

DISSERTATION

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE FACULTY AT ONE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
PERCEIVE THEY HAVE IN CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A
LEARNING COLLEGE CULTURE

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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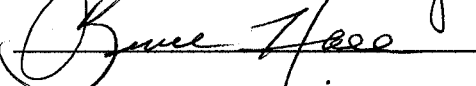
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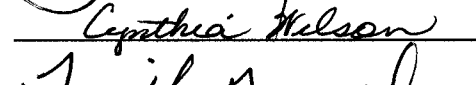
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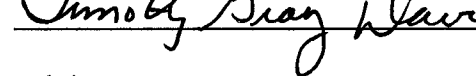
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY SYLVIA M. JENKINS ENTITLED AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE FACULTY AT ONE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERCEIVE THEY HAVE IN CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A LEARNING COLLEGE CULTURE BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

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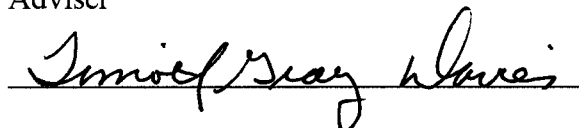








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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

AN EXAMINATION OF THE ROLE FACULTY AT ONE COMMUNITY COLLEGE PERCEIVE THEY HAVE IN CREATING, GROWING AND MAINTAINING A LEARNING COLLEGE CULTURE

Community colleges were created to help fill the void in American higher education faced by many and provide a skilled workforce to meet the needs of industry through an open door admissions policy. This open door policy and the easy access to a community college has generated increasing enrollments of students at all levels of preparedness. One major challenge community college leaders face is fulfilling the college's mission and at the same time realizing that students have many challenges that may prevent them from being successful. College leaders are looking for ways to create learning environments focused on student learning and student success. One model is called the Learning College. In the Learning College all constituents are considered learners and all college resources are directed to programs and services which effect learning.

The participants and site of this study are all anonymous therefore I have used pseudonyms to protect their identity. However, it is possible that persons familiar with the college may have some recollection of the information shared.

The leadership at Flatland Community College (FCC) realized there was a need to create a campus culture that was more focused on the learner and implement methods to determine if students were learning. They chose to adopt the Learning College as the model and the re-accreditation process, Academic Quality and Improvement Process (AQIP) as the framework for change. Organizational change theorists state change in an organization occurs when all constituent groups participate in the change process. In community colleges faculty are considered an influential constituent group and are critical to any transformation process.

This case study examines the role faculty at FCC perceive they have in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered college. Faculty participants have shared their level of knowledge in regards to the college's mission and direction. The participants shared their understanding of the Learning College, the Learning College Principles and why a transformation should occur and their role in the change process.

In the final chapter are my recommendations to community college leaders who may be considering using the Learning College model as a mechanism for change.

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I would like to thank my mother Stella Mason and my father, Lawrence Mason, Sr., who is deceased, both of whom served as school teachers in the segregated south and gave me the inspiration to be an educator. My mother continues to remind me that I can do whatever I put my mind to and do it well regardless of the obstacles that may exist.

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Finally, to the community college that allowed me to “come in” and learn more about your journey on becoming a Learning College, I will be forever grateful.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family for their love, patience, and support.

To my husband Craig for your prayers, love, and encouragement

To my daughters, Carmen, Courtney, Christine, and Carol, and my son-in-law Javon

And to my grandchildren, Jeffrey, Daniel, Ariyanna, and William for giving me the

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Thank you

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background

Higher education in America has a long history, beginning with the nine degree granting institutions that were founded in the United States before the Revolution. These institutions were modeled after the European Germanic university tradition of higher education with the fundamental assumption that only a certain proportion of the population needed or could profit from a college education. It was not until after the Civil War that three environmental changes in America transformed thinking about higher education. Those three factors were industrializing American industry, increasing completion rates of high schools, and the emerging of the American research universities (Deegan & Tillery as cited in Baker, 1994, p.12). These environmental factors created the need for a more skilled workforce and even though there were more universities, it was not the mission of these universities to make workforce skills needed by industry available to the masses.

Recognizing the need to expand access to education beyond high school to create a skilled workforce, Congress enacted the Morrill Act of 1862 which established the system of land grant colleges. This expansion of colleges provided access to higher education to larger numbers of people who previously would have been denied this opportunity. The Morrill Act of 1862 gave the states federal lands to establish colleges that would offer programs in agriculture, engineering, mechanical trades, and home economics as well as traditional academic subjects. However, there were still many people who either could not afford the cost of these colleges or could not attend because

of the location. Junior colleges were established to address these barriers (Lorenzo, 1994 as cited in Baker, p.113).

In 1901, Joliet Junior College became the first public junior college; it was founded by William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago. Harper and several other university presidents believed that the first two years of college were not necessarily a part of university level education. The purpose of the junior level was to create a separation of the truly gifted for entry into the senior division, relegating the lower division to junior colleges. Initially the growth of the junior college movement was slow until several social forces contributed to its development (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Ratcliff (1994) lists three factors that influenced educational reform during this era: the need to restructure and expand the public educational system, the need to professionalize teacher education, and the need to address the vocational education movement.

Community college growth in the latter half of the 19th century is attributed to local community support and the rise of the research university. Citizens supported the establishment of a local college as a symbol of the community's cultural status (Ratcliff, 1994). The growth of community colleges was also a result of research university presidents' goal to maintain the status of the research university. The first two years of college were designed to offer general education in the arts and sciences as well as to develop the student's ability to be better prepared for university level work, especially since this was the model of the Germanic university, which was research oriented. In 1922, the American Association of Junior Colleges reported the primary mission of the junior college as offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade along with the need to provide a more skilled workforce for industry (Thornton, 1972). During the

Progressive Era a period of reform from the 1890s through the 1920s, middle class citizens sought change in policies at all levels of society, economy and government. Educational reform was also a focal point during this era.

Later in the twentieth century, open access to public education and the increasing need to provide educational opportunities for citizens wanting to continue their education or become re-trained in another career were additional factors that caused the continued growth of the community college and the increase in enrollment. In 1947, the President's Commission on Higher Education for Democracy, commonly referred to as the Truman Commission called for the establishment of a network of public community colleges that would offer a comprehensive curriculum. The purpose of the community college was to provide educational service to the entire community and in order to fulfill the goal community colleges needed to provide a variety of services and programs. The Commission called for equal access to higher education which required a massive expansion of higher education in America (Drury, 2003).

Community colleges, unlike traditional four-year colleges and universities, are considered to be more flexible and adaptive to the needs of the local community. Community colleges offer a wide range of educational opportunities from adult basic education to continuing education courses for individuals who already possess a college degree. The community college mission as defined by Gleazer (1994), a strong supporter of community colleges serving the needs of adult learners "is for colleges to become community based learning centers" (Gleazer, 1994, p. 24). Although this definition was shared more than 25 years ago, community college leaders still use this philosophy as a guide to create mission statements. Community colleges by the very nature of the name

have become the institution of higher education residents in the local community look to for their educational needs. Community colleges were established with local and state monetary funding with public support. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the community.

In the 1960s community colleges grew faster than any other segment of higher education. The World War II baby boom generation became college age and the demand for access to higher education increased (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), and that growth has continued into the present time. From their inception community colleges were committed to serve the needs of the local community. Therefore, community colleges are as diverse as the communities in which they are located. According to the most recent statistics posted by the American Association of Community Colleges (2006), there are currently 1157 community colleges serving over 23 million students. This number represents 46% of all U.S. undergraduates, 45% of first-time freshmen; a further review of the statistics shows that community colleges are comprised of 58% women, 42% men. Of these students 62% are part time and 38% are full time. The student profile of the community college represents the following data about minority enrollments: 47% of Black undergraduate students, 56% of Hispanic, 48% of Asian/Pacific Islanders, and 57% of Native Americans. The average age of the community college student is 29 years

http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Content/NavigationMenu/AboutCommunityColleges/Fast_Facts1/Fast_Facts.htm.

These statistics provided by AACC indicate the growing diversity of the student population in community colleges. Along with increasing diversity there are a number of other factors that describe students who are enrolled at community colleges. Many of the

students are less prepared for college-level courses, many are first generation students, and most are part time students who are employed more than 20 hours per week. A growing number of students speak little or no English. Many of the students have family responsibilities and others may be unemployed as a result of layoffs. These are just a few variables that describe today's community college student (Community College Survey of Student Engagement Report, 2005). These demographics are evidence of the need to provide educational opportunities to students beyond high school in order to prepare them for the workforce. The traditional research university as noted earlier was not designed to educate students some would define as non-traditional. The challenge that confronts many community college leaders is how to meet the students' needs and help them achieve their goals.

In some cases, the characteristics of some community college students contribute to low retention rates and low graduation rates at community colleges (Astin, 1977; Tinto, 1987). Attrition rates for minority students in two-year colleges are at about 60 percent and in some cases are as high as 80 percent (Nora & Rendon, 1998). It is evident based on enrollment statistics that there is a need for community colleges in America. However, it also evident those community college students are not as successful as American society would like for them to be. As community colleges continue to grow and a more diverse population takes advantage of higher education, community college leaders are concerned about the success of all students and are looking for ways to create, grow and maintain a culture of learning that supports student success.

In order to address these concerns, there has been a call to change the way community colleges define themselves. Since their inception and to distinguish them

from the research university, community colleges have been viewed as teaching institutions. The literature on the history and development of the community college identifies them as teaching institutions (Smith, 1994; Cohen & Brawer, 1989; Eells, 1931; Thornton, 1972). Alexis Lange, dean of the University of California at Berkeley in the early 20th century was especially influential in the development of junior colleges as teaching institutions. He was an advocate of junior colleges being formed to prepare students for skills needed in society. In 1988 the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges Commission on the Future of Community Colleges stated that “the community college should be the nation’s premier teaching institution and quality instruction should be the hallmark of the movement” (Baker, 1994, p.205).

Faculty members are evaluated based on their teaching ability, not on the success rates of their students. With the emphasis on teaching, the focal point has become the instructor and not the learner. Thus, some have surmised that this focus on teaching rather than on learning could contribute to low retention rates. Barr and Tagg (1995) have said that in order to reverse low retention rates a paradigm shift needs to take place. The instructional paradigm that defined community colleges earlier in history needs to shift to what Barr and Tagg (1995) have termed a “learning paradigm.”

Community college enrollments continue to increase but the attrition rates are high; in order to address this concern greater emphasis must be put on student learning. Boggs (1995) said that the instruction paradigm that has guided community colleges from their inception no longer fits. He goes on to state that the junior college students of the early 1900s do not have much in common with today’s community college students. Nevertheless today’s classroom practices are probably not very different from those

earlier days (p.24). Faculty members usually teach the way they were taught.

Administrators hire and evaluate teachers based upon how well those teachers present the material (p.27).

Community colleges have become the fastest growing and most diverse institutions in higher education. In order to meet the needs of this diverse student population, reduce attrition rates, and accomplish the goals of the community college as defined in the mission statement, community college leaders are seeking various ways to transform the college.

According to the 2005 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) report, a culture that encourages active engagement of students with college faculty and staff, with other students and with the subject matter they study will make students more likely to learn and stay in college until they achieve their academic goals. Smith (1994) states that if community college faculty want to continue to be successful in their most important role they should place a greater emphasis on student learning.

Community college students are more likely than their four-year counterparts to be older, female, Black or Hispanic, and to come from low-income families. The majority of students attending a community college are part time students and full time workers. Many of the students completing high school are not prepared for college level work and need developmental courses. More and more community college proponents and critics are saying that the community college is not living up to its commitment to meet the needs of students. Therefore many community college leaders are looking at how they can change their college culture to help students attain their goals and also meet the needs

of the community. One model that some leaders are adapting to create that culture of engagement is called the Learning College (Tagg, 2003).

A Learning College is identified as an institution of higher education where assessment of student learning is the top priority. All college policies, procedures, and practices are designed and implemented to support student learning (O'Banion, 1995). It is suggested that in order for colleges to make this transformation to the Learning College, two questions should be asked before each decision is made or a new program is implemented: how will this help our students and how do we know? The first question reinforces that the purpose for everything the college does is to promote learning. The second question is a reminder to community college leaders that all programs and services need to be assessed regularly to determine if they are in fact promoting learning. To fulfill the mission of putting learning and the learner first a learning culture must be in place.

A learning organization maintains the student and learning as the central focus of the college and it is organized to help students learn to learn (Senge, 1990). If a learning organization is to be successful every employee of the college must be involved to create this new way of thinking. However, even O'Banion (1997) acknowledges that any attempt to change or reform an established educational institution is not easy. The message must be clear that the purpose for the change to being more learning-centered is to promote student success.

A number of colleges have chosen the Learning College Principles as guide to transform the college's culture to become more learning-centered. The six key principles offered as a framework to create a Learning College culture are: (a) the Learning College

creates substantive change in individual learners; (b) the Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices; (c) the Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible; (d) the Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities; (e) the Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners; (f) the Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners (O'Banion, 1995 p.15). Each principle identifies a characteristic a Learning College should have. Community college leaders who choose the six principles to effect change will need to do determine how to implement these principles at their respective colleges. The literature on the Learning College and the Learning College Principles gives examples of how the principles are being implemented to transform the college's culture and the examples are presented in the literature included in Chapter Two of this study.

Boggs (1992) lists four tenets of the learning paradigm which are all centered on student learning. First, the college mission should be learning-centered rather than teaching-centered. Second, institutions should accept responsibility for student learning. Third, supporting and promoting student learning should be everyone's job and should guide institutional decisions. Finally, institutions should judge their effectiveness and be evaluated on student learning outcomes rather than on resources or processes (p.25).

Tagg (2003), an early proponent of transforming the culture of community colleges from teaching centered to learning-centered institutions refers to community colleges that have successfully transformed their culture as Learning Paradigm Colleges. In Learning Paradigm Colleges the mission of the college is to produce learning and the focus is on

the learner learning. Tagg uses Biggs (1999) description of a Learning Paradigm College as level three thinking about teaching as described in Biggs quality model of teaching theories.

The quality model includes three levels of teaching theories. Level one is focused solely on the ability of the student to learn. Level two is focused on what the teacher does. Level three is focused on what the student does or what the student actually learns (Biggs 2001, p. 224). Biggs states “the teacher’s job is then to support students by aligning teaching methods, assessment tasks, and classroom climate to acquiring skills and kinds of understanding that we want them to acquire” (p.225). The six principles, the four tenets, and the level three thinking about teaching all refer to the learner actually learning. O’Banion, Boggs, Tagg and Biggs are all using varying definitions of what it means to be learning-centered but all with the same goal: the primary focus of the college should be on student learning and student success.

However, it is still too early to determine if this cultural transformation to the Learning College will have a positive effect on student success. One of the challenges early adopters of the Learning College philosophy have faced is resistance from faculty. Boggs (1999) states that faculty are offended by the language of the learning paradigm; some feel that there will be a loss of control, or a decline in academic standards. O’Banion (1997) cites comments he has heard from faculty that range from “we are already doing many if not most of what the literature purports we are not doing” to “this is an administrative ploy designed to reduce costs” (p.31). This resistance from faculty is understood because community colleges are noted for the excellent teaching and small class sizes offered.

However, low retention rates of students enrolled in community colleges needs to be addressed. To create a learning-centered college, faculty need to be made aware of why a transformation in the culture needs to occur. To support a learning paradigm, faculty need to be able to support the mission of the community college. Faculty need to understand the challenges that exist because the college is serving a diverse student population and be made aware of the barriers some students face (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005, p.154). The faculty and all other constituents need to be made aware of low retention rates and what factors are effecting attrition. Faculty and staff should be informed of effective instructional strategies and methods of student engagement that could help make a change. In order to create or transform a culture, all stakeholders must be a part of the transformation. Successful organizational change is dependent on support and participation from all college constituents.

Thaxter and Graham (1999) conducted a study including faculty from six Midwestern states on the level of faculty involvement in decision making. The study found that faculty members do not feel they are meaningfully involved in important decision making activities. Many of the faculty indicated that they were not asked to participate in college committees or other governance structures created to make institutional decisions. In order to accomplish the goals identified in the six principles of the Learning College a collegial environment must be in place. The philosophy of the Learning College is based on the theory of the learning organization as defined by Senge (1990), Shein, (1985), and Garvin (1993). In the learning organization the governance structure is decentralized, trust between managers and employees is critical. Communication should be open and consistent. Staff development and training is an

ongoing part of the culture because in a learning organization environment learning for both students and staff is essential.

Proponents of the Learning College would characterize the culture as a collegial and loosely bound system of governance. In the Learning College everyone employed is considered a learning facilitator. The goal is to ensure that everyone is aware of how their work facilitates student learning (O'Banion, 1997, p.9). Faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in decision making processes and in the implementation of programs and services designed to meet the needs of the students.

The literature related to creating a Learning College culture lists the characteristics of a Learning College as described in the Principles of the Learning College and the benefits of working toward achieving those characteristics (O'Banion, 1997, Tagg, 2003, Boggs, 2005). The literature is focused on using the Learning College Principles as a conceptual framework for transforming a college's culture from that of a teaching centered organization to a learning-centered organization (O'Banion, 1997).

As stated earlier, cultural transformation requires participation by all constituents. The literature suggests that community college faculty identified teaching as their primary role. However, those faculty defined teaching to be much more than disseminating information in the discipline. Faculty described themselves as mentors, role models, coaches, advocates, student facilitators, and guides (Fugate & Amey, 2000, p. 4). Secondary to teaching faculty identified service both to the community and to the college as increasingly important as they moved into more years of experience. Service to the college through committee work was seen not only as necessary for the health of the college but also as beneficial to the faculty members. Given this commitment to

education and service, community colleges seeking to become Learning Colleges need to include faculty in the transformation process.

Purpose Statement

The history and mission of the community college provide a clear understanding why community colleges serve a large and diverse population of students. One of the challenges community colleges face is providing a learning-centered environment where students can be successful. Some college leaders have chosen to transform the college's culture from the traditional focus of teaching to the focus of learning. In order to successfully transform the culture, all constituents should be involved. The literature on the Learning College did not express the role the faculty perceive they have in the process of creating a learning-centered culture.

This single site case study will focus on the role community college faculty perceive they have in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture at one college located in the Midwest. The Learning College concept and the Principles of the Learning College have been introduced to the college faculty as a means to create an environment conducive to student success. The college has used the several in-service days to introduce the Learning College philosophy to the faculty and college teams have been created to look at ways student success can be addressed.

The responses of the faculty at this college will help community college leaders interested in pursuing a similar college transformation learn how faculty perceive their role and if faculty understand the Learning College concept.

Research Questions

The reviewed literature has not clearly made the connection between creating a Learning College culture and the role the faculty play in this transformation. Therefore, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do faculty members learn about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission?
2. How do faculty members at this community college understand what it means to be identified as a Learning College and the use of the Learning College Principles as a framework to create a learning-centered culture?
3. How are faculty involved and encouraged in helping to create, grow and maintain a learning-centered culture on this campus?

Significance of the Study

The community college mission extends educational opportunity to all by offering a broad curriculum to meet the community needs (Gleazer, 1994). By the very nature of extending to all and broadening the curriculum, community colleges are the fastest growing and most diverse institutions of higher education (AACC, 2005). The challenge community colleges face is providing educational experiences that will help all students be successful. Attrition rates for minority students in two-year colleges are at about 60 % and in some cases as high as 80 % (Nora & Rendon, 1998). Community college leaders concerned about meeting the needs of all the students are looking for ways to create a college culture that is focused on the learner.

One framework being adapted is called the Learning College. The six Learning College Principles which are all focused on the needs of the learner provide a roadmap for college leaders to help with the cultural transformation in becoming a learning-centered institution (O'Banion, 1997). However the implementation of strategies to meet the goals of the Learning College will require that all college stakeholders be involved in the transformation. Shupe (2005) states the "success of any college that engages in a sustained, systematic focus on student learning will depend largely on how different constituencies perceive and respond to that effort" (p.33). One of those constituencies is the faculty in colleges in pursuit of becoming more learning-centered. Proponents of the Learning College (Barr and Tagg 1995; O'Banion, 1997) acknowledge that all stakeholders be involved in the transformation process. However, the literature on the Learning College movement does not fully represent how the faculty perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a learning-centered culture. It is critical that faculty are involved in this transformational process in the community college.

This single-site case provided an opportunity for a diverse group of faculty from one community college in the beginning stages of using the Learning College Principles as a framework for transformation to share their perceptions. These perceptions can give community college leaders insight into how involved faculty perceived they are in the process and whether those faculty support and understand the concept of creating a learning-centered organization

This study will help community college leaders who are either considering introducing the concepts of the Learning College and the Learning College Principles or

who are in the process of implementing processes to transform the college to become learning-centered understand how faculty perceive their role in this process.

Researcher's Perspective

I have been a part of a community college for over twenty years. Initially, I served as a part time faculty member, and then was hired for a full-time faculty position 20 years ago. I have served as department chair, assistant dean, and now as a dean. I continue to enjoy my tenure at the college because the mission of the college closely mirrors the mission of the land grant Historically Black Colleges and Universities that exist in the south. I received my undergraduate degree at an HBCU and will always believe had it not been for that opportunity I would not have had a college education. Community colleges offer that same opportunity for thousands of students today.

Open door institutions face a challenge in trying to meet the needs of a student population with diverse backgrounds, goals, and academic preparedness. Retention and persistence of students and degree completion are also challenges than many colleges are facing. One strategy some colleges are using to create a culture to support the diverse needs of the students is by adapting the Learning College Principles to become more learning-centered.

I first became interested in learning more about how faculty perceive their role in creating a Learning College culture when the college where I serve as an academic dean elected to use the Learning College Principles as a basis for transforming the culture. When the college initiated the process, the college applied for and was selected by the League for Innovation in the Community College to participate in the Vanguard

Learning College Project. The project required a three-year commitment to review the college's policies and processes in the following areas: organizational culture, technology, staff and faculty recruitment and development, learning outcomes, and under prepared students. These five areas were determined to be critical to student success. The purpose of reviewing processes and policies related to these areas was twofold: (1) to determine if the college's processes and policies were in place to support students and (2) if they were in place then how did the college know that the processes and policies were effective.

The Vanguard Project Team was appointed by the college's president and consisted of faculty and administrative staff from all of the college's divisions. Throughout the three years of the project the team had an opportunity to hear from some leaders in the community college movement about what it meant to be learning-centered. College teams participating in the project were asked to determine what it means to be a good college as opposed to being a Learning College. The discussion was good and the networking opportunities we were afforded were also beneficial. It also became clear that it would take more than three years of conversation by a few people to effectively embed the philosophy of the Learning College at Moraine Valley. Many faculty with whom I work view the terminology used by Learning College proponents as just another fad without true substance. The responses from the faculty at Moraine Valley were not too different from the responses of faculty quoted in the literature.

Moraine Valley is also facing the same challenges that confront most community college: growing enrollments, but not increased graduation rates; more students enrolling with diverse needs the faculty and staff are not prepared to address;

the need to recruit and hire a diverse faculty and staff; technology needs with shrinking budgets; and integrating assessment techniques to assure that student learning can be measured. Therefore, fad or not, the Learning College Principles provided my college with a framework used as guide to focus on student learning, student development, and student success.

I am interested in learning more about the faculty perspective of the Learning College and how they view their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a Learning College culture.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review for this study includes a brief history of the community college and some of the challenges community colleges are currently facing. Literature related to the paradigm shift from teaching to learning, the Learning College, the Learning College Principles and how these principles are used as a framework at some colleges to create learning-centered environments to address the issues of student success is reviewed. The final section includes an overview of the role faculty have traditionally held in the community college.

Overview of the Community College

Ratcliff (1994) describes the comprehensive community college as a distinctively American invention. The Morrill Act (1862) was enacted by Congress to create land grant colleges on public lands to educate a growing number of people desiring higher education and also to provide a better skilled workforce for a growing industrial society. Research universities that existed in the early nineteenth century limited enrollment to a few considered worthy of a liberal arts education. Since these modeled Germanic Universities, they were scientific in nature and thus research oriented. The Morrill Act was amended in 1890 to withhold federal funds to land grant colleges that did not enroll minorities, unless the state established separate institutions for minorities (Drury. 2003). These two acts enabled states to create public colleges and universities. However, many people desired access to a more affordable and conveniently located college with a curriculum broad enough to support the needs of the community.

In 1901 the first public junior college was founded with the support of several leading university presidents, with William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago as the major leader. The community college was designed initially to separate what Harper and other presidents of research universities deemed as lower level collegiate work and not university level education (Drury, 2003). Community college mission statements focus on the purpose of the institution, the audience it was designed to serve, and the goal the institution hoped to accomplish.

Today's comprehensive community colleges offer credit and non-credit courses. These courses include remedial or developmental courses for students not prepared for college level work. Courses for non-native speakers of English are offered for students interested in continuing their education. Vocational or career programs are offered for students looking to enter the workforce with a professional certificate or an associate's degree. Traditional liberal arts courses that will transfer to a four year college or university and courses for community residents seeking to continue their education are also a part of the curriculum. Community colleges, initially called junior colleges or two-year colleges were founded on the premise of separating those worthy of a liberal arts education from those who could only master the first two years of college course work. Community colleges have an open admission policy and offer programs and services to meet the needs of the local community.

