

DISSERTATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF
COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC DEANS
WHO HAVE TAKEN A NON TRADITIONAL PATHWAY

Submitted by

Nancy Curé

School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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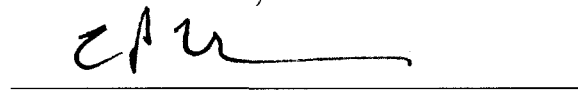
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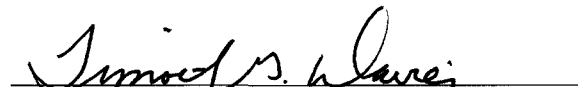
WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY NANCY CURÉ ENTITLED THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE ACADEMIC DEANS WHO HAVE TAKEN A NON-TRADITIONAL PATHWAY BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY.

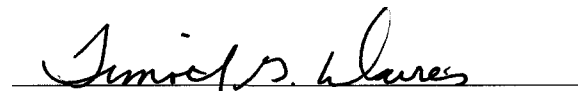
Committee on Graduate Work


Ellyn Dickmann


Bruce Hall


Cliff Harbour


Advisor – Timothy Davies


Director – Timothy Davies

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE

ACADEMIC DEANS WHO HAVE TAKEN A NON TRADITIONAL PATHWAY

This qualitative study examined the lived experiences of community college academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the position. Data were collected and analyzed from interviews of eleven academic deans who entered the community college through a non traditional pathway. Non traditional pathway was defined as no time spent as a full time or part time faculty member or any other position in education.

The goal of the study was to describe the structure of the phenomenon of being a non traditional dean entering and working in a community college environment. The deans' stories of transition to the community college included the reasons why the deans came to the community college, their motivators, their values and self confidence, the strategies they used to gain acceptance and fit in, and the recognition that their pathway was non traditional which made them unique in the community college. The structure of the phenomenon is a story of altruism and entrepreneurship, credibility and acceptance, assimilation and adaptation, and replication. The essence of the phenomenon is a story of paradoxes balancing the traditional beliefs and values of educators, the business perspective and values of the deans, and the alignment of those values and beliefs to accept those from a non traditional pathway.

The deans were motivated to come to the community college by their desire to give back and their need for challenge and risk taking. Before they transitioned, they recognized the need to establish credibility through the appropriate academic credential, teaching experience, and identifying the interchangeability of their skills. As they assimilated into the culture, the deans were surprised by the culture of education, identified the gaps in their skills, and identified strategies to fill those gaps. They also identified the need for establishing and maintaining good relationships. The deans reflected on the skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean. Finally, the deans reflected on the community college as a closed system and whether or not their non traditional pathway could be replicated.

Nancy Curé
School of Education
Colorado State University
Fort Collins, CO 80523
Spring 2008

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION.....	iii
CONTENTS.....	v
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background and Overview.....	1
Leadership Succession.....	2
Purpose Statement.....	5
Research Questions.....	6
Researcher’s Perspective.....	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	11
Career Paths in the Community College.....	15
Traditional Career Paths in the Community College.....	17
Non traditional Career Path in the Community College.....	18
Career Path to the President and Chief Academic Officer Positions.....	19
Academic Dean Position in the Community College.....	31
Conclusion.....	39
CHAPTER 3: METHOD.....	41
Research Design and Rationale.....	41
Participants and Site.....	42
Data Collection.....	44
Data Analysis.....	45
Trustworthiness.....	46
Conclusion.....	47
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS.....	49
Introduction of Participants.....	49
Tom.....	49
Ray.....	50
Manny.....	51
Nate.....	51

Harry	52
Mary	53
Cole	53
Pat	54
Adam	55
Linda	55
Amy	56
Stories of the Transition	58
Structure and Essence of the Phenomenon	71
Altruism and Entrepreneurism	73
Motivation to Give Back	73
Motivation Beyond Giving Back	76
Credibility and Acceptance	80
Need for Appropriate Academic Credential	81
Need for Teaching Experience	84
Interchangeability of Skills	87
Assimilation and Adaptation	91
Culture of Education	92
Gaps in Skills	96
Filling the Gaps in Skills	99
Skills Needed to be a Dean	102
Replication	107
Advice to Others	107
Community College as a Closed System	112
Conclusion	117
CHAPTER 5: RESULTS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS	121
Findings Related to Research Questions and the Literature	122
Findings: Lived Professional Experience of an Academic Dean who has taken a Non Traditional Pathway	122
Findings: Preparation to Achieve the Academic Dean Position	125
Findings: Skills and Abilities Needed to be an Academic Dean	129
Findings: Relationship Between Previous Professional Experience and the Academic Dean Position	133
Practitioner's Perspective	134
Biases and Assumptions	135
Community College as a Closed System	138
Recommendations for Research and Practice	142
Recommendations for Practice	142
Recommendations for Future Research	143

REFERENCES	145
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background and Overview

Community colleges are in the midst of a personnel crisis, and it is likely to worsen over the next decade (Cejda & Leist, 2003; Shults, 2001). The source of this personnel crisis is the overwhelming number of retirements within the colleges and the preparedness of individuals to assume the roles being vacated. Two major issues have combined to create this crisis (Shults, 2001). The first is that many faculty and administrators, including community college presidents, who came into the community college system during the great growth period of the 1960s are retiring or approaching retirement in ever increasing numbers (Boggs, 2003). The second is that the individuals in the traditional pipeline to the presidency are aging and also planning to retire in record numbers (Boggs, 2003; Cejda & Leist, 2003; Shults, 2001). In 2001, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) completed the Leadership Survey to provide data concerning the impact these retirements will have on the mission of the community college. In 2002 – 2003, the National Council of Instructional Administrators sponsored a survey of Chief Instructional Officers in designated regions to identify their perceptions of the number of potential retirements and their ideas for where the colleges could turn for tomorrow's leaders. The study found that there was expected to be a large turnover in the positions of department heads, division directors, and chief executive officers/presidents as a result of retirements (Cejda & Leist, 2003).

Shults (2001) reports that nearly half the current community college presidents indicate that they will retire by 2007. One third of the presidents surveyed believe that approximately one fourth or more of their chief administrators will retire by 2006 (Shults, 2001). The chief academic officers surveyed by Cejda (2003) reported similar statistics. They reported that they expected to see a large personnel turnover by 2013. Specifically, the CAOs identified that they expected to see a large turnover of faculty leaders (e.g. department chairs) as well as teaching faculty (Cejda & Leist, 2003). How will community colleges be impacted by these retirements?

The literature shows that a majority of the current presidents followed a common pathway to the position beginning as faculty, and moving through several administrative positions prior to assuming their first presidency (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2000; Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, 1985; Vaughan, 1990). The same holds true for the chief academic officer position. This traditional pathway may include positions such as department chair, dean or division chair, and chief academic officer. These positions become the pipeline to the presidency and chief academic officer positions. This pipeline is affected by the potential retirements of administrators and creates a community college leadership gap.

Leadership Succession

In 2001 the American Association of Community Colleges revised its mission statement to include a focus on leadership development as a strategic action and goal (AACC, 2001). The Leadership Task Force created by AACC identified three priorities: recruiting, preparing, and sustaining presidents and upper-level leaders (AACC, 2001). The task force outlined desired outcomes and action strategies for each priority. The task

force focused on the presidential position targeting the importance of middle managers in the pipeline to the presidency. The outcome was to identify and entice current middle level managers to become upper level managers or presidents. The strategies for accomplishing this outcome included: creating a web-based registry to act as a clearinghouse and career center that provides a description of the people who are prepared for positions that are currently open; designing and implementing a leadership program database that would inform interested people about university programs in higher education administration and community college leadership that are available; and developing an awareness campaign targeted at university programs that describe opportunities within the community college system (AACC, 2001). The researchers agree that the first step to address these priorities includes an understanding of the skills and traits required of the president and a discussion of effective leadership development (AACC, 2001; Cejda & Leist, 2003; Shults, 2001).

With the impending retirements, the research has focused on succession planning for community college presidents and chief academic officers. There also has been a focus on the increasing number of faculty retirements and the need to develop faculty recruitment plans. There has been less focus in the literature about succession planning for replacing middle level managers and specifically the dean position. The literature identifies a traditional pathway for the presidency and chief academic officer positions with an historical preference for academic experience. This traditional pathway begins as a faculty member, moves to department chair, dean or division chair, chief academic officer and then the presidency (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2000; Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg, 1983; Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, 1984; Vaughan,

1990). Traditionally, the dean's role has been pivotal in the succession planning for the presidency and the vice presidency. However, there is little research focused on the role and function of community college academic deans (Robillard, 2000; Vaughan, 1990; Wild, Ebbers, Shelley, Gmelch, 2003). There are a variety of job titles used to describe those in middle management in the community college. These job titles include department chair, division chair, associate or assistant dean, or dean of instruction. The department or division chair position has received attention in the literature with the discussion focused on the transition from the faculty to the administration, or on professional development to learn the skills to be an effective department chair.

Current literature on community college academic dean level positions is limited. There may be several reasons for this. First, the title of dean does not have a clear usage. Community colleges do not share a universal organizational structure and the title of dean can be used to describe several levels of academic administrator. For example, the Chief Academic Officer may be titled the Dean of Instruction. In other schools the dean title may be used to denote an administrator who is responsible for several content areas. Other colleges may not use the job title at all. The term middle level manager also has been used in the literature. This term has been used to describe the dean position as well as the division chair or department chair position. This inconsistency in job title can cause confusion when reviewing the literature. Second, there may be a belief that it is not important to study the dean position. In the literature, there seems to be more of a concern about succession planning for faculty and higher level administrators (president and chief academic officer) than for the middle management dean position. There is a focus on recruitment and selection for the faculty position and the president and chief

academic officer position and no focus on succession planning for the dean position.

Finally, historically there may have been more impetus or desire to study the university dean rather than the community college dean. In my review of the literature I found research on the university dean with specific focus on deans of a particular college such as education. I found little research focused on the community college academic dean.

This study is significant because it provides additional research on the community college academic dean. I am defining the academic dean as an administrator responsible for the oversight and leadership for a grouping of academic content areas. The career pathway research identifies that the dean position is pivotal in the succession planning for the presidency and vice presidency. Because this position is pivotal to the future of community colleges, there should be study into the preparation for the position and the succession planning to the position. Second, there will be many dean positions available within the next ten years as a result of retirement and natural attrition. This study will be useful to those who are interested in obtaining positions as deans and to those who are responsible for the recruitment and selection of candidates for these positions. With the large number of retirements in the traditional pipeline to administrative positions, the traditional pools of candidates may not provide enough candidates for these positions and this will present a challenge for the colleges. Therefore, it becomes important to study individuals who have taken a non traditional pathway to an administrative position in the community college.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the dean

position. I define the academic dean as an administrator responsible for the oversight and leadership for a grouping of academic content areas. Common job titles for these positions could include Dean Liberal Arts with responsibility for content areas such as communications, psychology, and the social sciences or Dean Career Programs with responsibility for content areas such as automotive, criminal justice, or the health sciences. In the organizational structure, this position would report to the Chief Academic Officer, Vice President of Academic Affairs, or Provost position. The dean's major reporting lines may include administrative staff (e.g. assistant or associate dean), department chair, and the teaching faculty.

