term value to the organization? Just as a new president coming in, you know, you can change the whole organization. But when you look behind you, what kind of wreckage is behind there?

In addition, another aspect of creating universal focus is the notion of the re-visioning process as expansive and uplifting. For instance, Fred stated that these overarching values should be the foundation of creating a broadly based vision:

What I like about them is I think they are more expansive, they are more challenging than the ones that we normally throw out. You should be able to go back to these and to continually expand them and redefine them.

Fred's emphasis upon expansiveness is reflected in his reference to a "grand vision:"

People respond to a grand vision. Saying that you are getting chocolate cake today and tomorrow you're going to have chocolate cake, and chocolate cake and chocolate cake. . . Well, the next day I'm going to put an extra half inch of chocolate frosting on the top so that's a change but it really hasn't changed much. But if you took them to a whole new

delight and some kind of fruit that they had never tasted before, that really pulls them out of their frame of reference.

As Fred commented, the grand vision can be conceptualized as taking organizational members “to a whole new delight.” Further, the grand vision must be expansive to the extent that it enables diversity and uniqueness to flow within the organization:

So the visioning process has to somehow connect to what you’re saying and what you’re doing. That’s why I say probably...the fewer words you can put in there, that the words you put in...people have to be able to be emotionally attached to it. The whole point is that when they’re doing that is that if you have ten people who believe in that and they are all going ten different ways.

If the vision is done right, it allows them to do that. In their particular part of the organization, this is how they’re putting it in place and implementing over here with different personalities, different requirements and all kinds of things. Hopefully, it moves them to the next level but at the same time it gives some sense of togetherness as they are doing it. The organization is going together forward with a tremendous amount of diversity and difference in how they’re necessarily doing it.

Fred spoke to the consequences of a failure to provide the scope that is needed for diversity and uniqueness to flow throughout the organization:

If you don’t you’ve destroyed everything that a participatory process is about which is to bring in the diversity of talents and the uniqueness of each individual in the organization. Allowing them to make maximum contributions is what it is about.

As this commentary suggests, a paradox is apparent in that the scope of the vision is both broad and narrow. The scope is broad in the sense that it permits great variance in bringing members with various background into the arena for advancing the institution, yet it is narrowly focused upon the direction for the future, moving them to the a higher level. Thus, the organization is “going together forward” under conditions fostering diversity and dissimilarity.

#### *Re-culturation*

The third key strategy, re-culturation, refers to the continuous process of re-creating the culture of the organization. As the following data and analyses provided by Fred, Eric and Joyce indicate, re-culturation is embedded within the re-visioning process. Fred described re-culturation as:

Re-culturation is a process that you go through and you gradually create a new culture at the organization. There are two things you are doing. You are bringing in different processes to do things and you are bringing in a different language to do things.

Next, Fred noted that the re-culturation process is both an aspect of the re-visioning process and a consequence of a compelling vision:

The re-visioning process occurs throughout the whole organization. The visioning is probably more of a big, global thing, and it's more of a statement.

In contrast, Fred stated:

The re-culturation process refers specifically to the culture of the organization. So, in my mind it would be very difficult to separate the two. They would be moving ahead, probably not always parallel, one of them will be following along as you go. But when a new vision is created and it actually makes a change, then there is a re-culturation that is going on in the organization.

In one sense, it's maybe the vision. And then again, what the vision produces is the re-culturation of the organization. If you get a strong enough vision it can change the culture, not dramatically, but it can make impacts on the culture of the organization.

In the following passages, Fred, and Joyce provided descriptive accounts of the result of a powerful re-visioning process in terms of how re-culturation became manifest with their respective organizations. This commentary exemplifies how the fundamental, broad-based purposes embedded within the organizational setting become enlivened through the visioning process as evidenced in the daily work of the institution. Thus, re-culturation creates a framework for participation within a spirit of renewed optimism and commitment. Fred emphasized that the overall purpose of the re-culturation process is "enlightenment," characterized by "true empowerment and ownership:"

Re-culturation is probably more on what is happening in the interaction with people and the organizational structure. . . it is probably the actual day to day changes that you see happening.

You would hope that flowing out of this comes this enlightenment. It's where you have true empowerment and ownership.

Fred remarked on how this process requires leadership that supports the creative process:

They support and own that which they created. You have great writers throughout history that have created all kinds of masterpieces and paintings, art and music and those kind of



things but there is always somebody that is recreating, rethinking, re-visioning and coming up with something that we find beauty and value in.

Because it's alive it has to change. It is a living creature. It has to change, we change, we have no choice but to change.

Fred commented below that this sense of creative tension marks the participative environment, as contrasted to the hierarchy:

So, if there isn't a tremendous amount of diversity and a lot of commotion as they're going forward, you haven't done it. If you want it to be neat and well packaged, you have the hierarchy. That is what it's designed for, to keep it very neat, very well packaged and very limited in its ability to vary from day to day, and person to person and new hires. It's a very rigid, very restrictive environment. You have to create another which is hopefully more open, more inclusive, allows people to express their given talents and abilities. You are trying to break down some of the barriers.

Fred's emphasis on breaking down the barriers is also reflected by Joyce, who alludes to this process as achieving a sense of being "one." Joyce remarked:

So they gather around the concept and I think that's where participating really helps, because it does break down the lines, it breaks down the barriers, it breaks down the hierarchy and allows you to just feel like you're "one."

If one group over there accomplishes something you should all feel pride, or hopefully they feel pride in what that accomplishment was and that maybe they had something to do with it.

In the passage below, Joyce commented how this sense of being "one" enabled the institution to avoid a sense of competition among members:

And that by somebody over here accomplishing something it kind of raises the institution and everybody in it. It's not a competition, "Well they did that, and I'm really jealous." I think when you get people to participate together, and they get to know each other, you break down those kinds of feelings so that it's not a resentment. It's not, "Well, we need to do this or we need more money" or whatever. It's "Isn't that great. They were really good at what they did and I want to go over and tell them how I think that really is a wonderful thing." And that's kind of the vision of what the perfect college would be.

Again, Joyce described the culture of Lincoln Community College as reflective of an institution organized around a commonly shared vision:

We had a lot of that at Lincoln Community College. It was just so nice to see people excited about something that happened over there completely out of their area and they're all talking about it. They are talking about it in the lunchroom, "Isn't that great that they were able to accomplish that." And, "Oh, it was in the paper today, and we just love

seeing Lincoln Community College in the paper.” I’m sure there were people in the institution who were sitting there fussing about it, but it just was more the culture that that wasn’t acceptable.

Last, Eric remarked on the uniqueness of participative leadership, stressing its potential to release the immense energy of people gathered around a common purpose:

I think what is unique about participative leadership is that you release the talents and the energy of more people. No one person today could possibly know everything that needs to be known about the changing environment or about changes in discipline. And I think participative management is simply, you just have more intelligence, more talent, more energy going into shaping the institution. In fact, if you think about transformational leadership, which I happen to be working on right now with one of my clients, I don’t know how you could be transformational without having a large cadre of talented people working together. No one person can transform an institution, even a small group.

Further, Eric commented on how the spirit of the participative organization provides the context for “true participation,” a form of interaction grounded in group process:

I would say that really is the main advantage and also by true participation, decisions are made that just astound you, that are just awesome, things that people do better as a group than you could ever have done by yourself. They make you and the institution better because you gave them the opportunity to use their talent instead of just being a sort of cog in the wheel.

Joyce described this phenomenon as the “ultimate team:”

I think that when people are unified around the college and what that represents, both for the students and the community and to them, you get that unification and that oneness and that’s the ultimate team right there. I think as a president you always strive to create that climate and culture that will make that happen. When you’ve not ever had it, I’m not sure that you know that it exists.

This commentary by Fred, Joyce and Eric has demonstrated that re-culturation, as both a significant force for renewal as well as a key outcome of the re-visioning process, provides a sense of purpose which draws people throughout the organization toward a compelling vision that is continually renewed. Thus, the mission of the participative organization is continually advanced as a collective process through focusing and refocusing on the institutional vision.

### Findings

The final phase, *fulfilling the mission*, discloses the significance of the key process, *renewing the spirit of the participative organization*. The sub-process, *revitalizing the vision*,

represents the primary method for continually re-engaging institutional commitment around the mission of the institution. These data and analyses reveal that in order to re-vitalize the participative vision, these presidents report that they employ three primary strategies. Unification refers to the sense of affiliation and collegiality that is achieved through the power of the visioning process. Actions taken by these presidents include fostering conditions to encourage “gathering around” the college with the vision as the central focus for organizing behavior. Establishing axioms or over-arching values for the organization which become engrained in planning processes and other institutional endeavors unite people around a sense of a common vision. Unification around a common sense of purpose enables the college to continually revitalize itself and thus fulfill its broad institutional mission.

The second key strategy reported by these presidents is fostering a sense of universal focus. This strategy refers to the notion that people wish to be connected to something beyond themselves in service to a higher purpose. Leadership actions are directed toward infusing the institution with a sense of a “calling,” resulting in the perception of having a “sacred trust.” The findings indicate that when referencing matters relating to the spiritual realm, these leaders spoke in a very broad sense. The emphasis was upon their role as participative leaders in creating connections among organizational members regarding the way work is conceived and carried out. Further, through implementing a “grand vision” which is encompassed in an atmosphere of expansiveness and inspiration, the visioning process is described as propelling the institution toward a desired institutional future. Thus, the scope of the visioning process is broad in that it encourages great variation in bringing together persons from diverse and unique perspectives, yet it is narrow in its focus upon a collectively desired future.

The third strategy, re-culturation, reflects the ongoing process of creating the organization’s culture. Re-culturation is described as an integral piece of the visioning process, and at the same time, is a result of a strong, deeply engrained institutional vision. Re-culturation is revealed in the daily interactions of the organization when “enlightenment” has permeated the

institution. At this point, the data indicates that “true empowerment” and “true ownership” are in place. In contrast to the rigid, tightly organized hierarchical context, the participative environment is characterized by a sense of creative tension. Thus, the structure, climate and culture of the organization allow for high variation in processes for undertaking the act of re- visioning the institution.

#### Summary and Application to the Core Category

The core category, Visioning Participative Environments, provides the integrative force that links these categories together. This process is described according to the properties of the core category (purpose, focus, nature, and outcome) which flow among the phases or sequences of interaction within this category. The phases are *opening the self of the president, shaping the institutional vision, embracing the mission* and *fulfilling the mission*.

First, the overall purpose of the category, re-committing the institution, reveals that the core category has provided a means for moving the institution into the re-visioning process. The purposes of each phase, as disclosed in their titles, reveal that action flows from the significance placed on the primary intent of this category. In the sense that the term re-visioning refers to the notion of perceiving the institution with a fresh perspective, the notion of focus comes into play. As the property of the core category, this indicator provides insight into how the scope of the visioning process widens. The scope of the visioning process expands from the internal, private self of the president to the broad landscape of the external environment. From the base established during the first three phases, the organization moves toward incorporating the personal interests of organizational members, including the president, with the broader interests of the external environment into the institutional vision and mission.