Gleazer (1994) describes the role of the community college as an institution of higher education that extends educational opportunity to all by broadening the curriculum. Because of the dual role of extending to all and broadening the curriculum, the population of community colleges is the fastest growing and most diverse segment of

the institutions of higher education. One challenge community colleges face is providing educational experiences that will help all students be successful. This challenge is not always met; therefore, retention rates are low for some segments of the college population. Attrition rates for minority students in two-year colleges are at about 60 percent and in some cases as high as 80 percent (Nora & Rendon, 1998). In order to meet this goal of providing a successful college experience for all students, Flynn (2005) recommends to college leaders that a major transformation of the culture needs to occur.

The Learning College literature suggests that this major transformation requires the institution to shift the focus from instruction to one that focuses on learning. All college constituents should be involved and should understand their role in student success. Every aspect of the college needs to be re-examined and redesigned with the focus on learning. One of the ways college leaders are choosing is to shift the focus from being teaching centered to learning-centered (O'Banion, 1997).

In an effort to define what it means to be a learning-centered college and how to successfully make this paradigm shift Kezar (2005) describes a process community college leaders could use. Kezar (2005) also acknowledges that some community college constituents may not understand what learning-centered means but may also view the suggestion of shifting the paradigm from teaching-centered to learning-centered as a fad. To better understand the concept of becoming learning-centered and dispel the thought that this paradigm shift may be only the latest educational reform fad, she suggests a three step process that includes exploration, implementation, and evaluation with faculty being a part of the discussion (p.7).

Exploration consists of discovering the cause for low retention rates.

Institutional data such as enrollment data, transfer rates, graduation rates and retention data must be shared with all constituents. O'Banion (1997) suggests the use of the data provides the college a "trigger event" to jumpstart transformation (p.227). Institutional data provides the rationale college administrators need to create the atmosphere for change. Implementation of programs and services needed to address these issues will require an evaluation of all existing programs and processes and also recommendations for change. An evaluation of all processes needs to be done on a regular basis to assure continued effectiveness (Kezar 2005).

The Learning College movement is relatively new in the history of community colleges. In the early 1990s the phrase, "placing learning first and the learner first" was included in documents of educational commissions, professional organizations, business leaders, policy makers, and increasingly, educators from every sector of the educational landscape (O'Banion, 1997, p.2). Boggs (1993) noted that the new paradigm focused on the learner. Community colleges are learning not teaching institutions. The mission of the community college is student learning. Barr and Tagg (1995), also early promoters of this new way of thinking, stated that the mission of the community college is to produce learning.

The Learning College paradigm is contrary to the earlier model junior colleges were founded. The paradigm or model that guided many junior colleges in the early 1900s was based on the traditional university model which is based the institution's dedication to research, scholarship, teaching and public service (Boggs, 1995, p. 25). Community colleges founded later in the century have been identified as teaching

institutions. The emphasis was on the teaching and not the learner. Boggs (1995) found in his study of community colleges that the mission statements of most colleges state clearly that the college exists to provide quality instruction. Barr also discovered that when the word “learning” was used it was almost always bundled in the phrase “teaching and learning.”

Barr (1995), Tagg (1995), Boggs (1995), and O’Banion (1997) identify in their writings that community college leaders were looking for ways to transform the colleges’ cultures to meet the needs of a growing and more diverse student population. College leaders recognized the need to become more accountable for student success. Community college leaders also recognize that it is important that this accountability would involve the commitment of everyone in the institution. One method some colleges are adapting is called the Learning College. The primary role of a community college identified as a Learning College is to create a culture conducive to student success.

In 1995, Barr and Tagg wrote an article that appeared in *Change* magazine where they challenged colleges to shift the focus from being teaching centered to learning-centered. Community colleges have historically been viewed as teaching institutions. With this challenge, the focus is directed to the learner. This paradigm shift requires college decision makers to base their decisions on what is best for the students. It also requires institutions to continually assess all policies, practices and procedures to determine if they are in support of promoting the success of the learner. Williams (1995) states that a refocus from teaching to learning has helped broaden the work of community colleges, with student learning as the stimulus for change and reform.

The Learning College

The phrase “learning college” is a relatively recent term in the literature and is used to identify colleges that are involved in reform efforts to transform themselves into learning-centered institutions. The term “learning-centered” means that the focus of the institution is the student learner. The Learning College is defined as a college that places learning first and provides educational experiences for learners anyway, anyplace, and anytime (O’Banion p.5). In order to assure that the focus is on the learner all decisions are made to support student learning, student development and student success. In the Learning College, evaluative measures are put in place to determine if programs and services are actually meeting the needs of the learner.

In the early 1990s, community colleges, building on their student-centered and teaching centered values, began to add learning-centered values to their mission and program statements. Almost all the respondents (97 percent) to a 1997 survey of over 500 presidents of the League's Alliance for Community College Innovation indicated that their institutions would move toward becoming more learning-centered in the next three to five years. Many community colleges have made a commitment to become more learning-centered, a commitment that represents a significant dedication to changing the traditional architecture of education (League for Innovation, 2000). McPhail (2005) characterizes this change of becoming a learning-centered college as a change in the culture of the organization. She acknowledges that this commitment to be a Learning

College will mean “walking away from habits and practices that stagnate the integration of learning-centered concepts in programs and services” (p.211).

The term “learning college” began to surface in the literature in the early 1990s and is still being used today to describe a paradigm shift outlining a collegial framework that requires a culture and leadership style that is centered on student learning. Earlier literature used descriptors such as learning culture, learning paradigms, and the learning organization to define a culture focused on learning. In 1993, the Wingspread Group on Higher Education challenged institutions of higher education to “redesign all learning systems to align the entire education enterprise for the personal, civic and workplace needs of the twenty-first century” (p.1). The report issued by the Wingspread Group included three central concerns that higher education leaders should address. The second of those three concerns calls for colleges to make student learning their highest priority. In order to accomplish this priority academic standards must be high, academic programs that respond to the needs of the students must be available, teaching practices must be improved, and more emphasis on assessing learning needs and achievement must exist (Brock, 1994, p. 51). The challenge from the Wingspread Group was in response to the increasing awareness that some institutions of higher education were not putting learning at the heart of the enterprise. Academic expectations and standards on many campuses were too low and needs of the students were not the primary focus. Colleges moving from being teaching centered to learning-centered have two distinct goals: 1) to place learning first in every policy, program, and practice, and 2) to overhaul the traditional architecture of education.

Early proponents of the Learning College movement argue that in order to meet the needs of community college students, the mission, vision, culture, and structure of a college must undergo a paradigm shift from the instruction paradigm to the learning paradigm – from being an institution that “provides instruction to students” to an institution that “produces learning in students” (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Learners in the Learning College are defined as students, faculty and staff. Everyone who is involved in creating, growing and maintaining a culture of learning is participating in a cultural transformation based on continuous improvement of all practices and services.

Tagg (2003) maintains that this cultural transformation will require changing the governing organizational paradigm to one that places the ends before the means. In the learning paradigm the end is the student, the learner. The means then would be the processes and services designed to help the learner be successful. Edgerton (1997) says community college leaders should think first of student learning and then reengineer the way academic work gets done. Tagg goes on to contrast the Instruction paradigm to the Learning Paradigm. In the Instruction Paradigm the formal processes are highlighted, in the Learning Paradigm the results or outcomes are emphasized. In the Instruction Paradigm atomistic structures exist; in the Learning Paradigm holistic structures are put in place. Where the Instruction Paradigm attends to classes, the Learning Paradigm attends to students (Tagg 2003, p.31).

O'Banion (1997) suggests that community colleges that wish to make this cultural shift can ask two basic questions that will keep faculty, staff, trustees, and administrators focused on this goal: (a) Does this action improve or expand learning? (b) How do we

know this action improves and expands learning? These two questions can be applied to any area of activity in an institution to help its members become more aware of the importance of learning in everyday practice (p.2). Traditionally, community colleges have served a diverse student population, and in order to meet the needs of the students, faculty and staff a positive learning culture is critical to the success of the community college. Smart and Hamm (1993) conducted a study of 30 two-year higher education institutions to determine to what extent culture affects perceptions of institutional effectiveness. The results of their findings were very similar to a previous study by Cameron and Ettington (1998) concerning culture at 334 four-year institutions. The type of culture that exists significantly predicts institutional effectiveness. Because community colleges face ongoing issues regarding assessment of institutional effectiveness, it was determined that an adhocracy supports innovation and activities crossing departmental boundaries (Lee, 2004, p. 505). Adhocracy is a loose, flexible, self renewing organic cultural form tied together mostly through lateral means. In an ad hoc culture colleges are able to implement continuous improvement processes that are critical to becoming a Learning College.

Learning organizations are guided by a quality-based purpose, clear mission, and goals that are flexible and dynamic. Barr & Tagg (1995) stated,

Putting learning at the heart of the academic enterprise will mean overhauling the conceptual, procedural, curricular, and other architecture of post secondary education on most campuses. The time-bound, place bound, efficiency-bound institution is not sufficient to the tasks facing us in the 21st century, as an information society competing in a global marketplace.

Culture is an often used expression that conveys the values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes understood by a group of people. Culture not only establishes the parameters for social interaction, it also provides a framework for how community colleges define themselves in relation to others (Rhoads, 1999). In the learning revolution, leaders must know what culture currently exists and have the skills to determine how to transform the culture to focus on the learner. In a Learning College culture learning is placed first and provides educational experiences for learners any way, any place, and at any time (O'Banion, 1999, p.5).

The hierarchical model of leadership that characterized community colleges when they were founded 100 years ago is no longer effective. The looser, more participatory forms of leadership that have emerged in the past few years are being encouraged. This change will create leadership that is transformational and committed to student learning and student success. Burns' study (as cited in Pielstick, 1998 p.7) characterizes the transformational leader as one who can: create a shared vision; communicate the vision; build relationships; develop a supportive organizational culture; guide implementation; exhibit character; and achieve results. In a Learning College collaboration on all levels is the key to creating a culture that supports student success. Williams (1995) states:

The learning paradigm underlies the institution's collaborative ethos, from student recruitment and admission through graduation and job placement or transfer to a senior college. In academic affairs the learning institution directs its faculty selection, orientation, advancement, and ongoing faculty development with the student's educational experience as its central goal. In the student affairs area, this institution will provide all student support services with the cultivation of the student's acceptance of personal responsibility for and commitment to his or her own proactive educational process (p.4).

In order to create a culture of collaboration focused on student success proponents of the Learning College recommend six principles that could be used as a framework. O'Banion refers to these six principles as the Learning College Principles. Each of the principles gives a defining characteristic of the Learning College and ways the characteristic supports student success.

Learning College Principles

A number of community colleges faced with the challenge of implementing strategies and processes that promote learning have elected to transform the college's culture from what has historically been identified as a teaching institution to one focused on the learner. The purpose of this cultural transformation is to provide a framework for community colleges to create a flexible and dynamic organization that is committed to student learning and student success. The Learning College Principles are being used by some colleges as a guide to create strategic priorities with the goal of increased student success.

In 2001, twelve colleges in the process of transforming the college culture to become learning-centered were selected to participate in the League for Innovations Vanguard Learning College Project. The project provided proponents of the Learning College movement an opportunity to involve colleges that were looking for ways to address issues related to student retention, the diverse needs of the community, staff and faculty recruitment and development, the development of learning outcomes and assessment techniques, the effective application of technology in administrative and academic functions, and the need to develop more collaborative governing structures. The leaders from each of the colleges were asked to use the Learning College Principles

as a framework to assess the college's current practices and policies and implement changes as needed.

The six key principles that are offered as a framework to create a learning culture are: (a) the Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners; (b) the Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices; (c) the Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible; (d) the Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities; (e) the Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners; (f) the Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners (O'Banion, 1995 p.15). The best way to understand exactly how each of the principles can be applied, I will refer to some best practices implemented at some colleges.

The first principle, the Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners, describes the primary role of a college where the focus is the learner. In order to create this substantive change in all learners, a welcoming college environment must be in place, programs and services must be designed to promote student success, and the college must employ faculty and staff prepared to meet the needs of the students. To do this O'Banion (1995) suggests that learning should be the central topic of all college discussions and that substantive change in the learner is a basic institutional principle (p.6).

The Community College of Baltimore County, one of twelve colleges selected to participate in the five-year Vanguard Learning College Project, implemented

LearningFIRST 2.0 as a part of the college's strategic plan. LearningFIRST 2.0 outlined the college's commitment to making learning the central focus and the college's goal of creating substantive change in the learner. Student learning is primary in the core strategic directions and is used as the guiding principle for all other strategic goals (McPhail, 2005, p. 76-77).

Moraine Valley Community College, another Vanguard College was in the early stages of developing a five-year strategic plan in 2001 and elected to use the Learning College Principles as a framework to develop college goals and strategic action steps. Five strategic priorities emerged as a result of the planning discussions. Moraine Valley's first strategic priority, emphasizing and promoting student success is in support of the first Learning College Principle: the Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners. To accomplish this goal, every college process is reviewed annually through departmental level institutional effectiveness plans. The institutional effectiveness plans are designed using the college's strategic priorities as the goal with student success being the objective of that goal. Restructuring and redesigning of programs and services are based on the level of effectiveness (<http://www.morainevalley.edu/ie/default.htm>).

The second Learning College Principle is that the Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices. To meet this goal learning-centered colleges create formal programs to orientate the learner to new experiences and expectations. Through these formal programs such as student orientations, mandatory advising seminars and in some cases credit courses, two key expectations are shared with the students during one of these

activities. The students are made aware that they are full partners in the creation and implementation of their learning experiences. In addition, the student must assume primary responsibility for making choices about goals and options. In other words, in order for students to achieve the goals they have set for themselves, they need to take full responsibility for accomplishing those goals. Faculty and advisors provide guidelines and offer recommendations for success, but it is the student's responsibility to adhere to those suggestions (O'Banion, 1997).

Colleges offer various options for students new to the college experience. Some colleges offer student success courses, dual enrollment, pre-college programs, distance learning, learning styles workshops, and services for students with disabilities, weekend and summer programs, and expanded learning options for high risk students (Clements, Harvey-Smith, & James, 2005). Leaders of learning-centered colleges recognize the diverse needs of the students therefore one-size fits all student services are not successful.

The third principle, the Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible, refers to flexible learning options and instructional styles. Learning-centered colleges recognize that students have varying learning styles and these colleges offer courses in numerous formats to meet the needs of the students. Currently, colleges are offering courses using course management software which allows students to access course materials at any time and any place Internet access is available. Some colleges offer a combination of web-based and face-to-face instruction that allows a great deal of flexibility for the student. Traditional face-to-face instruction in the typical 16/17 week format is also offered, but the instructors are encouraged to adapt various learning styles and strategies to engage students. According to the 2005 results of the Community

College Survey of Student Engagement, the more engaged students are with college faculty staff and other students the more likely they are to succeed. The CCSSE study identified the five benchmarks that have proven to be indicators of effective educational practice: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction and support for learners. According to the literature, colleges that show improved student success rates are likely to score above average on one or more of these benchmarks <http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm>.

In the Learning College, faculty are provided professional development opportunities to learn effective educational practices that lead to increased student success. Active and collaborative learning provides students an opportunity to be involved in their learning and to apply what they are learning in a collaborative environment. One example of a collaborative learning model is a learning community. In a learning community students register in linked courses where the faculty in several content areas create complementary curriculum so that the students apply the knowledge gained in one area to other subjects. Learning community students are traditionally a part of a cohort and are enrolled in the same classes. Active learning is an instructional technique used to increase student learning by promoting active participation in class. How much effort students contribute to their learning is also an indicator of student engagement. How often a student attends class, contributes in class, and the intent to complete a degree are a measure of students' commitment toward completing a degree or certificate (Tinto, 1993).

Faculty in the Learning College are expected to provide challenging course work of collegiate quality to produce student learning. Elitist critics contend community

colleges are inferior because they do not measure up to the academic model of the four-year colleges and universities (Pincus, 1994, p. 624). Some faculty critical of the learning paradigm have also equated it to being less academically rigorous. In addition, the debate over “teaching versus learning” has also created barriers that may cause a lack of understanding of the learning paradigm. The most recent CCSSE (2005) data indicates when students are given more challenging work, when the faculty member is accessible, and when the college provides the necessary support, the student is more engaged and is more likely to be successful.

The fourth principle, the Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities, is accomplished in various ways. O’Banion (1995) states that in the Learning College the university ideal of a “community of scholars” is transformed into a “community of learners” where the focus is on creating communities of the participants in the learning process. The most documented format of collaborative learning in the community college is learning communities. Gablenick (1990) describes the learning communities’ concept as a purposeful restructuring of the curriculum which links courses or course work that enables students to find greater coherence in what they are learning. Learning communities also increase the amount of interaction students have with faculty and with fellow students. This increased interaction, one of the benchmarks of student success, results in substantive change in the learner, the primary goal of a Learning College.

Lane Community College, the Community College of Denver, and Moraine Valley Community College use the learning communities’ format for developmental

education, honor's courses, and first- year experience courses. All three colleges report higher success rates for students who persisted in the linked courses.

The fifth principle, the Learning College defines the roles of the learning facilitators in response to the needs of the learners, affirms the fact that everyone employed at the college is responsible for student success. For example, O'Banion (1995) states the trustees of the college are learning facilitators as they exercise their responsibilities of governance and policy development. The goal is to have every employee think about his or her role as a learning facilitator. The learners who share in the responsibility for their learning are also considered learning facilitators.

In order to communicate the role of the learning facilitator, which may have been foreign to some employees, some of the Vanguard colleges used college wide "conversations about learning" to engage all members of the college in discussions about learning-related issues and challenges. This activity allowed college leaders to explain what it means to be a Learning College and to hear from the staff what they perceive their role would be in helping to create and maintain a learning-centered culture. In some instances, the faculty and staff expressed some resistance to the phrase "learning-centered" and saw it as a new fad. To overcome this resistance, institutional data was shared and staff development days were focused on the role of the learning facilitator (McPhail, 2005). Just as Senge (1995) suggests, a learning organization requires the commitment and participation of all constituents, and the Vanguard colleges realized that this was critical to the success of the transformation process.

The last principle, the Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for learners, has become for

some colleges the “heart” of the transformation process. This principle emphasizes that assessment is critical to the success of being a learning-centered college. Community college faculty and staff must closely assess all of the practices, programs and services offered to determine if they are effective. Are the services, programs and practices helping to expand student learning? If not, a redesign of courses, programs, and services is essential.

At Moraine Valley Community College every administrative department submits an annual Institutional Effectiveness plan and each academic department submits an annual student academic achievement plan. Each of these plans includes input from all levels of staff to examine the annual goals to determine if the objective of the goal was met.

For a community college to successfully accomplish each of these Learning College Principles it is important that all constituents be included in the process of creating change. However, involving all constituents in the process of creating a learning-centered institution may be challenging for some. Kezar (2005) states that one of the most resistant groups to what some may consider management fads is the faculty. O’Banion (1995) acknowledges that faculty at some colleges resented the fact that they were being told that they were not focused on the learner.

When the terminology “learning paradigm” and “becoming more learning-centered” were first introduced the voices of the faculty expressed some hostility to the implication that learning was not already taking place. Some faculty viewed this language as a false dichotomy that seemed to pit teaching against learning. In some cases they viewed this paradigm shift as a loss of teacher control. In addition in some cases faculty

believed the focus on the learner would negatively affect academic standards (Boggs, 1999). The views of the faculty added to the challenges community college leaders faced when initial conversations were held to promote implementing a learning-centered culture. However, in order for a college to successfully transform from a teaching centered paradigm to a learning-centered paradigm, how the faculty perceive their role is a critical factor in the change process.

Community College Faculty

The reasons why community colleges were established are numerous. Presidents of prestigious research universities patterned after the European Germanic university tradition of higher education held the fundamental assumption that only a certain proportion of the population needed or could profit from a college education. These leaders determined that the first two years of college should be separated from the senior division (Cohen & Brawer, 2003), leaving the senior division solely for the truly gifted. During the early twentieth century, industry demands required a more skilled workforce; therefore some colleges included vocational education in the curriculum. Local leaders also viewed the opportunity to establish colleges in their own communities as a sign of prestige (Ratcliff, 1994). These three major reasons combined with a growing population desiring an affordable and more accessible way to attain a college degree led to the establishment and fast growth of community colleges. Current mission statements at many community colleges attest the fact that the primary role of the community college is to address the needs of the community.

The mission of the community college, to provide an educational opportunity for anyone, has led to community colleges being the fastest growing and most diverse

segment of higher education. The National Center for Educational Statistics indicates that the student population of community colleges continues to be more diverse than four-year undergraduate colleges. Community college students are more likely to be older, female, and from low-income families and are less likely to be White (NCES, 2003-2004). Bragg (2001) states “community colleges fulfill a multiplicity of roles within their communities, offering a myriad of educational programs and services” (p.93). The open door admission status of community colleges along with the vast number of credit and non-credit courses including college level courses, remedial or developmental education courses, vocational or technical skills courses has led to a number of issues community college leaders are currently facing relative to student success. Even though community college enrollments continue to rise, graduation rates and retention rates are low. Some research indicates that community college students are under prepared and often unmotivated to learn therefore causing high attrition (Nora & Rendon, 1998).

Alfred (1998) calls for community college leaders to look for ways to redesign the college to address this issue of high attrition. He states, “success will come to those colleges that are able to redesign themselves to meet constantly changing needs” (p.315). Community college leaders should be concerned about not only the number of students coming in the door but also the number persisting to the “graduation-transfer-employment” door (VanWagoner, Bowman & Spraggs, 2005). In order to address the issue of low retention rates some community college leaders have chosen to look for ways to improve on the retention rates and improve processes and services to meet the needs of the students. Boggs (1999) acknowledges that the approach some community college leaders have chosen is to transform the college culture from a paradigm based on

teaching to a paradigm based on learning. This shift in thinking creates an opportunity for everyone to be more aware of who their students are, what barriers their students face, and what programs and services need to be put in place to increase the rate of student success. Colleges opting for this new paradigm are striving to be identified as learning-centered colleges (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 1997). The Learning College Principles discussed earlier in this chapter provide college leaders with a framework they can follow to transform the community college culture from what has traditionally been considered teaching-centered to becoming learning-centered.

Transforming a culture of any institution requires the participation of all constituents. In the Learning College, everyone in the institution is responsible for student learning. The shared responsibility for student learning does not relieve the student responsibility, but it means that everyone has a stake in student success.

Community college faculty play a major role in student success. The Commission on the Future of Community Colleges (1988) underscores the importance of faculty in fulfilling the community college mission by recommending that the two-year institutions and their leaders commit themselves to (a) recruiting and retaining top quality faculty, (b) identifying, employing, and nurturing faculty representing diverse groups, (c) providing for faculty renewal, and (d) establishing policies that address part-time faculty and their concerns and needs (Bogart, 1994).

Boggs (1999) also states that some faculty are offended by the language of the learning paradigm. Some faculty have equated the shift in thinking with lowering academic standards. In this section, I will include literature related to the role of the community college faculty member.

As a result of the complexity of the broad mission of the community college, it was important in the early years of the community college that the leaders of this new movement provided focused direction; hence a hierarchical system of governance was originally adapted by many colleges (Thaxter & Graham, 1999). As community colleges matured and the challenges to create an environment where all students felt welcomed and supported, leaders of community colleges realized that a collegial environment needed to be created. In order for any organizational change process to be effectively implemented, organizational stakeholders must be a part of the process (Drapeau, 2004). Community college leaders realize there is a need to become more focused on the success of the student which translates to the success of the institution. Community college leaders also recognize the involvement and vitality of the faculty are critical to the success of the organizational change (Bogart, 1994).

Albert Smith (1994) stated, “the importance of good teaching and instruction has always been emphasized by planners of the community college” (p.205). Leaders and observers of the community college movement have always reported that teaching was the main activity of the faculty of the institution. Community college faculty stand out from many of their professorial colleagues not only because of the size and diversity of their sector of higher education, but also because teaching, far more than research or service, is the heart of their profession (Huber, 1997). The importance of community college faculty in higher education cannot be overestimated. Community College faculty constitute thirty-one percent of all U.S. higher education faculty teaching thirty-nine percent of all students in higher education and forty-six percent of all first-year students. Accordingly, the way in which the two-year college faculty teach and interact with their

students has a profound effect on the overall success of American higher education (Outcalt, 2002).

The literature suggests that community college faculty identified teaching as their primary role. However, they defined teaching to be much more than disseminating information in the discipline. In research conducted by Fugate & Amey (2000) faculty described themselves as mentor, role model, coach, advocate, student facilitator, and guide (p. 4). Secondary to teaching, service both to the community and to the college became increasingly important as faculty moved into more years of experience. Service to the college through committee work was seen not only as necessary for the health of the college but also as beneficial to the faculty members. However, the faculty overwhelmingly agree that their primary role continues to be teaching (Fugate & Amey, 2000 p.10).

Boggs (1999) states the efforts of the faculty members will be essential in the transformation of colleges wanting to become more learning-centered. In an adhocracy faculty members are influential players and are in the position to help revise mission statements, participate in planning and operational decisions and facilities planning to support student success. Even more significantly, faculty should take the lead in identifying learning outcomes for students and developing ways to ensure that graduates achieve those outcomes.