A traditional pathway to the dean position would begin as a faculty member and then move into the administrative positions. This may include positions as a department chair, or an assistant or associate dean prior to becoming an academic dean. The non traditional pathway does not include time spent as a full time or part time faculty member position or any other full or part time community college position. Examples may include those who come to the dean position from the corporate world (profit or non profit), positions in government, or other positions outside of education.

Research Questions

The following research questions examined how non traditional academic deans make sense of their professional experiences:

- What have been the lived professional experiences of academic deans who have taken this non traditional pathway to the position?
- What preparation do they perceive to be necessary to achieve the academic dean position through this non traditional pathway?

- What skills and abilities do they perceive to be needed to be successful in the academic dean position?
- How did their previous professional experience relate to their academic dean experience?

Researcher's Perspective

My interest in this topic stems from my personal experience as a community college administrator. Using the definitions applied in this study, I currently am employed as an academic dean at a community college. My institution is experiencing the quantity of retirements forecasted by the American Association of Community Colleges (Shults, 2001). As an institution we are focusing on faculty replacement, preparing succession plans, preparing recruitment and selection plans, and developing professional development programs for new faculty. We are not focused on the number of retirements we are experiencing at all levels within the administration. The college has not developed succession, or recruitment and selection plans nor formalized professional development programs for administrative positions. I have worked at the college for thirty years and have held a variety of positions including transitioning from Student Development to Academic Affairs, an unusual pathway at the college.

I took a pathway through Student Development to the academic dean position and encountered numerous stumbling blocks on my journey. I began working in Student Development, moving to Academic Affairs as Assistant Dean Liberal Arts and Sciences. I had spent no time teaching or in the faculty ranks. I did have over ten years of administrative experience at the college and a masters degree in management. My transition from Student Development to Academic Affairs was unique. I was known and

recognized for my solid administrative experience. As I made the transition, I encountered several faculty members and others who held the traditional view that an academic administrator needed to have teaching experience and that my ability to function as an academic administrator should have been learned from my role as a faculty member. These persons set up several stumbling blocks such as requesting that I not serve on faculty evaluation teams or respond to student complaints. It was perceived that I did not have the necessary qualifications to complete these tasks because of my non traditional pathway. There are several ironies within this experience. My educational background is in business and I am trained as a management consultant. I have extensive coursework in human resources, organizational behavior, and organizational development. This included courses in leadership, recruitment and selection, interviewing, developing evaluation systems, labor relations, negotiations, conflict resolution, and individual and group behavior. My work experience in Student Development was as Registrar admitting and enrolling students, maintaining student records, and responding to student complaints. I also supervised thirty employees, developing and evaluating them yearly. My education and work experience prepared me for the transition although it wasn't valued by pure academics.

I recognized, after I transitioned to Academic Affairs, that I needed to add teaching experience to my resume. I began teaching part time and now have experience teaching at the associate, bachelor's, and master's levels. I also left administration for three years to take a full time faculty position prior to accepting the academic dean position. I now have acquired the experience that the pure academics defined as necessary for the position including an appropriate academic credential, as well as

pursuing the doctorate, and teaching experience. This experience is what led me to this topic and it provided me with a unique perspective as I engaged in this research.

The participants in my research study are professional colleagues. The assumptions and orientations that I brought to this research study included my background and familiarity with the academic dean position, my background in the community college system, and a strong background in and understanding of organizational behavior and development. I have a business background and experience consulting in that environment. I am comfortable with the language of business and have an understanding of the corporate environment. Although my pathway does not meet the definition of non traditional for this study, it could be considered that I took a non traditional pathway with the transition from Student Development to Academic Affairs. I can empathize with the issues that deans coming in to the community college from outside education would encounter. I believed that I would have some difficulty finding participants for my study because the experience of taking a non traditional pathway may be rare. I also believed that some deans would be reticent to discuss their non traditional background feeling stigmatized by the experience and because the community college is a small world they would be hesitant to share their experiences. I believe that my experience in business and taking a non traditional pathway helped to make the deans more comfortable as they shared their experience.

I believe that the community colleges are about to encounter or are encountering a critical time. There will be a significant number of administrative positions that will need to be filled. The challenge will be to find qualified individuals to fill these positions. The traditional sources of personnel to fill the positions available are lateral moves within

the community college or movement from the faculty. The assumption has been that the pipeline for administrative positions begins in the faculty and that faculty aspire to these role. With the number of retirements, many of the current faculty in the colleges are young and new to the community college. They may not be interested or ready to join the pipeline to administrative positions. Nor are the salary structures for faculty and administrative positions consistent. At my institution, a tenured faculty member with eight to ten years of teaching experience earns more than a mid level manager. Faculty members at the highest level of the faculty scale earn more than incoming academic deans. I do not believe that the colleges have addressed succession planning for administrative positions and they have not focused on developing managers within the organization to fill these positions. The dichotomy is that the colleges are not developing managers to assume these positions and, with a traditional perspective, may not be ready to hire those without the background and experience expected by pure academics. With this traditional history, colleges may not be prepared to harvest administrators from outside of academia. It is my belief that the dean position has the most potential to include individuals who have taken a non traditional pathway because of its location in the administrative pipeline. I believe that the traits and abilities of those in the corporate world or other positions will make the transition to education. I suspect that there are academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway currently working in the community colleges. An understanding of their experiences will help the colleges to prepare for this additional source of administrators to add to the pipeline.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In the community college, the labor market for administrators is dynamic and there is no clear documented sense of how to replace administrators (Twombly, 1990). Colleges search for, recruit, and hire people to serve as administrators. This process usually is time consuming and costly. It then becomes critically important to find the right person for the position with the skills and abilities to meet the needs of the institution who also shares the values and beliefs that form the institution's culture. Historically, there has also been a focus on hiring those individuals who had an understanding of and commitment to the mission of the community college (Twombly, 1986). Now community colleges are facing a challenging time as administrators leave their current positions through retirement and natural attrition. These leadership gaps occur at all position levels in the community college, and there are corresponding gaps in the pipeline leading to these positions (Shults, 2001).

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) has been focused on the impending community college leadership retirements. Shults (2001) surveyed current community college presidents to identify trends pertaining to the aging of community college administrators and the rate of retirement of these key leaders. The average age of current presidents was 57 years old and the average age of senior community college administrators was 52 years old showing that these key leaders are nearing retirement age. Almost half of the current presidents indicated that they plan to retire by 2007 and over 50% of full time faculty members reported planning to retire by 2004. It is difficult

to confirm that these retirements happened because there has been no current research published. Campbell (2006) asked community college presidents to project the retirements of their administrative and professional staff defined as non-faculty highly-specialized positions who report to the vice president/deans in academic, student, and business affairs. The results were that a significant number of these individuals will be retiring between 2006 and 2010 (Campbell, 2006, p. 13). These impending retirements will affect current administrators as well as the leadership pipeline.

The AACC has made several recommendations to address the impact of these retirements on community colleges beginning with calling the first Leadership Summit to discuss the impending leadership crisis, then creating a national database of graduate programs currently training future leaders, and establishing the Future Leaders Institute a professional development program for deans and other senior level administrators. Through funding from the Kellogg Foundation, they also created the Leading Forward Project. This project brought together key stakeholder groups including current leaders in the community college as well as educators and trainers who prepare community college leaders. The first phase goal of this project was to “produce an integrated plan of training strategies, endorsed by all stakeholders, to address the national need for new community college leaders” (Vincent, 2004, p. 3). A third strategy was the creation of the FuturesLeaders Administrative Work Profiling Session. AACC created this group of experts in community college leadership from AACC affiliate councils, college and state professional development programs for administrators, colleges in underserved areas, and university programs to address the impact of the impending retirements of administrators in highly skilled and specialized positions recognizing that colleges could be highly

vulnerable if they do not act to address this crisis (Campbell, 2006). The purpose of the work group was to develop a work profile for the community college registrar, a position selected by the group as most critical for their colleges, and to explore new strategies for colleges to reduce their recruitment costs and to increase their effectiveness in hiring. The panel identified key work tasks, major job content elements, and the attributes and competencies expected for successful performance of a future community college registrar.

The findings and conclusions of this work group included that there will be a critical leadership gap for highly specialized administrative positions, that the availability of professionals to fill these positions will be critical to the community colleges, and that there is a need to build awareness of the leadership gap with college trustees, presidents, vice presidents and deans (Campbell, 2006). These conclusions are consistent with the conclusions of the studies that address the impending retirements of presidents and senior administrators. AACC has focused on both the higher level positions in the community college (the president and senior level positions) and most recently on the highly specialized administrative positions in the community college, but there has not been a focus on the mid level positions in the community college such as the academic dean position. The academic dean position is pivotal in the career path to the presidency and the chief academic officer position.

This literature review focuses on the academic dean position in the community college. Community colleges do not share a universal organizational structure or standardized job titles and this impacts the review of the literature. To begin, I will identify a common organizational structure and provide definitions of job titles that I will

use. The first section, will discuss career paths in the community college with a focus on traditional and non traditional pathways. Then I will present the individual and structural perspective on the president and chief academic officer positions. Finally, I will discuss the academic dean position in the community college.

Community college administrative structures and job titles are unique to the colleges and are dependent on the size and structure of the institution. A conventional organizational structure would begin with a board of trustees to whom the president reports. Reporting to the president are the chief academic officer, chief student affairs officer, and the chief business officer (Blocker, Plummer, & Richardson, 1965; Cohen & Brawer, 1994). In some colleges the direct reports to the president may be expanded to include the people responsible for public relations, the college foundation, and human resources. These positions have administrators who report to them with the functional responsibilities for defined areas.

In academic affairs, the chief academic officer will have deans or division chairs as direct reports (Blocker, et al., 1965; Cohen & Brawer, 1994). These deans or division chairs will have responsibility for a grouping of content areas such as Liberal Arts or Career Programs. The reporting structure to the dean position may have different forms. Some deans may have an associate or assistant dean position reporting to them directly, and faculty department chairs responsible for overseeing specific content areas. Other deans may not have an administrative layer between them and faculty department chairs.

Job titles are not used consistently within the community colleges. The Chief Academic Officer may be titled Provost or Vice President of Academic Affairs or Dean of Instruction. Some schools may not use the dean title. They may choose to use the title

associate or assistant dean or division chair. These positions would be considered administrative. With the advent of collective bargaining, the department chair title was used for faculty positions with the responsibility for oversight of specific content areas.

For this review of the literature, the title of President will be used to denote the Chief Executive Officer of the institution reporting to the Board of Trustees. The title Chief Academic Officer (CAO) will be used to describe the person responsible for the leadership of academic affairs. The focus of this literature review will be on the academic dean or division chair position defined as an administrator responsible for the oversight and leadership for a grouping of academic content areas. Common job titles for these positions could include Dean Liberal Arts with responsibility for content areas such as communications, psychology, and the social sciences or Dean Career Programs with responsibility for content areas such as automotive, criminal justice, or the health sciences.