The properties of nature and outcome also unfold within the re-visioning process, flowing from the groundwork established within the three previous categories. The webbed organization is characterized as having high levels of trust, empowerment, understanding and ownership. From this foundation, these key aspects are extended throughout the organization. For example,

ownership is sustained through strategies referred to by Eric as fostering sense of a “calling” or a “sacred trust.” Eric, Joyce and Fred view understanding as a consequence of the personal visioning and collective visioning processes. Empowerment is also fostered through building the collective vision through the inquiry and dialogue process. Organizational trust is fused throughout the organization as people come together within the “ultimate team.”

Thus, as the category Re-visioning the Participative Organization has demonstrated, the framework for participation is continually renewed through actions which foster renewed commitment and energy for fulfilling the institutional mission. These presidents perceived the participative vision as an activating force for releasing the talents and energy of a diverse group of people within a large realm of collective, purposeful action. At the core of the re-visioning process is the desire to care for the well being of the institution and to act in the interest of the whole.

## CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

### *Overview*

This final chapter is presented in four sections. First, the initial section contains a short summary of the study. Second, the next section presents the findings so that they are interwoven with a review of the relevant literature, along with implications drawn from the study. Third, limitations and recommendations for practice and application are identified. Fourth, the conclusion completes this chapter.

### Summary of the Study

### *Background*

The literature on community college leadership indicates that factors underpinning the current external and internal environments bring to the forefront serious concerns regarding the future of the American community college. The literature demonstrates that community college leadership must consider significant factors in its external environment. These issues include decreasing fiscal allocation, changing demographics, the ongoing impact of technology and the political context surrounding the institution (Hodges & Milliron, 1997; Roueche, et al., 1989). Increased emphasis is also being placed on strengthening the institution's internal environment. This focus is closely linked to the growing interest in the role of institutional governance mechanisms for involving members throughout the campus community in organizational design and renewal (Schuster et al, 1994; Richardson, 1976; Alfred, 1985, 1994; Twombly and Amey, 1994).

The review of literature for this study has demonstrated that although the topic of leadership has received much attention, there is considerable debate surrounding its meaning, uses and characteristics. The elusive, ambiguous nature of leaders and leadership is a problem for community college practitioners and is linked to the split between theory and practice (Bensimon,

1994; Birnbaum, 1998). According to Gollatscheck (1985), there is an absence of clear theory on institutional governance.

### *Purpose*

The overall intent of this study was to develop greater understanding of the concept of participative leadership as it reflects the emergence of participative governance in the American community college. The purpose was to examine the participative leadership process as it reflects the actions of community college presidents in leading their institutions. Specifically, the intent is to contribute to the development of a grounded theory on participative leadership as understood within the literature on leadership and governance in the American community college.

This study focused on the central research question and sub-questions: What are the essential features or characteristics of the participative leadership process as experienced by community college presidents in leading their institutions? The sub-questions were: What are their experiences? What is the meaning of participative leadership to these presidents? What social interaction issues and broad conditions were present? What strategies do presidents employ as participative leaders? What are the consequences of employing such strategies?

### *Methodology*

Grounded theory was chosen for the methodology of this study due its ability to meet the stated purposes of this study. Grounded theory responded to need for: (1) in-depth descriptive accounts of the personal perspectives of participants; (2) generating data reflective of the everyday life of participative leaders; (3) building theory on the phenomenon of participative leadership; and (4) examining leadership as a distinct process within the unique setting of the community college environment.

### *Analysis*

The researcher selected a pool of seven community college presidents representing three national accreditation regions for in depth interviewing. Accepted sampling procedures for grounded theory were followed. Nine in-depth interviews, which lasted between one and one half

hours and three and one half hours in length, were conducted in various settings. Six interviews were conducted initially, and three focused interviews were conducted with three presidents in order to contribute to the theory building process.

To assure accuracy in transcript development and protect the identity of the participants, copies of transcripts were mailed to these presidents, and they were asked to review them. These transcripts were coded according to practices recommended by Strauss and Corbin, (1990, 1998). The analysis generated categories from the open coding process that led to the emergence of axial categories. The axial categories are considered a fundamental aspect of the analytical process as they provided the basis for generating a core category, linking the findings into a sequential pattern during the theory building process, and identifying the cornerstones of a model of participative leadership practice. These cornerstones provide the conceptual framework for interpreting the findings as they relate to the relevant literature.

#### Presentation of the Findings

Embedded within the four theoretical cornerstones are a set of leadership practices that comprise the participative leadership process. From this standpoint, the axial categories, Envisioning the Participative Organization, Participative Passages, Web of Participation, and Re-visioning the Organization represent the theoretical cornerstones of this conceptual framework. This dissertation should not be regarded as a study of leaders per se. Rather, it is about the leadership process and is based on an analysis of the actions that characterize this process. From this analysis, a model of participative leadership was developed. This analysis indicates that participative presidents within community college institutions do exhibit certain distinct practices in leading their respective institutions and that these practices can be described and delineated. This set of ten fundamental participative leadership practices responds to the call for new models of leadership for guiding the American Community College (Birnbaum, 1998; Bensimon, 1994).

These practices are linked to the literature reviewed for this study in order to demonstrate the relevance of this research to an established body of work on leadership. The central concept is



that through the visioning process, participative leadership embodies a set of practices on how to construct and respond to environments that encourage active participation in the decision-making process.

### The Ten Fundamental Practices of Participative Leadership

| Cornerstone                                 | Practice                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Envision the Participative Organization     | Envision the organization around the tenets of the participative philosophy      |
|                                             | Embrace the role of change agent to address the challenging external environment |
| Participative Passages                      | Engage with the conflictive dynamics of the campus environment                   |
|                                             | Lay the groundwork for mutuality                                                 |
| The Web of Participation                    | Construct agreements for participation                                           |
|                                             | Establish participative decision-making arrangements                             |
|                                             | Strengthen the culture of commitment through critical institutional process      |
|                                             | Face the challenges of the web                                                   |
| Re-visioning the Participative Organization | Shape the personal and institutional visions                                     |
|                                             | Reaffirm commitment to the mission                                               |

### Envisioning the Participative Organization

As the first theoretical cornerstone, Envisioning the Participative Organization implies that the visioning process begins in the personal and professional life of the president. This aspect of the visioning process indicates that an envisioned organization originates in the imagination and expresses the notion that what is merely an image can be transformed into an institutional reality.

### Practice: Envision the Participative Organization Around the Tenets of the Participative Philosophy

According to the findings presented earlier regarding the category, Envisioning the Participative Organization, these data and analyses demonstrate that these participative presidents engage in a process of imagining an ideal future. Further, the findings revealed that these presidents are keenly aware of the significance of their values and belief systems as a frame for the visioning process and that a discernable participative philosophy emerged.

According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), a vision is defined “as an ideal and unique image of the future” (p. 95). These authors posited that a vision conveys a standard of excellence and implies a choice of values (p.95). Kouzes and Posner (1995) further asserted that the role of the leader during the envisioning process is to create a vision for the organization which is based on ideal and unique images of the organizational future (p. 111). Kouzes and Posner (1995) also indicated that a vision “expresses our highest standards and values” (p. 111). The high significance of values is also underscored by Roueche et al. (1989) in their study of presidential leadership in community colleges. These authors asserted that the values leaders bring into their role as presidents significantly impacts the organization.

This study supports the view of Kouzes and Posner (1995) and Roueche et al. (1989) that the envisioning process is a fundamental aspect of leadership actions. First, this study reveals the perceptions that the role of participative president is grounded within the belief systems and value orientations reflective of personal and professional experiences. Further, the presidents interviewed generally revealed a strong sense of their personal values and how their value orientations corresponded with the institutional setting in which they assumed their roles as presidents. As stated by Kouzes and Posner (1995), “Our past is prologue to our future, and leaders who are students of their own and the organization’s history are better able to see into the future” (p. 111).

This practice of participative leadership reveals the importance of having a strong sense of commitment to personal values as well as to the value orientation underlying the mission of the community college. In general, the presidents interviewed for this study disclosed a deep commitment to humanitarian values, laying the foundation for how they will craft their evolving roles within their respective institutions. Kouzes and Posner (1995) emphasized that organizational visions are impacted by assumptions that are made about people and the world. As recommended by Kouzes and Posner (1995), it is important for leaders to discover “higher-order values that are the idealized ends for which you strive” (p.113). This reference to moving to a higher moral ground suggests that this model of participative leadership is linked to what leadership theorists refer to as transformational leadership (Roueche et al., 1989; Biggerstaff, 1992). Kouzes and Posner (1995) referenced the connection to leadership that focuses upon commitment and transformational leadership in the assertion, “The most admired leaders speak unhesitatingly and proudly of mutual ethical aspirations” (p. 133).

This study has indicated that these participative presidents demonstrated the capacity to articulate their personal values and also the values underlying the overall purpose or mission of an envisioned organization. The notion of the community college as being defined through its mission as involving orientation to the community, access and comprehensive program has been addressed by Bogart (1994), Cohen and Brawer, (1996); and Vaughn (2000). According to Cohen and Brawer (1994), community colleges “serve as agents of hope for all people regardless of their past experience with the educational system” (p. 20).

This study indicates that the underlying values cited by these authors are likewise reflected in the perceptions of the presidents interviewed for this study. The philosophical orientations were summarized in the tenets of the participative philosophy which emphasized the importance of access, principles and values, collective involvement in decision making, results oriented action and mutual responsibility for the change process. Thus, envisioning the participative organization around a core of articulated, clear tenets is a fundamental participative

leadership practice which provided the presidents with a frame for guiding the organization into a complex, volatile future.

Practice: Embrace the role of change agent to address the challenging external environment

This study has demonstrated that the presidents interviewed for this study exhibited a significant capacity to assess the contextual conditions in which the institution currently functions. The findings have indicated that the current situation is characterized by numerous constraints including resource scarcity, demographic changes, increasing demands for inter-organizational partnerships and information technology. These findings confirm the views reported in the literature regarding the problematic nature of the external environment (Hodges & Milliron, 1997; Vaughn & Weisman, 1998; Cohen & Brawer, 1994; Schuster et. al., 1994; Miller, 1998; Vaughn, 2000; Sarandon, 1994; Gladiolus & Swail, 1999; Rendon & Valadez, 1994).

These findings and analyses of this study are highly indicative of the need for community college presidents to be agents of change. The significance of the role of change agent is addressed by Rosabeth Moss Kanter, a Harvard Business school professor in her seminal work, *The Change Masters* (1984). Kouzes and Posner (1995) stated that a great similarity exists in comparing case studies they conducted and those described by Kanter in their discussion of the leader as an agent of change (p. 51). These authors pointed to the inherent connection between innovation, change and leadership. In Kanter's words, "Change requires leadership, after all, a 'prime mover' to push for implementation of strategic decisions" (p. 125).