It is clear in the literature on the Learning College that key stakeholders must be involved in transforming the culture. It is also clear that the community college faculty are considered a major stakeholder in this process (Barr & Tagg, 1995; O'Banion, 1997; Tagg, 2003; McPhail, 2005). In the Learning College, McClenney (as cited in Boggs,

1999) predicts profound changes in the roles of faculty and their relationships to students and to one another. She sees traditional instructional methods as ineffective, unaffordable, and infeasible for meeting future demands. Faculty members in the learning paradigm are concerned not only about keeping up with their disciplines but also about keeping up with what is being discovered about learning and effective methods to promote it.

Colleges electing to use the Learning College Principles as a framework for this transformation process realize that faculty participation is critical to the success of the process. The third tenet Boggs (1999) says is important in the learning paradigm is supporting and promoting student learning. Student learning should be everyone's job and should guide institutional learning. The second principle of the Learning College, the Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices, indicates that students and all college employees are responsible for student success. It has been noted the faculty in community colleges view teaching as their primary activity (Fugate & Amey, 2000 p.10; Kozeracki, 2002).

Proponents of this paradigm shift insist that the Learning College culture does not lessen the status of the teacher but acknowledges the role faculty believe community colleges have in society. In responses from community college faculty participating in the 1998-1999 Higher Education Research Institute's (HERI) survey, community colleges are committed to the policy of providing education to all who might benefit. Additionally, 82 percent of the faculty participating in the HERI survey ranked employment preparation as a goal for undergraduates, one of the primary reasons

community colleges was created, to provide a more skilled workforce (Kozeracki, 2002, p.49).

The shift from being teaching-centered to learning-centered encourages faculty to become more responsible for designing learning environments that promote student success and embed assessment techniques that encourage continuous improvement. Faculty electing to teach in an open admissions institution should also know the challenges they may face and the role they have in helping the college meet the goal of providing a quality educational experience for all students.

To date the literature reviewed has not stated what role the faculty perceive they have in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture. In order for faculty to participate, they should understand what is meant by the "Learning College" and how that model differs from what they may perceive has been a successful method of conducting business all along. The faculty must have an active role in the implementation process and any decision making process that affects their role in the college.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Community college leaders are committed to meeting the needs of their diverse population and to help them succeed. The Learning College, a college where the focus is the learner, and the Learning College Principles form the framework used to create a learning-centered environment combine to one method some community college leaders are using to address student success. Learning organization theorists (Senge, 1990; Kezar, 2005) have stated that effective creation of a learning culture requires full participation by all organizational constituents in the organization. However the current literature related to the Learning College has not identified clearly the role community college faculty perceive they have in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture. The purpose of this research is to learn how community college faculty perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture at one college located in the Midwest.

Research Design

To better understand how faculty perceive their role within a Learning College I have conducted a single site qualitative case study at a community college that is in the process of transforming its culture to become more learning-centered. The college I selected is Flatland Community College (FCC) located in the Midwestern section of the United States. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) define qualitative research as “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or to interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p.5). This case study research method provided

me an opportunity to listen to 12 participants describe their understanding of their role in a Learning College and review relevant documents that helped confirm or deny my findings. I also observed the participants in their natural environment and documented my experiences and observations of the site and participants' behavior in the interview.

I believe the case study is the most appropriate method for this research study based on the following four factors: the nature of the research questions I have proposed, the amount of control I will have, the desired end product, and my ability to identify a bounded system (Merriam, 1998 p.9).

Yin (1989) uses three different arguments to support the use of a single-case study design. One rationale Yin cites for using a single case study occurs when the participant or the site can be viewed as analogous to a single experiment, and many of the same conditions that justify a single experiment also justify a single case study. Selecting one college for this case study provided me the ability to do an in-depth study that has resulted in information that should be relevant to other college leaders that are either in the process of using the Learning College Principles as a framework for transformation or colleges still investigating this process.

The information I have learned could not be attained as thoroughly through the sole use of surveys or questionnaires as described in quantitative methods of research. I believe the richness of the faculty interviews supported by other documentation provides information I was pursuing and will expand the field of knowledge on this topic.

As stated in Chapter 1, this single site qualitative case study focuses on the role community college faculty perceive they have in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture at one college located in the Midwest. According to college

documents, the Learning College concept and the Learning College Principles have been introduced to the college faculty as a means to create an environment conducive to student success.

Research Questions

The literature has not made the connection between creating a Learning College culture and the role the faculty play in this transformation. Therefore, the following research questions will guide me in my study:

1. How do faculty members learn about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission?
2. How do faculty members at this community college understand what it means to be identified as a Learning College and the use of the Learning College Principles as a framework to create a learning-centered culture?
3. How are faculty involved and encouraged in helping to create, grow and maintain a learning-centered culture on this campus?

Participants and Site

Site Selection

Flatland Community College was selected because of my interest in learning more about how the faculty at this college perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a Learning College culture at a college where faculty involvement is critical to the change process. In a response to growing concerns related to student learning and student success, the college's president and other leaders at FCC have embarked on an organizational transformation using the Learning College Principles as a framework for

change. The college president has served as the chief academic officer at another community college that used the Learning College Principles as a framework for change. The president realizes that primary focus of a learning-centered culture is student success and acknowledges that many of the concerns the current college is facing center on student success.

Flatland Community College has one of the fastest growing enrollments in the Midwest and serves a very diverse population. The college offers more than 45 programs leading to an associate's degree. FCC offers courses that transfer to four year colleges and universities, courses leading to professional certifications and credit and non-credit courses in Workforce Development. Developmental programs are also available. There are numerous flexible learning options to meet the broad range of interests and ages of the community.

This college is currently pursuing re-accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission using a continuous improvement model focused on student success called Academic Quality and Improvement Process (AQIP). Published college documents indicate that internal governance is shared by faculty, staff, and administration.

Participants

Flatland Community College employs over 300 full time faculty and nearly 1300 part-time faculty thus, I elected to incorporate maximum variation sampling in the selection of the participants in order to collect responses from as many lenses as possible. With the permission of the college's president, I invited the faculty to participate in the case study. In order to assure maximum variation sampling, full-time faculty randomly

selected received a letter via electronic mail explaining the purpose of my study and a short demographic survey. The demographic data included information about the faculty member's length of service at the college, content area, tenure status, and level of college involvement on committees and task groups. Twelve faculty responded to my request for an interview and completed the demographic survey. The faculty represent varying disciplines, employment status, and levels of college involvement. The purpose of this random sampling is to attain as broad of perspective as possible.

I also interviewed two college administrators who work directly with the faculty on planning. The purpose of these interviews was to verify statements made by the faculty and to give further explanation of committee appointments and institutional priorities. I found these two factors to be the most significant in determining the role faculty perceive they have in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture.

Data Collection

Data collection included a review of college documents, survey data, interviews, personal observations, and journal notes (Yin, 1994). I made contact with the president of the college to explain the purpose of my research study and to earn the support and confidence needed to conduct the research. The college has an internal review process that I completed before receiving permission to contact faculty. The college administrator that needed to give final approval had some reservations about my study because he admitted that some faculty may not be aware of the topic I proposed. The vice-president of Academic Affairs served as the gatekeeper for my study. The initial letter to the faculty included support from the gatekeeper for this study.

Data collection continued until the criteria for ending data collection identified by Guba (1978) was achieved: exhaustion of resources, the emergence of regularities, and an overextension of data beyond the scope of this study began to emerge. Exhaustion of resources occurred when I decided I had collected enough data to answer my research questions. The information shared or documentation reviewed began to be repetitive and new information related to the purpose of my study was not emerging. Finally, through data analysis, information not directly related to the purpose of my study began to emerge. I have mentioned the overextension of data in chapter 5 with recommendations for future study.

Documents

I read published hard copy and electronic college documents to learn more about Flatland Community College. Other internal college documents such as meeting minutes, agendas of meetings, re-accreditation documents, the faculty handbook and other forms of administrative documents were analyzed after interviews were conducted to provide details of events related to faculty participation in college planning. The documents also provided information revealing the levels of involvement faculty have in the implementation of programs and services designed to support students. This documentation provided evidence to confirm faculty perceptions or disconfirm some comments that are not consistent with other findings.

Interviews

The primary method I used to collect data for this research was focused face-to-face interviews that lasted approximately 1 hour. Yin (1994) describes the focused interview as one scheduled for a limited amount of time, usually lasting an hour with the

understanding that the participants may be asked to participate in a follow up interview if necessary. Before beginning the interview, I shared the purpose of my research with the participant and why I thought their information is important to my study. Each participant signed the consent form giving me permission to tape the interview and to schedule a follow up meeting to ask clarifying questions if necessary.

The current literature on the Learning College is not written from the faculty perspective and the literature is not clear in the literature on what role the faculty perceive they have in this cultural transformation. Therefore, giving the faculty an opportunity to share their perceptions will help advance the research on the Learning College.

Observations

Another form of data I collected was through the observations I made each time I visited Flatland Community College. I documented my findings as an observer with permission to study the site and the participants. Observations of the participants' classrooms and offices, the interactions faculty have with students, the interactions faculty who have agreed to be participants in the study have with other faculty, and the interactions faculty have with staff provided some evidence of the type of culture that exists at the college.

Before each interview, I described the physical setting in my journal. The description includes such elements as the condition of buildings and work spaces, the location of the participants' offices, and the furnishings in the office (Yin, 1994). Once the interview was completed, I documented any observations I made of the participant's behavior. I documented whether the participant was comfortable in sharing information about the topic or whether the faculty member was hesitant about revealing information. I

also documented any other evidence that would provide additional information about the college's culture.

Journals

As mentioned earlier, I kept a researcher's journal detailing all of my observations and experiences during my visits to the campus and observations I made during the interviews. These field notes have helped me recall any particular nuances which I may have forgotten over a period of time that may be important to the research. I also included the field notes throughout the completed transcripts of each interview.

Phases of Data Collection

Data collection was done in four phases and was collected over several months. The four phases were the following: a review of college documents, an analysis of a demographic survey, in-person interviews and conclusions of data, and data analysis. I collected data during the fall of 2006 and concluded during the summer of 2007.

Phase I Document acquisition and review

Flatland Community College documents that contributed to this study were provided by college administrators, faculty participants, and documents found on the college's website. All copies of documents I received are mine to keep and destroy once the study is completed. An analysis of the documents, such as meeting minutes, strategic planning documents, and faculty correspondence provided insight into the level of faculty involvement in the college.

Phase II Demographic survey

In order to populate a participant pool who would likely respond to the research questions from diverse perspectives I sent a short demographic survey to full time faculty

via the college's published e-mail list. The survey questions pertained to length of tenure, employment status, content area, and level of college service. An explanation of why the person was being asked to complete the survey and the purpose of my study was included in my initial request. Faculty were asked to indicate if they would be interested in participating in the study. Once the surveys were returned, I categorized the results and faculty who responded were contacted to schedule an interview time and place.

Phase III Conducting interviews

Faculty who agreed to participate in my study were provided a detailed account of the purpose of the study, and an explanation of how the interview would be conducted. I assured the participants that all information would be kept confidential. Initial interviews were conducted within a six week time period at a location selected by the participant on the campus of Flatland Community College. Each interview was taped and lasted approximately one hour. Each interview was transcribed and then the transcript was reviewed by the participant.

Interviews were also conducted with two administrators to confirm statements made by the faculty participants and published documentation.

Phase IV Data Collection Conclusion and Analysis

Data collection ended when I felt all sources relevant to my study were reviewed and the characteristics of the faculty participants represented a broad spectrum of the faculty. All data collected was reviewed, in addition, taped interviews were reviewed to assure that all information was clear and the tapes were transcribed.

Data analysis began once all information was collected and read to get a general idea of what the participants shared. A coding process was established and the data was

categorized by themes that emerged. A description of the site, the setting of the interview, and my observations were analyzed.

Data Analysis

In order to describe how the faculty at Flatland Community College perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a learning-centered culture I analyzed data collected from the following: (a) college documents; (b) the demographic survey sent to all faculty in order to establish a diverse pool of participants; (c) face-to-face interviews of the faculty participants; (d) interviews of other staff to verify assertions that may have been made by the faculty participants; and (e) field notes related to observations I have made of the site and of the participants.

The data collected was organized by major themes that emerged using the data analysis described by Strauss and Corbin (1990). For example, I found that faculty who have served the college for a period longer than ten years are more aware of what it means when a college is identified as a Learning College. Faculty serving for shorter periods of time, usually less than five years, were not as fully aware of the Learning College or the Learning College Principles.

College documents were reviewed to confirm or disconfirm statements that were made during interviews. When reviewing college documents, I looked for statements that support Flatland Community College's commitment to student success. Documents such as mission statements, planning documents, institutional research reports, and meeting minutes provided me written evidence of the college's goals and the process the college

is using to meet those goals. In some college documents the Learning College was referred.

To create a participant pool with diverse views I sent a short demographic survey to over 150 full time faculty. Twelve faculty from different departments and employment status replied and agreed to participate in the study.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face with one participant at a time and lasted approximately one hour. Each session was recorded with the permission of the participant and I kept field notes, documenting observations that were relevant to my study. The recorded data was transcribed and a copy of the transcript was sent to the participant to clarify responses. I reviewed all tapes and read all transcripts to assure accuracy of the transcriptions.

During the interview the questions were focused on information relevant to the purpose of the study. The data collected in the interview provided the participants an opportunity to share their perceptions of the role they have in FCC's quest to become more learning-centered.

Field notes and observations were put into categories to support any generalizations that emerged from interview data. Field notes were used to help me to recall any particular observations of interest that may have had some bearing on the participant's response to questions.

Interviews of some college leaders were also conducted to provide support to information found in college documents and participant interviews. These interviews were conducted on site in the office of the administrator. The same interview protocol established for faculty participants was used in these circumstances.

Finally, based on all of the data analysis, I have written a description of the college and the responses of the participants.

Trustworthiness

The ability to establish trustworthiness is necessary in case study design. Better case studies rely on a wide variety of sources (Yin, 1994; Stake, 1995) that can be used to compare findings and confirm statements made in interviews. In order to establish trustworthiness I used two processes to assure accuracy of the data collected, triangulation and member checking.

Triangulation

Triangulation occurred when I compared information found in documents relevant to my study, my interviews, and my observations. When assertions about a process used or decisions made were unique in comparison to other interview responses, I verified that assertion by asking the participant follow-up questions, by interviewing other faculty and administrators about that particular assertion and by checking printed documents to either validate or dismiss the assertion. Yin (1994) describes this type of triangulation as data triangulation.

Member Checking

Another tool I used was member checking. Member checks involve the researcher checking formally with the participants on their views of the data collected (Stake, 1995). After completing the first round of interviews, I asked the participants to review the transcripts for possible omission or misrepresentations of their stories. I asked the participants to review my analysis to assure accuracy. All participants received an

electronic copy of the interview transcript and they were asked to submit any clarifications within one week of receipt of the document. Of the twelve participants only two submitted clarifications.

I conducted the interviews on the campus and observed the environment. I acknowledge that some of my judgments or analysis is subjective.

Chapter 4

FLATLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE – A CASE STUDY

Flatland Community College is a comprehensive community college offering credit and non-credit courses. The college offers associate degrees and certificates in over 90 programs. According to the most recent data available FCC enrolled more than 60,000 students in 2006-2007. I selected FCC to conduct my case study because of its noted history in this state as a leader in innovative programs and the community's commitment to support the college. FCC also has documented efforts to become a Learning College as a means to address issues related to student learning and student success. The purpose of my study is to learn how faculty perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a learning-centered college. The college employs the largest number of full time faculty in the Midwest and the full time faculty at FCC are considered to have a considerable amount of influence on the decision making process at the college.

In this chapter I will describe Flatland Community College by providing a brief history of the college, it's organizational and governance structures, and some of the challenges the college is facing in regards to meeting the needs of its students. I will describe the Academic Quality and Improvement Program (AQIP) FCC is using as their re-accreditation process and how this process is being used as one of the mechanisms to transform the college culture. And, finally I will introduce you to the

faculty participants in my study and share how they perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture.

History

Flatland Community College has one of the fastest growing student enrollments in the Midwest and serves a very diverse population. The college's origins can be traced to two major actions. The state legislature passed the Public Community College Act of 1965 giving residents throughout the state the authority to establish community colleges within their districts. Community college districts in this state are located within a county or can be comprised of several counties. In this case FCC's district is comprised of portions of two counties and one entire county. The residents of the newly formed community college district, located in a fast growing and prosperous area of the state, passed a referendum that same year enabling their community college to be created. Flatland Community College is now celebrating its 40th anniversary. In 1967 Flatland Community College began offering classes in 40 sites scattered throughout its district with fewer than 3,000 students and approximately 90 faculty and staff.

In 1973 Flatland Community College opened its first permanent building and the enrollment increased to over 10,000 students. This building was completed four years later, and the enrollment had doubled. As new buildings were added to the campus, the enrollment steadily increased. Today, the college is one of the largest single campus community colleges in the nation. The district taxpayers support the college's mission and future directions as indicated by their recently approved multi-million dollar bond referendum to support campus expansion.

Community colleges in this state are funded through three sources of revenue: state allocations, local taxes, and student tuition and fees. The percentages of funding from these three sources continue to fluctuate due to decreased state funding and the need to increase student tuition and raise taxpayer levies.

Organizational Structure

FCC has a seven member Board of Trustees, six of whom are elected by the district residents and one student trustee who is elected by the student body. The college is led by a president and four vice-presidents representing academic affairs, student development, and finance and planning, and administrative services.

Flatland Community College is a comprehensive college offering more than 90 academic programs leading to an associate's degree. General education classes that transfer to four-year colleges and universities, courses in developmental education, classes leading to professional certifications, and credit and non-credit classes in Workforce Development are offered. Flatland Community College holds all of the national, regional, and state accreditations afforded to community colleges in the United States. The college is also accredited by all career programs requiring professional certifications (College Catalog, 2007).

According to college publications Flatland Community College's mission statement adopted by the Board of Trustees in 1995, reads: *"to be at the forefront of higher education, serving the needs of the community. The College will be the first place residents turn to for the highest quality education and cultural opportunities. The College will serve as a model of distinction for community college education"* (College Catalog, 2007). The college serves over one million taxpaying residents and

30, 000 businesses. In order to determine what the needs of the community are, the college has established alliances with K-12 schools, baccalaureate transfer institutions, business and industry, non-profit and community based organizations and municipalities (AQIP, Systems Portfolio, Institutional Overview, 2007).

The college leadership realizes that serving a diverse population also requires the college to offer numerous flexible learning options to meet the broad range of interests and ages of the district residents. Classes are offered in a traditional 17 week face-to-face instructional setting, shorter term sessions, such as 5 weeks and 8 weeks, and through non-traditional delivery methods such as television courses and Internet courses. Courses are offered on the main campus of the college and at several extension sites throughout the district.

Governance

As a part of Flatland Community College's efforts to create a learning-centered culture faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in college-wide committees. A college-wide committee is defined in the Administrator's Guidebook (2007) as a group of faculty and staff appointed to a team to attend to any matter of business referred to them. The college-wide committee also will include faculty whose scope extends beyond two subdivisions. In other words, committees can be created within departments or divisions solely for the purposes of that unit but are not considered college-wide.

Currently, there are several college-wide committees in existence. The Leadership Council, whose membership consists of leaders from all employee groups, sets the direction for college activities. The other two college-wide committees

significant to this study are the Quality Improvement Council and the Institutional Effectiveness Council. These councils recently were created to enhance communication to the larger college community and to increase participation among all constituencies. There are numerous departmental level committees and task groups charged with implementing specific objectives.

Demographic Profile

Community colleges were created to serve the needs of the local community. Demographics of each college district are a factor in determining the types of programs and services offered by the college. The leadership at Flatland Community College uses demographic data to estimate numbers of students likely to register for courses, the level of preparedness of the students, and workforce needs. The following demographic information includes data about the district residents, students, and faculty and staff.

District Residents

The most recent census data published indicate that counties served by Flatland Community College have experienced a steady population increase since 2000. Flatland Community College serves more than a million taxpayers living in portions of two counties and all of the taxpayers in a third county. The most significant increases in population by race or ethnic origin include persons of Hispanic, African, and Asian descent. Some of the largest increases in the population are people of Hispanic origin. Foreign born residents represent nearly 16 % of the population and over 20 % of the population speaks a language other than English. Ninety percent of

the population has a high school degree and over 40% have attained a bachelor's degree. (<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/17/17043.html>)

The changes in the population have had a significant impact on the role Flatland Community College plays for its residents.

Students

The enrollment data at Flatland Community College compare well to national community college data in regard to age, gender, and national origins, but because of the size and populous area the college serves, it is one of the largest community colleges in the nation. According to the most recent college publications available, Flatland Community College enrolls more than 72,000 students in credit and non-credit classes. In Fall 2006 the enrollment was more than 14,000 FTE. Of that 14,000, 34% were full time and 66% attended part-time. The median age is 24 years and the average age is 30 years.

As the demographics of the counties served have changed the student population has become more racially and culturally diverse. Flatland Community College began tracking students' ethnic backgrounds in the early 1970s and at that time only a little more than 4% of the students of known ethnicity who registered in credit classes were categorized as minority. In 2006, 32% percent of the students registered in credit classes were categorized as minority. The significance of this statistic is the percentage of students identified as minority is greater than the percentage of residents identified in the 2000 census. The minority enrollments are Hispanic, 13%; Asian/Pacific Islander, 11%; Black, 6%; and other, 2% (AQIP, Systems Portfolio Institutional Overview, 2007).

In order to make data informed decisions and to meet the needs of a growing and diverse student population, Flatland Community College participates in the National Community College Benchmark Project and in the Community College Survey of Student Engagement. Data collected and analyzed through these forums provided evidence that Flatland Community College is facing some of the same concerns other community colleges are facing in regard to student preparedness and student success rates.

The data used to determine institutional priorities related to student success are as follows. The first was the increasing numbers of students needing developmental education and the low success rates of students enrolled in those courses. The second was student advising was not consistent and not well coordinated. And the third concern was the lack of communication and collaboration with the high schools that would enable the college to learn more about the needs of students likely to enroll at the college. The college is currently participating in a new re-accreditation process, the Academic Quality and Improvement Program. The program requires colleges to conduct a self study with the goal of continuous improvement. The self study is a collaborative and inclusive approach of data collection and decision making. As a result of the self study and the college's priorities, AQIP action teams were established to address the areas listed above that need to be improved.

Data collected through the use of classroom and multi-section assessment tools, surveys of student goal attainment, student persistence rates, degree completion rates and success of students registered in developmental education courses were used to determine strategies that needed to be implemented. Student performance also is

collected and analyzed as a part of the faculty led Program Review process. Program Review will be discussed later in the chapter.

As a result of the teams' efforts and changes made within the college some significant improvement in student success rates and retention have been reported. In 2006 nearly 3,500 students received a degree or certificate, an increase of 181 students over the number graduating in 2003. There has been an increase of first time, full time degree seeking freshmen completing a degree within 3 years from 66.4% to 76.0%. The institutional GPA for all students in the 2005-2006 academic year was 2.77.

Persistence rates of students within term has held steady at 92% for the last three academic years. The term to term persistence rates have increased over the last three academic years from 62.8% to 65.0%.

The area of greatest concern for the leaders at Flatland Community College is the growing number of students needing developmental education courses and the success rate of those students. Success rates within term and retention rates from semester to semester were studied to learn where improvements needed to occur.

(AQIP Systems Portfolio, Category 1P13, Measures of Student Performance).

Faculty and Staff

To meet the needs of this very large and diverse student population, Flatland Community College employs 340 full time faculty, nearly 930 part-time faculty, nearly 930 full and part-time support staff, and 51 administrators. The student to faculty ratio is 17.2/1.

Of the full time faculty, not including librarians and counselors, 29% hold a doctorate, 65% hold a master's degree, and 6% hold a bachelor's degree or less. Full

time faculty positions are tenure track positions. Of the 340 faculty, 70% have been employed at the college more than 5 years (Office of Institutional Research, 2007).

All employee groups with the exception of administrators are represented by collective bargaining unions. The Board of Trustees recognizes the following associations: Classified Personnel Association represents all full, part-time, and temporary classified employees; the Faculty Association represents all full time faculty and the Adjunct Faculty Association represents all part-time faculty who provide at least 18 credit hours of instruction each academic year. The Fraternal Order of Police represents all full and part-time employees within the college's police department. The International Union of Operating Engineers represents all full and part-time operating engineers and maintenance mechanics (AQIP Systems Portfolio Overview).

The employee group that is the focus of this study is the full time faculty. Community colleges historically are identified as colleges where the focus is on teaching. If teaching is the primary focus, faculty are considered one of the key stakeholders in the success of any college initiative. Community college leaders recognize the involvement and vitality of the faculty is critical to the success of organizational change (Bogart, 1994).

Albert Smith (1994) stated, "the importance of good teaching and instruction has always been emphasized by planners of the community college" (p.205). Leaders and observers of the community college movement have reported that teaching was the main activity of the faculty. The importance of community college faculty in higher education cannot be overestimated. The way in which the two-year college faculty

teach and interact with their students has a profound effect on the overall success of American higher education (Outcalt, 2002).