Career Paths in the Community College

Within the organizational structure of the community college there may be administrative pathways in academic affairs, student affairs, business affairs, and other administrative services. The pathways to each of these positions are specific to the functions of the area. The focus of this literature review is on the academic pathway. There may be four pathways that could be discussed in academic affairs. The traditional academic pathway would include time spent as a faculty member, with movement to a department chair position, and depending on the size and structure of the community college could include time spent in an assistant or associate dean position, then the dean or division chair position, and then the chief academic officer position. A second career

pathway would be entry in a student development position or other area within the community college, and depending on the size and structure of the community college could include time spent in an assistant or associate dean position, then the dean or division chair position, and then the chief academic officer position. A third pathway begins in other educational settings such as K-12 or in a university with movement to the community college. The entry port for this pathway could be either a faculty or an administrative position moving through the traditionally defined pathway. The fourth pathway I am designating as the non traditional pathway would be a career that begins outside of education in positions in the private (profit or non profit) sector, the government, or other positions. The entry port for this pathway could be either a faculty or administrative position. "Community colleges in general appear to be more open to hiring individuals from outside of higher education than are four-year colleges and universities" (Twombly, 1992, p. 8). The researchers do agree that it is unlikely that a person could move into a top level position in the community college from outside of the community college but that there are opportunities to make this move at lower levels in the organization (Amey, et al., 2002; Twombly, 1988).

Administrative careers have been examined in the literature from an individual perspective or a structural perspective (Cejda, McKenney, Burley, 2001; Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg, 1983). The individual perspective places attention on demographics or personal background. The structural perspective looks at the sequence of positions held by individuals. Most articles that identify career path or career trajectory or career ladders as their focus center on the pathway to the presidency or the chief academic officer or on the transition from the faculty to the department chair

position. As discussed above, it is difficult to discuss one pathway to any position in the community college because there is not a consistent organizational structure or use of job titles. The preferred mechanism for identifying career pathway is to identify individual positions held previous to the current position. Information on career path is then extrapolated as the sequence of previous position held is analyzed. From the structural perspective, researchers have identified a traditional pathway to specified positions such as the presidency or chief academic officer.

Traditional Career Paths in the Community College

Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, and Bragg (1983) identified a normative presidential career ladder that begins as a faculty member, moves to department chair, dean, provost, and then the presidency. The assumptions within this ladder are that most presidents gain the position through experience in the academic side of the community college and that important experience is gained through each successive position. The traditional career path to the chief academic officer position is from teacher to department head or assistant division chair, to division chair, to associate or assistant dean, to dean of instruction or academic vice president (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2000; Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, 1985; Twombly, 1988; Vaughan, 1990). The CAO position is the most commonly held position prior to gaining the presidency (Vaughan, 1990). The academic dean position is pivotal within these career pathways because it serves as a major position in the pipeline to higher level positions in the community college.

The information on the pathway to the academic dean position is embedded in the studies published on the pathway to the presidency or to the chief academic officer. The pathway to the deanship can be inferred by tracing the pathway to these positions.

Following these pathways, it can be assumed that the pathway to the dean position would include positions such as faculty member, department chair, or associate and assistant dean. Moore et al. (1983) also identify a normative career ladder of academic deans. The ladder begins with the faculty position, moves to department chair, then to assistant or associate dean or assistant to the dean and then the academic dean position. Again, the focus in the research is on the traditional pathway and a non traditional pathway can only be inferred.

Non traditional Career Path in the Community College

The early studies on pathways provided categories for respondents to use to indicate previous positions. These categories included the traditional positions such as faculty member, department or division chair, dean, or chief academic officer as well as positions outside of academic affairs such as chief student affairs officer. They also included other positions in higher education such as experience at a university. There was an acknowledgement of positions held outside higher education although these categories were limited. Moore et al. (1985) limited these categories to public school administrators or teachers. Cejda and McKenney (2000) used the categories K-12 and "other". The "other" category was not clearly defined. McKenney and Cejda (2001) in their study of women CAOs specifically defined the "other" category as positions held outside of educational organizations. Weisman and Vaughan (2002) include categories for other education outside the community college, community college state system, business or industry, and government. There were not significant numbers of respondents indicating experience outside of higher education particularly as first previous position. The assumption is that the non traditional pathway is a non academic

pathway within the community college or a pathway from K-12 or another university. The researchers did not focus on individuals coming into the position from jobs outside of education in the private sector or in the government.

Amey et al. (2002) conclude that career paths are changing. They note that presidents come to the position with prior presidential experience or other significant administrative experience. This administrative experience includes non-academic positions within higher education institutions. They also note that presidents and senior leaders with public school backgrounds are fewer since 1985. Administrators still build careers largely in the community college (Amey et al., 2002). Therefore, the career path is changing to include additional positions within the community college not necessarily including positions outside of higher education.

Career Path to the President and Chief Academic Officer Positions

A majority of the literature studied the president and vice presidential positions in the community college tracking the career path of Chief Academic Officers and Presidents. This research provided insight into the personal and professional characteristics of the positions including age, educational background, gender, and diversity within the positions. Several national studies were conducted that study the career path of community college leaders. I selected these studies because I felt they were representative of current work and presented a broad view of these career paths. This is not meant to be an exhaustive review of the research that focuses on community college administrative or leadership positions; rather it is to present the representative studies that have followed the significant administrative positions through the last two decades.

Moore, Twombly, and Martorana (1985) published *Today's Academic Leaders* a national study of administrators in community and junior colleges. This comprehensive overview of high level community college positions is generally recognized as the seminal work looking at community college administrators. The authors surveyed administrators nation wide to identify their characteristics and career paths. The respondents were placed into nine categories to report the data including president, campus executive, chief academic officer, chief business officer, chief of student affairs, head librarian, director learning resources, director financial aid, and director continuing education. These positions were identified as the high level community college positions responsible for decision making and the institution's day-to-day functions. The academic dean position was not reported as a specific category.

Respondents reported on basic demographic information including age, gender, race, marital status, occupation of spouse, occupation of parents, and parents' education. They also identified educational background and professional background. In professional background, respondents identified the current position held, the number of positions held prior to the current, and the length of time in each position. Finally, the respondents reported on professional development activities that prepared them for their current position and any mentor relationships they may have had and the impact these relationships had on the respondent's careers.

The summary of major findings of this research include: most of the positions surveyed are held by males, over 80% of the administrators were White, presidents tended to be somewhat older than other administrators, most two year college administrators hold master's degrees, and approximately 45% of the administrators had

doctorate degrees. Because of the scope of the study, it was not possible to report on specific career paths for each of the positions. The study identified length of time in current position, whether or not the respondent held academic rank (indicating time spent as a faculty member), and previous position. The study asked respondents to indicate the ten positions held previous to current position.

In the aggregate, the 193 presidents who completed the survey reported holding 47 different positions prior to taking their current position. The majority of presidents had held the position of chief academic officer immediately prior to becoming president. A substantial percentage made a lateral move coming to the position from another presidency. Eighteen percent of the presidents came from positions outside of higher education primarily positions as administrators in public schools. In the second previous position, the presidents reported holding 72 different positions. Again, the majority of presidents had held the position of chief academic officer. Twenty two percent of presidents had been employed outside of higher education with three quarters of the positions in public schools. In the third previous position, 79 different positions were identified. The greatest percentage had held the position of chief academic officer or secondary school teacher. Thirty six percent of the respondents had held a position outside of higher education as teachers, coaches, or public school administrators. The remaining positions within higher education were faculty, deans/directors, and other types of positions within colleges.

For Chief Academic Officers, only the first previous position was discussed and the aggregate of 271 CAO's reported 89 different first previous positions. The most frequently held position was chief academic officer indicating a lateral move. The

second most common was department chairperson, and then a faculty position. Small proportions had been chief student affairs officers, and associate or assistant deans. Less than 10% had been employed outside of higher education primarily as secondary school administrators or teachers.

This study identifies several important trends for my study. Presidents and vice presidents have held a variety of positions prior to their current position and it is difficult to chart one common pathway. This variety of positions does establish that there is a pipeline of administrators to these positions. Lateral moves to the presidency and vice presidency are common. This sets the stage for the importance of administrative experience prior to attaining these positions. This research also establishes that there is an academic pathway to the presidency with many of the presidents holding the position of chief academic officer prior to the presidency. Finally, it includes the common assumption that positions outside of higher education generally only include K-12 positions as teachers or administrators. It does not take into account that people may move to these positions from the private sector or government positions.

Twombly (1986) concludes that the community college is a closed labor market. The community college has become its own best source of administrators. Preference is given in selection of individuals to fill top level positions to persons from within postsecondary education and more specifically from within two year colleges. Using the data found in *Today's Academic Leaders*, Twombly determined the proportion of administrators who held their first previous position in postsecondary education versus outside of postsecondary education with a focus on two year college versus four year university experience. The majority of each group of administrators came to their current

positions from a position in postsecondary education institutions, either two or four year. It then follows that relatively few came directly to their positions from outside of postsecondary institutions.

Twombly (1988) again used the data gathered in *Today's Academic Leaders* to determine "whether access to career paths leading to top-level positions was restricted by fixed entry positions, and whether progression to top-level posts followed clearly defined steps" (p. 669). The study focused on the careers of community college presidents, chief academic officers, and chief student affairs officers. The presidents reported six categories of first previous positions with a high proportion reporting that they came to the presidency from another presidency making lateral moves. The career lines of presidents consisted of primarily administrative positions. Faculty positions were the most frequent entry point identified by presidents, and it was assumed that movement from faculty to administrative positions happened early in the president's careers. A small number of presidents came to their positions from outside of education but most had some postsecondary experience or university experience.

The chief academic officers utilized a traditional career sequence to the position from "chief academic officer from department head, and to department head from faculty" (Twombly, 1988, p. 677). The chief academic officers reported eight categories of first previous position. They were most likely to have come to the position from a similarly titled position making a lateral move. Staff positions such as assistant or associate dean appeared to be important to the chief academic officer career trajectory. It is interesting to note that chief academic officers were equally likely to have come to the position from an administrative dean position as an academic dean position. The least

likely first position prior to the chief academic officer position was faculty. They were also not likely to have come from line officer positions moving laterally from other positions that report directly to the president. Faculty positions were the most common entry position for each career line. For those chief academic officers who followed the academic pathway, the career pathway included time spent as a faculty member, department head, and academic dean.

Twombly (1988) concluded that the careers of community college administrators are not highly structured, and they are relatively short. With the exception of the presidency, most of the positions did not share a common pathway. An academic background was highly favored as a traditional source of presidents with time spent as chief academic officer as a stepping stone to the presidency. Twombly also found that movement between areas (e.g. from student development to academic affairs) happens early in the individual's work history and that experience in the administrative ranks was necessary. Finally, for those current administrators who came to positions from outside of education most had previous college or university experience.

Vaughan (1990) focused on the dean of instruction position (chief academic officer) emulating his previously published research on the presidency position. Vaughan begins the study with a discussion of the job title and role of the dean of instruction. He explains the confusion surrounding the title of dean and concludes that the title dean of instruction is specific to the community college and should not be confused with the title of dean used in the university setting. The dean of instruction title is used by community colleges for the person who has the "major responsibility for the institution's instructional program, including faculty matters" (Vaughan, 1990, p. 6). Vaughan provides a profile

of the dean of instruction looking at family background, mobility, educational background, professional memberships, publications and research, the deans' workload, the deans' chief confidant, and the dean at home.