In accord with Kouzes and Posner (1995) and Kanter (1984), this study discloses that these participative leaders are also "prime movers" as evidenced by their recognition of the need for change as well as the ability to move the institution into the transformational process. For example, the data revealed that these presidents viewed themselves as agents of change in regard to institutional expectations at the time of entry into the presidential position. They emphasized that they were viewed as exhibiting trustworthiness by those who were instrumental in bringing

them into their institutions. Further, these presidents underscored the importance of addressing problematic social conditions within the external environment as well as the pressures for increased participation from various constituencies. A significant finding is that the traditional hierarchical form of organization is no longer considered adequate for addressing the challenges identified within the literature (Senge, 1990; Helgesen, 1995). This perspective is a central theme of this study of participative leadership.

The overall implication is that assuming the role of an agent of change is guided by a vision reflected of a complex, challenging external environment. The vision for the institution is based upon a philosophical stance that accentuates the importance of embarking upon the change process. This vision is multi-directional in that it embodies linkages from the past into the current situational context, providing a frame for future action. As stated by Bennis (1991), higher education leadership must “create an environment that actually embraces change, not as a threat but as an opportunity. I think that’s the only way to run an organization in a turbulent world” (p. 152). Hood et al. (1999) asserted that the future will require leaders who “. . .help the institution to survive amidst the turbulence of the times; and be able to deal with the politics that will envelop the institution.”(p. 12). In effect, as stated by Schuster et al (1994), “It is clear, however, that higher education leaders will need great skill and insight to negotiate a way through the awaiting hazards” (p. 6). As the findings of this study and the literature convey, great foresight by educational leaders is needed to navigate into this volatile, problematic future.

#### Participative Passages

Participative Passages, the second cornerstone of the participative leadership process, emphasizes the highly interactive nature of the visioning process and the organizational dynamics that link the president and campus members within the institutional context. This cornerstone underscores the importance of the laying the groundwork for constructing the participative organization. The focus for action is within the internal environment and encompasses the more informal aspects of the organization. These data and analyses presented in the previous chapter

demonstrated that these presidents seek to create an atmosphere that produces the perception that more egalitarian relationships have come into being. At the same time, the responsibilities of the position require that they maintain their role as the campus leader. The dynamics of the change process are shaped by the necessity of contending with the intrinsically asymmetrical arrangement of power relationships within the organization.

Practice: Engage with the Conflictive Dynamics of the Campus Environment

The emphasis within this study upon focusing upon the institutional environment is likewise reflected in the literature. For example, Johnson (1998) indicated that “the best opportunity for change comes from inside the college—not by state mandates” (p. 38). Sarantos (1994) asserted “. . .an environment can be created that recognizes the constancy of change, values the importance of individual contribution and perspectives and proactively adapts to changing educational and market-based forces” (p. 2).

Despite this high emphasis in the literature upon the need for focusing upon implementing change with the internal campus environment, the literature also indicates that issues of power and conflict characterize the academic environment. A significant segment of the literature regarding the struggle for power and control within the internal campus environment focuses on the issue of responsibility for the antagonistic working relationships between administrators and faculty (Miller, 1998; Schuster, 1994; Richardson; 1976; Leatherman, 1998). While these authors differ on who should be considered culpable for the contentious working environment, it is clear that the capacity for faculty to resist change is significant (Alfred, 1985). Further, the centrality of the role of faculty within academic institutions is well documented in the literature (Vaughn, 2000; Schuster et al., 1994; Alfred, 1985; Richardson, 1976; Vineyard, 1993).

As delineated throughout the category Participative Passages, the internal environment of the institution is indeed characterized by a climate of mistrust, apprehension and contentiousness. These data and analyses reinforce the views expressed in the literature outlined above through examples that indicated that the presidents perceived the climate of their institutions as

characterized by conflictive exchange and divisiveness at the initiation of the change process. Further, this study substantiates the pivotal role of faculty as a fundamental source of resistance to the change process as it is initiated within the typical hierarchical organization of an academic institution.

#### Practice: Lay the Groundwork for Mutuality

As this study has demonstrated, the institutional context is perceived by these presidents as characterized by interactions in which campus members, particularly faculty, “play the game” within non-participative structures and processes. These responses are described by terms such as “screwing it up royally,” “malicious compliance,” “benign neglect,” “open defiance” and “sabotaging the process.” These presidents perceived campus members as engaging in actions that inhibit their attempts to lay the groundwork for the participative organization. The presidents respond to the gaming process through invoking strategies for developing participative relationships.

As referenced under the previous practice, there is a significant segment of literature documenting the discordant, divisive nature of the institutional environment. In addition, some writers indicated that faculty resistance is related to job insecurity, low morale and unfavorable perceptions of campus administrators (Cohen & Brawer, 1996; Johnson, 1998; Hood, et al., 1999; Alfred, 1985; Richardson, 1976; Schuster, 1994). However, the literature reviewed for this study on academic culture apparently did not provide illustrative accounts of how this resistance actually unfolds within the institutional environment. In short, as stated by Schuster et al., (1994), faculty “seldom voice their frustration ‘for the record;’ political astuteness generally requires a less provocative stance. In sum, the gulf between administration and faculty very often is wide and deep.”

This study may be viewed as contributing to the knowledge base on this pervasive chasm between administration and faculty, particularly in respect to how participative leadership confronts the climate and culture of divisiveness and discord within academic life. Through its

vivid description of the interactions that take place, this study reveals examples of how passive resistance took place within the everyday life of these organizations. Further, the practice of engaging directly with conflictive processes indicates that participative leadership includes specific strategies that are undertaken in order to contend with this resistance. These strategies are focused upon building a sense of reciprocal mutuality among institutional members in order to lay the foundation for a more participative climate and culture. This study has demonstrated that these presidents engaged directly with the conflict rather than stepping away from it or denying its existence. Another significant finding is that these presidents avoided assigning blame for which party should be held culpable for the conflictive nature of academic culture. Rather, they identified non-participative structures and processes as the source of the contentious environment and focused their leadership strategies toward enhancing the interactive context in which work is carried out.

Thus, this leadership practice indicates that acknowledging, uncovering and confronting discontent is a key method for developing the climate and culture of trust of the emerging participative organization. This aspect of participative leadership is critical since some literature indicates that presidents were generally unaware of the morale level of their college. According to Johnson (1998), presidents differed most significantly from the faculty regarding perceptions of how positive their leadership is regarded within their various institutions.

Further, the findings of this study suggest that careful examination should be undertaken regarding the applicability of the research on participative governance undertaken within the corporate domain. According to some writers on participative governance in academic settings, the movement toward increased participation is viewed as stemming from the management theories and practices within corporate America (Schuster et al., 1994; Twombly & Amey, 1994; Acebo, 1994). Since corporate studies are not characterized by the unique dynamics of the faculty sub-culture, their transferability to the campus setting may be restricted. As Schuster et al. (1994) remarked, the corporate model is limited since the challenges for decision-making in higher



education “are different, in considerable measure because of the distinctiveness (some would say peculiarities) of academic culture” (p. 13). Thus, this study discloses that the focus of participative leadership is upon building participative structures and processes that encourage collective involvement in decision-making activities.

### The Web of Participation

The third cornerstone, the Web of Participation, refers to how the vision, as an image of the future, becomes translated into action. The Web of Participation discloses how participative leadership advances the vision so that it becomes co-created through collective involvement within the climate and culture of the participative organization. The organization undergoes a continual transformative process from a hierarchical, bureaucratic form into a more open, integrated and organic institution. The term “web” provides the frame for describing an organic, holistic perspective for building institutional structures and processes. The term “participation” communicates the dedication and determination of these presidents to achieving active engagement in the decision making process by all those who work within the organization. This study has demonstrated the significance placed by these presidents on developing a climate and culture of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding.

The findings of this study substantiate the views of writers that building commitment toward a common vision is a primary responsibility for the leaders of today’s community colleges and that a focus upon the climate and cultural life of the institution is essential (Roueche et al., 1989). Baker (1992) asserted, “The responsibility of community college leaders lies in mobilizing a shared commitment toward a common vision, a feat that can be accomplished by focusing more attention on symbolic and cultural processes” (p. 11). The following leadership practices include specific strategies for implementing and sustaining the move toward the vision of the participative organization, emphasizing the importance of constructing a climate and culture of participation. As Kanter (1983) related, “Masters of change must also be masters of the use of participation” (p.241). The presidents in this study indicated a strong sense of vigilance for

anticipating an opening in the hierarchical framework so that the change process could be advanced into the everyday life of the institution.

#### Practice: Construct Agreements for Participation

A key strategy for constructing the climate of mutual involvement is eliminating the dual system of decision-making so that broad agreements for the decision making process can be established. The findings of this study focused on actions taken by these presidents to abolish the duality in the prevailing faculty governance structure of their institutions. Several presidents found that faculty governance in their institutions was divided. These structures were referred to as either the faculty senate or the collective bargaining unit. This finding supports the literature which indicates that a major obstacle to implementing and maintaining participative governance is the dual model for decision-making (Schuster, et al., 1994; Vineyard, 1993). The findings underscored the importance of addressing the myth that faculty leadership can be split between two decision-making structures. This leadership practice is centered upon actions directed toward eliminating dual decision-making structures that separate key processes within the governance structure. Thus, broad based ownership results from deconstructing a governance system that splits decision-making processes and reinforces a climate and culture of separation.

Another key strategy related to this leadership practice is the establishment of participative decision-making arrangements, generally referred to as “teams” by these presidents. In effect, these presidents gave very high emphasis to constructing environments for group based decision-making. The key elements of the participative settings are commonality, flexibility, inclusiveness and consensus-based decision-making. Teams are viewed as the primary vehicle for creating commitment to a common vision, thereby creating contribution throughout the organization. As stated by Twombly and Amey (1994), “Teamwork is the essence of participatory governance.” Wheatley (1999) observed, “The era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player” (p. 39). Wheatley (1999) described the “participative

universe” as characterized by the sense of ownership or personal connection that people have to the organization which inspires them to contribute (p. 68).

The findings of this study confirm the research indicating the importance of these key characteristics as essential aspects of teams within organizations. First, the issue of commonality indicates that the perspective of campus members is broadened through their participation in team-based activities. Social groups are created which share a mutual set of values, expectations and identities. Commonality is achieved through participation in inter-dependent teaming processes. This emphasis upon developing a sense of commonality is also emphasized by Kouzes and Posner (1995) who emphasized the importance of building a vision which conveys a unique image of the future for the “*common good*” (p. 124).

Second, flexibility was also identified within this study as a key characteristic of these participative decision making vehicles. The major assertion was that flexibility in the structure of the decision-making process enabled more effective decisions to be made through fostering higher levels of ownership. Flexibility produced the option of localness so that power and control over decisions were pushed into the outer sphere of the web when conditions supported this movement. The findings of this study indicate these participative leaders view localness as building ownership by providing those affected by the impact of the decision the responsibility and authority for carrying out the decision making process. Thus, flexibility is a tool for creating meaningful participation through building ownership.