The leadership at FCC is respectful of the role the faculty have at the college. The administrative leadership works collaboratively with the faculty leadership to maintain a governance model that provides the faculty an opportunity for consistent and valued involvement in college affairs.

To demonstrate their support for the college's mission, all of the participants in this study are members of a committee on the departmental or college-wide level. Many of the participants have served on the Faculty Senate. Some have assumed leadership roles in the college's reaccreditation process. Almost all of the participants are aware of and have participated in the Program Review process. Several participants mentioned the Program Review process as an example of how they are contributing to the college's effort to become more learning-centered.

The faculty at FCC understand and support the mission of the community college. These participants all acknowledged that they were aware of the mission of the college. Although some said they had not memorized Flatland Community College's mission statement and could not remember reading it in any of the college's publications, they agreed with the college's purpose. The faculty understood the challenges the college is facing in regard to providing an opportunity for all of the districts residents and they are ready and willing to support the college's priorities. The faculty at Flatland Community College can be viewed similarly to the way faculty are characterized by Huber (1998) where they are satisfied overall with their students and are committed to the educational mission of the community college (p.20).

College documentation indicates the leadership and the residents have a commitment to fulfill the mission of the college. Statements describing how decisions are made and the college is governed indicate that all constituent groups are involved in planning. In order to address issues related to student learning and student success, the college's leadership has determined that a culture focused on the learner needed to be created. The purpose of my research is to learn how faculty perceive their role in addressing the college's mission to meet the needs of all students by creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture.

College Challenges

As noted earlier, a portion of FCC's mission statement reads, "*the college will be the first place residents turn to for the highest quality education and cultural opportunities.*" In order to fulfill this goal a high level of commitment from the college leadership and all of its constituents is required. According to the college's re-accreditation documents, the primary concerns FCC is facing are the following: maintaining an environment that is welcoming to all students; developing curriculum and assessing student learning; increasing student support services; expanding college facilities; and hiring and developing exemplary faculty and staff.

To address these concerns FCC has expanded its course offerings; increased student services such as tutoring, child care, and advising; and increased classroom and student support spaces on the main campus. The curriculum review process has been redesigned, and the college has made a greater commitment to hiring a more diverse faculty and staff. Professional development is available for all levels of college employees (AQIP Systems Portfolio Overview).

To fulfill the college's mission these challenges must be addressed, and full participation from key stakeholders is essential. FCC has elected to participate in a re-accreditation process based on self-examination of current systems and a review of institutional effectiveness procedures. This re-accreditation model was selected because the model requires the college to seek a broad range of input to successfully meet the requirements of the regional accrediting agency. The college leadership recognized that in order to address the concerns related to student learning and student success full participation from all college constituents was critical. This process also would provide the college leadership with a vehicle to transform the college's culture to focus on the learner.

In 2000 the Flatland Community College Board of Trustees approved a recommendation from the college president to seek re-accreditation through a process based on continuous improvement offered by the regional accrediting agency. The re-accreditation process is referred to as AQIP. The acronym stands for Academic Quality Improvement Program. Faculty and staff at Flatland refer to the process as "QIP" and see it as the mechanism for change with an emphasis on student learning and student success.

Academic Quality and Improvement Process

The college's leaders are aware that with the growing demands of the community and the more complex needs of the students, the college needed to reinvent itself to be prepared to continue to offer the highest quality educational and cultural opportunities in a community college setting. According to college documents Flatland Community College is committed to institutional self assessment, targeted

planning, and implementation of strategies leading to measurable results. The AQIP process is designed to help colleges conduct a critical self-examination and provide a vehicle to transform the culture to become learning-centered. AQIP emphasizes helping students learn, which is consistent with Flatland's belief in the power of teaching and learning (AQIP, Institutional Overview, 2007). The AQIP process requires all stakeholders to be involved in the establishment of institutional priorities, strategic planning, and implementation of institutional effectiveness strategies.

In order to meet the requirements of the AQIP process, Flatland Community College identified several institutional priorities to achieve the college's vision of focusing all of its resources on learning. The leadership at FCC has created an organizational committee structure that provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to have input on decisions. The selection of these priorities was based on data collected through the Office of Research and Planning and from discussions held during strategic planning retreats. Faculty, staff, students, and community members from all constituent groups were invited to participate in the retreats.

As a result of retreat discussions, college-wide teams were formed to address and recommend action steps related to the priorities. The three overarching priorities are: Teaching and Learning, Quality and Innovation, and Resources.

The first priority and action steps, *Teaching and Learning* will be strengthened by expanding learning communities, establishing learning outcomes measures, exploring collaboratively the criteria on "Learning College." The second priority and action steps, *Quality and Innovation* will be emphasized and documented through improving student success by engaging students in the learning process; engaging

college personnel more fully to improve processes and outcomes; prioritizing and implementing the recommendations from the regional accrediting agency; implementing new program review procedures; and expanding innovation in programs and services. The third priority and action steps, *Resources* will be addressed by implementing the Master Facilities Plan, improving financial and performance efficiencies, expanding partnerships in resource development, and strengthening diversity in personnel, program and business activities.

There are many examples of activities currently in process at the college in support of these institutional priorities. Some of the challenges FCC is facing will be addressed through the establishment of the institutional priorities and identified action steps will be addressed by college-wide AQIP action teams.

Teaching and Learning

The mission of the community college is to provide citizens educational opportunities beyond high school that are accessible and affordable. Community colleges within the United States traditionally have an open door policy. With these criteria in mind, community colleges are serving populations of students with a diverse array of needs and abilities. As a comprehensive community college, FCC also is committed to offering educational opportunities to citizens who have not attained a high school diploma, citizens whose primary language is not English, students planning to transfer to a four year college or university to earn a bachelor's degree, and college graduates who are interested in re-training or preparing for a career.

In order to provide a curriculum expansive enough to support all these needs, the FCC faculty have the responsibility to design and teach courses related to 90 academic

programs leading to an associate's degree or certificate. The action steps selected to address some of the challenges related to teaching and learning are expanding learning communities, establishing learning outcomes measures and exploring collaboratively the criteria on "Learning College."

Curriculum Challenges, Changes, and Recommendations

Flatland Community College has had steady enrollments over the last decade. While there was a brief enrollment spike prior to, and now an enrollment decline after the conversion from quarters to semesters, the college has maintained consistent enrollments of approximately 17,000 FTE. Likewise, as the district grows more diverse, particularly among immigrant and Hispanic populations, English as a Second Language (ESL) course work represents a larger percentage of the total enrollments (Office of Institutional Research Reports).

In research reports prepared by the Office of Institutional Research at Flatland, the demographic trends mentioned above will continue. The college is likely to experience some of the same issues related to enrollment that are predicted to happen across the nation. The baby boom generation that sustained the growth of the community college movement has or shortly will move into retirement. This will contribute significantly to the aging of the district population. To address these population shifts the college leadership is analyzing its current offerings. Programming is available for post-retirement adults but that programming may not continue to be viable for the next generation. The children of the baby boom generation – the baby boom echo – are moving into higher education. This will continue to increase the number of traditional age students enrolling in classes at

community colleges and it is predicted that students will be under-prepared in core literacy and math skills (Office of Institutional Research Reports, 2006).

Likewise, Flatland Community College district will continue to experience a growth in diversity. Nearly 90,000 of the district residents have limited or no English proficiency and many are low income. A disproportionate number of these residents' children do not finish secondary schooling and it is predicted they will subsequently find their way to Flatland Community College seeking English proficiency and one or another form of Adult Basic Education (Office of Institutional Research, 2006).

College planning documents indicate job opportunities within the service sectors such as retailing will continue to increase, but these jobs tend to pay less than jobs in manufacturing and the trades. This will contribute to a trend already underway which is a decline in the average income for many of the district residents. High wage jobs within the service sector will require some investment in post-secondary career education. With one or two exceptions to be discussed below the majority of Flatland Community College Career and Technical Education (CTE) is aimed at those high wage jobs within the service sector. Recently approved programming has been added to prepare students for careers within the service sector (e.g. cosmetology and paralegal). Health Care programming is considered the most sought after field of study because it is considered a growth industry and offers high paying jobs. The faculty and administration continue to expand offerings within health care with an emphasis on the creation of flexible scheduling that will increase the numbers of nursing students (Office of Institutional Reports, 2006).

New industry in the district requires highly skilled workers. To prepare the students for these jobs, FCC will need to increase the investment in core Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) skills. The manufacturing curriculum increasingly will resemble a pre-engineering transfer program, particularly within emerging technology fields like nano-fabrication (Strategic Context Academic & Student Affairs Strategic Objectives, Fall 2006).

A critical factor that FCC has incorporated with the development and redesign of curriculum is the assessment of student learning. As the needs of students change and the requirements for highly skilled jobs increase, it has become more evident to the college leadership that documenting student learning is a priority. One process the college has expanded and improved is a state mandated process called Program Review.

The Program Review process is providing an opportunity for faculty to take the leadership role in curriculum review of all courses and programs. Within the process, faculty are beginning to incorporate assessment techniques and review learning outcomes data to make decisions regarding curriculum revisions. More about this process will be discussed later in the chapter.

One of the first major initiatives was changing from the quarter system to a more traditional seventeen-week semester. This change required the full participation of the faculty to re-write curriculum and develop learning outcomes based on the new semester schedule. The change also required the full support of all administrative offices to change processes to be in alignment with the semester. Changing to a seventeen-week semester has enabled the college to offer more flexible learning

options for students. Within each seventeen week semester, students can enroll in shorter term classes such as 8 week and 5 week sessions in both traditional and non-traditional formats.

Another major initiative and one of the action steps identified by the AQIP planning team was the establishment of learning communities. The research on the learning communities model indicates greater student retention within the courses that are linked or delivered in a contextual format (Smith, MacGregor, Matthews, & Gabelnick, 1990). The Learning Communities project has provided a greater opportunity for faculty to form collaborative partnerships across departments and provides students with an opportunity for contextual learning. The faculty participants in my study referred to the Learning Communities project as one of the most enjoyable parts of their college teaching experience.

The establishment of learning outcomes measures, one of the action steps for the *teaching and learning* priority provides a vehicle for the faculty to take a critical look at the curriculum and their methods of instruction. Learning outcomes are established at the course and program level and faculty develop assessment strategies to measure student achievement within each course. This process is faculty driven with administrative support to ensure success.

The last objective in support of the teaching and learning priority, exploring in collaborative fashion the criteria on the "Learning College" is the primary focus of my research. The philosophy of the AQIP process parallels the Learning College concept. The primary focus of the AQIP process is student learning and student success. The primary focus of the Learning College is student learning and student success. The

action by the college to adopt the AQIP process as a means of re-accreditation and the inclusion of an objective to study the Learning College criteria are indications that both of these models are being used to change the college's culture to become more learning-centered.

Quality and Innovation

The second institutional priority is Quality and Innovation, which includes objectives that parallel the Learning College Principles. The principles serve as a framework colleges can use to create the paradigm shift from teaching to learning (O'Banion, 1997). The six key principles that are offered as a framework to create a learning culture are as follows: (a) the Learning College creates substantive change in individual learners; (b) the Learning College engages learners in the learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices; (c) the Learning College creates and offers as many options for learning as possible; (d) the Learning College assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities; (e) the Learning College defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners; (f) the Learning College and its learning facilitators succeed only when improved and expanded learning can be documented for its learners (O'Banion, 1995 p.15).

The objectives selected as a focus for continuous improvement in support of the institutional priorities and the Learning College Principles are parallel. Improving student success by engaging students more fully in the learning process parallels the second Learning College Principle; the Learning College engages learners in the

learning process as full partners, assuming primary responsibility for their own choices.

Resources

The last institutional priority identified in the re-accreditation documentation is Resources. The college leadership recognizing the need to address issues that support student learning is conducting an assessment of the human, financial, and physical resources. The purpose of this assessment is to determine if each of these areas has systems in place to support the college's mission. The development of plans and policies related to resource development use the same criteria as the other AQIP Action projects with the focus on student learning and student success.

For example, faculty and staff hiring is critical to the fulfillment of the college's mission. Therefore, the policies being examined and redesigned are in line with the college's effort to hire and retain an exemplary workforce (Systems Portfolio, Valuing People).

In the next section of this chapter I will introduce the twelve faculty who agreed to be a part of my research study. The faculty represent a wide range of perspectives related to their role in the college.

Faculty Participants

FCC faculty represent the largest employee group at the college. Currently there are 340 full-time faculty and nearly 930 part-time faculty. I limited my study to full time faculty participants. The faculty who volunteered to be participants in my research represent 12 academic departments and have experiences from being non-tenured to those with more than 20 years at the college. Each faculty member

voluntarily responded to my e-mail invitation. I asked each participant to complete a short demographic survey to provide me with general characteristics about content area, length of time at the college, level of involvement at the college, and tenure status. During the interview I asked participants to share their knowledge of the Learning College and how they learned about the concept. Participants brought a unique perspective in their responses to my interview questions. The following paragraphs are short summaries of their responses to my demographic survey and a statement about their knowledge of the Learning College.

Els is tenured and teaches in the Education-Teacher Preparation program. She has been at the college for 10 years but previously served in the K-12 system at a neighboring school district for more than 20 years. Els currently is serving on a college-wide committee related student assessment. She also serves on two committees related to student activities, and serves as the lead person in her department for the Program Review process. I would categorize Els as very sincere in her support of the college's mission because of the concern she expressed for her students. Els uses various approaches to help them succeed. Her knowledge of the college's Institutional Priorities and direction as they are connected to students' success was evident during our conversation. Els shared documents with me that provided evidence that the Learning College is referred to in terms of the college becoming more learning-centered. She says she also has heard the college president and others refer to the Learning College during in-service day workshops.

Abe is a non-tenured anthropology instructor and has been at the college less than 5 years. His previous teaching experience is from a private Liberal Arts college.

Currently he is serving on a divisional committee. Abe indicates he supports the mission of the college and wants his students to be successful. He shared some concern about his perception of the relationship between faculty and administration and said he would rather not be involved in college politics. He does not support the behavior of some faculty. He said some faculty behaved rudely in meetings and openly criticized some administrators. He does not condone that behavior. Abe's main priority is the students. He conducted research on the Learning College in preparation for my interview but acknowledged he had not heard anyone on campus talk about it.

Bill is a tenured math instructor and has been at the college for nearly 10 years. His service to the college is through his participation on a statewide curriculum review panel. He has served on departmental committees but has decided not to be involved in college-wide committees. Bill also sees the committee appointment structure as too political and does not agree with all of the decisions made by the Faculty Senate. He is concerned about his students and offers to tutor one-on-one if necessary. He did his own research on the Learning College in preparation for my interview but took exception to the inference that the focus at Flatland was not learning. He viewed the concept as a fad but agreed with the objectives to focus all of the college's resources on learning.

Kiki is very involved in the Faculty Senate and serves on a number of college committees. She is tenured and has been at the college 6 years. One of her greatest interests is professional development, and she serves on a committee charged with planning in-service days. She also is involved in the Learning Communities Committee. She expressed some frustration with the level of input faculty have in

strategic planning but considers her participation as significant. Kiki is knowledgeable about the Learning College through personal research and talking to others who are proponents of the concept. She says she never heard the terminology used in conversations at the college but is hopeful that the discussions will move in that direction.

Gene is a tenured career programs instructor and currently serves on Faculty Senate committee called the Academic Regulations Committee. The faculty who serve on this committee conduct a grade appeal process. He proudly shared his concern for the students and is very supportive of the college's mission. Gene has been at the college more than 20 years. He did research on the Learning College in preparation for the interview. He said he was not aware of the terminology beforehand.

Roy teaches computer science courses and is tenured. He has been at the college more than 10 years and is supportive of the college's mission. Roy is an advisor to a student club and serves on the Classroom Technology Advisory Committee. His knowledge of the Learning College is based on his personal research. He could not remember hearing anything about the Learning College during in-service days or at any other time.

Jay teaches English and has been at the college more than 20 years. He is knowledgeable about the college's mission and dedicated to helping students succeed. He is very involved in college planning and decision making. Jay served on the Faculty Senate at one point and now chairs one of the AQIP teams. Jay was selected by the college president to attend a conference where the focus was the Learning

College. He currently serves as a member of the Learning Communities initiative and has a leadership role in the Program Review process in his department.

Jay is concerned about what he perceives as a lack of commitment to the Learning College philosophy on the part of the college's administrative leadership. According to Jay he and others who attended the Learning College Summit have had only one conversation with the college president. He finds this very frustrating for the college to have spent money sending people to a conference and not incorporating the information learned in planning discussions. However he is hopeful that eventually he will hear more about the Learning College once some issues such as finances, campus expansion, and lower enrollments are addressed. The reduction in state funding, the campus expansion project, and lower enrollments are the reasons shared most often by faculty as reasons the administration may not be as focused on teaching and learning. Jay's views are shared by other faculty participants, but he was more vocal sharing his views.

Kati is tenured and has been at the college for over 20 years. She is very involved at all levels of college governance. She has served on the Faculty Senate and is now one of the faculty serving on the college-wide Institutional Effectiveness Council, the Quality Improvement Council, and the Program Review Advisory Committee. She serves as an advisor to a student club and is a member of several other departmental task groups. Kati has participated in planning retreats and is aware of the strategies being used at the college to become more learning-centered. She was a member of a college-wide team who attended a conference on the Learning College

and can name several examples of how the Learning College Principles are being implemented at the college.

Lorti is non-tenured and teaches in the Languages department. She has been employed at the college for many years but was recently hired as full-time faculty member. Before being appointed as full-time faculty she served on a number of college-wide committees as a representative from the classified staff. She is very knowledgeable and supportive of the college's mission. She is knowledgeable of the Learning College and mentioned some of the implementation strategies related to the college's Institutional Priorities as evidence of the college's pursuit of becoming more learning-centered. Currently she is involved in two committees focused on global education initiatives.

LaTia is non-tenured and has been at the college for less than five years. Being a faculty member at FCC is not her first teaching position, but her first at a community college. LaTia serves on the Curriculum Committee as a representative from Liberal Arts and also serves on a departmental level committee. LaTia is aware of the college's mission and could identify processes such as AQIP and Program Review. She also is very involved in planning college-wide in-service days. She showed me examples of projects related to in-service that she has been involved in to help enhance the programs offered to faculty. After she attains tenure, she plans to get more involved in college-wide committees. She could not readily recall hearing about the Learning College, but did some research before I met with her.

Pele teaches accounting and has been at the college for more than 10 years. She is tenured and is a member of several college committees. Pele is a member of

two Faculty Senate committees and also serves on one of the AQIP Systems Portfolio teams. Pele is very knowledgeable about the college's mission and Institutional Priorities and could make the connection to the Learning College.

Trish has been at the college for more than 20 years and has been involved in planning and decision making for a number of years. Trish serves as a faculty senator and is a member of the Institutional Effectiveness Council and Program Review Advisory Council. Trish is supportive of the college's efforts to become more learning-centered and understood the connection with the AQIP process. She felt that the role faculty have in decision making is critical to the success of college goals and encourages her colleagues to get involved. Trish is aware of the Learning College because of her participation in planning retreats and attendance at conferences related to the topic.

Early indications from the demographic survey data are that faculty are involved in the college regardless of tenure status. Faculty vary in their knowledge of the Learning College and this level of knowledge may be related to their level of involvement in the college's governance process. In the next section I will share the perceptions faculty have of their role at the college in helping to create, grow, and maintain a learning-centered college.

Data Analysis

I have chosen to conduct a qualitative single-site case study to allow faculty at this institution an opportunity to share their perceptions of the Learning College and how they are supporting the college's efforts to become more learning-centered. This

information should contribute to literature on the Learning College. In addition, this research will assist colleges seeking to become more learning-centered. The following section identifies the themes that emerged from my data analysis of the faculty interviews.

Themes

Using the data analysis methods described by Strauss and Corbin (1990) I did a line by line analysis of each participant transcript and assigned codes to the data. The themes that emerged from my data analysis are *informed* and *aware*, *involved*, *concerned*, and *hopeful*. I will define each theme and use pertinent data from the participants' transcripts as supporting data to explain how I derived that particular theme. I have included data from college documents, field notes, and observations related to the faculty statements.

Informed and Aware

I found all of the participants to be *informed* and *aware* of the College's mission, the concept of the Learning College, and the term learning-centered. Some of the participants were knowledgeable of the Learning College Principles and the College's Institutional Priorities. When I interviewed my participants I used the term strategic priorities. I later learned that the term Institutional Priorities is used at FCC. I define the term *informed* as one who is knowledgeable of the College's mission, the Learning College concept, Learning College Principles, and the term learning-centered because of their involvement at the college. They are members of the faculty senate, college-wide committees, AQIP Project teams, and participate in Program Review.

They may have attended conferences related to the Learning College concepts or conducted research and can relate the concepts to activities at the college.

The degrees of understanding the participants have of the Learning College terminology and concepts parallel Bloom's Taxonomy (1954) of the Cognitive Domain. All participants demonstrated the first level of cognitive knowledge by their ability to recall information they read when they did their own research about the topic in preparation for the interview. For example almost all of the faculty participants responded similarly to Bill's response to the question about their knowledge of the Learning College, "I went on the internet just for a few minutes to prepare for our interview, I looked up Learning College." Or Gene's when he said, "I spent a little time looking for information on the Learning College." Then the responses began to vary when I inquired more about their understanding of the role they have at college in the application of the Learning College Principles. Some participants responded similarly to Gene when he acknowledged he did not see a connection to anything they were doing or what was occurring at the college.

...a lot of longwinded discussion about it that from my perspective is we talked more about some of the other questions, I felt it was very disconnected from me in our program as to what I teach and what we teach, why we teach, when we teach.

In Gene's estimation conversations he has been a part of are not relevant to anything he is doing. Therefore, either the method of communication is not clear, or the terminology has not been defined and linked to activities occurring at the college, nor is it familiar to Gene. Gene did say that after conducting his own research about the

Learning College he liked what he read and could cite things he was doing in the classroom that could be used as examples to support the Learning College Principles.

The Learning College Principles described earlier in this chapter serve as a framework in creating a learning-centered culture. In order to create the culture, faculty should be a part of the change process. When faculty responded like Gene or Bill did, I would say their level of knowledge of the Learning College is at the basic cognitive level. Gene teaches in a career program that is required to maintain certifications based on industry standards. His department regularly updates the curriculum and assesses students' skills.

The college didn't stipulate that we need to do this in the sense that we need to change to accomplish this. Our program was already doing this before the college brought up the concept to talk about it. The in-service day meetings that we've had where the entire day [was devoted] to discussions about AQIP, [creating] assessment [strategies], and everything else. In essence, we talked about what we needed to do meet accreditation standards.

Gene believes what he is doing is because of the leadership within his department and not because of direction or guidance by the college's upper administration. Faculty like Gene who are not involved in a college-wide committee, but are knowledgeable of the Learning College through their own research do not make the connection to what they are doing on the college wide level.

In other instances I use the term *aware* as a theme to describe what faculty know about the direction the college is taking to transform the culture. The theme *aware* refers to responses when the faculty member acknowledges reading about the College's mission and Institutional Priorities and hearing about them during professional development days and other workshops where they are discussed but

could not make the connection to the concepts of the Learning College or to anything occurring at the college.

For example, I use the word *aware* to describe responses made by Roy, Gene, and Bill to the question about their knowledge of the Learning College being referred to in either college documents or conversations. When their response was “no, I am not knowledgeable” but they would say,

I have read about it through research on my own but I am not aware of it being talked about here or being applied to anything we do.

This lack of connecting the research to what is occurring at the college could be due to the fact that Roy, Gene, and Bill are knowledgeable about the college’s mission and have read about the Learning College but are not currently participating in any of the AQIP teams or college-wide committees where this terminology may be applied. I have found faculty who serve on an AQIP team or college-wide committee are able to make a connection to the direction the college is taking and the Learning College model.

Lorti, Pele, and Trish are *informed* and *aware* when they confirm they have heard the President use the terminology and they see the connection between the Learning College and the direction the college is headed. In each case, the participant is very involved in college planning and is a member of a college-wide team. Lorti served as a member of the Leadership Council and helped frame Institutional Priorities. She states:

...throughout my time here I’ve been involved in strategic planning forums which are done in a continuous improvement type of environment and I’ve participated in that process two or three times as we’ve become an AQIP

institution as well that has become our primary way of selecting our AQIP projects for the year is during that planning time.

Pele served as a faculty senator and also recalls hearing about Learning College in faculty workshops and in-service days. Trish has also served as a faculty senator and is now a member of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee.

Jay, Els, and Kati who are all very involved at the college could list examples of what was happening at the college to create a learning-centered culture. These participants conveyed their comprehension and application of the concepts by giving me examples of how they would interpret or support the concepts in the classroom or in other college opportunities. Els acknowledged she was aware of the concepts but did some research before to make sure she was prepared to answer the questions. To demonstrate her awareness, she made available to me copies of college documents where the concepts were mentioned and examples of how the Learning College Principles were being implemented. When asked about how she learned about the college's mission and strategic priorities, her response was,

Well, I made copies; this is one of the things that the [college president] gives out every year. It asks someplace, are you knowledgeable about the college mission and strategic priorities? So, I made a copy of this for you.