Vaughan (1990) found that the majority of deans' of instruction were male, White, 48 years old, and held the doctorate. Most had been in their current position for over 5 years. He concludes that this position is a mirror image of the president position. The three most common positions held by deans of instruction prior to assuming the position were division chair/academic dean, associate or assistant dean, and faculty member. Over 50% of the deans followed this traditional pathway. This study surfaces two important issues. First, it discusses the confusion that surrounds the use of the dean title. It also defines a traditional pathway to the chief academic officer position that includes time spent as a division chair or academic dean.

McKenney and Cejda (2000) surveyed chief academic officers at public community colleges who were members of the American Association of Community Colleges. The purpose of the study "was to expand the information on administrative careers in community colleges" (McKenney & Cejda, 2000, p. 747). They focused on chief academic officers because a large number of community college CAOs move on to the presidency. This study identified that there were more female CAOs (39%) than in previous studies and the analysis was done for males and females as well as in the aggregate. The typical male CAO was 52 years old, married, White, with a doctorate and had served in the position for slightly more than six years. The typical female CAO was 51 years old, married, White, with a PhD and had served in the position for slightly more than five years. Respondents were asked to indicate faculty versus administrative

positions. Men moved to an administrative position between the fourth and third previous position. Women moved to an administrative position between the second and first previous position. On average, the movement to administration occurred at the third previous position. This research focused on establishing a profile of the chief academic officer. It does not attempt to establish a career path to the position, but it does focus on the role of faculty experience in the background of most CAOs. The authors operate under the assumption that individuals who aspire to become CAOs will have some experience in the faculty and seek to establish when the move from the faculty to the administration happens.

Cejda and McKenney (2000) built on Twombly's work choosing to focus on one position, the CAO in the public community college. Respondents identified the four positions held previous to the CAO position. These responses were analyzed using six criteria to identify a career path. The conclusions reached were that: two year schools give preference to those employed in two year colleges when selecting CAOs; a majority of the CAOs remained in one state their entire career, a small percentage of CAOs left their home state to attain the CAO position; and over 50 percent of the respondents reported experience in four year schools or elementary or secondary schools. This research supports that community college administrators have experience in K-12 and university settings. Fifteen percent of CAOs spent their entire careers in two year institutions leading to my concluding that the community college administrative labor market is not completely closed.

McKenney and Cejda (2001) used the data from their survey to develop a profile of the woman CAO. Their purpose was "to gather personal and professional data

concerning the career experiences of women CAOs and to identify significant career path predictors to facilitate the advancement of women who aspire to the community college CAO position (McKenney & Cejda, 2001, p.2). The average female CAO was 51 years old, White, married, with a doctorate and had served in her current position for a little over five years. This survey introduces the concept of entry port to the study of career path. The most common entry port for women CAOs was a faculty position. The average woman CAO had held approximately three positions in higher education of which two were administrative and one was faculty. The immediate prior position was as a chief academic officer or as a CAO at another institution.

McKenney and Cejda (2001) acknowledged that the analysis of career paths was the most challenging portion of their study. They were able to develop eight, three position career paths that represented almost two thirds of the study. A faculty position was the primary entry port for women CAOs with primary academic officer and department chair or head as the next frequent. Only two of the eight common career paths began with a faculty appointment, supporting the concept that an individual does not need to have a faculty position in a community college prior to moving into administration. Many of the administrators had made lateral moves during their careers with more than half of the respondents serving either as the CAO for another institution or as a primary academic officer. The authors concluded that administrative experience rather than particular position is an important determinant in the path to the CAO in the community college. Career paths to the CAO were not clearly defined. There was not a sequential set of positions through which a candidate for the CAO position should gradually advance. Instead, it would appear that for women a variety of credentials and

experiences are important including classroom experiences, obtaining a Ph.D, and holding an administrative appointment as a primary or chief academic officer.

Amey, VanDerLinden, and Brown (2000) replicated, in part, the study by Moore, Twombly, and Martorana (1985). Their purpose was to “gain a better understanding of the broader array of administrative leadership paths, including those that may be a part of new staffing patterns” (Amey et al., 2000, p. 574). The study presents a profile, career trajectories, difference between gender, and themes for the positions of president, chief academic officer, senior student affairs officers, and business fiscal officers. These positions are consistent with the higher level positions found in the community college organizational structure and with the positions chosen by Moore, Martorana, and Twombly. Again, the academic dean position is not analyzed.

They found that the average president was a White male, age 56, with a doctorate degree who had served in the position for an average of seven years. Female presidents represented 27% of the respondents. The average female president was White, age 55, with a doctorate degree who had served in the position for an average of four years. The majority of presidents were hired into the position from other community colleges. Twenty two percent were promoted into the presidency from within their institution. The career path of the presidents included movement to this position from another presidency, or the more traditional path of chief academic officer/provost, or dean. A small percentage were promoted directly from the faculty to the president position. Search committees seem “more inclined to hire presidents with substantial administrative experience, including other presidencies” (Amey et al., 2000, p. 578).

The study found that women represented 42% of the responding chief academic officers. The average female CAO was White, 54 years old, with a doctorate degree and had held the position for less than five years. The majority of CAOs were promoted to the position from within their present institution. Twenty eight percent were hired into the position from another community college. Approximately one half of the respondents followed a traditional career path to the position. Previous positions held included CAO, Academic Dean or Dean of Instruction, or Department Chair. A small percentage were promoted directly from the faculty to the chief academic officer position. The conclusions of this study included that a traditional background in academics seems important for this position, there seems to be the need for a strong administrative background, and that current CAOs have backgrounds that include experience in continuing and vocational education, student affairs, and non-academic administration. This may point to an alternate career path for this position (Amey et al., 2002). Amey et al. discuss a non traditional pathway to the positions, but their discussion of this pathway assumes experience obtained in the community college. They define the traditional pathway as experience as an academic dean, department chair, or faculty member. Their non traditional pathway includes positions in the community college outside of those defined in the traditional pathway.

Weisman and Vaughan (2001) surveyed community college presidents using Vaughan's Career and Lifestyle Survey (CLS) building upon the CLS surveys conducted by Vaughan and others in 1984, 1991, and 1996. The CLS was used to collect information on the demographic characteristics of community college presidents, the pathways to the presidency, and selected factors pertaining to the presidency (Weisman

& Vaughan, 2001). The average president was 56 years old, White, with a doctorate degree, and had served in the presidency for over seven years. The proportion of female presidents increased between 1991 and 2001. Female presidents were younger with an average age of 54 with the same educational attainment and years of service. The majority of the 2001 respondents were in their first presidency. The respondents were asked to indicate the first previous position held to the presidency. The most common pathway was through academic administrative positions including chief academic officer, vice president, the dual position of chief academic and chief student services officer, or other positions with academic overview. This study also identified other types of positions held outside the community college. Five percent of the presidents came to their position from other education positions, and small percentages had come from community college state systems, business or industry, or the government.

The composites of the average president or chief academic officer have remained similar since 1985. The average president or chief academic officer is male in the early to mid fifties, White, with a doctorate, and holding the position from five to eight years. There has been an increase in the diversity and in the number of women holding these positions. The career path to these positions is difficult to chart. There are a number of common assumptions held by the researchers. The first is that experience in education is important. They seem to assume that all candidates will have experience as a faculty member, experience in the community college, or that they come to the community college from the university setting or K-12. None of these researchers, except for Vaughan and Weisman, include a category to record experience outside of education. They also assume and the research supports that there is an academic pathway to these

positions. A non academic pathway appears to be an anomaly, but it may be becoming more of an option recently. There are several findings in this research that are important to my study. It is difficult to chart one pathway to these positions because there is a large variety in the positions held prior to the current position. The most common first position prior to the current position is a lateral move either as president or chief academic officer. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the most common entry port was a faculty position. The positions in between range from department chair, to assistant or associate dean, to administrative dean, or academic dean to the current positions. This means that there are a variety of positions in the pipeline to the presidency and the vice presidency and the academic dean position is important in this pipeline. The research also establishes a traditional pathway to these positions and that the academic dean position falls on the trajectory. There needs to be a focus on the academic dean position in the community college because it is pivotal in the career pathway to the presidency and chief academic affairs positions and it is a major position in the pipeline of administrative positions. It is also important to have information directly related to the position rather than extrapolating information from studies of other positions.

Academic Dean Position in the Community College

There is much research available on the university or four year academic dean. The research has focused on specific types of deans (e.g. nursing or education) as well as general discussion of the dean position in the university structure. There have been books and research articles published on the deanship, its role and function in the organization, and the traits and skills and abilities necessary to be an effective dean in the university (Gmelch, 2003; Gmelch, Wolverton, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999; Green &

Ridenour, 2004; Morris, 1981; Sarros, Gmelch, & Tanewski, 1998; Tucker & Bryan, 1988; Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002; Wolverton, Gmelch, Montez, & Nies, 2001; Wolverton, Wolverton, & Gmelch, 1999). This same body of literature has little research focused on the role and function of community college academic deans (Robillard, 2000; Vaughan, 1990; Wild, Ebbers, Shelley, Gmelch, 2003). Again, this literature review is made more difficult because job titles used to describe those in middle management positions vary across community colleges. These job titles include dean or division chair, associate or assistant dean, or department chair. The department chair position has received attention in the literature. The department chair is usually a faculty position reporting to the dean or division chair who is responsible for activities such as scheduling and staffing of classes, and hiring and evaluation of adjunct faculty (Blocker et al., 1965; Cohen & Brawer, 1994). The research is focused on the transition from the faculty to the administration, or on professional development to learn the skills to be an effective department chair.

For this literature review, the academic dean is defined as an administrator responsible for the oversight and leadership for a grouping of academic content areas. In the organizational structure, this position would report to the Chief Academic Officer, Vice President of Academic Affairs, or Provost positions. The major reporting lines to the academic dean may include administrative staff (e.g. assistant or associate dean), department chair, and the teaching faculty. These midlevel academic leaders are responsible for the day-to-day business of the college, and they are in pivotal positions in the leadership pipeline acting as the potential pool to fill future leadership positions in the community college (Bragg, 2000; Shults, 2001).

Wild, Ebbers, Shelley, and Gmelch (2003) utilized the data gathered in the *2000 National Survey of Community and Technical College Academic Dean* to summarize the demographic characteristics of academic deans in community colleges. The purpose of their research was to identify the stresses of the dean's role. The average academic dean is a 55 year old, White male who perceives himself as an administrator (rather than a faculty member). The length of time the deans had served in the position resulted in an even breakdown with half serving more than three years and half serving less than three years. The only career path data that were gathered was that more than two thirds of the respondents had secured the dean position from an internal position.