These findings on the importance of flexibility in structures for team decision-making to encourage participation contribute to the research conducted by several authors. The emphasis on creating ownership through localness is also echoed by Senge (1990). Senge (1990) indicated that localness frees the capacity of people to be committed since it gives them a wider scope for action. The findings of this study correspond with Senge’s (1990) assertion, “Localness means moving decisions down the organizational hierarchy; designing business units where, to the greatest degree possible, local decision makers confront the full range of issues and dilemmas

intrinsic in growing and sustaining any business enterprise” (p. 287). Kanter (1983) also references localness in her statement, “. . .the closer the arena for participation is to the job territory, the more it will be embraced. Local, task-related issues seem to work best” (p. 252). Wheatley (1999) stated that by acting locally within a web, “We are more likely to be sensitive to the dynamics of this system, and thus most effective” (p. 45). This reference to webbed organizations is expanded upon by Helgesen (1995) in which she indicated that the flexibility of the web enables it to operate in various ways. Helgesen defined the web as “*a team that goes the distance*” (p. 33).

Third, inclusiveness was also identified as a key characteristic of these team-based decision making units. The findings of this study revealed that inclusiveness is viewed as a means for widening the scope of access of various parties to the decision-making process. Since a wider diversity of perspectives is achieved, increased decision-making effectiveness results. This study contributes to the body of knowledge generated by writers such as Schuster et al. (1994); Twombly and Amey (1992); Birnbaum (1998) and Bensimon (1994). These authors addressed the issue of exclusion of under-represented groups within traditional models of leadership. As Schuster et al. (1994) and Bensimon (1994) have indicated, there is a pressing need to develop models that are based on a more collective notion of leadership.

Last, consensus based decision-making was identified as the final key attribute of team-based settings. The primary leadership actions included establishing agreements regarding consensual principles and processes, emphasizing procedures for true representation and honoring recommendations emerging from teams. The findings indicated that consensual decision-making is a highly interactive, mutually reciprocal process that leads to higher levels of trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding.

The importance of developing consensual decision-making within team-based processes is well documented in the literature within higher education (Twombly & Amey, 1994; Acebo, 1994; Roueche et al., 1989). Given the importance that faculty place upon consensual decision-

making processes (Miller, 1998), the findings of this study contribute to the body of literature on addressing the need for governance structures that are viewed as credible and legitimate by this significant sub-group.

**Practice: Strengthen the Culture of Commitment Through Critical Institutional Processes**

The findings from this study underscore the importance of sustaining commitment to the participative vision through continually nurturing and strengthening the organizational culture. The notion of organizational culture as an integrative force is focused on how it contributes and interacts with institutional structures, processes and members. In this sense, the Web of Participation constitutes an arrangement of networks that re-enforce the notion that all members have the potential to be strong contributors to the institution. The culture of commitment is sustained through creating conditions that foster trust, empowerment, ownership and understanding.

This leadership practice, strengthen the culture of commitment through critical institutional processes, reflects the findings of this study that the function of the visioning process during this stage is to provide the direction and frame for guiding behavior toward organizational goals. The participative leadership philosophy, outlined under the first cornerstone, Envisioning the Participative Organization, provides the underpinning for tightening the sense of identification among members to the purpose and goals of the organization. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), sustaining commitment is important for leadership because it ensures that current organizational actions are matched to the vision of the future. As stated by Melrose (1998), a critical goal for leadership is “. . .ensuring that there will be harvests in the future as well as in the present” (p. 293). This leadership practice includes four key strategies for building trust, ownership, empowerment and understanding, thus sustaining the culture of commitment. These data and analyses contribute to the literature on organizational leadership and decision-making as outlined below.

First, modeling the participative culture was described by these participative presidents as a primary strategy for building commitment throughout the organization. According to the findings of this study, role expectations for these presidents included living out the values, norms and belief system characterizing the participative organizations. As one president in this study remarked, presidents and the upper level administrators must “walk the talk.” Indeed, as Kouzes and Posner (1995) asserted, in order for a leader to achieve credibility, they must be perceived as someone who will “walk the talk” (p. 210). Therefore, commitment is strengthened through modeling values and norms that build trustworthiness in the leader, thus fostering a broad sense of mutual trust throughout the organization.

Further, these findings indicate that if consistency in modeling is sustained, the outcome will be to move from a culture based on contractual agreements to a culture reflective of shared assumptions, values and norms. This view is congruent with the leadership philosophy expressed by acclaimed writer, Max Depree (1989) who contrasted contractual organizational relationships with those based on covenants. Depree (1989) stated, “A covenantal relationship rests on shared commitment to ideas, to issues, to values, to goals, and to management processes. . . .Covenantal relationships reflect unity and grace and poise” (p. 60). This emphasis upon the leader creating a reciprocal response around covenantal relationships is also reflected by McGee-Cooper (1998) who stated that to function at the level of a covenant, developing a high level of mutual trust is essential (p. 8).

Another key aspect of this strategy is fostering open communication through high visibility, thus reinforcing the perception that the president is deeply engaged in the everyday life of the organization. The importance of leadership as tightly connected to the organization is underscored by Kouzes and Posner (1995). This strategy also reflects the perspective expressed by Roueche et al. (1989) that effective and open communication requires high visibility to foster the perspective that contributions are valued by the leader (p. 227).

Second, another key strategy for fostering commitment identified in the findings of this study is establishing broad-based systems for recognition and celebration around institutional values and beliefs. The importance of this approach is reflected by Melrose (1998) who stated that leadership should create an environment in which the contributions of members are visibly valued (p. 293). Kouzes and Posner (1995) asserted, "Celebrations should also call attention to and reinforce key organizational values. Celebrations that do so let others know what's valued and encourage people to try for their opportunity in the spotlight" (p. 294). The notion that recognition and celebration events reinforce and nurture organizational relationships is also supported by Kouzes and Posner (1995). These writers stated, "Celebrations bring people together so that information can be exchanged, relationships can be nourished, and a sense of shared fate can be sustained" (p. 301). The findings of this study also indicate that these presidents recognize the significance of symbolic cultural activity and ceremonial practices within the organization (Baker, 1992). This finding also contributes to the literature developed by Block (1998) who stressed, "Culture is the emergence of shared meanings, not as a product of top-level intentions" (p. 89). Thus, trust, ownership and understanding are fostered through institution wide systems for celebrating the life of the organization.

Third, the findings of this study reveal that these presidents emphasized the importance of education and training experiences for furthering commitment to institutional goals. Special emphasis was placed on strengthening the cultural orientation of the institution through focusing broad-based training and education around the guiding values and principles of the organization. An important finding is that education and training are ongoing events that offer opportunities for personal and professional development to all members. This perspective is underscored by Helgesen (1995) who stated that in the webbed organization, "Training will be reconfigured as education, a continual process in which everyone participates, sharing knowledge and skills, as in the pre-industrial master-apprentice model" (p. 49). The culture of commitment is strengthened

within an environment fostering the importance of developing the knowledge, talent and skills of all members of the organization, thus enhancing their ability to contribute.

Another key finding of this study is that a primary focus of these educational programs is to develop deeper understanding of the impact of guiding principles and values in the professional lives of individuals. This approach is reflected in the literature by Jaworski (1998) who advocated continuous learning for undertaking the journey of self-discovery. Jaworski (1998) expressed the position that through personal and professional development individuals experience “. . .three fundamental shifts of mind that set the stage for our becoming more capable of participating in our unfolding future” (p. 261). Jaworski (1998) indicated that one shift which occurs is in the understanding of the nature of commitment. As this study has indicated, increased understanding of organizational goals and principles is achieved throughout the organization through this focus on developing the person as the means of enhancing organization effectiveness, thus sustaining commitment to the organization.

Last, this leadership practice also reflects a key finding of this study that these presidents underscored the significance of systems of professional performance review consistent with the cultural orientation of the organization. These systems provide a means for achieving accountability, promote alignment with institutional goals and construct the context for empowering and sanctioning individuals. Issues related to the complexity and challenges of addressing the sanctioning process are addressed under the next leadership practice contained within this cornerstone.

#### Practice: Face the Challenges of the Web

This study of participative leadership has demonstrated that as the organization has evolved, it has moved to a more open, organic, integrated form and into a more decentralized arrangement of relationships. At the same time, the webbed organization is characterized by deeply embedded problem areas situated within the dynamics of the organization. As Kanter (1983) cautioned, “Participatory systems are often painted by their proponents as organizational



Utopias that will automatically improve everything” (p. 271). Kanter refers to this issue as, “The ‘great expectations’ trap: hoping for an organizational Utopia” (p. 271). This section discloses that this leadership practice is geared toward examining the most critical challenges associated with participative governance and the “special dilemmas and pitfalls inherent in participation” (Twombly & Amey, 1994, p. 275).

This leadership practice underscores the notion that participative leadership enables practitioners to face the dilemmas and challenges of the web by viewing participation as a developmental process which can be observed, described and traced. The critical challenges identified in this study include trustworthiness, team-based decision-making, empowerment and the paradoxes of the hierarchy. This section demonstrates that the findings of this study contribute to the established body of knowledge on these important topics. The following discussion provides indicators, recommendations and links to the relevant literature for current and future community college leaders for creating and sustaining participative organizations.

#### *The Challenge of Trustworthiness: The Soft Side of the Web*

This study examined organizational trust as a concept addressed at the personal, interpersonal and institutional levels. The primary problem areas that emerged included issues concerning openness to others, the sanctioning process, process-based trust and the problem of reversion.

In regard to the problem of openness, the findings of this study demonstrated that since the president must be viewed as a person of high integrity, establishing trustworthiness is an essential aspect of participative leadership. The significance of trustworthiness is well documented in the literature on leadership, as reflected by Kouzes and Posner (1995) who stated, “Trustworthiness is *the* crucial ingredient in the credibility formula. . .”(p. 166). Kouzes and Posner (1995) also indicated that by being open, the leader encourages others to also engage in being open which leads to interpersonal trust. Roueche et al.(1989) underscored the importance of trust and openness in their finding,

Of all the values shared by CEO's interviewed in this study, openness and trust, in conjunction with integrity, were identified by all. They collectively felt that how they were perceived in relation to these values permeated both their internal and external environments" (p. 227).

Despite the high emphasis upon building trust through openness to others in the literature as well as in the findings of this study, an important dilemma identified in this analysis is that openness to others during the trust building process may result in an environment in which antagonistic responses such as discourtesy, disrespect and faultfinding emerge. Ironically, the very strategies that are directed at transforming the contentious environment into a more collegial setting may produce the opposite response, especially at the initiation of the change process. This phenomenon was described under the first cornerstone of this model. The key strategies for addressing this problem area are a highly evolved team structure along with the internal strength and sense of personal security of the president.