She referred to the documents several time throughout the interview. Els went on to make the connection by saying,

... if you look at the institutional priorities of the college, and this is disseminated to the entire faculty the first day of school, the focus ...at this institution is on teaching and learning and us being, becoming better teachers, and working toward ensuring student success. I think all of our support systems, there's no pressure whatsoever to publish or to receive recognition through that avenue but our focus is to improve teaching and learning. And our institutional priorities since I've been [at the college] have been on teaching and learning, quality and innovation, providing resources.

Els connects what she has heard about institutional priorities during in-service day to what she and others are doing to improve instruction. She also refers to the committee work in which she is involved related to the institutional priorities. Els retired from a career in the K-12 education system and sees her experience as unique. She believes that because of her experience she understands what the college administrators are trying to accomplish.

Jay, who is tenured and involved in the AQIP process, responded to my question about his knowledge of the college's mission and priorities this way,

I am knowledgeable about the mission. The strategic priorities seem to shift from year to year depending on what group gets together and talks about them. I've been involved in this when I was on Faculty Senate.

His ability to respond to my question about his knowledge of the college's mission and institutional priorities provides evidence of his level of understanding. Jay also shared with me his opportunity to attend a conference where the Learning College was the focus and he learned about a number of processes that could be related to what was happening at the College. Jay used the example of his involvement in the Learning Communities project as an effort the faculty are using to help create a learning-centered culture.

However it is important to note that even though Jay is informed about the college's mission and priorities, he communicates his frustration about how decisions are made. His perception of decision making could have some effect on how successful a cultural transformation will be if the message is not continuous and consistent.

Kati, whom I identify as *informed* and *aware*, describes herself as an early adopter. She serves as an advisor to one of the student clubs. The term “early adopter” means she was a part of a team selected to attend a conference sponsored by the Higher Learning Commission to learn more about the new process later identified as AQIP. She was one of the faculty representatives who agreed with the administration to select the AQIP process as model to transform the college’s culture.

Kati sums up her understanding of how all of the elements are connected this way,

...the program review process which is now an assessment project and some measured objectives tied to active course files and tied to the Learning College and tied to AQIP all of a sudden this year they go tied together.

She very readily used the terminology, knew what I was referring to, and used examples of what they were currently doing at the college as evidence of the effort to transform the college’s culture. She mentioned as example of her understanding of the cultural transformation the following,

I'm going to go back to that conversion, because what happened with that is we took our entire curriculum and for the most part we turned all our objectives from the teacher will do this, and the course will do this, to the students will learn. The students will demonstrate. And that was a cultural shock for us and I think that was the first major step now as faculty go back and actually read their course files and [the faculty said] now I can measure and that was the first time [the faculty] realized how important measurement or determining if the students learned is. Now we're seeing assessment strategies in the courses for the first time and these are all the steps that have just occurred basically in the last year.

Kati shared this example with great excitement and with a feeling of accomplishment.

As an early adopter, Kati feels a responsibility to help the college transform to become learning-centered. She also used this as example of the strategy being used to include

faculty in the process. This example describes how the faculty now realize the importance of including assessment techniques and redesigning curriculum to determine if students are learning.

Faculty participants who were able to relate examples of how the college's mission and Institutional Priorities are linked to the Learning College Principles and how they are being applied identified the college's re-accreditation process, AQIP as the method being used to transform the college to become more learning-centered. Faculty who understand the terminology and are aware of how it is being applied are at the third level of Bloom's Taxonomy. They are able to apply their knowledge to specific and broad examples, such as the Learning Communities project and Program Review.

Trish, a psychology instructor who formerly served on the Faculty Senate, gave me a very clear explanation of how she is involved in the college, her knowledge of the Learning College, and the direction the college is taking to become more learning-centered. She also talked about the levels of knowledge some of her colleagues have about the direction of the college.

I've been on the Institutional Effectiveness Council which oversees the nesting of AQIP, the priorities of strategic plans all together, so I've been very involved in that. ... We're the group that oversees the progress. But what we did was shifted from; we took the term "quipped" out of AQIP and basically said that we should be doing this in everything we do. So we just kind of said that its not just going to be dealing with accreditation, we're going to use the quality improvement process in everything we do. So the Institutional Effectiveness Council is the Council that oversees all of the QIP the Quality Improvement Process projects whether they're related to accreditation or other institutional projects that are underway.

Trish went on to explain why other faculty should be knowledgeable about the direction the college is taking and what role faculty have in creating a learning-centered culture and the terminology that is being used.

I would say in each discipline we have our early adapters, who have been, there're probably only five of us that are as involved as I am in everything like this but fortunately its one from each division so we have a point person in each division who can speak at the level that I can speak to for all of these ... So if we say that their key link is through the program review and through assessments and that's how they would see their link into the quality aspects and student success. I would say that they all know if you use those terms, because, I don't know if you're aware of this with our contract switching from quarters to semesters we have about 8 in-service days a year and almost every one of them we set aside time for program review assessment. And finally at this last one which was in, would have been in January, the message we got was 'we get it already'. You know, let's move on to program review and assessment and we got it. So that's one reason why we went with this, if you got that part now we can expand to other institutional projects beyond program review, but they got that part and they know what they're supposed to be doing. So I think in that area they know what they're suppose to be doing so now we're ready to move them to other quality improvement projects, slowly.

...well when Learning-centered first came out it was like well it's about time and that's what faculty do all along. So it's about time you guys are catching up and that was kind of the attitude. And there was this kind of an idea that we're already doing this so what else do you want us to do. So we shifted to continuous improvement and then to quality improvement and have begun to use those terms more, I think the Baldrige utilizes the quality approach so we have attempted to use those terms as a way to look at pretty much everything and have delineated the steps, the plan, act, do whatever, those four.

Trish believes that faculty have had ample opportunity to hear about the college's processes through committee involvement or during an in-service day activity. However, Trish is a faculty member serving on various college-wide committees and is privy to a number of conversations related to college planning than many of the newer or less involved faculty are. It is obvious from Trish's comments and the terminology she is using such as "Baldrige" that she posses a high level of

knowledge. She is probably also involved in determining the approach the college has elected to use to inform faculty. When she uses the pronoun “we” to talk about the terminology being changed from continuous improvement to quality improvement, she again supports the fact she is included in the discussion and understands the direction the college is taking to become more learning-centered.

Roy a tenured faculty member but not currently serving on a college-wide committee, expressed his knowledge of the Learning College by indicating he read about it and he also says he has been in conversations about the Learning College Principles. Roy’s response to my question on how he learned about the Learning College Principles was,

We have on many occasions talked [about] how we try to increase retention how to make the students successful. I think some of the principles are applied at the business school and of course we do have some faculty members participating in certain committees to express their concerns on how we can make [FCC] a Learning College. Personally, I think if you’re directly involved in those kinds of processes you understand the Learning College. I am indirectly involved [because] I joined the other type committees where I expressed my concerns, my suggestions.

Roy is describing the level of knowledge faculty have if they are serving on college-wide committees and the opportunity they have to express their concerns. Roy serves on a departmental level committee but still is able to share his concerns within his department.

Roy talked a great deal about his concern for his students and how he linked his knowledge and support of the college’s mission to his concern. Roy says,

I think as a community college, the goal, the mission should be to provide an opportunity for all levels of students to have an education.

On the other hand, Kiki is knowledgeable about the college's mission and very involved politically, but did not make direct connection to anything happening at the college in support of the Learning College concept. In response to my question about her knowledge of the college's mission and strategic priorities she responded,

I am aware of those, especially in light of the fact that I'm also on the Faculty Association's Board of Governance. So, we're very familiar in Faculty Senate with the mission as well as the strategic priorities for the coming year because senate is involved with developing those.

Kiki acknowledges that she is *aware* of the college's mission and because of her involvement in Faculty Senate supports the concern some faculty have about not being as *informed* or *aware* of some information. However, it is interesting given the fact Kiki is involved that she is certain about the fact that she has not heard anyone at FCC use the Learning College terminology. In her response to my question about hearing the terms Learning College and learning-centered her response was,

No I honestly listen for that because I know, you know, with [my relative's] involvement I've had my own private tutorial with her so, I listen for that and in many cases there's confusion about learning communities and Learning Colleges. Do I hear that as a precursor to any discussion? No.

Kiki made this statement with conviction and certainty. But her tone was one of concern that she has not heard about the Learning College concept.

Lorti, who is entering her second year as a full time faculty member has been at the college a number of years in different roles. In a former role, she participated on college-wide planning teams and fully understands the college's mission. She said,

I sat on leadership council for the 2005/2006 academic year so I was very involved with the mission and the strategic planning.

She went on to share her knowledge of the college saying,

...throughout my time here I've been involved in strategic planning forums which are done in a continuous improvement type of environment and I've participated in that process two or three times as we've become a AQIP institution as well that has become our primary way of selecting our AQIP projects for the year is during that planning time.

In this situation Lorti's level of knowledge is a result of her involvement in planning while she was representing a different constituent group. Now that she is a full time faculty member and not tenured, she is not able to participate in college-wide teams because of a practice established by the Faculty Senate. However, because of her previous involvement she is *aware* of the direction the college is planning. Some of the other non-tenured faculty opposed this practice, but Lorti supports the Senate's position, even though she acknowledges being involved on college-wide committees is the best way to learn about the college.

LaTia became very involved in the college from the beginning of her employment at the school, not on committees but by being involved in planning faculty development activities. However, even with this level of involvement she is somewhat *informed* about the mission of the college to an extent but somewhat unsure of the connection to the Learning College model. This is her response to my question about her knowledge,

I'm somewhat knowledgeable of the mission because I have my students actually look at the mission online in regards to a service-learning course that I teach also, but the strategic priorities I'm a little fuzzy on. I know that the Learning College is a priority because I've heard that talked about. Learning communities I've heard something about, but, I've been kind of hoping to hear more about our strategic plan.

Again, I found it interesting that LaTia is involved in planning professional development activities and also has her students read the college's mission statement,

but is not quite as familiar with the college's priorities. LaTia admits to hearing about the Learning College, but cannot make a clear connection to what she has heard and what is actually taking place at the college.

The remaining participants all expressed a basic knowledge of the college's mission and the Learning College but it was based on their own research. For different reasons they are not involved in college-wide committees. The two reasons that were mentioned most often were that they were non-tenured or that they had no interest in becoming politically involved.

As I have mentioned before, non-tenured faculty are not selected to serve on college-wide teams because the Senate leaders believe that their participation in controversial meetings may have an impact on the tenure decision. Some non-tenured faculty supported this decision and some do not. Those who do not support this practice believe they should have an opportunity to serve if they wish to do so. However, because the Faculty Senate leadership through the Committee on Committees described later in this chapter makes the final decision and it seems to be supported by the administration, I am not certain this practice will reverse any time soon.

The second reason some tenured and non-tenured faculty have chosen not to participate in either the Senate or on college-wide teams is because of the behavior of some faculty. I will discuss this further in the section on *concerned*, one of the themes that emerged from the data.

If the practice of excluding non-tenured faculty from the decision making process does not reverse itself, then the likelihood of the college making a full

transformation is uncertain. According to the literature on organizational transformation, all constituent groups must be informed about the direction the organization is taking and a process needs to be implemented that involves everyone in the change process.

The faculty at FCC are critical to the college's goal of becoming more learning-centered because of the basic principle of the Learning College. The focus is on helping students learn. If the faculty are not informed about what a Learning College is, how the Learning College Principles are used as a framework for a college to become more learning-centered, and how the faculty can assist in creating a learning-centered culture, then a true transformation of the culture will not occur. In the next section I will share the type of involvement the participants have at the college.

Faculty Involvement

The leadership at FCC realizes that there is a need to transform the college's culture to become more learning-centered to address some of the needs of a growing diverse student population. In order to successfully transform the culture, the college's leadership realizes full-time faculty should be involved in planning the college's future direction, making decisions for short term and long term goals, implementing processes to redesign courses, and developing new programs and services to help increase student success.

The faculty who participated in my research are *involved* at the college in three different ways. The three levels of *involvement* are distinguished by how a faculty member is selected to participate, either by self nomination or by invitation. The invitation could come from the Faculty Senate Executive Committee or from the

administration. If faculty members are interested in participating on a college-wide committee they would have to be selected by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee. If faculty members are interested in participating on a departmental level committee they can accept an appointment by an administrator. The second level of *involvement* would be participation in the collective bargaining unit and I have labeled this as *political involvement*. Faculty are elected by their peers to represent a department for a two year term as a Senator. The third level of *involvement* is service to the college by assisting students outside of class, such as volunteering in the tutoring center or writing center. Based on their responses on the demographic survey and also in response to questions asked during the interview all of my participants are involved in at least two of these levels of *involvement*.

College-wide Committees

Participation on a college-wide committee is probably one of the best opportunities faculty have to become informed about college issues and plans to address those issues. A factor I found extremely significant to this study is the process used to identify faculty interested in serving on college-wide committees. The Faculty Senate has a committee called Committee on Committees. The description and charge of this committee reads:

The Committee on Committees is a standing committee established by the Bylaws and Special Rules of the Faculty Association. It fulfills our contractual agreement to have input on the membership of certain committees.

Faculty are appointed to Association committees and College Wide committees through the following process.

1. *The chair of the committee contacts the president-elect of the Association, who serves as the chair of the Committee on Committees.*

2. *The Committee on Committees puts out a call to all faculty (via email) for volunteers to serve on that committee. The Committee on Committees requests a statement of skills and rationale for serving from the volunteers.*
3. *The Committee on Committees ranks the volunteers based upon the skills requested, and the skills and rationale indicated in the volunteer's statement.*
4. *The names of the recommended volunteers are then presented at Senate for approval.*
5. *The volunteers and chair of the committee are then informed of the decision.*

Since most committees have clear terms for membership, a call for volunteers is usually put out when terms expire, in order to fill those vacancies. Occasionally committees may request additional members. Whenever possible, the Committee on Committees attempts to maintain a fair representation of disciplines (Message from the Committee Chair - July 10, 2007).

The Committee on Committees will take into consideration individuals who desire to serve on institutional and Senate Committees. They will recommend faculty for membership on committees including Senate Committees, College Wide, and Curriculum Committees.

Senate will review and discuss the recommendations. Membership on Senate committees will be determined by Senate vote. The Committee on Committees and Senate will make a good faith effort to have representation of the election units and to establish a rotation of members. Upon Senate recommendation, the names of faculty will be forwarded to the appropriate administrator for committee membership (Faculty Association Agreement, 2007).

The executive leadership at the college acknowledged that even though the Committee on Committees process is sometimes slow, they have found it to be the best way to collaborate with the faculty and to assure faculty participation in decision making. In conversations with the participants, some of the faculty found this process to be too limiting and it did not give newer faculty opportunities to participate as fully as they would like to participate. The senior faculty thought the process works very well and are pleased the administration supports their practice.

In 2005 in response to critical feedback Flatland Community College received from the AQIP Systems appraisers about the level of involvement in decision making

and the lack of communication to the college at large, several governing councils were created (AQIP Systems Portfolio Appraisers' Report, 2005). The membership of the Quality Improvement Council consists of the 12 members of the Institutional Effectiveness Council and the Leadership Council. All constituent groups are represented on these councils. Systems appraisers represent the Higher Learning Commission and are responsible for reviewing college documents to determine the effectiveness of the systems and processes used at the college to meet the goals and objectives established by the college's leadership. What the appraisers found was that decision making was limited to a few and that the implementation of strategies to implement change was not communicated effectively.

In order to improve input from all constituent groups and to support Flatland Community College's efforts to create a learning-centered culture, college documentation indicates faculty and staff are encouraged to participate in college-wide committees. A college-wide committee is defined in the Administrator's Guidebook (2007) as a group of faculty and staff appointed to a team to attend to any matter of business referred to them. The college-wide committee will include faculty whose scope extends beyond two subdivisions. In other words, committees can be created within departments or divisions solely for the purposes of that unit but are not considered college-wide.

One of the most influential college-wide governing units on the campus is the Administrative Council. The Council, as described in the Faculty Handbook, advises and recommends to the President on issues involving concerns with the administration

of the College. This process includes, but is not limited to identification of perceived needs for new policies and/or procedures; development of new policies and/or procedures; and recommendations for changes in existing policies and/or procedures, consistent with institutional philosophy, mission and goals. The Council views institutional needs and goals from an overall perspective, rather than from the interest of any one segment of the college.

The Leadership Council is advisory to the President. Its purpose is to ensure clear and timely two-way communications among the President, administration, and the college constituencies. It is comprised of the leadership of the college, and the college constituency groups including full-time faculty, part-time faculty, classified staff, students, administrators and members of the President's Cabinet. The Council reserves the right to invite ex-officio members as it deems necessary. It is chaired by the President and co-chaired on a rotating basis by one of the constituency leaders. Meetings are held bi-weekly throughout the year. The Leadership Council addresses issues of college-wide concern. While it is understood that constituency leaders have a responsibility to their respective members, as a body the Leadership Council is expected to function in a manner that serves the best interests of the college as a whole.

Institutional Effectiveness Council implements and monitors processes for tracking action plans, key influences, and challenges, addresses conflicting expectations from different stakeholders, and communicates results to key stakeholders (Administrative Guidebook, 2006). Faculty and administrators who serve

on this team view it as a significant venue to share in the decision making process and keep lines of communication open to all constituents.

Academic Program Review is a state mandated review of specific learning objectives for each course. The learning objectives are established by the faculty and are reviewed by the Division Curriculum Committee and then the College Curriculum Committee. Both committees are composed of faculty and administrators. The college also established a Program Review Advisory Council, a cross-divisional group of faculty and administrators charged with overseeing the Program Review Process. Program Review has two major purposes. The first is to ensure that the learning outcomes established for each course align with the state's Community College Board student learning objectives. The second is to ensure that general education courses offered at community colleges are transferable and career and technical education courses are in compliance with program specific regulations. The faculty, however, view the Program Review process as a venue for them to demonstrate their commitment to student learning.

Each college-wide committee is populated with at least two faculty representing different divisions. Even though these committees have been established and the descriptions of the committee makeup seem to be all inclusive, in reality the practice of selecting faculty participants is very limiting. Some faculty believe their voices are not always heard, even if they are on a committee. Other faculty feel left out of the committee appointment process because only tenured faculty are given the opportunity to participate.

Kati, Kiki, Jay, and Trish who are all tenured are all participating on college-wide committees and are involved closely with planning professional development opportunities for the faculty to learn more about the direction the college is taking. Kati and Trish are members of the Leadership Council and Institutional Effectiveness Council. Jay, Ele, and Trish serve on AQIP Action Project teams and Program Review teams. Gene, Roy, Pele, Lorti, and LaTia serve the college as advisors to student clubs. Kiki and Pele are currently members of the Faculty Senate, the collective bargaining unit for full-time faculty. Others are former senators and one participant served as an officer in another collective bargaining unit before she became a full time faculty member.

Faculty who serve on the committees shared their reasons for serving and their experiences as a committee members when I asked them questions related to how they learned about the college's mission and Institutional Priorities, and how they learned about the Learning College. Trish who was a senator and understands the importance of being involved, responded,

I first learned about the Learning College when the information was shared with the faculty association – during our summit in conjunction with administration, and a new president... I was involved with the senate at that time. Then once I rotated off the senate, I've been on the Institutional Effectiveness Council which oversees the nesting of the AQIP, the priorities of strategic plans all together, so I've been very involved in that.

Trish's involvement on the college-wide level gave her the opportunity to work with the administrative leadership to shape the discussion with the faculty on becoming more learning-centered. However, she also acknowledged that there was a deliberate decision to use the AQIP terminology.

...we found that these terms, quality improvement, continuous improvement don't raise the hackles of faculty when we say this is learning-centered, it's like yeah? So it seems to be a little more accepted. I have some other experiences that have gone on with this process, but we've tried to educate different meetings and sessions for various levels of the faculty in using in-service days and try to get them involved and understand what quality improvement is. But recently we had three key decisions made in the institution by administrators who totally bypassed the entire quality improvement cycle, and it was like wait a minute, if we're a quality institution you should be following these practices as you make decisions. So the institutional effectiveness council, two of us are on this myself and an administrator we agreed to put together a quick template checklist for decision making and that all the administrators should commit just to cover themselves through this and it incorporates all the quality principles. Well, we submitted it to the Higher Learning Commission and we're presenting next week.

It is obvious from Trish's response that she views faculty involvement as a true partnership with the administration. She used an example of how a process designed by a joint team of faculty and administrators to make decisions was ignored when three key decisions were made. When this was discovered Trish and an administrator worked together to develop a template that should be followed. In my estimation a faculty member who has this level of involvement and authority is another indication of the importance faculty have in the decision making process.

Trish's experiences working with the administration have been positive. She uses the pronoun "we" to talk about the work that has been accomplished and what is being planned for the future. Other faculty such as Kiki are involved but do not necessarily have the same sentiments as Trish.

Kiki is a faculty senator who is also very involved in professional development, but she is concerned that faculty input is not always respected. Kiki's response to her level of involvement in college planning was,

Well, we are trying to move more towards a climate of shared governance and so, we are having retreats with faculty senators... key administrators including our VP level and some Deans. However, what's happening is it seems like administrators are sending us what they think we should do and now we're just going to be in a role of responding. So, there's some disconnect there because we thought it was come together with an idea and it seems more one side showing what they think and, he's already pretty much laid out the plan. So, it's not exactly what we're hoping is going to come out of it.

Even though Kiki sounds frustrated with how she perceives the role of faculty in decision making, she is still willing to participate. At the end of our conversation, she was off to a Senate meeting. She believes that in order to change things she must be involved.

Jay, who served as a faculty senator and is currently leading one of the AQIP teams is also the coordinator for one of the college's major initiatives commented on his involvement at the college this way.

I am knowledgeable about the mission...and I've been involved in strategic planning when I was on Faculty Senate.... I'm chairing an AQIP right now having to do with student engagement.

Even though Jay is involved, later I will share some of the frustration Jay has with the administration because of what he perceives is lack of action on the part of the college president to implement the Learning College Principles. Jay was one of 12 people selected by the college president to attend a conference on the Learning College. Jay said he learned a lot at the conference and agreed with the information he learned about the Learning College and the Learning College Principles. He had hoped that the conversation would continue at the college, but in his estimation nothing has happened with the information. He is hopeful that one day the conversation will focus on student learning and student success. Jay said,

...first time I'd heard those terms used. ... but we spent 2-3 days learning about and talking about what a Learning College is. This is something apparently the president had a real interest in because I know that when we were finished with it, we met with him, talked about it. He had put it in as one of his Institutional Initiatives for 2005-2006. I was on it and one other person, one other faculty member was on it, we were also both on Senate at the time so we brought it back to Faculty Senate too. I was part of the ground floor of whatever discussions were being had about that, and I kind of got the impression that we went, we learned about this, we came back, we told him [the president] it was what he wanted to hear anyways, he made it an institutional priority, and then that was it.

As far as Jay is concerned the topic of the Learning College has never been discussed since that meeting with the president.

I've not seen any substantive or tangible efforts since then to really make that idea a part of the campus culture here. In fact it, I don't really see it used much in the language, in the policies, and so forth. Certainly there's no, to my knowledge, there's no committee or task force or group of individuals looking at how to incorporate those ideas, meaningfully into the college and into its mission and so forth. And all the people who were involved in learning about that were just, just sort of let go.

Jay was very adamant about his feelings about the lack of support or action related to this initiative. Jay does however believe he applies what he learned through his work with faculty in the Learning Communities project. Jay also believes that he can do what he pleases as long as the administration is not involved.

Kati, who has been at the college for more than 20 years, is very involved at the college. Kati was selected along with other faculty and staff to attend a conference sponsored by the Higher Learning Commission in 2000 to learn about a new accreditation process based on assessing college processes and developing strategies to promote continuous improvement. She was a part of the decision making team to select the AQIP process. She describes herself as an early adapter.

Kati continues to serve on the Institutional Effectiveness Council and considers it to be an effective committee model to help communicate the college's continuous improvement strategies to the larger community.

The other part of this quality improvement council is something called the institutional effectiveness council and that's what I'm on. The institutional effectiveness council is called the IEC and that's the operating arm of the quality improvement council so they will initiate quality improvement projects, write charters for the projects and monitor the quality in the capital "q" movement at FCC. The IEC and the leadership council joined together every six weeks in a formal meeting called the quality improvement council. That was an amazing phenomenon...we have formal communication that goes out. We have a formal web page that goes out. We have formal meetings, we have an engine now, that drives it, and that was key to our process.

Kati is very pleased to see the transformation happen at the college where there is a system in place that provides an opportunity for every constituency to have a voice in the decision making process. Her involvement also provides her insight into how the selection of AQIP is related to the Learning College. Kati explains it this way,

We were trying to adopt here AQIP principles. The president had seen other models for Learning College so we were operating with that at the same time. That didn't get far enough off the ground. But I think AQIP was incorporated; only they were working on the nine principles of engaging students so I think all of this was there. I'm going to go back to that conversion, because what happened with that is we took our entire curriculum and for the most part we turned all our objectives from the teacher will do and this the course will do to the students will learn. The students will demonstrate. And that was a cultural shock for us and I think that was the first major step now as faculty go back and actually read their course files and I was okay how can I measure and that was the first time. How can I measure what that does.