Goff's (2005) study measured job satisfaction of academic deans in all 50 states, "to determine whether academic deans would pursue a community college presidency to help counter the current leadership crisis" (p. 1). The study presents a demographic profile (includes age, ethnicity, hours worked per week) of academic deans based on job satisfaction. The typical participant in the study was male, White, 51-55 years of age with a doctorate degree who had been an academic dean for one to three years. They found that female deans had a higher general job satisfaction score. Sixty five percent of the deans were at least 50 years old. This indicates that over 65% of the deans currently on the academic leadership pathway to the presidency are as grey as the current retiring senior leadership and that there is a shortage of young, satisfied academic deans moving along the pathway to the community college presidency. The age of the academic deans is also a factor impacting the current leadership crisis.

There is little research related to the specific responsibilities of community college instructional leaders (Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002). Hockaday and Puryear

(2000) identified nine traits of effective community college leaders: vision, integrity, confidence, courage, technical knowledge, ability to collaborate, persistence, good judgment, and the desire to lead. Some research focuses on the role and function of the community college administrator and the traits and abilities necessary to be successful (Bragg, 2000; Brown, Martinez, & Daniel, 2002; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997). Many studies focus on professional development programs for administrators sponsored by a professional organization or state based programs (Amey, 2004; Anderson, 1996; Boggs, 2003; Boggs & Kent, 2002; Chiriboga, 2003; Ebbers, Gallisath, Rockel, & Coyan, 2000; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Romero & Purd, 2004). Primarily, the focus is on creating or improving doctoral programs (Bragg, 2002; Duvall, 2003; O'Rourke, 1997; Young, 1996). The research identifies the skills and abilities that academic deans need to be successful in the position with a focus on how professional development programs can be structured to meet these needs.

Townsend and Bassoppo-Moyo's (1997) study was part of a larger study that surveyed chief academic officers in nonprofit colleges and universities. Using the responses from community college chief academic officers, they asked four questions focused on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by people currently entering academic affairs administration and those that would become necessary in the next five to ten years.

The survey asked the community college chief academic officers to identify the knowledge and skills required to be effective using seven competences. The responses identified four major competences that effective academic administrators should have. The first was the need for contextual competence including an understanding of the legal

issues and state and federal rules surrounding higher education, and of curriculum development. Other major needs were the knowledge and skills related to teaching and learning and instructional technology. The second was technical competence including competency in budgeting and financial issues, analytical and thinking skills, expertise in evaluation of people and programs, managing time, scheduling classes, and dealing with union contracts. The need for interpersonal competence was the third competence identified. This was expressed as a need for skills in human relations including a knowledge of and skill in participatory management, management or supervision, team building and facilitation of group interactions, and conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation. The fourth competence was communication which includes the skills of listening, speaking, writing, and computing skills. There were minimum responses that fell into the conceptual competence category which included the need for broad based knowledge of the liberal arts, or knowledge of one discipline in depth, and the need for a theoretical knowledge of higher education.

The respondents also identified the knowledge and skills that will become necessary in the next five to ten years. The responses fell into the same four competences but not in the same priority. In the contextual competence, a need for an understanding of instructional technology was added as well as the knowledge of cultural diversity and a skill in working with culturally diverse people. Unlike the responses about the needs of current administrators, the responses indicated a need for some knowledge of national trends and issues, national demographics, issues and trends in higher and K-12 education, and in international education. The next most frequent competence was interpersonal indicating the need for interpersonal skills, team building,

participatory governance, knowledge of Total Quality Management, and conflict resolution or mediation. The third competence was communications with an emphasis on information technology and computer related skills. The final major competence was technical including the need for knowledge and skill in handling budgets and finances, evaluation or testing and assessment, and strategic planning. A few respondents reflected the need for adaptive competence or the ability to adjust to change.

The knowledge and skills desirable for now and in the future were generally consistent. Respondents indicated that current administrators needed an awareness of legal issues and government rules affecting higher education, but these needs were rarely indicated as necessary for administrators five to ten years from now. Rather, respondents indicated that administrators in the future would need an understanding of cultural diversity and instructional technology. They also indicated the need for communication, interpersonal, and technical skills. Expertise in team building and conflict resolution emerged as dominant needs. The need for computer literacy was also stressed. The need for expertise in team building and conflict resolution emerged as important for both current and future administrators. The greatest technical need was in budgeting and financial knowledge as well as the knowledge and skills in evaluating people and programs. There was little need expressed for conceptual competence defined as the understanding of higher education or for having an in depth knowledge of a specific discipline or the liberal arts. The respondents could have assumed that deans would have this knowledge either through education or experience or it could indicate that there is an open labor market for these positions and that this information could be learned by those who take a non traditional pathway to the position.

Deans create the stage for future operations while managing day-to-day activities (Bragg, 2000). Subject matter expertise is important, and deans should also possess democratic leadership skills, creative management, and finely tuned human relation skills. Bragg identifies six core knowledge areas to prepare community college deans for leadership: an understanding of the mission and philosophy of the community college, a learning centered orientation to understand the changing student characteristics and their impact on teaching and learning, instructional leadership including understanding what constitutes good learning and how teaching produces active learning, and understanding of information and educational technologies, and understanding of institutional accountability and learner assessment, and administrative preparation beyond the traditional. Traditional preparation for community college leaders has been built upon programs for K-12 administrators and higher education administrative training programs (Bragg, 2000). Professional development providers need to pay closer attention to the particulars of community college leadership.

Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) surveyed chief academic officers with doctoral degrees. Their purpose was to identify current community college instructional leaders' perceptions of the skills necessary for effective practice, the skills emphasized in their doctoral programs of study, recommendations for doctoral program coursework, and the relationship between the skills and areas of expertise identified as emphasized in their doctoral programs of study and the skills and areas of expertise recommended for emphasis to prepare future community college leaders. Respondents were asked to rate 48 specific skills. The specific skills were broken down into the categories of leadership, communication, institutional planning and development, management, policy, research

methodology and application, legal, finance, technology, and faculty and staff development. Of the top 20 skills, communication skills were identified as some of the most important skills including effective listening and feedback skills, effective writing skills, conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation skills, an understanding of interpersonal communication, and effective public speaking skills. Leadership skills had the next most responses with developing and communicating a vision, understanding the community college mission, understanding and application of change, and understanding of collaborative decision making ranked as important. Management skills were ranked next with organization and time management skills, evaluation and recommendation of personnel, delegating, and board and local governance, policy, and procedure ranked as important. Curriculum development and understanding of teaching and learning styles and methodology also were ranked as important. Accounting skills, understanding of legal issues, and long range budgeting and projections were important.

The roles of middle managers vary by campus throughout the United States (Andrews, 2005). “There is arguably no more important role in community and technical colleges than that of the middle manager” (Andrews, 2005, p. 11). Andrews defines the middle manager role as department chair, division chairperson, or dean. He identifies the following as the key expectations of the middle manager: hiring, supervising, evaluating, and representing the faculty; scheduling courses and times to meet student and community needs; developing, submitting, and defending department or divisional budgets; developing improvement opportunities; and demonstrating strong personal traits such as integrity, honesty, flexibility, ability to change, timeliness, humor, and trustworthiness.

The academic dean position is pivotal in the pathway to the chief academic officer and president's positions and in the administrative pipeline. The majority of presidents and chief academic officers have spent some time in the dean position, and it is important to study this position because of its role in the pipeline to these positions. There is little research available on the role and function of the academic dean position in the community college as well as the pathway to the position.

Conclusion

The researchers acknowledge that it is important to understand administrative positions in the community college and that it is important to have research specific to the position (Amey et al., 2002; Moore et al., 1985; Vaughan, 1990). The academic dean position in the community college has not received much attention in the literature and there have been no studies that focus on the pathway to the position. The academic dean position is pivotal in the career pathway to the chief academic officer and president positions. It is also pivotal in the pipeline of administrative positions within the community college. With the potential number of available positions due to retirements and natural attrition there is a need to study this position. There has also been discussion that the community college is a closed labor market and that experience in the community college is a requirement for hiring. More recent literature has opened the door to the possibility that the labor market is not as closed as it has been assumed. The researchers do acknowledge that entrance into the field from an outside position is unlikely at the top level positions. It could be more likely at mid level positions such as the academic dean position. It is my assumption that there are deans currently working in the community college who have taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. The purpose of

my study is to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. It is important to learn about these experiences as a new entry port into the community college and as a method to address the historical need for qualified administrators in the community college.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Research Design and Rationale

In this study I attempted to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who took a non traditional pathway to their deanship. I selected phenomenology as the qualitative research tradition for this study because it seeks to understand how individuals experience a phenomenon. Phenomenological researchers focus on what an experience means for the persons who have experienced the phenomenon to then provide a comprehensive description of the experience. The underlying assumption of the phenomenological researcher is that the content of the interviews and the subsequent interpretation will result in a revelation of the structure and essence of the shared experience (Schram, 2003).

In this phenomenological research, I made an a priori decision and examined the meaning of experiences for individuals. I entered into the field with a strong orientating framework, more of a philosophical perspective than a distinct social science theory. This perspective informed what I studied and how it was studied. It is based on the premise that human experience makes sense to those who live it, prior to all interpretations and theorizing (Creswell, 1994). This methodology was particularly suited to this research study because the focus was on understanding the essence of the lived experiences of the deans identified from data collected through interviews and analyzed with a focus on the meaning units to develop a structure and an essence statement.

The philosophical perspective I used for this study was based on the traditional pathway to the academic dean position. The traditional pathway to the dean position includes experience as a faculty member with increasing levels of administrative experience culminating in the dean position. It is assumed that the traditional thinking is that an academic dean needs to have these types of experiences to be successful in the position. Tradition, then, has impacted the pathway to the dean position. This research examined how non traditional academic deans make sense of their professional experiences. I collected data through interviews and analyze it focusing on meaning units to develop the structure and essence of an academic dean who has taken a non traditional pathway.

Participants and Site

I interviewed 11 community college academic deans who had taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. There were three strategies that I used to identify current academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the position. To identify deans at the national level, I contacted the National Council of Instructional Administrators (NCIA). The NCIA is a council of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) with over 4000 members representing about one fourth of all two year colleges. The NCIA agreed to assist me with identifying participants for my research initially through referrals from Executive Board representatives and then through two emails to the 4000 members of the council. I also focused on contacting state community college organizations to determine if they maintain a list or database of administrators. For example in Illinois, the Illinois Council of Community College Administrators publishes an annual directory of administrators. I discovered that there is

no central directory I could access that identified these types of groups. I sent email to a variety of sources including other students enrolled in the Community College Leadership program at Colorado State University, the Executive Board of the League for Innovation in the Community College, and individuals such as current community college chancellors and presidents asking for their assistance in identifying state groups. I received several leads from these contacts and sent requests for participants to the Texas Instructional Administrators, the Chief Academic Officers in Illinois, Arizona, and Kansas, and the presidents in Iowa. I also contacted presidents, chief academic officers, and other leaders in the community college system to identify within their colleges or within the community college system who have taken a non traditional pathway.