A second important finding regarding the problem of trust and sanctioning within a participative organization is the relationship between trustworthiness and personal vulnerability. The findings indicate that as the institution moves toward higher levels in its ability to resolve issues related to trustworthiness, the climate and culture becomes increasingly supportive of processes for resolving low-trust interpersonal relationships. These findings contribute to the research conducted by Kouzes and Poser (1995) regarding the importance of a climate of safety for fostering vulnerability so that individuals are encouraged to open up to others and develop trust. As Kouzes and Posner (1995) asserted, leaders must demonstrate their trust first and that means "...going first in the area of trust; it means a willingness to risk trusting others" (p. 167).

Another key finding from this study of participative leadership is related to the issue of the degree of trust perceived regarding the nature of institutional processes. These data and analyses revealed that in a low-trust environment, creating trust in the process of decision-making is very formidable and requires that the president take careful actions to maintain the problem-solving process. In short, the president must sustain a very watchful, vigilant pose when

undertaking the change process within a low-trust environment. This finding contributes to the literature regarding the choice of issues around which participation occurs (Kanter, 1983; Twombly & Amey, 1994). Twombly and Amey (1994) suggested that in order to advance the participative philosophy, particularly at the initiation of the change process, formal reward or compensation should be provided (p. 278).

Another key finding of this study related to trust building is referred to as the problem of reversion. Reversion refers to the challenge of sustaining the participative climate and culture in order to maintain alignment with the participative vision. The findings indicate that leadership must focus on building the climate of trust that will eventually turn into the culture of the college. These data and analyses indicated that in a low-trust environment, the institutional climate and culture could quickly relapse into a highly negative mode. While the climate can revert very quickly into a negative direction, it takes a great deal of time and sustained effort to move it into a positive direction. This finding also corroborates the research by Kanter (1983) and Twombly and Amey (1994) that some sort of formal reward and recognition system is needed to sustain commitment to the organizational philosophy. Thus, the findings of this study underscore the notion of participative leadership and the visioning process as inextricably linked to the development of the climate and culture of the organization.

#### *The Challenge of Team-Based Decision-Making*

A central challenge for participative leadership is using effective teams for active involvement in the decision-making process. The major problem areas include: (1) inadequate understanding regarding teamwork; (2) team deployment; (3) true representation; and (4) divergence in team focus. According to Twombly and Amey (1994), the most extensive examination of participation is provided by Kanter (1983) in her seminal book, *The Change Masters*. The following discussion of teamwork relies primarily on her wide-scale research within corporate settings, along with the application of her work to the community college setting by Twombly and Amey (1994). As indicated by Baker (1992), "Many community college

presidents experience difficulty in building integrated, well-functioning leadership teams that are in effect extensions of the presidential power and influence” (p. 11).

First, in relation to the issue of inadequate understanding of teamwork, the findings indicate that establishing formal training programs is an important strategy for building participative environments. These presidents have emphasized the need for broad-based training in group process skills. This approach is significant given problems associated with implementing quality circles within academic environments (Twombly & Amey, 1994; Acebo, 1994).

Closely related to the problem of creating better understanding of teamwork is the issue of team deployment. The findings of this study indicated that there is considerable variation in the conditional context regarding the type and level of involvement in decision-making. Team decision-making is indicated under conditions in which there are high levels of controversy, complexity of the problem, impact on the direction of the institution combined with a low level of participation at the margins of the institution. In contrast, a restricted time frame may indicate that presidents seek input informally rather than establishing a formal group-based decision-making process. The findings also indicated that these criteria for decision-making should be widely understood within the institution. These data and analyses contribute to the research conducted by Kanter (1983) that teams are the primary units of organizational structure to facilitate joint individual and group contributions to organizational goals. As Kanter (1983) asserted, “. . . structure means giving people full information about the ground rules; it does not imply the imposition of mindless formulas for action. . .” (p. 249).

The problem of true representation was also another issue faced by these participative leaders. The findings of this study indicated that a key aspect of establishing consensus-based decision-making is creating a context in which participants actively represent their constituents. This situation requires that people consult with others and that a reliable feedback process is in place. The findings indicate that when true representation is in place, a sense of ownership permeates the involvement of campus participants and the teamwork phase of the institution has

been reached. This finding contributes to the body of literature reviewed by Twombly and Amey (1994) regarding the issue of decision-making authority within participative governance systems. These findings support the view that when there is widespread information exchange, a common purpose, shared language, and active involvement, it is more likely that responsibility for decision-making can be shared throughout the institution (Twombly & Amey, 1994).

Last, perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of implementing and maintaining team-based decision-making is discovering how to respond to the problem of divergence in team focus. The findings of this study disclosed the perspective that a team may lose its focus on the original mission and the leader is challenged to refocus the team. Examples provided within this study demonstrated that a team may withdraw from the larger organization and lose its sense of how it fits into the larger picture. This finding correlates with the research conducted by Kanter (1983) in which the problem of sub-optimization was identified. Kanter asks, "What if the team works together so well that it closes itself off from the rest of the organization, creating its own segmentation?" (p. 267). In effect, a team optimizes its own sub-goals and loses sight of the larger goals of the organization. Further, the findings of this study on participative leadership on refocusing teams substantiate observations by Twombly and Amey (1994) that generally the college president is in the best position to monitor participation.

#### *The Challenge of Empowerment*

One of the most formidable challenges in implementing and sustaining the culture of commitment is related to the issue of empowerment. This study on participative leadership has identified two key problem areas related to the empowerment process, inclusion and establishing expectations for shared responsibility. This discussion of the complexities and special challenges of the empowerment process discloses how empowering groups and individuals is closely linked to team-based decision-making as discussed above.

The issue of inclusion refers to the difficulties inherent in attempting to bring campus members into the decision-making process. This issue is important for community college

presidents who focus upon expanding access to broaden the range of perspective within decision-making contexts and the level of commitment throughout the organization. A primary goal of participative governance is to improve the effectiveness of the institution through empowering members at all levels of the organization. As stated by Twombly and Amey (1994),

It is not enough for the leader to rely on the commitment and actions of a faithful few, however. The leader must find ways of bringing into the process as many members as possible, while keeping those informed who are not currently active (p. 274).

At the same time, Twombly and Amey (1994) stressed the limitations of participative governance in terms of addressing the problem of gender and ethnic inequalities within the community college setting. First, participation should not be understood as a feminist agenda since this approach transcends issues related to gender and ethnicity. Second, while participative governance will not necessarily cause more women and minorities into an organization and ensure full participation of these groups, it can provide increased opportunities for persons already holding positions to become more involved. The findings from this study on participative leadership support this view of Twombly and Amey (1994) since the focus was upon fostering an environment for broad involvement, rather than references to how participation produced changes in gender and ethnic balance within the institution.

This emphasis upon empowerment has been addressed extensively by Kanter (1983) who discussed ways people acquire power and use power in organizations she describes as “empowering” (p. 24). As indicated by Kanter (1983) and Twombly and Amey (1994), there are several types of inequalities that can disrupt the team process and efforts to empower the organization. Two of these inequalities, the “seductiveness of the hierarchy” (Kanter, 1983, p. 256) and “the myth of ‘team’” (Kanter, 1983, p. 262) are discussed below.

First, this study indicates that sub-group allegiance is a significant obstacle that hinders the ability to broaden the scope of access to institutional decision-making. In effect, the presidents identified in this study emphasized that established organizational relationships are a powerful force for inhibiting the move to more participative systems. This notion refers to what Kanter

(1983) calls the “seductiveness of the hierarchy” (p. 256). “The seductiveness of the hierarchy has emotional roots. The emotions that make it easier to reproduce the hierarchy than to operate as partners are principally fear and comfort” (Kanter, 1983, p. 257). Certainly, the presidents in this study emphasized strategies for confronting fear along with the need to establish a sense of comfort regarding increased involvement in decision-making contexts. According to Kanter (1983), lower-status people tend to refrain from making contributions to the group from fear of retribution. Due to the comfort issue, they will also tend to maintain established patterns of interaction (Kanter, 1983, p. 257). Kanter (1983) indicated that support from leaders over a period of time will encourage people to “. . . act in ways that place them outside the hierarchy. This is what we mean when we say that a group ‘loosens up.’”(p. 257).

The findings of this study on participative presidential leadership contribute to this research on using teams for building empowerment by Kanter (1983) and Twombly and Amey (1994) by specifying strategies for encouraging contributions from all members of the organization. These strategies include maintaining sensitivity to inter-organizational relationships, having direct presidential involvement in actively recruiting team members outside the usual leadership group, and including those with expertise in problem-solving processes.

This emphasis on the political factors which impact decision-making is also reflected in another key dilemma identified in the data regarding building an empowered organization. According to this study, presidents must carefully observe the dynamics of team processes since the hierarchy may replicate itself within the team, thus inhibiting contributions to decision-making. Presidents must maintain sensitivity to team dynamics and make interventions when indicated. A key finding of this study is that these participative presidents demonstrate keen insight into the complexities of team-based decision-making. For instance, one president referred to the need for “true consensus” rather than pseudo consensus by referring to an example of ineffective team processes he termed, “like think.” According to this study, a participative

organization should move toward decision-making processes that encourage all participants to express their voices without fear of recrimination, thus fostering a diverse, inclusive perspective.

Second, as indicated by Twombly and Amey (1983), "Teamwork does not necessarily mean democratic decision making will prevail" (p. 279). Further, "Participation per se does not always equalize power and may even increase discrepancies" (Kanter, 1983, p. 258). Thus, the problem of implementing broad empowerment is made difficult by what Kanter (1983) refers to as "the myth of 'team'" (p. 262). This myth refers to the notion that legitimate differences among team members do not exist (Kanter, 1983, pp. 262, 263). The result is that team members may behave as if they are working together perfectly and therefore may be unwilling to contribute candidly within the group. (Kanter, 1983, p. 263; Twombly & Amey, 1994, p. 279). The findings of this study demonstrate that these participative leaders place great emphasis upon building teams within a climate and culture that fosters the view that all members, regardless of their position within the institution, have the potential for making strong contributions to the overall goals of the organization. Importantly, safe environments for making contributions should be developed. Further, these findings also reinforce the earlier point that education in group process must also be a high priority for building participative organizations.

Additional findings in this study of participative leadership related to the problem of inclusion also contributes to the broad literature on empowerment and team-building identified by Kanter (1983); Twombly and Amey (1994); and Senge (1990). This study on participative leadership demonstrated that presidents must also carefully monitor the composition of team membership. For example, due to the "ripple effect" a team may become so large that it becomes a committee. Also, "rotating team leadership" may emerge. Due to variations in expertise within teams, team members informally take over the leadership function depending upon which aspect of the problem is being addressed. Further, the scope of the issue may indicate that membership should be expanded to include those from outside the campus community. Last, as an institution becomes increasingly empowered, the phenomenon of "multiple representation" takes place. The



perception that individuals represent multiple areas increases as individuals and groups becomes increasingly empowered within the organization. Thus, these findings contribute to the literature by presenting empowerment as an aspect of the developmental process expressed in team-based activities which can be traced and observed as the institution becomes increasingly participative.