Kati realizes that the faculty would view the Learning College terminology negatively, so she understands that using the terminology of the AQIP process would be better understood.

Now we're seeing that in the courses the first time and these are all the steps that have just occurred basically in the last year. We now have a new program

review process that took a decentralized [approach] in writing a report from a core of four experts for an essentially controlled [little] vested interest in the program. And developed an assessment project... with a high level of interest, brand new in the last year and really literally we are spinning and reeling from all the things we just did in the last year. Assessment projects for some of them for some areas that force people to look at for the first time, okay I'm doing my job, are the students learning from that? And I think many of us are still reeling from that and trying to figure out what data do we count, ... program review which is now an assessment project and some measured objectives tied to active course files and tied to Learning College and tied to AQIP all of a sudden this last year they got tied together ...we're still waiting for all the results; I haven't seen all the results yet.

Almost every faculty participant mentioned program review as the process that they would relate to the role faculty has in creating a learning-centered college. Program Review is a faculty led process. Kati, Trish, and Els all view Program Review as the process most faculty identify when they talk about creating a change in the culture. This process requires faculty to review and redesign the curriculum and include assessment techniques to determine if students are learning.

Program Review is a perfect example of how colleges include faculty in the transformation process. Historically the curriculum is the responsibility of the faculty. Therefore this process provides an opportunity for faculty to be made aware and implement assessment strategies, student learning styles, and varied modes of delivery. All of these topics support the Learning College Principles.

These faculty participants are all involved in activities outside of the classroom. Although some are not serving on college-wide teams they view their service on departmental teams and as advisors to student clubs as important. In the next section, I will share some of the concerns faculty have about the committee selection process. I will also share examples of the types of participation in which other faculty are

involved.

Abe, Alex, LaTia, Lorti, and Gene are not involved in college-wide committees but for different reasons. As I have mentioned previously, some faculty who are not at that level of involvement told me that usually non-tenured faculty are not selected to be on committees because on occasion the discussions held in the meeting could be confrontational. The Faculty Senate leadership did not want the participation of non-tenured faculty because it may affect their ability to attain tenure. According to LaTia, sometimes the conversation in meetings is confrontational and some tenured faculty believe non-tenured faculty should not be put in uncomfortable situations. LaTia expressed her concerns this way,

I've taken on a lot of leadership roles and I might be a little bit, ... different than the typical person waiting for tenure because I've, I've really kind of stepped up and been in uncomfortable situations...but I am willing to participate.

The level of participation LaTia is referring to is departmental level and in her case with professional development planning. LaTia has experience teaching at other institutions and realizes that it is important for faculty to be involved in college planning. She admits that she has been in uncomfortable situations but she participates anyway.

LaTia's comments about the controversial atmosphere raises concerns about the college's culture and the relationship between faculty and administration. It is apparent that the decision by the full-time faculty to only allow tenured faculty to be appointed to college-wide committees may contribute to the adversarial environment. On the other hand some tenured faculty and even non-tenured faculty support the philosophy.

Lorti has been at the college several years but is now a non-tenured faculty member expressed her concern this way,

...this is my first year so I'm not tenured [and] they do not want non tenured faculty to participate in certain committees because it could perhaps cause problems in the tenure process which is kind of a shame, because one of the ways to get involved is committee work and yet if you can't fully participate in some of the more controversial committees you may not get to that level of involvement of knowledge.

Lorti understands the reasoning behind this decision and will not challenge the custom because of her strong allegiance to the Faculty Senate. In her former position, she was leader in another collective bargaining unit.

Kati expressed a different concern about the level of faculty involvement,

...At this point we have much more of a partnership and I'd probably be part of it, but we're much more of a partnership between administrators classified and faculty ... Our problem is we haven't gone far enough beyond the early adapters. There's a core of us who are still there who are carrying the flag and the institution will not be able to go much longer with us because we are either retiring or we have served or we are just burned out or we have moved on to other projects or something and we have to get that second and third line in to get it as part of the entire culture.

Kati believes that not enough of the tenured faculty are as involved as they should be.

As I mentioned earlier, Kati believes there is a large group of tenured faculty not willing to participate for a number of reasons. If this lack of participation on the part of the faculty continues the opportunity for faculty to have consistent input into decision making may dissipate. Or, the process of selecting and appointing faculty representatives to committees may need to be changed. Interestingly, some tenured faculty and the non-tenured faculty expressed a sense of frustration about how faculty are selected to serve. Faculty who have an interest to serve on college-wide

committees follow the Committee-On-Committee process, a Faculty Senate committee described earlier.

Kati described three groups of faculty at the college. The first group she labeled early adopters who tend to participate in everything and are feeling burned out. The second group she labeled Gen Xers who really do not want to be involved. They teach their classes and go home. She is hopeful the recently hired faculty will be more participative. However, she acknowledges that the practice of excluding non-tenured faculty may have adverse consequences in the long term.

Other faculty preferred not to be involved in what they called "political issues" and concentrated on providing college service within their departments. A third level of involvement that at least three participants shared was the time they volunteer in the tutoring center, writing center, or student advising. At least two faculty mentioned being an advisor to a student club. I noticed during my visits that all faculty participants had office hours posted and were appreciative of the office configurations which allowed them a space to work with students independently.

It is clear from my data analysis that the length of tenure of the faculty member had some relation to his or her level of involvement. Kati, Trish, Lorti and Jay who have been at the college the longest, have all served as a faculty senator or officer in an association at some point in their career and are currently serving on college-wide or AQIP teams. Kiki has not been at the college as long but became very involved early in her career as a Senate representative. Abe, Bill, Gene, Roy, and Pele deliberately have decided not to be involved in what they call political issues and spend their time with departmental assignments. Els devotes her time to curriculum

issues and is a leader in the Program Review process. All of the faculty agree that they have a responsibility to help the college achieve its mission of helping students learn.

College documents indicate that FCC is striving to provide opportunities for all employees to have representation in the decision making and planning processes. However, it is evident based on the experiences of the faculty that the selection and appointment to college-wide teams is not always deemed fair. Faculty who are tenured and choose to serve on college-wide teams seem to be few in number, therefore creating a concern that the few will soon be burned out or will soon be retiring. The other concern is that the practice of only allowing tenured faculty to be appointed creates a culture where only a few are privy to the decisions made and limits the opportunity for others particularly non-tenured faculty to be informed about the direction the college is taking. If this practice continues it is unlikely that true cultural transformation will occur.

There are two distinct opinions about the current practice of committee appointments held by the faculty and administrative leadership, which could be the cause for the concern some faculty expressed. The first opinion shared by the tenured faculty is a belief that this practice of appointing and selecting works best and is in the best interest of the non-tenured faculty. The administrators with whom I spoke acknowledged that this process was slow but have agreed to it because they have found it was the most congenial way to work with the faculty.

The second opinion is one of concern that too few faculty are involved in the decision making process and could be a direct cause for faculty not knowing about the direction the college is taking. Also, there are some non-tenured faculty who would

like to be more involved at the college-wide level but are not given the opportunity to do so. This concern leads me to the next theme that emerged from my interviews with the faculty.

Concerned

Many faculty shared their concerns about their students and the students' ability to successfully accomplish the goals they have set for themselves. The faculty support the college's mission and want to do their part in helping students learn. However, I also associate the theme *concerned* to responses from faculty participants who expressed concern for how committee appointments are made and the lack of communication at the college. Some faculty are concerned about the relationship they have with the administration and how decisions are made. Two participants expressed frustration over the lack of action by the administration to move forward on implementing the Learning College concept. At least two participants expressed some concern about the behavior of other faculty in public meetings.

I would attribute all of these reasons for *concern* to the fact that the faculty care about their students, are committed to the mission of the college, and want to be involved in creating a learning-centered environment. I will share the faculty's views and how they expressed their concerns to me.

Els is a full time faculty member who retired from an administrative position in the K-12 education system. Els refers to her students as kids and expressed a great deal of concern for her students' ability to do college level work. She has revised her curriculum to teach basic research skills to her students and to keep them engaged. These are skills she says they should have learned in high school.

... I'm real sensitive of the importance of student engagement and having a philosophy that is not ...just a essentialist ...needs to be more progressive and kids need to be engaged in the learning process... a major concern that I have is, I am appalled at the level, the skill level of the students that we get... but, their skill levels are atrocious. You know, I spend a lot of time re-teaching a lot of stuff they should already have. You know, they don't know how to do research... even reading comprehension is a real issue...they arrive at our door they're JUST really unprepared you know to do college level work.

Els was very passionate about her concerns for the students. Her statements support the data shared earlier about the increasing numbers of students needing developmental education before enrolling in college level courses. Els also believes that if more faculty had a background similar to hers in education, then they would be better prepared to help the students. She describes the situation this way,

I think a lot of that is because of my background. I come out the K-12 system and I think a lot of college professors have not had any Methods classes and they think lecture is their major responsibility.

Els believes many of her colleagues have never taken classes related to teaching and are only able to replicate the methods used when they were students. The college does offer extensive professional development opportunities for the faculty. However, participation is all voluntary and Els believes it should be made mandatory. She also credits her understanding of educational institutions for the reasons why she is more informed and aware of the direction the college is taking to help students. Els lead one of the first Program Review projects and learned that her colleagues were not as knowledgeable about redesigning curriculum and creating assessment strategies as they need to be.

Roy also is concerned about the ability of his students but he believes he has a responsibility to teach them to be good citizens. He describes his role this way,

I know the major goals as a person, as a teacher ... is to teach students, give them the knowledge, give them another skill, especially when teaching them on the computers. I think as community college, the goal, the mission should ... provide all the opportunity for all ... levels of students to have an education. The students not only have the skill, they also know how to be good citizens.

Roy continued to connect his concern for students becoming good citizens throughout the interview. He supports the mission of the college and the fact that the college is opened to all types of students.

Gene, who teaches automotive technology, realizes he needs to use different instructional strategies to engage his students. He described for me the differences between his 8 o'clock class and his 11 o'clock class.

Class to class that's how diverse, diversely different the groups are. So, it's like what I do at eight o'clock I can't teach the eleven o'clock class the same way, they're not getting it. So, I need to adapt, and find different methods. And I don't want to set them up for failure. But, what I did do is have a, I had my fireside chat with them; I had my own heart-to-heart talk. And, I basically asked them what do you want to get out of this class?

Gene is very sincere about his concerns for his students. He worked in the field for 28 years before teaching at the college. He well aware of the skills they need to pass the certification exams and also to do well in the workforce. Therefore he is willing to do whatever it takes to help them to be successful.

Alex who taught at another college before coming to FCC shared his hope for his students saying,

I want them to be successful at the next step and if they take another Anthropology class I want my class to have been an adequate preparation for the next Anthropology class, if they never take another Anthropology class for the rest of their lives, that's fine. I want them to look back on my class and say well I survived that one. I would like for them to say that I prepared them to do hard work and they are successful. So I guess I have this sense

of trying to contribute to their next steps. Whether it's the following semester or beyond... It sounds kind of smarmy when I say it that way, but I actually do believe that stuff, you know. ...Sounds Cheesy.

Alex wants his students to learn. He sets high standards for them and expects them to be successful. He even admits to sounding a bit self-righteous but he was sincere in his statements.

Kiki and Jay are also concerned about the students, but they responded to my questions by sharing their frustrations with the administration because in their estimation nothing has been said about the Learning College. Both Kiki and Jay are knowledgeable about the Learning College and support the concepts of the Learning College. They believe it would be a good model to implement at FCC to address issues of student success.

Jay was one of twelve college employees selected to attend a conference on the Learning College and he shared this concern about what has transpired since that time.

I think the idea's good. I was at the Summit I was sold on the idea. I think we can make it work if we really focus our attention and think about our policies and procedures and attitudes about how we connect those ideas to actually putting them into practice.

Jay does not believe that the administration has made a concerted effort to link the Learning College model with the college's current policies and procedures. He cannot cite an example of anything they are currently doing that would support the concept. He goes on to say,

I've not seen any substantive or tangible efforts since then to really make that idea a part of the campus culture here. In fact, I don't really see it used

much in the language, in the policies, and so forth. Certainly there's not, to my knowledge, there's no committee or task force or group of individuals looking at how to incorporate those ideas, meaningfully into the college and into its mission and so forth... and all the people who were involved in learning about that were just, just sort of let go. It seems like we spent a lot of money and time to go investigate that and then I haven't really seen much come of it. I kind of got the impression that we went, we learned about this, we came back, we told him it was what he wanted to hear anyway, he made it an institutional priority, and then that was it. a lot of decisions started being made around here in terms of cutting funds that I thought seemed just apathetical to what my understanding of what a Learning College would be in terms of reducing. I mean, one of the things I came away from the Learning College Summit was how important [student services are] unfortunately we started cutting funding for advising, for testing, for some of those frontline services, and which I said well, why are we cutting that? That's, where we need to be putting our money, that's what I would think a learning-centered college would do.

In this statement Jay is referring to the college's president. He directs his comments toward the president because he believes the president should be the one leading the change. He even cites an example of student service advising that was cut and is critical to student success. This incident, he says, demonstrates the fact that the actions of the administration do not support what they say they believe.

Jay continued to share his frustrations but he said the actions or the lack of action by the administration have not dissuaded him from continuing to do the things he thought he should do to help students learn. In other words, he believes he can make a difference without waiting for the support or approval of the administration.

Jay expressed his sentiments this way,

Having had an entire institutional team who had gone, learned about this and would have been able to disseminate these ideas to all the different constituents and groups. ... disbanding that team, throwing the idea out, and then not really having the follow up... it's one thing to introduce the idea, which is great, but then if we don't discuss ways of how we're going to operationalize it...it seemed like after that talk, there was no clear direction given from the president on down as to, especially down to the deans and associate deans, all

right, how are we going to make this happen in our area... I've been able to accomplish what I've been able to accomplish to some extent with promoting ... because there isn't anybody telling me I can't because nobody knows whether they should or not.

This statement by Jay leads me to believe some faculty have decided to move forward with or without the support of the administration. The point Jay is making is addressed in the literature on organizational change. In order for change to occur the direction must be communicated. In Jay's estimation this communication is not occurring at FCC.

Kiki also expresses concern over the way she believes faculty are excluded from the decision making process. She says,

we are trying to move more towards a climate of shared governance and so, we are having retreats with faculty senators, key administrators including our VP level and some Deans. so we have a retreat next week where we will actually be ironing out those priorities for the upcoming year. However, what's kind of happening is it seems like administration, primarily ...is sending us what he thinks we should do and now we're kind of just going to be in a role of responding. So, there's some disconnect there because we thought we were to come together and agree on an idea and it seems more like one side is showing what they think and, it's already pretty much laid out... the plan. So, it's not exactly what we're hoping is going to come out of it. We also are getting a sense that some decision making is being made based on reports that are being done outside the college.

Kiki's knowledge of the Learning College is basically what she has heard from a relative but did express support of the concept. She also is frustrated that the administration has not introduced the Learning College to the whole college community. Kiki's perception is that decisions are being made without input from the faculty or other employee groups. She describes this as a disconnect and believes if this strategy does not change then the relationship between faculty and administration will continue to be strained.

When I asked Kiki if she heard the Learning College being talked about she responded,

I honestly listen for that because I know, with my relative's involvement I've had my own private tutorial with her, so I listen for that and in many cases there's confusion about learning communities and Learning Colleges. Do I hear that as a precursor to any discussion? No. No, it usually it comes back down to, how are we going to survive if our enrollment is going down and, and our costs are going up. How are we going to make ends meet? That seems to be driving the discussion... for some reason that whole concept or fad is just not being played out. And anytime we do talk about student learning, it's in regards to retention and success. How can you keep an Algebra student in class, because it means money, that's what we're hearing?

Kiki also expressed some concern about the level of distrust faculty have with each other. She provided an example of how territorial some faculty are fearing that the administration would impose their wishes on them without their input. She described a recent discussion with faculty this way,

Faculty were very defensive assuming that someone was going to impose a new way to do this which, is a very key piece of retention in student success; getting them placed in the right class. And, so right away it was a horrible discussion because the real, underlying motive was not conveyed. So, that was resolved and so people started to show their cards. , it was a real threat that somehow what is working in my department is going to be changed because of some other person in charge of a new project...

In this statement Kiki is sharing what maybe evidence of a philosophical divide among the faculty about how business should be conducted. I have noted instances where some faculty are not pleased with how faculty are selected to serve on committees. Here is another incident that portrays some distrust among the faculty. This lack of trust leads me to believe that it is possible that faculty who are not a part of the Faculty Senate leadership are not supportive of other practices they may have.

This distrust could also be a reason why some faculty have decided not to be an active participants in the Senate.

Kiki believes this level of distrust could be dissolved if more faculty stepped up and became more proactive about promoting the Learning College concepts. Kiki made this comment based on her perceptions.

...this is my perception, that faculty, could be more of a leader on this and we could be espousing these. (And, there are people that know what a Learning College is, whether they think it is a fad or not, I think we could be, be more proactive. I don't think it's always up to the leadership of the college to implement fads, or whatever you want to call it... we could be tooting our own horn about how certain projects are implemented and how effective program review has become with faculty as leaders.

Kiki serves on the Faculty Senate. She would like to see more faculty involved, and she believes this could happen if more faculty were involved in the discussion on becoming learning-centered. She does not however mention the practice of excluding non-tenured faculty from the process. I think this omission is due to her allegiance to the Faculty Senate leadership and her views of the administration.

Pele was very concerned about some of the decisions the administration has made about eliminating some student services and thinks these decisions will have a negative impact on the college in the long term. She expressed her concern by saying,

Right now it seems to me that the priority is to have a balanced budget at all cost and as an accountant that's definitely a good thing. I think that they are – they being the Administration are making some decisions that are not in the long term the best interest of the school.

One of the things that they did is we have a assessment testing center here at the college which use to be open 10-12 hours a day, ...part of their budget

cutting they basically shut down faculty's ability to give make-up test in the testing center... independent study center those students have always gone in there to take their quizzes and exams and their having the same problem and that's because of the budget cuts.

Pele and others are hopeful that the college's administration will eventually realize that some of their decisions will have a negative impact on student learning.

Interestingly enough, some of the participants also expressed concerns about the behavior of their peers in public meetings and in departmental meetings. Alex who is non-tenured shared with me his participation in a conversation with faculty about developing a new instructional strategy and expressed his opinion by saying,

...And they intentionally didn't want it to be involved with the center for teaching and learning because there's a fear of distrust in administrators here that I have discovered, that I don't necessarily share yet, maybe in a few more years I will. I don't know. People feel that somehow if administration is involved it will sully things, because now it becomes part of the contractual obligation and blah, blah, blah. So yes it's entirely separated from the administration.... yea, these are my new colleagues, for better or worst.

As I have mentioned before, Alex has had experience at other colleges and universities and shares a different feeling toward the administration at this point in his career. He believes his attitude may change in the future based on things he has heard from his peers. He thinks many faculty have chosen not to develop new ideas out of fear that administration involvement will need to be involved and that would ruin the project. Some faculty believe if the administration is involved, faculty will lose control of programs they lead. This same feeling was expressed by Jay in reference to the Learning Communities project. For now Alex chooses to stay focus his attention on his courses and participates in committees within his department.

LaTia is really interested in hearing more about what is happening at the college, but she is non-tenured and has not had the opportunity to serve on college- wide teams. She says communication at the college is not the best. LaTia shared this with me,

...it's very difficult, the communication here. I don't know if other people have mentioned this but communication here has been, is often cited as the real problem here, there's a real difficulty in communication.

At one point when faculty were informed that the college would be moving from quarters to semesters, there was quite a bit of angst. She said at one meeting faculty were actually yelling at the administrators. She said she had not experienced this sort of outburst at any of the colleges where she taught. LaTia says she is amazed by her colleagues' behavior and the fact that no one seems to be held accountable for their actions.

Flatland Community College is a very large place. The number of challenges the college is addressing is complex and requires input and support from all constituents. If FCC wants to become a Learning College by using the Learning College Principles as a framework that will require the college's leadership to take a closer look at how the message is being created and communicated. The primary role of a community college identified as a Learning College is to create a culture conducive to student success. In order to create that culture the faculty have a critical role in creating that culture. Therefore, the entire faculty should have a role, not just the faculty who have attained tenure or faculty who are actively involved in the Faculty Senate. The comments made by some tenured and non-tenured faculty indicate they are concerned about the

possibility that not all faculty are informed about the direction the college is currently pursuing.

In the next section, I will share the hope that the faculty participants shared regardless of their perceptions of the administration, their colleagues, or how decisions are currently being made and communicated.

Hopeful

It is evident all of the participants are optimistic about the future of the college and their own careers at FCC. They are *hopeful* because throughout the interview they embedded their responses with the fact that they were happy to be employed at FCC. They supported the mission of the community college and believed that most of the faculty and staff wanted the best for the students.

They admitted to having problems communicating with the administration, but they believe the administration has a number of issues to confront, however they also believed communications would improve. Some of the participants used the size of the college, the funding crisis in the state, the semester conversion, and the campus expansion project as reasons for some of the unrest on the campus.

Some of my participants went on to say they really liked some of the administrators and called them by name. The participants acknowledged the administrators are concerned about the college and the students. Abe said it this way,

Some of them I really like. I really like [our dean], I really like the Provost and the VP they're the best; I really like both of them. I think they're baffled by why any kind of innovation doesn't seem to trickle down. I mean they have the students best interest at heart, I think my best interest at heart, I think they have...and I don't know where the disconnect is.

Abe is sharing his concerns about the communication issue that exists at the college. However, believes it is really not deliberate on anyone's part to exclude anyone for information and therefore is hopeful that the environment will improve.

Overall they have a great deal of respect for the college's president and the direction he is leading the college. They are supportive of the AQIP process and understood its purpose. They felt that this process of assessing programs and services will make FCC a better college.

They are willing to participate at any of the level of the college to help students learn and to help meet their needs. Many spend time as student advisors and also work outside of class in the writing center or tutoring center. One participant attributed some of the frustration with administrators to contract negotiations. Even the more politically involved faculty believed that once contract negotiations ended, the conversation about teaching and learning will continue.

Kati, one of the faculty participants most involved on the college-wide level expressed her optimism this way,

...those of us who are working on this have begun to make inroads and I think as long as we don't have some major problems again such as conversion that'll distract us from it. I think we can [create a learning-centered environment].

Trish, a tenured faculty member who is involved politically and serves on college-wide committees said,

...but in general the faculty who were involved in it said we should be doing this [AQIP]. This is beneficial to us. This is what we want to know about our program or our discipline and so we're very pleased about those broad statements and that way we still need to work on glitches.

The faculty participants, even those who were critical of the administration's decision to convert the academic calendar from quarters to semesters are hopeful that the college could get back on track and focus on student success. Many of the participants believe the drop in enrollment is due to the semester conversion, but they have no real evidence of that statement.

Participants who worked at other colleges prior to being employed at FCC all said FCC was an excellent college and they were pleased to be employed as a faculty member. Based on data from the Office of Institutional Research, faculty hired throughout the forty years of the college's history tend to stay at the college until retirement if they attain tenure. Faculty acknowledged they have many opportunities to develop professionally and are paid the highest of any community college faculty in the state.

The college is in the midst of a campus expansion program that will result in improved instructional spaces, student services spaces, and offices. Currently, all faculty have individual offices located in suites of anywhere from three to six offices. Faculty located in older buildings have individual offices that open onto the main hallways. The individual office spaces provide private space for faculty and also provide them a space to work with students outside of class. All of the faculty identified their work environment as a good one for working with students on an individual basis.

The human, financial, and physical resource potential at FCC are strengths identified in the AQIP Systems Portfolio. Through the reaccreditation process issues such as teaching and learning, quality and innovation, and resources are being

addressed to improve upon the existing college environment. It is because of this process the participants expressed hope for the future of the college.

Conclusion

Flatland Community College is experiencing a growing number of students with diverse needs, learning styles, and expectations enrolling each semester. The challenge community college leaders have is how to create an environment that is conducive to student success. In order to create this environment, some colleges have elected to use the Learning College as the model. The primary focus is the student and student learning. In order to shift that focus to the student all college resources must be dedicated to student learning.

The leadership at FCC has decided to adopt the Learning College as the model to create a new culture focused on learning. College documents indicate that the re-accreditation process AQIP was selected as the vehicle to implement change. A number of college-wide committees and teams were created to address specific issues related to *teaching and learning, quality and innovation, and college resources*. The state mandated Program Review process was also re-structured and became a faculty led process. This process gave the faculty an opportunity to review existing curriculum to make changes and implement assessment strategies to determine student learning.

In conversations with my participants I have learned that they are not all informed about the direction the college is taking to become more learning-centered. Their lack of knowledge or information is directly linked to the faculty member's level of involvement at the college. The practice used to select faculty to college-wide committees is a concern because it excludes non-tenured faculty, thus leaving a gap in

the knowledge base of the faculty. Some tenured faculty have a problem with this practice because of the low numbers of tenured faculty willing to participate in the decision making process. Some tenured faculty have opted not become involved because of the perceived strained relationship between the faculty and the administration. The administrators I spoke to realize the practice used to select faculty is a concern but have decided to support the practice in order to maintain cooperation from the Senate leadership.