In this nominated sampling technique, the presidents, CAOs, and deans made me aware of individuals I could contact. As I received referrals or responses to my email requests, I created a list or database of current academic deans. I emailed these deans a letter asking them to self-identify and/or identify other deans they may know who have taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. The correspondence included my definitions of traditional and non traditional pathways, explained my study and its structure, requested some basic demographic information about the individual and the individual's current position and college, and pathway to the position. I asked the potential participants to complete the demographic form and return it to me. Once the deans who had taken a non traditional pathway were identified, I selected a variety of individuals to interview who experienced the phenomenon (criterion sampling). I received 58 responses to my questions for participants. Of those 58 responses, I identified 15 potential participants. I rank ordered the potential participants first, by

those who most closely met the literal definition of non traditional pathway for my study. Then, I used the demographic information to provide diversity in age, geographic location, previous positions to the community college, years of experience as a dean, and size of college. Thus, I used a maximum variation sampling strategy as well. I then contacted the deans by email to request their participation in this research study and to schedule an interview. When the deans agreed to participate, I sent them a consent form and scheduled the interviews.

Data Collection

The deans were interviewed by phone. I used unstructured and generally open ended questions to elicit views and opinions from the participants. Each interview was approximately 60 – 90 minutes. My goal was to have the participants describe the meaning of the experience or the essence of being a dean who had taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position.

The interview questions were open ended to encourage the deans to share their experiences. The interviews were tape recorded. I made field notes in a research journal after each interview to record my observations and feelings. These notes were used to assist in the coding of the data. I completed two to three interviews, transcribed them, and analyzed the data in each separately. The interview questions were then reviewed and revised based on the analysis of the data as I learned how the structure of the phenomenon was taking shape. I then continued interviewing the next two to three participants and repeated the process.

Data Analysis

Phenomenological researchers use the analysis of significant statements, the generation of meaning units, and the development of an “essence” description (Creswell, 1998). Phenomenological data analysis proceeds through the methodology of reduction, the analysis of specific statements and themes, and a search for all possible meanings (Creswell, 1998).

The data analysis process that I used is based on Strauss and Corbins’ (1990) constant comparative analysis method. In my first step, I organized the data to get a sense of the whole data base. I read the transcripts several times and reviewed the tapes of the interviews to immerse myself in the details. This provided me with a sense of the interviews as a whole so that I could create a full description of my experience of the phenomenon. The next step was to identify statements about how each of the deans experienced the phenomenon of taking a non-traditional pathway to the position.

In the first level or open coding, I reviewed the transcripts and identified key words and phrases. I listed out the significant statements that identified how the deans had experienced the non-traditional pathway. Next, I grouped these statements into meaning units or themes. The meaning units included words, phrases, lines of text, sentences, or paragraphs that held meaning. In the second level or axial coding, I related and clustered the meaning units into categories or themes. I created a master list of codes from the interviews that I had completed, defined the codes, and then grouped them together into themes. I then memoed about each of the interviews. In this memoing document, I used the axial codes and inserted verbatim quotes from the participants. I then reviewed the data and selected the core categories. In the third level or selective

coding, I reflected on the core categories to build the story of the deans' transition to the dean position. From this reflection, the structure of the phenomenon emerged. I then constructed a composite of the lived experiences of deans that described the structure of the phenomenon of being an academic dean who had taken a non traditional pathway to the position.

Trustworthiness

I used four methods to establish trustworthiness in this research study. These methods included member checking, rich textural description, peer review, and reflexive journaling.

First, I asked a panel of judges (peers and trusted advisors) to review the initial interview questions and provide me with feedback. The goal of the questions was to gain a deep, rich knowledge of the participants. The feedback from the panel assisted me to clarify the questions and determine that the questions would result in the information I was seeking.

During the interview process, I tested my understanding by restating information the participants shared asking for confirmation or correction. I also used member checking by returning the transcription of the interview to the participant so that the participant could confirm that the transcription was accurate and that it conveyed the meanings of the interview.

The goal for the data collection was to provide a rich textural description from the interviews. A peer review or evaluation of the data assisted with this. After I coded and interpreted the data, I asked another researcher or peer to review the data to look for patterns (meaning units) and to provide feedback that the patterns fit together logically or

if the data should be arranged in a different pattern. The peer reviewers reviewed my coding and interpretations to determine if my conclusions make sense.

Finally, I used a journal to record my personal reflections about the research. I used this as a check and balance tool as I reflected on and interpreted the data. After I completed each interview, I spent approximately 30 minutes reflecting on the interview and recording my reflections. I used these reflections as a tool to help me bracket my preconceived ideas about the deans' experiences so that I understood their journey through their voices. I believed that I needed to be aware of this at all times so that my personal experiences and beliefs did not work their way into the interpretation of the data. Once the interviews had been transcribed, I also added my comments to the transcriptions.

The concept of suspending bias or epoch is central to phenomenological methodology. I needed to bracket my preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of the participants. Because I am currently employed as an academic dean in a community college, I needed to be consciously aware of this throughout the study. I strive to examine and seek meaning in each participant's unique perspective through an open and informed perspective.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who had taken a non-traditional pathway to the dean position. The research acknowledges that there will be a great number of retirements within administrative positions in the next ten years. There have been many studies completed that look at the pathway to the chief academic officer and president positions.

This research also identifies that the dean position is pivotal in the pathway to these positions. There has been less research completed looking at the dean position and the pathway to this position. This study will describe the structure and essence of what it means to be an academic dean who has taken a non-traditional pathway to the position. It will provide information to those who may be contemplating these roles and to those who are responsible for filling these positions.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The participants for this study are diverse, six men and three women, coming from six states, ranging in age from 39 to 70, and from different ethnicities including White, African American, and Hispanic. All have master's degrees and four have doctorates. Their backgrounds are also diverse including previous work in state government, ministry, health care, business, and the military. Several are financially secure after retiring from a full career or from owning and selling a successful business. Others left or retired from successful careers to transition to education motivated by the challenge of a new career. All share a common desire to help others which was one of the attributes that drew the participants to education.

The backgrounds of the deans are unique as are the colleges to which the deans transition. The deans share very personal stories of how they came to the position and how they transitioned into the community college. The stories of first year transition provide numerous insights into who the deans are, their values, and their desires to be successful in the transition. I will introduce the participants detailing attributes such as age, education, work experience, and degree and then present their individual stories of their transition.

Introduction of Participants

Tom

Tom is 70 years old and came to the community college to be the Director of Continuing Education and Community Service after working for 24 years in state

government. Within months of being at the college, the position was renamed Dean of Corporate and Community Education. He has been at the college for 12 years and now holds the position of Vice President Workforce Development and Community Development. Tom has a master's degree in Public Administration with a background in social work and "I don't have a doctorate and never desired to have one."

Tom is very well known in the community, "I have been around 40 years in the community and I know a lot of important people." He was recruited for the position at the community college by the president. "I don't need this position from a financial perspective. I don't need to work." Tom has an extensive personal history with education that underscores the importance of education in his life. His parents had bachelor's degrees; both he and his wife have more than one master's degree; his children have degrees and one son works in education. His wife worked in education and he has provided college funds for his grandchildren.

Ray

Ray has been the Dean of Continuing and Professional Education for six months. He is 49 years old and came to the community college from a position with the state housing authority. He has over 20 years of marketing and sales experience owning a business and working with a nationwide chain of newspapers. Ray has an MBA degree and is currently working toward a doctorate degree.

He is well known in the community and has been an active K-12 school board member serving his fourth term. He is very proud of his work with the school district. "I was a high profile community person and coming from the school board it's almost like an assumed educational background." His wife is an administrator for the school

district and his “family life is very good.” He learned of the position from someone connected to the college who said “there’s a position out there for a dean that works with business and the community and it sounds so much like you, and you’re the kind of person they need.” He applied for the position and “the more I found out in the interview, it really sounded like a great match and it has been.”

Manny

The move to education was a deliberate choice for Manny. He left his career in economic development to pursue a Ph.D. in Community College Leadership. “I got myself financially set and I just planned way ahead of things.” He has been at the college for one year as the Dean of Workforce Education. To get the position, he used “networking, meeting influential people, and worked it into a position.” He attended a variety of professional meetings in the state to meet people “to demonstrate my interest and talk to them of how I saw the role of the college and how my background could tie in.”

Manny is 47 years old with an M.B.A and the Ph.D. He has approximately 18 years of work experience in international economic development. Prior to coming to the college, he didn’t see the role that community colleges could play in economic development. This has now become a passion for him. He is upfront that his ultimate career goal is “the presidency.”

Nate

Nate is 70 years old and retired from the ministry “there really was no retirement from it, I just walked away from it” after 25 years of service. He transitioned to the community college 27 years ago staying within one college district. When he came to the

community college, “the college was only 15 years old. They had many positions and were hiring folks from the public school system and business.” He came to the community college to be Dean of Continuing Education. He is currently the Dean of Workforce and Economic Development.

His was a conscious choice to “walk away from the ministry” and move to education. He also made a conscious choice not to be a teacher but to be an administrator. He facilitated the move by earning a doctorate in Community College Leadership and higher education administration and working an internship at the community college while still employed in the ministry. He sees the move from the ministry to education as a “natural progression.” He draws a strong correlation between the ministry “teaching and counseling” and education. “There was a natural flow from teaching adults in one setting to teaching adults in another setting.”

Harry

Harry began his career as a carpenter. He joined the Air Force and after leaving, earned a bachelor’s degree in industrial technology. He tried teaching in the high school but “it was not for me.” He went back to carpentry but left because of “insufficient funds and it was cold.” He tried high school teaching again and then was recruited for a position as assistant supervisor of trades for the state, ultimately becoming the supervisor. He has been at the community college for 20 years. “I made a quantum leap to education.” He was recruited by the president and came to the community college as Dean of Instruction. “I had a solid reputation as understanding occupational vocational programs.”

His career has been influenced by the needs of his family. “The opportunity (the first dean position) was pleasing because I had two young children and even though this was more work, it was more money and that was certainly appealing.” When my youngest graduated from high school, I applied for and received another dean position (out of state).” Harry is 56 years old and has a doctorate degree. He is currently a vice president of Academic Affairs.

Mary

Mary came to the college as Dean of Health Sciences. She has been at the college for 12 years and is 54 years old. Her prior work experience was as a nurse, in nursing education, and with the state department of public health. She has 20 years of experience in nursing administration. After she completed her MSN degree, she “was looking for career mobility and recognition for the master’s degree. I saw the ad for the community college, decided to apply, and lo and behold was offered the position.”

Mary had done some “guest lecturing and some part time teaching at other institutions” and thought this position “even though it is an administrative role, there might be some opportunities for me to do some teaching.”

Cole

Cole is 39 years old and has been at the community college for five years. He came to the college as Director of Athletics “making a conscious choice to move to athletics because I was looking for a career change.” He had worked in business in marketing for an engineering firm. “I bought the business, managed and grew it, and sold it to a major engineering firm.” He completed a four year transition with the new firm and “spent time thinking about the next career move.” He selected athletics “and lo and

behold the college was hiring an athletic director.” Once there, the current vice president noted “you have the ability to do a lot more than just be an athletic director. I’d love to see you go back and get your master’s.” The academic dean position was vacant and the vice president wanted to “have you report directly to me and serve as our dean.” He served in the interim dean role until he earned the MBA degree.

He earned his MBA degree and noted “I was probably more qualified to be a dean of business than to be an athletic director and yet I still think I needed that MBA.” He is currently the Dean of Business and Social Science and has had that position for five months.