The notion of participation as a developmental process is further addressed in findings produced by this study which indicate that empowering the organization is dependent upon the extent to which a sense of mutual responsibility has been built. The key findings emphasize the importance of establishing the meaning of participation within the organization at the initiation of the participative change process through strategies such as maintaining an awareness for “teachable moments,” and ensuring information access. Other strategies include building expectations for the role of ambassador (true representation) and setting clearly articulated standards for decision-making. These strategies address the important concern that participative decision-making is generally a time consuming process, thus inhibiting its effectiveness to responding quickly within problem solving situations.

One of the most significant findings generated by this study on participative leadership related to the problem of inclusion and organizational relationships is the role of unions within participative governance. The findings of this study indicated that an attempt to unionize one institution was averted due to the perception of faculty that they were effectively included in campus participatory processes. Findings also indicated that at another institution the union was integrated into the campus decision-making process through a president’s decision to abolish the dual decision making process, thus appointing the union as the voice of faculty leadership.

Since Twombly and Amey (1994) indicated that the literature on participative governance in the community college has not addressed the role of unions (p. 280), these findings address an important gap in the literature. First, they indicate that leadership approaches to unions vary according to the historic conditions characterizing the organizational setting. Second, in both situations discussed within this study, strong presidential leadership was evident and much

emphasis was placed upon laying the groundwork for participative decision-making. These points are underscored by Kanter (1983) in her writing on teams and unions in which she stated that their success occurred “. . .because careful groundwork was laid before the parties ever came together to begin joint problem solving” (p. 262). Third, the findings of this study disclose the participation is reflective of resolute presidential leadership within the organization. As Kanter (1983) indicated, “It is significant in this respect that participation works better where the parties involved in it are strong and there is clear leadership in the organization” (pp. 248, 249). This view is reinforced by Twombly and Amey (1994) who stated, “Participatory forms of governance do not serve as a substitute for leadership. Participation works best when there is clear leadership in the organization” (p. 277).

Last, the issue of sanctioning for achieving accountability within the empowerment process has been examined within this study of participative presidents. The relevance of the findings of this study to the literature on accountability is demonstrated by the emphasis these presidents place on developing clearly designed and consistently applied systems for performance review. The findings revealed that sanctioning takes place at the level of assessing individual performance and must be aligned with institutional goals and reflect the institutional vision. The findings also indicate that when an organization has become empowered so that decision-making is team-based and the perception exists that all parties are regarded as accountable, including the president, sanctioning may take place within team environments.

In similarity to these findings, this review of the literature indicates that fostering accountability is regarded as a critical aspect of leadership. For example, Block (1998) indicated, “Peer accountability is the glue that preserves chaos from anarchy and lawlessness” (p. 93). The importance of accountability is also reflected by Melrose (1998) who stated that building trust “. . .is a slow and difficult process. But it’s worth it; individuals and teams will be much more inclined to take responsibility and be held accountable” (p. 292). Further, Melrose (1998) related that leaders must ensure high quality in performance in order to achieve institutional goals. This

author stated, "Accepting sub-par performance is devaluing to those who are meeting requirements" (p. 293). The link between increased empowerment, accountability and achieving broad commitment is underscored by McGee-Cooper (1998), "When people are empowered to achieve shared goals, accountability takes on a new meaning of purpose and commitment" (p. 83).

### *The Challenge of the Paradoxes of Participative Leadership*

Last, this leadership practice indicates that leaders must carefully consider how to confront the primary paradoxes they will encounter as their institutions move toward more participative forms of organization. The findings of this study have disclosed that the context for participative leadership is characterized by three major paradoxes relating to the role of the hierarchy as the institution evolves. These paradoxes are based on issues and misconceptions related to empowerment, "being in control" and participative processes. In general, the findings disclose the complexity and subtlety of issues of power and control within academic settings and the need for insightful, skillful handling by presidents.

According to the findings generated from this study, the paradox of empowerment refers to the misconception that empowerment of organizational members leads to abolishment of the hierarchy. Specifically, this paradox refers to the tendency to confuse the empowering process with removing the lines of authority, responsibility, and accountability. Conversely, the findings of this study disclose that participative leaders simultaneously create opportunities for broad empowerment while at the same time maintaining well-managed systems for accountability. These leaders are particularly cognizant of how the mystique of empowerment could lead to a misuse of the institutional reporting structure. In this sense the hierarchy could be considered as a structure for maintaining multiple steps for input, feedback and information sharing. As Kanter (1983) remarked in addressing the need for structure in organizations, "This reflects the importance of clear limits in making an empowering, freedom generating process like

participation work. . . Anchors are necessary, something to bounce off of, some constraints or criteria or goals” (p. 248).

Further, Kanter (1983) also cautioned that leaders should not relinquish control or responsibility for results simply because the circle of leadership has widened (p. 248). As Block (1998) remarked, “In practical terms, we will always need bosses, some hierarchy, clear structure, measures, and rules to live by” (p. 92). As the findings of this study of participative leaders discloses, the super-ordinate relationship presidents occupy relative to campus members does not dismiss them from fulfilling the responsibilities connected to that role.

The second paradox, “being in control,” refers to a related issue facing participative leaders regarding the issue of power and control within the hierarchy. In contrast to the misconception that that empowerment means abolishing control of responsibility, this paradox refers to the assumption that the president must assume a directive, tightly focused role in order to fulfill the need for strong leadership cited previously (Kanter, 1983; Twombly & Amey, 1994). Conversely, the findings of this study indicate that the president actually gains more influence through releasing the form of control typically located within the traditional hierarchical model. In contrast to the power of position, this control is more integrative and organic and is based upon fostering a mutual sense of commitment throughout the organization flowing from the participative vision.

The problem of “being in control” within a participative organization is a serious consideration for community college leadership. As Twombly and Amey (1994) have asserted, one of the most difficult challenges for community college leaders is how to initiate participative governance so that ownership by all is achieved (p. 275). This dilemma relates to what Kanter (1983) refers to as “Participation by Command.” (p. 244). In effect, leadership must carefully consider implementation processes that produce ownership among constituents rather than creating a sense of compliance with administrative dictates.

As the findings of this study indicated, the perception that the leader is attempting to impose teamwork on the organization will lead to the loss of true involvement and creativity of institutional members. The implication is that current and future leaders should address their personal intentions regarding their own role in the participative organization. According to Baker (1992), “. . .their personal internal need to control tends to interfere with efforts to transform the organization for the future, thus complicating, and sometimes confounding, the leadership process” (p. 5).

The findings of this study also suggest that community college leaders should acknowledge another complicating factor facing leaders which is related to what Kanter (1983) calls, “The paternalism trap” (p. 245). In effect, rather than viewing participation as a fundamental change in organizational process, beneficent leaders see participation as a gift and expect appreciation from members for the gift it has provided. According to Kanter, (1983), “. . .leaders can easily fall into the paternalism trap by treating participation as a gift rather than a right, and as a luxury rather than a results-oriented, task related organizational tool” (p. 245). Further, the paternalism trap and other forms of ineffective leadership practice will tend to manifest themselves within organizational interactions, thus creating additional traps. As Senge (1990) remarked,

Teams are microcosms of the larger organization, so it is not surprising that the defensive patterns characteristic of the larger organization become embedded in the team. . .To the members of a team caught in their defensive routines, they feel very much walls—blocks and traps that prevent collective learning (p. 251).

A major finding emerging from examining this paradox is that the language of participation may be misapplied by leaders and gives only the appearance or impression of a more egalitarian set of relationships within the organization. This finding reinforces the research by Roueche et al. (1989) who indicated that even though the concept of participatory management implies a more egalitarian approach to leadership, it cannot be assumed that this

style is necessarily adopted by the leader. These authors stated, "The misuse of the concept has resulted in great disillusionment among followers" (p. 141).

The third major paradox, participative processes, is embedded in the prerequisite that participative leadership is both an approach for creating and maintaining firm institutional structures and processes while simultaneously allowing processes to self-generate and evolve. The findings of this study reveal that processes take many shapes and forms and originate from dissimilar sources. From the standpoint of leadership practice, the president must understand how this unfolding takes place and assume the view that this evolutionary process indicates that as the institution becomes increasingly characterized by processes, more people are brought into institutional decision making. The major criteria for determining the value of a process is the extent to which it contributes to achieving results. These findings contribute to the research conducted by Helgesen (1995) regarding webbed organizations. Helgesen (1995) indicated that webs tend to configure at all points in the organization. According to Helgesen (1995), "Because the web of inclusion is always spawning new lines of connection, and connecting people in new ways, it can serve as an instrument for constant reorganization" (p. 29). Further, web-like structures diffuse decision-making power toward the edges of the organization and facilitate the emergence of new routes of communication (Helgesen, 1995, p.31). Thus, community college leaders should recognize that as the institution becomes increasingly participative, it will evolve toward more instances of webbed based decision-making units which self originate within the institution.

#### Re-Visioning the Participative Organization

The fourth and final cornerstone, Re-visioning the Participative Organization, emphasizes the participative visioning process as a force for moving the institution forward within a rapidly changing, problematic external environment. As Helgesen (1995) asked, "How do webs help organizations to face the specific and extraordinary challenges that will inevitably confront them in the next century?" (p. 47). Kouzes and Posner (1995) commented,

The most important role of visions in organizational life is to give focus to human energy. Visions are like lenses that focus un-refracted rays of light. To enable everyone concerned with an enterprise to see more clearly what's ahead of them leaders must have and convey a focus (p. 108).

The focus of the re-visioning process ranges from the internal, private self of the president to the broad landscape of the organization's external environment. The notion of re-visioning the institution refers to the notion of reflecting, or looking back with a fresh eye (Kolodny, 1985, p.59, referenced in Twombly & Amey, 1994). As an aspect of the developmental process of the visioning process, re-visioning implies that significant progress has been accomplished in implementing the participative vision. Further, within the context of this study on participative leadership, the concept of re-visioning links the visioning process back to the first practice, Envisioning the Participative Organization. This speaks to the developmental nature of the visioning process and the notion that leadership implies the ability to engage others. As Kouzes and Posner (1995) stated, "Leaders cannot command commitment, only inspire it" (p. 11).

#### Practice: Shape the Personal and Institutional Visions

The findings of this study disclosed that participative leadership emphasizes the importance of building personal visions through self-reflection and creating an institutional context for creating the collective vision. The strategies and leadership actions that surround these efforts are described within this leadership practice.