Faculty who are aware of the Learning College because of participation in decision making teams at the college expressed concern for how the message is not being communicated effectively, if at all. They are hopeful that once some of the looming issues such as the state budget reductions, a drop in enrollment and the campus expansion are addressed, and then the conversation can once again be focused on teaching and learning. The administrators I spoke to and their comments were supported by at least two senior faculty members who said the Learning College terminology is not used regularly because of the fear faculty may perceive it as a fad. Therefore, the AQIP process is referred to most often to address the need to transform and create a culture centered on learning. However, the problem with that decision is some faculty are not making the association with what they are doing to becoming more learning-centered.

Even though my participant group is small in comparison to the number of full time faculty employed at the college, I believe their experiences provide a good representation of the faculty as a whole. They prepared for my interview by doing research on the Learning College and I believe they were all sincere in their responses.

They shared their concerns about their relationships with the administration, with their peers, and with their students. They all had an optimistic view of the future of the college and wanted to do their part in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture.

In chapter 5 I will offer my recommendations based on my own experience working in a college striving to become more learning-centered and the literature I have read on the Learning College. In the next section, I will address the research questions that guided my study.

Research Questions

The leadership at FCC elected to use the AQIP process as means to transform the college's culture to become more learning-centered to address issues related to student success. The goal of the AQIP process is to create a culture of continuous improvement with the focus being student learning and student success. The process is an inclusive and collaborative mechanism used to implement change.

I identified the following research questions to help me learn how faculty at Flatland Community College perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture.

1. How do faculty members learn about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission?
2. How do faculty members at this community college understand what it means to be identified as a Learning College?

3. How are faculty involved and encouraged in helping to create, grow and maintain a learning-centered culture using the Learning College Principles as a framework to create a Learning College?

How do faculty members learn about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission?

In order for faculty to be effective in the role they are expected to perform they should be orientated and informed about the mission of the college and how they can support the mission. FCC's mission statement appears in all major college publications including the annual report that is mailed to all employees. The college schedules anywhere from six to eight in-service days each academic year and there is a New Employee Orientation program. Agendas from in-service days and orientation sessions indicate that the mission statement is referred to as a basis of discussion. All of the faculty said they were aware of the college's mission and support it. They did have varied responses to how they learned about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission.

I learned from the faculty who were more recently hired, that the New Employees Orientation they are required to participate in seemed to be a waste of time because they did not find the conversation relevant. Most said the time was used to have department heads present programs and services. They described it as a "show and tell" rather than anything constructive. Also, the in-service days were referred to as "rah rah" days by some faculty. It is evident that the college expends a substantial amount of money on faculty development but the opportunities are either not taken advantage of or are poorly designed.

Alex who has been at the college for three years responded to my question this way,

Well I went through an orientation session two and a half years ago when I was here, when I first got here I should say but I don't think I retained much of that in detail.

Alex found that time he spent was not very productive but participated because it was a requirement.

And Gene's response was,

Well, we went through a lengthy organization, orientation and there was discussion of that, the interactivity between the faculty and the students, and (pause) everybody was too busy patting themselves on the back as opposed to identifying specifics.

Gene seemed to be annoyed by the behavior of the persons in charge of the program and did not think it was productive.

Kiki and LaTia who are both very involved in faculty development agreed that New Employee Orientation needs to be revamped. They also expressed the need to focus in-service on the topics identified in the AQIP process. They believed if this was done, more faculty would know about what the college's leadership is trying to implement. It is important to note that the faculty believe it is their responsibility to create better educational opportunities for their peers.

One of the administrators I interviewed acknowledged that New Employee Orientation needed to be redesigned and it is a goal for the new Director of Faculty Development. He also acknowledged that the college leadership needed to do a better job of communicating goals and Institutional Priorities to all employee groups. The college has created a new college-wide committee structure to address the

communication issue.

Examples of faculty concerns to improve communications at the college and to provide relevant professional development activities for the faculty, and the desire by all of the faculty to be involved in some way in creating a learning-centered culture leads me to the next research question.

How do faculty members at this community college understand what it means to be identified as a Learning College?

FCC is a well established community college and has the support of community residents. This support is evident in the constant high enrollment in credit and non-credit courses and the recent approval of a multi-million dollar bond referendum to expand and improve campus facilities. College data indicates that the population in the district is becoming more diverse and the industry in the district is requiring higher level skills. Some students enrolling at FCC are not prepared for college level work, and a number of students need additional student services to help them to be successful. To address these issues an analysis of the existing culture and processes to create a culture focused on learning and student success has been implemented.

Several years ago the college's leadership attended a number of conferences sponsored by the Higher Learning Commission to learn about a new accreditation process based on an evaluative process leading to continuous improvement. The Academic Quality and Improvement Process is referred to as AQIP. The purpose of AQIP is to determine if all college resources are directed toward learning and student success.

Some faculty, staff, and administrators were also sent to a Learning College Summit in 2005 to learn more about a paradigm shift of changing the focus of the college from teaching to learning. Some team members embraced the concept and felt it would be appropriate to use to create a culture focused on learning and student success.

According to an administrator and two faculty participants the college leadership decided to adapt AQIP as the re-accreditation process and incorporate the Learning College concept throughout the process. It was felt that if new terminology was introduced, some may have viewed it as a fad and not taken the conversation seriously. In contrast, reaccreditation is a process all faculty are familiar with and acknowledge the importance of the process is important.

In order for any college to be transformed the desire to do this must be communicated effectively to all constituents. I have learned from my twelve faculty participants that their knowledge of the Learning College has been attained in different ways. Most however did say they learned about the concept from the research they did to prepare for my interview. Some did say they learned about the Learning College from conferences they attended. Also, two did say they recall hearing about the Learning College at in-service days held at the college. Most did not remember hearing anything about the Learning College during New Employee Orientation.

Els did say she read about the Learning College in college documents and had some to show me. She understands what the president and other college leaders are referring to when they talk about becoming a Learning College.

Faculty who said they were aware of the terminology and also could relate it to processes being employed at the college describe their participation in the Program

Review process and the AQIP re-accreditation process. The length of tenure at the college seemed to be a factor in the level of knowledge or understanding the faculty member has of the Learning College concept. Non-tenured faculty are not appointed to college-wide committees where most of the conversation about the directions the college are held. Some non-tenured faculty shared their objections to this practice. However, college documents and the college website announcing college in-service days indicate that there have been opportunities for faculty to learn about the Learning College and action steps the college is taking to become more learning-centered are also listed.

Tenured faculty like Trish and Kati expressed the fact that faculty have been given ample opportunity to learn about the direction college is taking, but it is up to the faculty member to get involved and attend meetings. Their perception is not totally supported. Some non-tenured and tenured faculty state the communication is poor and if faculty members are not on certain teams or active in the Faculty Senate then they are left out of the loop.

At least one faculty member viewed the terminology as a fad and even considered it insulting to infer that learning was not a focus before. He viewed the words “teaching” and “learning” as synonymous. He also thought the size of the college and some of the other issues being addressed at the college contributed to the reason why he had not heard anything about the Learning College.

Faculty who attended one of the conferences or who are active members of college-wide committees are more likely to be familiar with the Learning College than

other less involved faculty. The college leadership is currently looking for ways to inform more people about the Learning College through the AQIP process.

Once faculty are informed about the Learning College, the next critical piece is their involvement in helping to create, grow, and maintain a learning-centered culture. My next question addresses how faculty are involved and how they are encouraged to participate.

How are faculty involved and encouraged in helping to create, grow and maintain a learning-centered culture using the Learning College Principles as a framework to create a Learning College?

The role of the faculty is the primary purpose of my study. What I have learned is the faculty recognize and agree they do have a role in creating, growing, and maintaining a culture focused on learning and student success. How this role is understood is again predicated on a faculty member's tenure status and ability to participate on college-wide committees where most of the decisions are made. The participants are aware of the college's mission and express support for the mission. They were able to identify college documents that stated the mission and they also could cite times during the college year that mission statement was mentioned.

Alex, Pele, and LaTia have teaching experience from four-year colleges and universities. They all believed that the support they give to students at Flatland is gratifying and they were pleased to be at the college. Even though LaTia is not tenured she has found other ways to participate through her involvement in faculty development.

Trish, Jay, and Kati, who are have been at FCC for the majority of their

professional careers, believe the service faculty give to the college is essential. They all demonstrate this commitment to the college's mission through their involvement at the college.

The administrative leadership at FCC supports the involvement of faculty in planning efforts and decision making. The process for identifying faculty participants in college-wide committees is referred to in several college publications. Every college-wide committee has equal representation from all college constituent groups. The Faculty Senate has a Committee on Committees charged with the responsibility of informing the full time faculty of committee participation opportunities. They also make the final decision about which faculty are appointed to college-wide teams. This process is not supported by some of the non-tenured faculty because they do not have some of the same opportunities tenured faculty have for committee participation. This practice is a cause for concern if the college culture is to be transformed.

The non-tenured faculty have found other venues to become involved. Some examples are assisting in planning college wide professional development days and on departmental committees solely populated by faculty.

Currently, FCC is in the process of seeking re-accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission through the AQIP process. Many of the faculty are serving on AQIP Action project teams. These teams were formed to address issues related to *teaching and learning, quality and innovation, and resources*. I would relate faculty involved on these teams to their role of helping to create, grow and maintain a Learning College culture, because the AQIP principles of continuous improvement closely parallel the Learning College concept. The focus of both models is on creating

college cultures focused on students and student success. Both models require all constituent groups to be involved in the transformation process and both models are based on assessment and continuous improvement.

In order for faculty to be fully engaged in the process of creating a learning-centered culture, they have to have opportunities to do so. Once the opportunity is provided, they should be encouraged to participate and given rationale as to why the role they have is critical to the transformation process.

I have found that all of the faculty are willing, but the opportunity is not always there. As I have discussed earlier, the practice used at the college to select faculty participants for college-wide committees excludes non-tenured faculty. The reason given is to keep them from participating in controversial meetings that could impact the decision on tenure. Some non-tenured faculty are fine with this practice; others are not. The problem with the practice of excluding non-tenured faculty is communicating the direction the college is taking is not clear to those not privy to the discussion. According to one faculty member, the Senate representative is responsible for communicating with his or her peers. However some faculty found this method ineffective because the departments are large and communication is poor from both the Senate rep and the administration.

Faculty knowledge of the Learning College Principles and ways they could be implemented were not widely understood. However, after reading about the principles, some of the faculty could cite examples of what they are doing in the classroom or through departmental initiatives that would be supportive of the ideals of the principles. For example, Roy's concern for his students being full participants in their learning is

one of the principles. When Roy said,

I think as a community college, the goal, the mission should be to provide all the opportunity for all levels of students to have an education. I also think it is my responsibility to help them to become good citizens.

Roy's concern for his students to become good citizens is associated with them being responsible for their learning. He mentioned it several times during the interview.

And Gene was able to associate the principles to the certification standards his program is required to meet. He said,

The college didn't stipulate that we need to do this, in the sense that we as an automotive program need to change to accomplish this. Our program was already doing this before the college brought up the concept, to talk about it. The in service day meetings that we've had where the entire days been discussed about AQIP, you know, assessments, and everything else.

In both cases, Roy and Gene did their own research on the Learning College and the Learning College Principles and they responded to my questions by acknowledging support of the ideas and what they were doing. The two college-wide processes that most faculty mentioned as opportunities for their participation were in Program Review and AQIP. The administration and some faculty leaders will say that the intent to use Program Review and AQIP as the mechanisms to involve faculty in college transformation. Some faculty are not making that connection with their involvement being related to becoming a Learning College. I believe this disconnect exists because the Learning College terminology is not being used regularly. Again some will say this was a conscious decision on the part of the leadership so that the effort to transform the culture would not get bogged down into a disagreement on terms.

Therefore, faculty are encouraged to participate in different levels of the college. However, that participation is framed by tenure status and peer approval. Although the

administration may view this practice as acceptable in order to get the cooperation from the faculty leadership, it would be interesting to learn at what cost the transformation process is being neglected if full faculty participation does not exist.

SUMMARY

The leadership at Flatland Community College has identified a number of factors that need to be addressed in order to continue to fulfill the mission of the college. The issues of enrollment growth, a population becoming more diverse, the growing numbers of students needing developmental education, and the need for highly trained workforce are some of the major concerns. In order to address these factors in a strategic and collaborative process, the leadership has elected to seek re-accreditation using the AQIP process.

AQIP is based on establishing continuous improvement strategies focused on student learning and student success. This process also requires the input from all college constituents. The leadership at FCC is committed to student learning and student success. They are also committed to strategic planning through a collaborative process. To meet these two goals, college-wide teams have been created. These college-wide teams are populated with at least two members from each constituent group. Strategic planning and action steps are developed by these college-wide teams. The team members are also responsible for communicating their efforts to the constituent groups they represent. The constituent group that is the focus of my study is the full-time faculty.

Twelve faculty representing twelve different departments agreed to participate in my study. My goal was to learn from the faculty how they perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a Learning College Culture. I selected Flatland because of their documented commitment to transform the college's culture to meet the needs of their growing diverse student population. The decision to select AQIP as the re-accreditation process, the college's desire to become more learning-centered, and the commitment made through its mission statement, *“to be at the forefront of higher education, serving the needs of the community. The College will be the first place residents turn to for the highest quality education and cultural opportunities. The College will serve as a model of distinction for community college education”* (College Catalog, 2007) indicate the college's commitment to transform the culture to meet the needs of the students.

Analysis of the transcripts of the faculty interviews produced four themes. I found the faculty to be informed about the Learning College concept. Each of the participants took my request seriously and those who said they were not aware of the Learning College before agreeing to participate in my study took the time to do research before I met with them. Those participants who were already familiar with the concept of the Learning College were forthright in how they gained that knowledge. In every case the participants are aware and supportive of the mission of FCC and believed what they knew about the Learning College would be a good model to implement as the college moves forward.

The participants demonstrate their support of the college through involvement in either departmental or college-wide committees. Program Review is one example of

how most faculty feel they are contributing to transforming the culture to have a more learning-centered focus even though the term learning-centered is not one with which they are familiar. The opportunity they have to review and revise the curriculum to include assessment strategies to measure student learning seems to have had a positive impact.

Some are involved politically as members of the Faculty Senate and participate in planning discussions with top level college administrators. Others serve as advisors to student clubs and organizations. They expressed their concern for their students and for all students attending community colleges. They understand the need to adapt their curriculum and teaching methods to meet the needs of the students. They also expressed concern for what they perceive as a lack of collaboration on the part of the administration, but still they are hopeful that this collaboration will improve. In some instances, the faculty expressed concerns about the attitudes and behaviors of other faculty. Because of those concerns some faculty members chose not to be more involved in college-wide committees. However, they feel their contributions to students through their departments are just as valuable.

Finally, all of the faculty participants are hopeful that the efforts of the faculty, administration, and classified staff will all result in an improved college environment. They are also hopeful that the conversation will become more focused on student learning and student success. They are hopeful that communications between constituent groups will improve now that some major concerns, such as the semester conversion, the campus expansion program, and a more effective committee structure have been addressed.

I will offer my recommendations based on my experience and literature review
in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Flatland Community College, like many other community colleges, serves a diverse population of students with an enrollment that continues to increase. The history and mission of FCC mirrors how community colleges are discussed in the literature. For example, Deegan and Tillery (1994) state the history and mission of the community college begins with documenting a growing need to educate more citizens in the late 19th century (Baker, 1994, p.12). To meet the goal of providing equal access to higher education, community colleges typically have open enrollment policies. Because of open enrollment, students at all levels of preparedness enroll at community colleges.

FCC has an open enrollment policy and offers flexible scheduling of courses at several locations throughout the district. The open enrollment policy and a broad access to a college education have increased the challenges FCC is facing that are associated with providing an opportunity for higher education to students at all levels of preparedness. FCC is not alone in facing these challenges. Many other community college leaders are looking for ways to provide an environment where all students can be successful. According to statistics provided by the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) (2005), many of the students enrolling in community colleges are less prepared for college level courses, many are first generation students, and most are part time students with jobs working more than 20 hours per week. Data published by the FCC Office of Institutional Research indicate that some students

registering for college level courses at FCC have the same characteristics as the students participating in the CCSSE project. Community college leaders across the nation, including the leadership at Flatland, are looking for ways to examine college processes, curriculum, instructional styles, student learning styles, and college services to help students attain their goals (Biggs, 2001).

Community colleges typically are viewed as teaching institutions. Their primary focus has been on teaching in comparison to many American colleges and universities where the emphasis of the faculty is research (Fugate & Amey, 2000 p.10; Kozeracki, 2002). In order to meet the needs of students, some community college leaders have implemented institutional effectiveness processes that provide a framework for colleges to change the culture from the traditional focus of teaching to the focus of learning. This paradigm shift was introduced in the literature by Barr and Tagg (1995) when they addressed the need to change the focus from teaching-centered institutions to institutions where student learning is the priority. In order to successfully create this paradigm shift faculty and staff should be involved in developing and implementing assessment strategies and institutional effectiveness processes to determine where improvements need to be made. These improvements are determined by a critical look at the curriculum and other programs and services that support student learning.

Some colleges have elected to use the Learning College concept as a model to create learning-centered cultures that are focused on student learning and student success. A learning-centered college is identified as an institution of higher education where assessment of student learning is the top priority. All college policies, procedures and practices are designed and implemented to support student learning

(O'Banion, 1995). These colleges are referred to as Learning Colleges and are using the Learning College Principles as a framework to create a learning-centered culture. The Learning College Principles are being used by some colleges as a guide to create strategic priorities with the goal of increased student success. A full description of the Learning College Principles appears in Chapter 2.

According to published college documents, the leadership at Flatland decided to adapt the Learning College model as a mechanism for change. In 1999 a cross functional team which included the college president, vice-presidents, faculty, and staff, was charged with examining the demographic data of the district, and the institution and to make a decision about how to address issues such as student retention, student academic achievement, and the effectiveness of student support services. This team agreed that a paradigm shift such as the shift introduced by Barr and Tagg (1995) was necessary. In 2000 the Board approved the recommendation to participate in the Academic Quality and Improvement Process (AQIP) a newly created re-accreditation process, to provide the mechanism needed to change the college's culture where the focus is on the student and student learning. The AQIP model parallels the principles of the Learning College concept.

Learning College literature and examples published on how to create a learning-centered college are based on organizational change theories developed by Senge (1990) and Schein (1992). The research published by O'Banion (1995) centers on what college leaders should do to transform the college's culture which is focused on student learning. The Learning College Principles as described by O'Banion (1995) outline a framework that could be used to create a learning-centered culture. McPhail

(2005) has published a collection of case studies identifying ways colleges are implementing the Learning College Principles. What I have not found in the literature on the Learning College is the role the faculty perceive they have in the process of creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered college.

One of the factors critical to a successful transformation of the culture is the involvement of all constituent groups in the transformation process (Senge, 1993). At Flatland Community College the governance structure is designed to give opportunity to representatives of all constituencies to be a part of the decision making process. The full time faculty have the longest length of tenure at the college and based on comments heard during my interviews with faculty and administrators the faculty are one of the most influential constituent groups at FCC. Therefore, in order for FCC to successfully transform the college's culture, the full-time faculty must be made aware of the direction the college leadership is taking and be given a role in making that change. According to Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), faculty need to be made aware of why a transformation in the culture needs to occur. To support a learning paradigm, faculty need to be able to know and support the mission of the community college and participate in the change process.

In this chapter I will share what I have learned from 12 faculty participants and how they perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered college and how my findings relate to the literature on the Learning College. The participants offered a unique opinion of what they perceived their role to be at the college. There are also a number of opinions and concerns the faculty shared that are similar. The four themes that emerged from my data analysis addressed in Chapter 4,

aware and informed, involved, concerned, and hopeful characterize the faculty statements and their understanding of the college's mission, the Learning College, the Learning College Principles, and the role they have at the college in helping to create, grow, and maintain a Learning College culture.

These results should help community college leaders interested in pursuing a similar cultural transformation understand how faculty perceive their role and how faculty could be engaged in the change process. The following sections will provide a summary of my findings and how they are supported in the literature. I also will identify ideas that I did not find in the literature but should be considered by college leaders in the planning process.

I will end the chapter with my recommendations for how the concerns shared by the 12 faculty could be addressed by college leaders seeking to create a learning-centered college.

Findings

The purpose of my study was to learn how faculty perceive their role in creating, growing and maintaining a Learning College culture and I used three main questions to frame my research. My findings include what faculty understand about the mission of the college, the Learning College and the Learning College Principles, and how faculty perceive their role.

Faculty understanding of their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission

The mission of the community college is conveyed through statements that include the purpose of the college, whom the college serves, and the goals the college

plans to achieve by accomplishing the mission. The community college mission as defined by Gleazer (1994), “is for colleges to become community based learning centers” (p. 24). A portion of FCC’s mission statement reads,

“to be at the forefront of higher education, serving the needs of the community. The College will be the first place residents turn to for the highest quality education and cultural opportunities. The College will serve as a model of distinction for community college education” (FCC College Catalog, 2007).

This mission statement indicates the college wants to be at the forefront of higher education and also serve the needs of the community. In order to continue to be true to this statement, FCC leadership realized the population of the district was growing more diverse and the needs of industry were changing. They also needed to make sure the college offered the programs and services to support the needs of the students.

In 1999 the decision to assess the college’s culture and make recommendations to change the college’s culture to be more responsive to the needs of the students and the community the college serves was made by a cross functional team. This action is one example of how the FCC leadership understood the importance of constituents being full partners in helping the college fulfill its mission. In order to help fulfill the mission constituents need to be aware of the mission, understand the goals of the college, and learn what their role and responsibility are in helping to achieve the mission. Constituents knew the organization must also understand the culture that exists.

I believe that it is critical that faculty understand and support the mission of the college and know the college’s culture so they can understand why or if a culture needs to be transformed. Constituents need to be informed about why this

transformation is being sought and if and how they can support it. Once constituents are fully aware and informed about why, then they should be introduced to model that could be used to transform the culture. FCC chose to use the Learning College culture as the model. They believed transforming the college's culture to become more learning-centered would serve as a mechanism to help the college achieve its primary mission helping students learn and succeed.

The FCC mission statement is published widely and regularly in college publications. I began my interview asking participants questions about how they learned about the mission of the college and how they understood their role in supporting the mission of the college.

I found my participants *aware and informed* of the college's mission. All of the participants were aware of the college's mission and shared examples of how they supported the mission. Several in-service days are scheduled each academic year where some faculty said they heard discussions related to the college's mission. The tenured faculty involved in college-wide committees said most often that they are knowledgeable of how the mission statement is being supported through the college's planning processes. They could also cite examples of how their role as a faculty member is critical to helping the college achieve its mission. For example, tenured faculty have the opportunity to join the Leadership Council, the Institutional Effectiveness Council, and the Quality Improvement Council, which are three college wide teams where decisions are made that determine the college's direction (Systems Portfolio Organizational Overview, 2006).

Non-tenured faculty said they heard about the mission statement during in-service activities and during a yearlong New Employee Orientation program that they were required to participate. But, most of the non-tenured faculty said they did not recall having conversations specifically linked to their role at the college and what responsibilities they have in supporting the college's mission, even though they agreed they should be full partners in helping the college achieve its mission. The non-tenured faculty have learned more about the mission and their role in supporting the mission through departmental meetings, working with colleagues on specific activities like the Learning Communities Project or by serving on a Program Review team. The ability to be involved in some way at the college increases the level of awareness a faculty member is about the direction the college is taking to fulfill its mission.

All these faculty are involved at the college in some way or another outside of the classroom. Some on the college-wide level, others in their respective departments and some are advisors to student clubs. Some volunteer their time in the writing center or tutoring center. At one point during their careers two faculty advised students during peak registration periods. At each of these levels of participation faculty are able to demonstrate their support of the college's mission and their commitment to students.

So, how do faculty learn about their role and responsibility in supporting the college's mission? I asked these faculty this question and their answers varied from, "I happened to get a copy of the annual report in the mailbox yesterday and the mission statement is included," to "I was on the planning team charged with reviewing the mission statement a few years ago." Most faculty said they read the statement in

college publications. Some said they were aware of the statement but “hadn’t memorized it.” However, regardless of their responses to how they learned about the mission of the college they all supported the mission.

It is good that all of the faculty participants said they were at least aware of the mission statement. However, for all to say they were supportive of the statement was significant. If college constituents are aware and supportive of the mission it helps make the transformation process more effective.

I attribute the varying levels of knowledge or the lack of knowledge faculty have about their role and responsibility of helping the college achieve its mission to two major factors. Professional development opportunities are not being used effectively and the opportunity for non-tenured faculty to participate in the decision making process on the college level is non-existent. These two concerns which I will discuss next are based on comments shared by the faculty regarding their experiences in professional development and their understanding of the committee appointment process. The committee appointment process was described in Chapter 4 and verified by both faculty and administrators.

It is evident that FCC is committed to professional development because of the number of in-service days held each year and the required New Employee Orientation each non-tenured faculty member receives released time to attend. However, these opportunities are not being used effectively because the non-tenured faculty cannot recall a conversation where the mission of the college and their role is discussed. Some faculty even characterized the New Employee Orientation as a waste of time.