Pat

Pat is 53 years old and currently the Vice President of Academic Affairs. He has been in the community college system for 15 years coming in as a Dean of Humanities. His positions have been in several states with him moving to new positions to gain additional responsibilities. He is ready to move on to the presidency. “In the rather conventional way, I went straight into a master’s degree program with the idea that I would pursue an academic career.” His degree is in humanities and literature and language. He entered the military after working briefly in the corporate world because “I didn’t much like the corporate environment. I was led into the military because there was no money available to continue graduate studies and an overabundance of people stocking the graduate department.” He worked a “highly technical, very specialized career field in the Air Force” even with the degree in humanities. He taught at the Air Force Academy and earned his Ph.D. at an Ivy League institution. He continued to

“bounce back and forth between the operational and academic side of the Air Force” and then was offered and took early retirement.

I applied for many faculty positions, was not terribly successful, but was very successful at getting interviews for administrative positions. I ended up in an administrative track with the community college and frankly, I love it. If you would have asked me when I was at the Ivy League school or in my final years at the Air Force Academy what my career would look like, I would have described to you a very traditional academic career, go off to some school and join the faculty, publish or perish. (Pat)

Adam

Adam is 56 and retired four years ago from a 20 plus year career in financial management. He held “high level positions with a substantial salary” and he is financially secure. He works in a multi-campus system starting as an accountant financial consultant in the district office. He had been offered a teaching position and an associate dean position at different campuses in the system. He was “approached by the president and vice president (of another campus in the system) about the technical dean position.” His current position is Dean of Business and Technology which he has held for eight months. He has an MBA degree and has considered pursuing the doctorate in Community College Leadership.

Linda

Linda is well known in the community serving as a school board member for 10 years and in other community oriented positions. She came to the community college as Dean of Health Professions and also had very limited adjunct teaching experience. She learned of the position from a friend who was on the board of the community college.

I didn't believe I was qualified for the position. I don't have any background in academia, I would think they would want somebody who had many more of those features. I threw my hat in the ring to be

considered for the position and didn't believe that I would be considered.
(Linda)

She has held the position for seven months.

Linda is 53 with MBA and MSN degrees. Her family is very important to her. After starting a family, her work positions were "part time because I did want to spend some time with my children." She has held positions as a nurse, nurse researcher, and in nurse education. After she earned her MSN in 2006, "I really only thought I would be faculty, part time faculty. I'd come to a point where I was able to make that choice. Economically that did not present a struggle for me." Education has "always been important." Her husband is a professional, "both my dad and my husband's father were school superintendents. Both of our mothers were educators as well. I think that I've grown up with education and really believe how important education is and what opportunities it can provide."

Amy

Amy is "the product of a community college." She served in the Air Force and in the Reserves for 23 years, joining right after she graduated from high school. "One of my primary reasons for going into the military was I knew that there was not going to be a way for me to afford college after high school." Joining the Air Force was a way "to leave the small town I grew up in." The Air Force paid "for all of my education, up through my Master's degree." She trained as a medic in health care. After leaving the Air Force, she worked in health care administration.

Amy is 50 years old and has a master's degree in Health Care Administration.

She came to the community college as Dean of Career Education. “My pathway into education was based on luck.” She learned of her current position from a friend in the Reserves who was a faculty member at the college.

He kept talking to me about it and how he thought I was qualified for the position. It’s not that I wasn’t interested in moving into education, I had always thought I would end up in education but I just didn’t think I was qualified for a position as dean at a community college. (Amy)

The deans came to the community college in a variety of positions including workforce development and community education, careers including business, health, and general careers, and liberal arts or general education. Some deans are responsible for primarily non credit programs, others only credit programs, and some a mix. Those responsible for non credit areas have more of a business philosophy, the need to make money and generate revenue for the institution. Their role in the institution leads them to question whether or not they are an academic dean or if they define themselves as an academician or educator. All of the deans clearly acknowledge their experience and expertise in their past life as important and they have a genuine desire to share their expertise with faculty and students.

Education has been a factor in many of the dean’s lives either through a family history with education, participation on a school board, or by earning a degree or taking classes at a community college. This is important because it establishes an understanding of education and a mindset toward the importance of education. The deans are comfortable in their knowledge of education and it lends itself to their desire to be a part of it. Some of the deans made a conscious choice to move to education by planning for the career move, others were recruited, others fell into it. Several had determined that the transition to education would be a good career move to pursue after retirement.

Knowledge of or being known in the community was perceived as a method to smooth the transition because it increased the level of comfort with the move. A strong sense of self and confidence, an entrepreneurial spirit, is a shared trait of the deans. The deans' experiences, values, and personal attributes are evident as they tell their stories of transition.

Stories of the Transition

The stories the deans share of their transition to education are unique and personal and therefore need to be told by the deans in their own words. They provide their overall impression of the experience, why they believe the college selected them, and the skills they brought to the position. They discussed their experiences in the first year(s) as they transitioned to their new life in education.

Mary described her first year at the college as “truly baptism by fire. I felt one step ahead of the flames at all times.” She described the prior culture of the institution as a “we/they mentality. I had to work really, really hard to overcome that and to gain trust and prove myself to these folks.” She discusses the lack of an orientation program for her saying, it was “extremely frustrating. It was sink or swim.” She used her strength of character and personal management style to overcome many issues. “It took me at least a good year to two years to get the faculty to fully forget what was.” She sought support from the faculty and camaraderie from other administrators at the college. “Feeling like I had some support, that helped me to hang in there.” There were several administrators hired at the same time she was.

It sort of made for kind of equal footing. They hadn't had a history with the institution like having taught here and then were promoted to the dean position. They were from the outside as I was from the outside. So, we able to sort of bond and try to hang together through all this. So there was

that kind of camaraderie and if it weren't for that fact, I definitely would have said, forget it, for my sanity. (Mary)

She believes she was valued for her administrative experience and background in supervision. She also recognized that "there was only one other applicant for the position so it's not like they had a ton of people to choose from." She reflected on the skills she brought to the position and how they benefited the college.

I was able to bring my knowledge about things such as blood-borne pathogens to the college and update our requirements within the division for that. I put policies and procedures in place, trying to put more of a formalization into things. I'm very collaborative. It took time, energy, and a bit of enthusiasm to gain their trust. I might not be able to speak all their language but at least I know what their job is and what they're trying to teach future health care professionals. I'm a very conscientious person so I would say I'm going to do this and I would follow through on it. I walked the walk and talked the talk. And that's really what they were looking for, somebody that had good, strong administrative experience and now I see why. (Mary)

Mary's skills are a mix of her expertise in health care and management skills. She believes that she was valued for her interpersonal and management skills because the college was in need of those skills at the point she was hired.

Harry shared that it was "a tremendous transition from the state level to higher education. The transition was tremendous for me." He was concerned about himself personally, "I was always thinking – what are my options if this doesn't work? I will have to go back to building houses." He recognized that "higher education administrators speak their own language. This was a new language for me and I had a lot to learn." His experience in the first year was unique in that "it was two months before my family moved here and I worked 80 – 90 hour weeks. I learned the job by actually reading every file in the filing cabinet." He agreed with Mary in that "I didn't know the history. I didn't know the plans. I didn't know the future. I just started reading to survive." He

felt that “being accepted into the culture wasn’t all that smooth.” He believes he was valued for his administrative experience and knowledge of occupational programs.

“Success is ultimately related to some basic personal values and understanding of human relations. I can speak the speak and walk the talk and I was hired to support their needs.”

He discovered that he “needed to be willing to learn from my mistakes.” He developed a unique way to get feedback from others. “I developed an evaluation instrument that I handed to all the faculty and I asked them to fill it out and send it to the president.” He did this “because I wanted to learn.” He used the instrument for the first transition and continues to use it today. “The first one was very frank and certainly a lot to build on, and multiple years later, an excellent review. I learned some truths about myself and what I needed to know to be a good administrator.” Harry also had a transition to another dean position in another state. He felt that this “transition has been great. I am just learning how to shovel sun instead of shovel snow. Did I have naysayers? You bet. But, the transition has been great.”

Linda recognized this as “one of the most challenging transitions that I have made.” She reflected on why the college selected her and the skills she brought to the position.

My family knew a lot of people in the community. I think my community involvement and community stature are fairly well known among especially health care providers and that had something to do with me being hired. They must have thought that they would give it a try, and see if my reputation in the community matched with or would work with the background that I had and the credentials that I did bring. I think they were attracted because I had both business experience and the MSN credentials. I think they wanted to find someone with a nursing background because nursing is the largest department. I do think that they had looked for awhile. It can be very difficult to recruit in the nursing master’s area because there is a critical shortage. Sometimes I ask myself if I was just a good, convenient person at the right time. I bring a whole

lot of experience. I'm a big picture person. I really like projects like budgeting and I enjoy management. I think my own strength as an individual and having been in management positions before really helped me. (Linda)

Linda believed she was valued for her knowledge of the community, her mix of business and nursing experience, and her management skills. Even though she was known in the community, she still acknowledged, "for the large number of people that I know in the community, I did not know really anyone when I came to the college. I really didn't have any base." She continues, agreeing with Mary and Harry, "I had no feel for the culture, no feel for the politics involved. I was pretty much told that there was no orientation booklet for the dean. So I found myself finding my own way." Her first year was also unique in that "a couple of deans chose to challenge me in my territory within the first three months that I was here. I think they kind of wanted to see what I was made out of." She attributes her success in handling this to "my own strength as an individual and having been in management positions before really helped me kind of negotiate that." She talks about encountering the administrative tasks such as promotion and tenure documents for faculty within weeks of arriving. "I spent a lot of time on weekends just poring over documents that had been written by others, reading files, figuring out what was expected of me and what was reasonable for me to do in this situation." She acknowledges, "I've never been afraid of learning." She sums up her experience the first year with,

I just felt that I could have been helped out a little more. I still feel like I don't get told things sometimes. I feel like I have to discover things on my own. So, it's a learning process for me. I kind of had to figure that stuff out myself and ask a lot of questions and felt that there was a barrier, kind of. (Linda)

Nate transitioned to the community college from the ministry. “I knew people in the district. I had done volunteer work in the community and had been very active.” He was also known at the college because he had completed an internship in the district. “I am able to work with people of all ethnicities, all backgrounds, all socioeconomic areas. This provides me with a firm and real knowledge about people and relationships.”

Nate shared a story about overhearing an administrator state that he would never want to hire a minister to work in the community college. Nate felt “a little sensitive sitting there.” He says of the transition, “I didn’t feel any resistance and don’t today. I have been able to use that background (the ministry) successfully in my relationships. It hasn’t been a hindrance at all.” He did acknowledge that,

I wasn’t as open with my background, in the beginning, as I am now. There was, I guess, timidity on my part in the beginning. I worked through that and there has been general acceptance all of the 27 years I have been in the district. (Nate)

He shared this insight, “I felt I had sufficient ability to be productive and I had a sufficient background to be helpful.” He believed that “I provided an outside view of certain things that enabled me to bring up different concepts and sometimes the devil’s advocate in certain areas to say let’s look at it from this viewpoint.”

Cole reflected on why he believed the college selected him.