First, this practice underscores findings from this study that disclosed that these presidents emphasized the power of their personal visions. As one president remarked, his personal vision was his "personal compass," and his "beacon into the future." Thus, the personal vision was portrayed as an anchor for guiding the institution's future. The findings revealed that engaging in self-reflection in order to enrich and sustain the personal vision involved two major strategies, stepping back from the presidential role within the institution and actively engaging with the external environment. Stepping back involved distancing the self from the pressures and

responsibilities of the campus in order to re-energize and rethink the organizational future and the leadership role. Also, through engaging with the external environment, these presidents actively sought input from sources outside the institutional environment through interactions with colleagues with whom they had established trust-based relationships. The importance of relying upon a “safe environment” for this aspect of the reflection process was underscored.

This focus on the critical significance of the personal vision as a condition or foundation for establishing a shared vision along with reflection as a key strategy is reported in the literature on leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Senge, 1990). As Kouzes and Posner (1995) reported, “We also enrich our future and give it detail as we call the richness of our past experiences” (p. 106). Thus, reflecting upon the past enables leaders to more effectively advance their institutions into the future. According to Kouzes and Posner (1995), self-knowledge may be the most important knowledge to be gained by leaders (p. 335). From the standpoint of literature on leadership skills, developing the capacity for self-reflection is an important consideration for community college leaders who wish to develop their leadership skill set (Roueche et al., 1989; Baker, 1992; Vaughn & Weisman, 1998; Vineyard, 1993).

Second, this practice underscores the emphasis placed upon shaping the institutional vision from the foundation which emerged from the self-reflection process. The findings of this study reveal that the presidential vision provided the bedrock for initiating and sustaining the organizational re-visioning process. The key strategies are establishing and maintaining a context for inquiry and dialogue. The concept of inquiry primarily references the capacity of the organization to respond to shifts in conditions within various institutional environments. Dialogue refers to the highly interactive approach used by these presidents for initiating and sustaining the institutional re-visioning process. Both inquiry and dialogue provided the context for building and reinforcing the sense of commonality that fuses commitment to the participative vision.

These findings regarding the notion of inquiry raise another important consideration for community college leadership. By maintaining sensitivity to shifts in the external environment,



the president discerns the need for the re-visioning process to begin. Shifts are regarded as changes in conditions over which the institution lacks control and may have a profound effect on the organization, such as diminished resources or a change process launched by an oversight organization. Presidents are challenged to refocus the organization through initiating the re-visioning process. This perspective reflects the research conducted by Mintzberg (1993) which indicated that the entire field of strategic planning should be reevaluated. As Wheatley (1999) observed, many writers in the area of planning increasingly emphasize strategic thinking as opposed to strategic planning. The presidents in this study of participative leadership stressed the importance of responding, reacting and acting, underscoring the importance of inquiry as a learning process. Wheatley (1999) indicated that leaders must be faster, better learners. "Agility and intelligence are required to respond to the incessant barrage of frequent, unplanned changes" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 38). Thus, this study of participative leadership indicates that shifts are in effect triggers for initiating strategies for embarking on a re-visioning process. Thus, responding quickly and from a base of understanding may be more important than processes designed to predict and control.

Further, the data from this study also revealed that shifts may positively impact an institution since they may force the organization to act in different ways, and thus are opportunities for change. The leader sustains awareness of this environment, and through vigilance prepares for changes that may be fundamental in nature. The analysis indicated that presidents may experience an instinctive feeling that a shift is approaching, affirming research that reports that relying upon intuition is a characteristic of effective leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Roueche et al., 1995).

The second key strategy identified within these findings for shaping the institutional vision is dialogue. These findings reveal that the re-visioning process integrates the personal visions of organizational members into a broad institutional vision. This convergence of personal visions, referred to as "fragments" by one president, is reproduced into a single unified vision for

the institution through the dialogue process. The findings indicated that these presidents typically think of personal visions as “pictures” or images held by individuals of themselves and the institution. This notion contributes to the literature on visioning as a highly visual activity (Senge, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 1995). The findings also indicate that in the sense that personal visions are pictures or images held by individuals, the participative vision is a portrait of the institutional future shared by members of the organization.

There is ample literature supporting the importance of dialogue in building institutional visions. For example, Block (1998) referenced the importance of assisting individuals in discovering and expressing their vision for the organization by stating, “Common vision will emerge from this dialogue” (p. 92). As Senge (1990) asserted, creating a personal vision must precede the formation of the shared vision. The visioning process takes place within a context supportive of inquiry and dialogue (Senge, 1990; McGee-Cooper, 1998). Thus, the findings of this study serve as a gateway for integrating the literature on visioning and teamwork within the community college setting.

#### Practice: Reaffirm Commitment to the Participative Mission

The emphasis of this final practice is upon a re-examination and reaffirmation of the institutional mission through two primary methods. These methods are maintaining institutional processes around the participative vision and mission and renewing the institutional spirit. The findings reveal the linkage between the visioning process and the institutional mission and how re-visioning reinforces recommitment to the purpose and goals of the organization through strengthening a sense of broad ownership and empowerment throughout the organization.

Maintaining commitment through establishing institutional process includes four key strategies. First, a highly interactive, inclusive process for formally reviewing and re-adjusting the institutional vision is routinely conducted within these institutions. This process keeps the vision, or dream “fresh and alive” and enables the institution to refocus the vision when conditions shift. Second, planning and visioning processes are combined in the sense that both processes are

linked into everyday life of the institution. This emphasis on interlacing planning and visioning processes reinforces the earlier point that traditional strategic planning processes are incongruent with effective leadership.

Significantly, Kouzes and Posner (1995) referenced the importance of this shift from strategic planning to processes that are tied more directly to institutional visions and the fast changing, problematic environment. These authors stated, "And this confusion lies at the heart of the issue: the most successful strategies are visions, not plans" (p. 133). Third, these findings noted that debriefing and reflecting are used as group-based processes for focusing on the future and may lead to increased risk-taking. This emphasis on debriefing and reflecting support the notion that creating safe environments within the organization addressed at the issue of personal vulnerability is a primary focus for participative leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Senge, 1990). Fourth, maintaining celebratory processes linked directly to accomplishments around the vision and mission provided a framework for continually upholding and revitalizing the vision and mission statements.

Last, the findings of this study disclosed that participative leadership encompasses a sense of vitality, energy and stamina. This leadership approach is distinguished by its sense of spirit and purpose, and these leaders report that they strive to create conditions for maximum contribution to the organization from all members through continual revitalization of the organization. These primary strategies are unification, universal focus and re-culturation.

First, the findings indicated that unification occurs when members are unified around the vision of the institution. Broadly stated axioms or over arching values are essential for uniting people around a commonly shared vision, and great power emerges from a deep common commitment to the shared vision. As Senge (1990) stated, "Shared visions derive their power from a common caring" (p. 206).

Second, universal focus refers to the desire to create something beyond oneself in the service of a higher purpose. The data indicated that in mature organizations, participative

leadership may include infusing the institution with a sense of a calling so that caring for the institution becomes a “sacred trust.” The importance of establishing a grand vision that creates an emotional attachment of members to the organizational mission is an aspect of creating universal focus. The work of Senge (1990) is particularly notable here in his statement, “A shared vision, especially one that is intrinsic, uplifts people’s aspirations”(p.207). This concept of universal focus also demonstrates the relevance of this study to the literature on spiritual leadership which indicates that some educators view their work as an expression of their inner life or as a calling (Palmer, 1998).

Third, the final strategy identified by these presidents is called re-culturation. Re-culturation is a means for recommitting members around the broad purposes of the organization, and it implies that a change in institutional values has taken place. Re-culturation and the visioning process are inextricably linked, and a newly enhanced, powerful vision can bring about changes in the organizational culture. From the perspective of participative leadership, as a process for renewing optimism and commitment, a sense of “enlightenment” and “true empowerment and ownership” will emerge when re-culturation is present. Re-culturation is characterized by a sense of “oneness,” a tremendous release of creative energy and being a member of the “ultimate team.”

#### Limitations and Recommendations for Application and Research

As with any research effort, this study has certain limitations regarding application and theory that should be considered. First, there are potential limitations regarding the applicability of this study of participative leadership within the community college setting. The first limitation is related to the research design of this study that identified community college presidents as the sole source of data. From this standpoint, the specific question as to whether members of an organization actually perceived that participative decision-making has been implemented is raised but left unanswered. Community college leaders who wish to develop strategies encompassing a

broad range of perspectives of various constituencies should consider this potential limitation in applying these findings to implement or sustain a participative change process.

Further, while some may suggest that participative leadership should include contributions from students, the presidents in this study did not identify students as active participants in the institutional decision-making process. As well, the findings also do not reflect how students could or if they should be incorporated into the broad governmental framework. Thus, practitioners interested in developing a participative approach that directly involves students in key decision making processes should consider how this limitation may apply to the contextual aspects of the institution they serve.

Second, this study exhibits certain potential limitations to the field of theory building and research that mirror the limitations for application to the field of community college leadership. As indicated above, this grounded theory research was restricted to an analysis of the perspective of community college presidents. Since the scope of this study did not include an examination of the perspective of campus members as well as other constituencies, these findings are based solely on the perceptual mode of persons who are responsible for leading their institutions. Research geared toward a broader view of participative leadership intended to include the views of various constituencies should consider the relatively narrow focus of this study. Specifically, a grounded theory of participative leadership would benefit from incorporating the views of all parties to the participatory decision making process.

Also, the analytic focus of this study resulted in the generation of four axial categories as well as a core category, which represent a phenomenon referred to as participative leadership. Much effort was directed toward all aspects of the research process, including selecting the sample, developing the interview schedule, conducting interviews, coding, and analyzing the data. Nevertheless, the social scientific concern with validity indicates that questions may be raised regarding the extent to which these categories actually represent the phenomena under study. For example, the category Envisioning the Participative Organization indicates that

participative leadership is highly reflective of a value orientation that advocates a genuine concern for others as represented in the articulated statement of philosophy. However, the paradox of “being in control” identified within the Web of Participation revealed that some participative leaders essentially use the language of participation to advance themselves at the expense of organizational members and perhaps their institutions.

It is beyond the stated purpose and scope of this study to explore in depth the issue of ethical considerations or the nature of the paradoxes that were identified. This shortcoming could be addressed through additional grounded theory research and analysis. Another recommendation is that a phenomenological research approach to discover perceptions regarding the personal meaning of participation to leaders would be helpful in examining the ethical considerations involved in adopting a participative leadership approach.

Another consideration is related to the variation in the sample in terms of length of time in the presidency. While the general philosophical approach and conceptualization of participative leadership held consistently across the sample, the wide variation in presidential backgrounds may have affected findings regarding how participative leadership unfolds as a developmental process. At the same time, through selecting a sample which includes the perspectives of presidents who are retired and retrospectively recalled experiences combined with presidents actively engaged in leading the change process, the breadth of this phenomenon within various contexts was illustrated.