Tenured faculty participating in this study seemed to be more knowledgeable about the roles they have in helping the college achieve its mission. This connection is probably clearer to tenured faculty because they have greater opportunities to serve on college-wide committees where planning decisions are made. The practice of not allowing non-tenured faculty to serve on college-wide teams is a concern of some tenured and non-tenured faculty. This practice was established by the Faculty Senate and is supported by the administration. The decision to allow full-time faculty to manage that selection process and also to exclude non-tenured faculty from participating on college wide teams is also a concern. As one of the senior faculty said, this decision has in some cases caused burn out, or discouraged others from wanting to become involved. Because a large population of new faculty do not have the opportunity to be a part of the decision making process they are not aware of significant discussions that take place and therefore do not have the same level of understanding as those who are privy to the discussions.

The literature on organizational change emphasizes the need to include all stakeholders. The literature on the Learning College supports this theory. However the literature does not focus on how this transformation can be successful within a governance structure that does not allow full participation by all stakeholders regardless of employment status.

As I mentioned previously, the 12 faculty participants have a desire to help fulfill the mission of the college and they all do in some form. However there were some who felt shut out of the process on a college wide level. Thaxter and Graham (1999) who conducted a study including faculty from six Midwestern states on the

level of faculty involvement in decision making found that faculty members do not feel they are meaningfully involved in important decision making activities. Thaxter and Graham (1999) indicated in many instances faculty were not asked to participate in college committees or other governance structures created to make institutional decisions.

The concern some faculty at FCC have about their opportunity to be more involved on a broader level at the college centers around a practice of committee appointments established by the Faculty Senate. The practice of only selecting tenured faculty to be appointed to college-wide committees is supported by the college's administration, is creating a divide among the faculty and is contributing to the apparent lack of knowledge some non-tenured faculty may have about the college's Institutional Priorities and future directions. The practice has caused some levels of isolation among the newer faculty and the effect of this practice may result in the college's inability to truly transform the college's culture. O'Banion (1997) states that all stakeholders should be made aware of the transformation and be involved in the decision making process.

One college administrator acknowledged that this practice is supported by the college's administration. According to the administrator, the procedure used to identify possible faculty participants on a college-wide committee and the criteria used by the Senate has proven to be the most successful way to maintain a collaborative relationship with the faculty leadership. The faculty who serve as Faculty Senators want to maintain their level of influence at the college, and they do so by assigning faculty who do not have the concern of attaining tenure.

Some tenured faculty, who have the opportunity to participate in the decision making process, expressed concerns about their relationship with the administration and question whether or not their participation is valued. This concern is addressed in the literature by Huber (1998), Fugate & Amey (2000), and Dickinson (1999) where faculty indicated a level of distrust of the administration.

One faculty participant identified this level of distrust as a recent concern at FCC. According to this faculty member at one point in the college's history most of the college's administrators were former faculty at FCC. If the administrative position or circumstances were not suitable, the person could return to a faculty position with tenure. A state statute instituted in the mid 1990s prohibits persons accepting administrative positions from maintaining their tenure, and that could be the reason fewer faculty are electing to serve in administrative positions. One faculty participant did not think faculty at FCC are willing to give up their tenure because it is associated with job security and acknowledged influence.

The current top level administrators at FCC have been hired from outside the college and are not as well known as their predecessors. They are also perceived to have agendas not in alignment with the faculty who have been at the college for a number of years. Most current upper level administrators have been at the college 10 years or less. Their decision to live with this practice of committee appointments could be viewed in many ways. One administrator realized that it was better not to try to change a process that was in place before he was hired in order to maintain a collaborative environment. The administration is also trying to address the concern of distrust. They want to assure that faculty input in the decision making process is

valued and that the administration wants to maintain open communications with the faculty leadership.

The college leadership needs to address ways to involve more faculty in the decision making process regardless of tenure status. If not, more faculty will become disenfranchised and elect not participate. Two phenomena could occur, with the first being a lack of input from a large constituent group, and change does not occur to the extent it needs to because of the lack of knowledge and support for the change. Issues such as communicating effectively and clearly to all faculty about their role and responsibility at the college is essential if a true transformation is to occur. Boggs (1999) states the transformation process and student learning are a part of everyone's job. Secondly, the level of influence faculty want to maintain will be lost because of the indifference created among the ranks of newer faculty when they have been excluded from the process.

The lack of input from non-tenured faculty on the college level and the perception that professional development opportunities are not be used effectively to communicate the direction of the college clearly and consistently have a direct impact on the level of understanding faculty have about the Learning College and the Learning College Principles. As I mentioned earlier, the faculty need to understand and support the college's mission before they can embrace a concept such as the Learning College and the Learning College Principles.

Faculty Understanding of the Learning College and the Learning College Principles

According to FCC college documents, The Learning College concept and the Learning College Principles have been introduced to the college faculty as a means to

create an environment conducive to student success. Agendas I read indicate that in-service days were used to introduce the Learning College philosophy to the faculty and college teams have been created to look at ways student success can be addressed through their re-accreditation process. However, the responses I heard from my interviews with the faculty clearly indicate varying degrees of knowledge about the direction the leadership is taking to transform the college, their understanding of the Learning College, and the ability of some faculty to make the connection to activities that they may be involved in to the Learning College Principles.

In order to learn how faculty perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered college, I first needed to learn if faculty understood what it meant to be a Learning College. According to O'Banion (1997) the transformation to become more learning-centered only occurs when all stakeholders are informed about the direction the college leadership is proposing and the stakeholders are included in the change process. O'Banion (1997) goes on to quote Wilson (1996) by saying, "if a vision is to shape the future and drive action...then it must be communicated broadly, consistently, and continuously until it becomes an integral part of the organizations culture" (p.23).

What I heard from my faculty participants is that their understanding of what it meant to be a Learning College varied from faculty conducting their own research about the Learning College and the Learning College Principles to those who stated examples of how faculty participated in the change process and how the information is shared at the college. Those faculty who did their own research in preparation for the interview supported the ideals of the Learning College and would like to see the model

implemented at FCC. Most could even give examples of what they were doing in the classroom or outside of the classroom to create a learning-centered environment. They were able to give examples despite the fact that they had never used that language before or had even heard the terminology being used.

Faculty who said they were aware of the Learning College and could relate it to processes being employed at the college described their participation in a college-wide committee, the Program Review process, or the AQIP re-accreditation process as the reasons why they are knowledgeable about the Learning College terminology and philosophy. The length of tenure at the college seemed to be a factor in the level of knowledge or understanding the faculty members participating in this study have of the Learning College concept. As I have mentioned before, non-tenured faculty are not appointed to college-wide committees where most of the conversation about the directions of the college are held. Some college documents and the college website announcing college in-service days indicate that there have been opportunities for faculty to learn about the Learning College and action steps the college is taking to become more learning-centered are also listed. The inability of non-tenured faculty participating in this study to make a connection to the Learning College may be related to a decision made by the college's leadership not to use the terminology in published documents. The communication using the terminology does not appear to be consistent or widely distributed.

In conversations with FCC college administrators, the terms Learning College and Learning College Principles have not been used regularly by the college's administrators because of the concern of the terms will create a backlash from the

faculty. In its stead, the AQIP terminology is most often referred to relation to creating a culture to support learning. In the literature, other college leaders have acknowledged the faculty have viewed these concepts as fads (McPhail, 2005). One of my faculty participants associated the terminology as a fad and said he took exception to the notion that he and other faculty were not focused on student learning all along. He did, however, admit that he supported the concept based on what he read. Boggs (1999) refers to studies that indicate some faculty are offended by the language of the learning paradigm and the Learning College.

O'Banion (1997) among others agrees that some faculty have a negative view of the concept. One senior faculty participant agreed that the Learning College terminology was deliberately omitted when talking about the need to change in order to meet the needs of students. The terminology used in the AQIP reaccreditation process is being used instead. Most of the faculty could easily talk about the reaccreditation process or at least they understood the goal of the AQIP process. However, much less understood are the six Learning College Principles, described in Chapter 2, which focused on the needs of the learner and serve as a framework for colleges to transform the college.

Proponents of the Learning College suggest these principles can serve as a guide for college leaders to help with the cultural transformation in becoming a learning-centered institution. However the implementation of strategies, such as the Learning College Principles will require all college stakeholders to be involved in the transformation and to do that they need to understand the direction the college is taking. Shupe (2005) states the "success of any college that engages in a sustained,

systematic focus on student learning will depend largely on how different constituencies perceive and respond to that effort” (p.33).

Again, I found the knowledge faculty have of the principles varied but most had not heard the principles being referred to at the college. The faculty serving on AQIP teams or those serving on either the Leadership Council or the Quality Improvement Council had the best understanding of how the principles are being applied at the college. To indicate their understanding of the principles they mentioned the college’s Institutional Priorities and action steps as examples of the direction the college was pursuing. The Program Review process, which is a faculty led process, is the one example used most often by the faculty as their level of involvement of helping the college to become more learning-centered. This process as described earlier in Chapter 4 provides faculty an opportunity to redesign curriculum that include assessment strategies to determine student learning. Based on Shupe’s (2005) philosophy of cultural transformation, if all faculty at FCC are not knowledgeable or engaged in the transformation process, it will be difficult for the college to be transformed.

According to a study conducted by Kezar (2005) college leaders attempting to transform the college’s culture to become learning-centered should recognize the faculty should be included in the three phases of cultural transformation. Those phases are exploration, implementation, and evaluation of the concept.

Kezar (2005) uses the issue of examining the factors that attribute to low retention rates as a reason why a college’s culture may need to be transformed. According to FCC research reports, Flatland has this same concern of high attrition rates which is one of the reasons the college’s administration offers for transforming

the college's culture to being more focused on the learners. All college constituents should be involved in addressing the issue of student retention. Everyone should be made aware of these data and assist in the second phase of designing new programs and services to implement change. Then all programs and services should be evaluated regularly to determine effectiveness.

College re-accreditation documents posted on FCC's website indicate the college is using the re-accreditation process AQIP as the mechanism to include faculty in the three phases of college transformation. Faculty have been appointed to AQIP Project teams charged with the goal of identifying factors that inhibit or affect student retention rates. Those teams make recommendations to implement programs and services to address factors that attribute to low retention. The AQIP process then requires colleges to incorporate evaluation processes to assess effectiveness.

The decision to use the AQIP process as a mechanism to transform the college culture seems to be acceptable to the faculty. However, the same two issues, committee appointments and ineffective communication through professional development opportunities, that impact the level of knowledge faculty have about their role of supporting the college's mission are also affecting the understanding faculty have about the Learning College and the Learning College Principles.

To avoid backlash the administration along with a few faculty leaders have opted to use the AQIP process as the mechanism to effect change. However, the breadth of involvement of the faculty in this process also is predicated on being appointed by the Faculty Senate. The Committee on Committees, a branch of the full-time Faculty Senate described in Chapter 4 advertises committee openings and selects

faculty to represent the Senate on college-wide teams. Therefore, only tenured faculty have this opportunity.

The college has limited references of the Learning College and the Learning College Principles in published college communications. If the college's goal is to become learning-centered then the terminology needs to be referenced. Examples of new or redesigned programs and services also should be referenced so faculty and staff can see the connection. Faculty involvement in the implementation of strategies to create a culture of learning is critical in the transformation process (Kezar, 2005). Their participation creates ownership that is critical to a successful organizational transformation (Bogart 1994). The faculty who are not allowed to be full participants in the change process cannot make the connection with what they are doing to what the college leadership is aspiring to accomplish.

Faculty involvement in creating, growing, and maintaining a learning-centered culture

The terms Learning College and learning-centered began to surface in the literature in the early 1990s and are still being used today to describe a paradigm shift involving a collegial framework that requires a culture and leadership style centered on student learning (O'Banion, 1997). In order to accomplish this shift, academic standards must be high, academic programs that respond to the needs of the students must be available, teaching practices must be improved, and more emphasis on assessing learning needs and achievement must exist (Brock, 1994, p. 51). Therefore my next research question, how are faculty involved in helping to create, grow, and

maintain a learning-centered culture on this campus is very pertinent if FCC is serious about creating a culture focused on students.

Barr and Tagg (1995) define learners as students, faculty, and staff. Everyone is involved in creating, growing, and maintaining a culture of learning by participating in a cultural transformation based on continuous improvement of all practices and services. At FCC the AQIP process and Program Review are the two examples of what most people referenced when I asked about their involvement in transforming the college. The AQIP process requires a review of all college programs and services and is a continuous improvement process that requires a long term commitment from the college. Program Review is a state mandated process that requires faculty to review curriculum on a 3-5 year cycle. Because of the long term commitments and mandates that both of these processes require and with the level of faculty involvement, it is my estimation that faculty do have a role in helping to create, grow, and maintain a learning-centered culture. Also, because faculty used these examples in their responses, I would say they also see these processes as significant to their participation in creating this culture.

Faculty, who are not involved in either of these processes, cited their involvement on departmental committees or their service to students as club advisors. Two of the faculty are very involved in planning in-service days and workshops for faculty where discussions are held related to student learning and student success. Based on faculty responses they seem to be very concerned about the college maintaining a high level of quality in instruction and they care about their students.

They seem to be willing to try to do whatever they can to help their students be successful.

This conclusion leads me to the last portion of my research question, how are faculty encouraged to help create, grow, and maintain a learning-centered culture. The leadership at FCC say they support a planning structure where all constituents have input, but there is a gap in the way faculty are involved. Burns (1998) states, the looser, more participatory forms of leadership that have emerged in the past few years are being encouraged. This change will create leadership that is transformational and committed to student learning and student success. Burns' study (as cited in Pielstick, 1998 p.7) characterizes the transformational leader as one who can create a shared vision; communicate the vision; build relationships; develop a supportive organizational culture; guide implementation; exhibit character; and achieve results.

In a Learning College collaboration on all levels is the key to creating a culture that supports student success. As I mentioned earlier, the FCC committee selection process should be a concern for both the faculty and the college's administration because it limits faculty participation. A process that was created in the past to address the concern of tenure is to some extent causing friction among the faculty.

The culture at FCC could be described at this point as evolving, stressful, somewhat contentious—but not apathetic. As a matter of fact, I found all of my participants to be hopeful about the future of the college and the role they have in improving the college. The reasons cited most often as to why there is some contention are the lack of communication among the staff, the size of the college, and

the numerous projects such as the semester conversion and the campus expansion project.

For example, faculty who were selected to attend the Learning College Summit in 2005 were somewhat disheartened by the fact that the college president only met with them once to talk about what they learned. The faculty hoped that the conversation could continue and think the conversation may have been derailed because of the semester conversion project. The college moved from quarters to semesters and required the faculty to redesign their curriculum to meet this format. Some faculty felt this decision was not wise and are now blaming the administration for a drop in enrollment. Other faculty feel that the semester conversion was not an issue and saw this change as an opportunity to revise curriculum.

Another example faculty cited as a reason there are problems is the campus expansion project. The district residents approved a multi-million dollar bond referendum a few years ago and an enormous amount of time as been devoted to planning and designing the new buildings. Faculty are hopeful that once the buildings are completed, then more time will be spent focused on teaching and learning.

All of the reasons stated are actually being addressed in the college's re-accreditation process. Flatland's campus expansion is in response to the growing enrollment the college is experiencing and the need to update facilities and technology. The Program Review process now includes more faculty because the semester conversion is complete. In addition, the issue of communication or the lack of communication because of the size of the institution is being addressed by the redesign of the committee governance structure. It is hoped that there will be more

constituents on college-wide teams, especially full time faculty then communication to the constituents will become better.

Flatland Community College currently has six in-service days scheduled each academic year. Faculty acknowledged that some people referred to them as “rah rah days” and did not find them to be of much value. Other faculty said they found the days useful but not well attended. I would recommend that the college in-service days be used regularly to convey the college’s Institutional Priorities. Faculty could be asked to lead those discussions and use examples of what is being done to clarify the confusion that may exist. I also would recommend the use of the New Employee Orientation program as another venue to share these goals with all employees. This program was viewed by faculty as lacking substance and being a waste of their time.

FCC is investing a great deal of money in professional development, which is one of the college’s Institutional Priorities. One of the college’s administrators realizes the need to revamp their professional development programs and has recently appointed a new faculty member at 100% released time to administer the program. This faculty member was one of my participants and is looking forward to the challenge. She indicated the need to restructure the New Employee Orientation program where faculty have the opportunity to learn more about the Learning College and how this model is being adapted at FCC.

What I have learned from my faculty participants, college documents, and conversations with two administrators is that through the AQIP process, Program Review process, departmental teams, advisors to student organizations, opportunities to volunteer time in the tutoring or writing centers, and the Faculty Senate faculty are

provided many opportunities to help create, grow, and maintain a culture focused on learning.

One faculty member said if one wanted to be involved at the college, there are many opportunities to do so but acknowledged some are limited to tenured faculty. Most of my participants acknowledged that there are many ways they could be involved at the college and they are encouraged to do so. However, there are some non-tenured faculty who feel left out of the process because of the practice of not being appointed to college wide committees. Some newly tenured faculty have opted not to become involved on the college wide level because they perceive the committees are political or too contentious. Some of the more senior faculty who have been involved for a number of years are concerned that too few faculty are involved and the lack of involvement is causing burn out among some of the more involved faculty. None of the tenured faculty suggested changing the committee appointment practice to help resolve some of these issues.

My Experiences

My decision to conduct research on how faculty perceive their role in creating, growing, and maintaining a Learning College culture is a result of my current position and because I fully support the idea that all constituent groups should be involved in college planning. As an administrator and former faculty member at a community college that also identifies itself as a Learning College I have the opportunity to help create an environment where student learning and student success is the primary goal.

My personal experience of growing up in the South when educational institutions were segregated and my choice of higher education was limited has given

me a great appreciation for community colleges. Community colleges serve large populations of students who may have not had opportunity for education beyond the secondary level. Community colleges serve such large and diverse populations, and the issues facing community colleges are also vast. I have found the opportunity to serve in a community college challenging and rewarding. In my role as a faculty member, I had the opportunity to create an environment that was welcoming and conducive to learning. This opportunity could not have happened without the support of a college administration that has that same commitment. What my colleagues and I have learned at my college is a collaborative partnership with all college constituents is critical to create a learning-centered environment throughout the college. Having served as a faculty member and now as an administrator where I work very closely with non-tenured and tenured faculty I wanted to learn more from the faculty about how they perceive their role in helping to create a learning-centered environment. Through my research I hope not only to improve on the program and practices we currently employ at my college but also to provide information that could be helpful to others.

The opportunity I have been afforded to participate on a college-wide level in strategic planning sessions, college task groups, and co-chairing my college's Systems Portfolio project has given me a greater appreciation and understanding of the direction the college is taking to meet the needs of our students and the community we serve. I believe similar opportunities should be afforded to all employees. In my own experience, I have learned to value the input from people from across the college. The cultural change that I have been privileged to be a part of would not have happened if

the decision to implement change was not widely and consistently communicated. Even with the perception that I have, it could be seen differently by faculty who are non-tenured or by faculty who are tenured but have not been appointed to a college-wide committee where planning discussions are held.

One of the responsibilities I have in my current position is the planning and implementation of professional development for all employees. Professional development is geared toward helping faculty and staff be prepared in their role and learn what their responsibility is in helping the college achieve its mission. It is with intention that the focus of college-wide in-service days is student learning, student development, and student success. At these in-service days the message about the role and responsibility of all faculty and staff to help create a learning-centered environment is the recurrent theme.

Another major area I have responsibility for is the New Faculty Orientation program. The premise of the New Faculty program is to prepare full-time faculty to meet the needs of the college's diverse student body. The roles and responsibilities of faculty are listed in the Faculty Association's agreement and are re-emphasized in the non-tenured and tenured evaluation processes. Full-time faculty are expected to be full partners at the college in areas of creating a learning-centered environment, curriculum that helps students learn, and assessment techniques that provide the data needed to improve or enhance instruction.

Currently, all other newly hired employees are required to attend an orientation session where the college's missions and strategic priorities are shared and discussed. The staff evaluation process provides a mechanism for each person to communicate

his or her goals in support of the college's mission and provide evidence or the results of those goals. These opportunities provide venues for faculty and staff to realize their role in the college and to become full partners in the transformation of the college.

The governance structure currently in place at my college provides a wide range of opportunities for all constituent groups. There are many opportunities for faculty and staff to participate in the decision making process on many levels. Faculty, staff, and students are invited to participate in strategic planning sessions. Some invitations are sent to faculty based on their leadership positions at the college such as department chairs, Faculty Association leaders, President's Advisory Council members, and faculty who chair standing committees. All faculty and staff have an opportunity through focus groups or surveys to respond to new initiatives that are the result of the strategic planning sessions.

Monthly administrative council meetings are held where the president and others share information to department managers, who are expected to communicate this information to the staff. The college president gives a bi-annual state of the college address where all faculty and staff are invited to attend. The president's address and other information shared on in-service day remain available through an internal web cast that can be accessed from any office computer.

The many levels of communication and opportunities to be involved have created a culture of collaboration and cooperation on our campus. The expectations of how staff should work in a respectful manner are also shared through all employee orientation programs. After full-time faculty complete their first year of employment

they are required to identify at least one college service activity in which they will participate during each annual evaluation period.

The open governance process, the professional development opportunities, and the continuous and open communication systems at my college have all created an opportunity for us to create a learning-centered college. However, cultural transformation is an ongoing process and we are always looking for ways to improve the process. At my college, full-time faculty are an influential constituent group and I realize that without their full participation the transformation process will not be effective.

The information I have learned from the twelve faculty participants has given me new insights into how faculty perceive their role in creating a learning-centered culture. Even though some of the practices I learned about at FCC are not practiced at my college, there are concerns shared by the participants that I could associate with concerns mentioned by faculty at my college. One example would be the Learning College terminology not being fully understood. We also decided not to use the terminology because of the fear faculty might view this concept as a fad. Therefore, we are also using AQIP as the mechanism to effect change even though the philosophy of the Learning College is evident throughout our planning processes. However, just as I learned from conversations with my faculty participants, if one were to ask faculty at my college about our journey toward becoming a Learning College, I am sure that the person would be faced with similar misunderstanding that is displayed by faculty at FCC. Using the Learning College terminology may be

critical in creating a connection between faculty and the transformation to being a learning-centered institution.

Therefore in my role and with the knowledge I have gained from this study, I plan to make recommendations that I am hopeful will improve the communication process that is critical to a successful transformation process.

Recommendations

Several proponents of the Learning College (O'Banion 1997, Kezar 2005, McPhail 2005) acknowledged that the faculty have resisted the terminology used to define the Learning College or what it means to be learning-centered therefore FCC along with many other colleges have opted not to use the terms more frequently. This decision has contributed to the inability of faculty who are not closely associated with planning to make the connection to what they are doing to becoming more learning-centered. I found the faculty participants willing to support the idea of the Learning College but most had not heard the terms used. Community college leaders should communicate their decision to transform the college's culture by stating the reasons why the Learning College model is being adapted and use the terminology regularly in all communications to the faculty and staff. However, using the terminology alone will not be sufficient. The actions taken by the college to actually increase the participation level of all constituents and inform them of the reasons why a cultural change needs to occur is important. The most effective way to inform, educate, and involve everyone is through professional development.

Professional development is a critical factor in the ongoing development of college employees and provides an opportunity to connect the purpose and mission to

the goals the college is hoping to attain and the role faculty have in accomplishing these goals. FCC offers a wide spectrum of professional development opportunities, but based on responses from the faculty participants and one administrator, the New Employee Orientation Program needed to be redesigned. The data reported in the AQIP Institutional Overview and other documents should be shared with new faculty to communicate how their role as faculty plays an integral part in the college's transformation.

My second recommendation to college leaders would be to create a governance structure that is inclusive and fairly administered. The governance structure of the college was not the focus of my study but it became a significant factor in how faculty learn about their role and responsibility at FCC. College documentation and my conversations with FCC college administrators support the fact that the college's leadership recognizes the importance of input from all constituents. Every college-wide team is populated with representation from all employee groups. However, the governance model used at FCC gives the Faculty Senate the power when it is time to populate college-wide committees with faculty representatives.

The practice as explained in Chapter 4 has caused a divide among the faculty. Some tenured faculty who have the opportunity to serve on college-wide teams have either become burned out, disenfranchised, or disinterested. Some non-tenured faculty feel left out of the process and do not think it is fair. In one case a faculty participant shared her displeasure about this practice and thought it should be changed. However, this participant like some others may have a change of heart once she achieves tenure

and joins the ranks of those faculty that are included in college-wide decision making roles.

This practice could result in creating an “in” crowd environment. I did not expect to find a practice of excluding faculty from the governance structure by their peers as the greatest barrier to full participation in the transformation process and did not include this in my review of the literature. My recommendation would be for anyone seeking further study of the college’s culture to take this dynamic into consideration.

This case study was done over a year and half, and I relied on conversations limited to 12 faculty and two administrators and their current perceptions. I read college documents to learn more about the college and its strategic directions at this point in time. To learn if FCC will truly be able to transform would take a longer study of both the faculty participants and the data published by the college.

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