While a grounded theory of participative leadership would benefit from a theoretical analysis generated from both a more inclusive database, it would also benefit from a scope focusing upon participants who speak specifically to a particular phase within the change process. For example, specific research could focus on Web of Participation in order to examine in more detail the dynamics of teamwork from the standpoint of a sample selected on the basis of broad experience on this particular topic. This research approach would enable the generation of findings that are more definitive and specific in their analytic focus.

Last, another recommendation related to theory building concerns the relationship of this beginning theory to established leadership theories such as transformational leadership and servant-leadership. A more fully developed theory of participative leadership would benefit from a systematic comparison of its conceptual foundation with other leadership theories. This recommendation also applies to the relationship of participative leadership to established theories within social science such as conflict theory, and the constructionist and feminist perspectives.

Perhaps the most important point is that this study represents only a move toward the creation of a conceptually clear definition of what constitutes authentic participative leadership. In this respect, the most important consideration would be to return these categories to the field in order to gauge the degree of correspondence between the findings and the social reality they presumably represent.

### Conclusion

The major contribution of this study is that it illuminated the richness, complexity and multi-dimensional nature of the participative leadership process as it unfolds within community college environments. The scope of this study was restricted in that data gathering was limited to the perspectives of participative presidents. However, the scope is broad in that this study contains a wide range of highly descriptive data regarding the institutional setting of the community college linked to the dynamics and dimensions of participative leadership. The elegance and power of grounded theory has led to the discovery of patterns that reflect the organizational life and leadership role of these participative presidents. This approach has responded to the clarion call for research that addresses the need for alternative models of community college presidential leadership. In this sense, this study contributes to the creation of a grounded theory of participative leadership that lends greater understanding for professional practice as well as to the growing body of research on this topic.

This commentary on participative leadership concludes through referencing the poetic words of Margaret Wheatley in the updated epilogue to her book, *Leadership and the New Science* (1999):

I believe the fundamental work of this time—work that requires the participation of all of us—is to discover new ways of being together. . . .We are all pioneers and discoverers of a new world, and we all need one another. It is up to us to journey forth in search of new practices and new ideas that will enable us to create lives and organizations worthy of human habitation (p. xi).

As reflected in this statement, the work of participation requires the contributions of all. This study represents a beginning step toward the creation of a conceptual framework on participative leadership in the community college setting that is useful for practitioners and researchers who journey together around this common purpose.



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## **APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

### *Initial Interview Guide*

1. Please provide me with some brief background about your personal history such as the length of time you've spent as a community college president, the institutions in which you have been a president and what led you to becoming a president.
2. As the leader of the campus, what was the overall environment that you intended to create? What was it like for faculty, staff and students?
3. Given your experiences as a community college president, how would you define the term "governance"? What does the term "participative governance" mean to you?
4. Please tell me about your most significant experiences as a college president. What strategies have you used?
5. What are the most important changes or trends that you see emerging for the community college and its leadership?
6. What are some other comments you would like to make regarding your role as a community college president?

## APPENDIX B

### *Initial E-mail Correspondence with Participants*

Dear Dr. (name):

My name is Lauren Grasmick. I am a Ph.D. candidate at Colorado State University in the School of Education. I am writing a dissertation on the topic of participative leadership in community colleges according to the experiences of community college presidents. In the next several months, I will be interviewing 8 – 20 community college presidents to explore their perspectives on leading their institutions. The sample includes those who have been recognized by others as participative leaders. I am very interested in interviewing you about your experience and would appreciate having you participate in this study.

I hope you will agree to be a part of this study. As you are aware, limited research has been done on the topic of the community college presidency, and there is a significant need for greater understanding on this topic issue *from the president's point of view*. Your perspective has the potential to influence policy makers, educators and theorists on this important topic. Your experiences and strategies will provide the basis for the findings of this grounded theory study.

Should you agree to participate, your involvement would include a one to two hour interview either in person or by telephone. The interview will be scheduled at your convenience in a suitable location.

All interviews will remain confidential. Research standards and ethical codes will be followed to protect your privacy. In describing your experiences in this study all descriptors will be excluded. You will be assigned a pseudo name, and the only information on participants will be generic demographic descriptions.

I greatly appreciate your consideration of this request. If you would be gracious enough to agree to be a part of this study, please reply to this e-mail. I will place a follow-up phone call to your office to answer any questions and to schedule a time for our visit.

Once again, I hope you will be a part of this study, and I look forward to receiving your response.

Sincerely,

Lauren Grasmick



## APPENDIX C

### Letter Confirming Interview to President

President's Name  
Campus address  
Institution  
Street Address  
City, State, ZIP

Dear President (name):

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my dissertation research on the topic of presidential leadership. I look forward to our visit and I thank you for your willingness to be a part of this study.

Your secretary has scheduled an hour and a half for the interview. I have an interview protocol that focuses on exploring the leadership you have provided for your campus. This is only a guide, and I will look forward to having an open conversation with you about your experiences. I do ask permission to record our talk on audiocassette tape for transcription purposes. As indicated previously, all conversations will remain completely confidential. Any identifying information will be eliminated and descriptions of the presidents interviewed will contain only generic demographic data.

A copy of the Informed Consent Agreement has been enclosed for your signature. This is a standard informational release form approved by the Human Subject Review Committee at Colorado State University. I will plan on collecting the form before we begin the interview, and I will be happy to answer any questions before the interview begins.

Again, thank you for participating in this study. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or comments about our visit. I look forward to our meeting.

Sincerely,

Lauren Grasmick

## APPENDIX D

### *Colorado State University*

#### *Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Project – President*

**Title of Project:** Toward a Grounded Theory of Participative Leadership: Perspectives of Community College Presidents

**Name of Principal Investigator:** Timothy Davies, Ph.D.

**Name of Co-Investigator:** Lauren Grasmick

**Contact Name and Phone Number for Questions/Problems:**

Researcher: Lauren Grasmick, 317 Willow Valley, Lamar, CO 81052; telephone: 719-336-5430

Advisor: Timothy Davies, Ph.D., School of Education, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO 80525; telephone: 970-491-5199

**Purpose of the Research Study:** The purpose of this study is to explore the process of participative leadership as experienced by community college presidents. The intent is to describe the experiences of community college presidents who have implemented participative governance in today's challenging educational environment. For the purposes of this study, the sample will include individuals who are recognized by others for their efforts in implementing participative governance and have spent a minimum of six months in a community college presidency.

As a participant, you agree to be interviewed in person or by telephone. During the interview you will be asked to share your thoughts, perspectives, strategies and experiences as a community college president. The interview will be scheduled at your campus or in a suitable location. After the interview, you will be asked to complete a short Demographic Information Form that asks generic information only. The interview will be recorded on audio-tape. You will have an opportunity to review the final transcripts of the interview for accuracy. The interview will be no less than one (1) hour and no more than two (2) hours.

Page 1 or 2   Subject initials: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Risks Inherent in the Procedures:** There are no known risks. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in an experimental procedure, but the researchers have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown risks.

**Benefits:** The participant will benefit from participation by the knowledge that he/she contributed to research regarding the experiences of community colleges presidents who are known for their leadership in the area of participative governance. This information could be of benefit to policy makers, community college educators and persons seeking leadership positions in the community college.

**Confidentiality:** The information that you provide in the study will be handled confidentially. Your information will be identified in the dissertation only by general descriptive information about you and your institution (i.e., a female president of a community college in the northwest). Your audio-tapes will be destroyed after the transcription. Since your name will not appear on tapes or transcriptions, your participation will remain confidential.

**Liability:** The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if any injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

Questions about subjects' rights may be directed to Celia S. Walker at (970) 491-1563.

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

Your signature acknowledges that you have ready the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 2 pages.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant Name (Printed)**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Participant Signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Co-investigator signature**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Page 2 of 2    Subject Initials \_\_\_\_\_    Date \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX E

Demographic Questionnaire

Pseudo Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please answer the following:

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time as community college president \_\_\_\_\_

Length of time as president of current institutions \_\_\_\_\_

Size of Institution (Approximate FTE) \_\_\_\_\_

Highest degree earned \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX F

### Thank You Letter Following Interview

Date

President's name  
Office of the President  
College  
Street Address  
City, State Zip

Dear President (name):

Thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to participate in the study on the community college presidency. I enjoyed our time together and found our conversation to be highly beneficial. The insights, experiences and perspectives you shared have provided very valuable information for this research.

After the interview has been transcribed, I will forward it to you for your review within the coming weeks. Please review the transcript to for accuracy, and I'll appreciate any additional comments you may wish to share with me. Please be sure to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you once again for agreeing to participate in this study.

Sincerely,

Lauren Grasmick

## APPENDIX G

### Focused Interview Guide (Eric)

1. In our previous interview you described your approach in building a participative environment as the president of the institution. Please describe again the way you moved into the governance structure you created. For example, please review how you shifted from the previous style of management, created the principle agreements and standing committees, conducted the open forums, and encouraged the faculty to adopt a shared vision.
2. In our first interview, you talked about building trust in terms of four level of decision making. Please describe this again in light of a participative organization. Previously, you mentioned the ideas of "thrilling moments" and "exquisite decisions" as well as the notion of empowerment.
3. Please describe situations that required you to apply sanctions to behavior that was not in the best interests of the organization.
4. A theme that emerged during the analysis of my interviews is the role of the private self or inner environment of these participative presidents. Please describe how you drew back and reflected during your presidential role and how this process was manifested in taking action within the campus environment.
5. Another theme that has emerged focuses on the visioning process. When you felt the institution had reached the vision you originally established, how did the process work to begin building another, greater vision?

## APPENDIX H

### Focused Interview Guide (Fred)

1. A theme emerging during the analysis of the interviews is how participative presidents perceive the role of the hierarchy. Please describe your view of power and power relationships within the participative organization.
2. How did you go about building trust within the organization? What do the terms empowerment and ownership mean to you?
3. A theme that has emerged is the role of the private self or inner environment of these participative presidents. Please describe how you drew back and reflected during your presidential role and how this process was manifested in taking action within the campus environment.
4. Another theme that has emerged focuses on the visioning process. When you felt the institution had reached the vision you originally established, how did the process work to begin building another vision?

## APPENDIX I

### Focused Interview Guide (Joyce)

1. Please provide some brief background information regarding how you became a participative president. What personal values guided your career path?
2. Give the presence of status differentials within the community college environment, how have you gone about developing trust within the institution? How is trust gained with outside constituencies?
3. What happens to the hierarchy as the organization becomes increasingly participative?
4. What is the process for empowering people within a participative organization?
5. A theme that has emerged during the analysis of my interviews is the role of the private self or inner environment of these participative presidents. Please describe how you draw back and reflect within your presidential role. How does this process become manifest in taking action within the campus environment?
6. Another theme focuses on the visioning process. When you felt the institution had reached the vision you had originally established, how did the process work to begin building another vision? How did you know the original vision was completed?
7. Another theme indicates that the institution becomes increasingly participative; it likewise becomes more highly integrative in terms of its social structure and processes. Please comment on this statement.