My private business experience helped out in the selection process. You’re not going to meet a whole lot of deans in business that actually have the level of private business experience I have. They can talk about anything they want out of a textbook, but I’ve actually lived those things. I bring organizational skills, people skills, being able to envision where a division or department should go, and the ability to build consensus and have others share in that vision and go forward. I also love people. I love working with other people, collaborating on projects and working through challenges. I think all divisions are looking for someone to champion their cause. They’re looking for a leader that they can trust and when they

need somebody to go to bat for them, someone they can trust will get it done. (Cole)

Cole shared these insights about his transition,

I think people here really respected the fact that I ran my own business and that I sold it to the largest engineering conglomerate in the world. I think that had a certain currency to it that bought me a certain level of acceptance here. (Cole)

He also believed that the business and interpersonal skills he brought assisted with gaining acceptance. He felt that he was “readily accepted there, with other administrators, and then as I worked with more and more faculty members from across the various division, in committees or whatever, then I would gain their acceptance as well.” He also introduced a perceived difference in acceptance between career and transfer faculty.

There may be someone on the career/vocational side that really has a heightened respect for what I did in private business just because they’re aware of the company I sold my business to or something. There may be a faculty member or two on the transfer side that just feels like all of our deans should have taught for 30 years before they became a dean or something like that. (Cole)

He believed that transitioning from “a non-conventional path into a dean’s role, that would be, frankly, tough, because there’s just so much about education that we in private business didn’t or don’t understand.” Cole had spent some time as Athletic Director/Associate Dean Business and felt “fortunate in that I had kind of this little five year transition period where I could kind of wean out of my old career, learn the new stuff, and now I feel like I’m ready to be a real dean.” He looked to the future saying, “in another five years, I don’t think anybody will remember that I came from private business. They’ll just assume that I started out teaching like everybody else did.” He

summarized his thoughts with, "I'll be accepted or not accepted based on the job I do, how well I work with the people and how effective I am in solving their problems."

Pat felt that the transition was "not terribly difficult." He does acknowledge that even though "I'd had some fairly prestigious academic tickets that I'd punched, the faculty were dubious of me as a colleague and a peer." He describes his first year transition as "I was just curious about what people were doing and why they were doing it. It was curiosity that guided me for the first year or so." His strategy included "if you ask the right kinds of questions or at least show the right kinds of interest, people will assume you are smarter than you are." His experience at the Air Force Academy provided him with the ability to "talk with some knowledge." In the first year, "there was a real focus on curriculum, curriculum development, and where we were headed as an institution." He found the culture to be "very collegial, so I came into a collegial environment and felt comfortable within it, and just perpetuated it."

He felt that "it was actually my administrative abilities that moved me forward. People began to trust that I would organize things in the right way and so they relied on me at a certain point to do that." He discussed the skills he brought to the college.

I brought a lot of management experience. Department of Defense accounting is basically fund accounting and I could talk budgets like there's no tomorrow. I can talk about computer equipment that was just emerging into the academic environment. I'd also had facilities development experience. I think the thing that draws people to my background is it was clear that I had that kind of experience and when I got there, it became evident that I had that kind of experience. When people would talk to me they could see that I understood what I was talking about when I'd talk about budgets and setting priorities. (Pat)

Along with the skills he brought to the position, Pat also attributed his success at the college to his military experience.

Just set things in order, treat people equitably and make sure that people were treated equitably, and people don't have huge expectations beyond that. The military prepared me to do that exceptionally well. Little did they know I was just using the military model within an academic environment. (Pat)

He summarized his transition this way "everybody said – you transitioned well to the community college. Well no, I just kind of moved into the community college. And brought me with myself and did what I can do well."

Adam believes that he was selected for the position because of "my diverse background and different skills sets of auto mechanics, engineering, and carpentry. I have the working knowledge of the skills that we're trying to teach in the technical areas." He also believes that

I was just a person of interest because I wasn't the conventional type of candidate they had ever had before. I'm told that I was chosen because of my ability of being forward looking. I wasn't going to live with the way things were. (Adam)

He believes that the college valued his financial background and skills. "They are obviously overshadowing the capabilities of what exists at the college. I was only on the campus two weeks and they made me chairman of the budget committee." He discussed his reasons for making the transition.

You have to have some of that background of wanting to help people. Having that strong (desire) made my transition a little easier than somebody who is just designing up a job and education turns out to be something they want to try. (Adam)

Adam also encountered several surprises as he made the transition. He believes that the college "was very traditional." He was surprised that "the college was not as progressive, did not stay as up to date as I thought it would." The college wanted to change direction. "They had come to the conclusion that they needed to start operating

like a business. It was a good direction. I just don't think they realized how much they were biting off." He discussed his disappointment that "there wasn't a lot of fresh blood, most of it was growth from within. But that culture's changed in the 3 ½ years I've been here." When he came, "there was not a big acceptance of outsiders." He also shared a downside of coming to the college. "One of the most disappointing things to me is that none of my experience that I brought with me was really evaluated for my pay." He also identified what he believed to be a misconception by the college about hiring a person from business.

They think that you bring someone in from industry and then that person goes out and taps the back of all their buddies in industry and you get this large influx of their employees wanting to come to school and they make these big donations to the college. They really were just trying to get me into that role so that I would go out and shake the hands of business and get donations and get those students for them. (Adam)

He concludes, "I enjoy what I'm doing. I enjoy working with people. I've had the good fortune of having three great department heads and an administration that has been willing to take the chance."

Amy described her transition as "not difficult for me. I transitioned in the summertime and things were kind of quiet. They hadn't had a dean in that position for most of the summer. The previous dean had retired so they had been searching for a few months. They really wanted to get someone into the position and the vice president was pretty glad that somebody got into the position." She had done a lot of research about the college to familiarize herself with the mission and vision and activities in the college.

They valued me for my master's degree in health care administration. They had been looking for a long time and we were getting close to the start of the fall semester. They really needed somebody and I was in the right place at the right time. (Amy)

In the first year, “they pretty much left me alone for the most part. Letting me feel my way through. People were very gracious in answering my questions and helping me as much as they could help me.” She described other transitions she had made, “in some of my previous positions it was you get thrown in and you either sink or swim and I had a tendency to function pretty well in that kind of environment. Go in, figure out what needs to be done and start doing it.” She went on to say,

It was not a hard transition by any stretch of the imagination. I had a lot of people who really helped me with that and supported me in terms of learning the internal policies and procedures and processes and that sort of thing. The deans in the career area were very helpful in taking me under their wing. We had very cordial relationships, we worked very well together. (Amy)

She doesn't believe her “pathway was unique, if you think about it from a career education philosophical perspective, the way I came up through the military and through a corporation and then into education.” She believes this is consistent with the pathway of many career educators. She acknowledges, “nobody really ever talked to me about it (the pathway) being non traditional, and I don't really think that it had an impact. I don't think that my background or pathway really influenced them or impacted them one way or the other.” She also surmised that there might be a difference if she were a transfer dean,

I'm not really sure they ever really thought too much about it, because I was on the career education side. I do think it would have been different if I was working with just arts and sciences faculty. I'm very much a career education minded person and that's a product of my pathway. (Amy)

She summarizes her feelings about the dean position, “I think that I found where I was supposed to be my whole entire career, but wouldn't have gotten there without the experiences I had before that.”

Tom chooses to set himself aside from the institution. "I'm not saying that I'm nothing of an academician, but that's never been a focus in my life." He sees himself more as a broker.

My expertise is in finding appropriate people and managing the system. This was not well received by the academic folks in the beginning. This has gotten more pleasant in recent years. And since elevation to the vice presidency, it's become much easier because they don't view me as an intruder or interloper any more. But I was certainly in the beginning.
(Tom)

He talked about his transition into the institution, "at this institution, the deans all meet weekly. And that went from being an uncomfortable experience to being one of the crowd, to being one of the old-timers, because of turnover due to retirements." The initial discomfort was "mostly personality based and it was a feeling among the other four academic deans that I did not possess the qualifications to be part of their group."

Tom has many years of work experience and expertise. He reflected on why he believed the college selected him "I am well known in the community. I have contacts that are important to the college. I believe I was valued for my management supervisory skills as opposed to academic skills." He believes that the college valued him for these skills and because "people have a familiarity with what I am trying to accomplish and I do it in a pretty non threatening kind of way." He has years of experience but "as long as I don't pretend to be an expert in microbiology or math, I have a certain level of respect from those people. Nor do I intrude too heavily in their world." Tom discussed the success of his programs and their financial viability, "as a matter of fact, we're beginning to subsidize some of the academic areas now. I've become more popular as we do more of this."

Ray questions whether he is an academic dean. "See in my mind, that means somebody who's evaluating teachers, helping kids get a professional education, which means you have education courses." Ray is responsible for continuing and professional education. "Those teachers are usually by contracts, they're not tenured. They just choose their class and that's it." He shares that his vice president "told me last week not to think of it that way, you're one of the deans." He defines the folks in his area saying, "we're just high energy, and it's really moving in all directions, on all cylinders, and it just makes it all happen." He shares that he was "received very well." The people at the college have been complimentary." One said, "we're lucky to have a person of your caliber out here." He believes in networking.

I try to get out quite a bit, meetings, going to community events, a lot of people here already knew me. I have a high profile in the area. I know business leaders and I serve on a lot of boards. People have been treating me very well. (Ray)

He does not have much interaction with faculty but "I deal quite a bit with the other deans. A couple of them mentor me as far as some of the fine points of credit courses, they're just so helpful." He sums up with "it all came together for me, so I can't imagine anybody saying, oh, that person wasn't ready to do what they're doing." Like Tom, he makes money. "We're profitable now. It's really hard to criticize someone who's brought the thing up to a level that never existed."

Manny defines himself as "very non traditional, having never stepped into a community college, period, until a year and a half, two years ago." He took the transition as a "challenge. I decided I wanted to make the switch. It would be a calling to go to the community college." He believed that he could provide a bridge between the colleges and economic developers within the area. He saw "a bigger role for colleges in economic

development. I used my intuition and personality, my business savvy to prepare for the transition.” In graduate school, “I just entrenched myself in reading as many articles and Google everything about community colleges – their missions to learn more about them.”

The college saw the proper fit and they saw the need of wanting to change and bring a different perspective. They wanted someone with a different perspective, more entrepreneurial, with a business mindset. They wanted somebody who had worked in the real world. I had to convince them that I could deliver because I didn't have years of experience in the community college. I know that in academia that you could be frowned down upon if you don't have umpteen years of academia background. Once they knew me and thought more visionary, they hired me. (Manny)

I know that I am still at a big disadvantage, and the college I'm at now, they took a big gamble on me because they knew I'm still learning. There is only one more dean here, they all understood that I was coming in with a major disadvantage of not having experience. I had the support from my other peers and my other directors under me. I received many compliments when I came here the first few weeks and I still do. They were very delighted to see a new, refreshing person from the outside and not only from the outside of the community but outside of academia. I have not seen any resentment. I heard comments from career directors that they were very impressed that the college was willing to take that gamble on somebody from that non traditional route. Right now I'm still struggling. But they know that the curve line is going to jump up and I'm going to open up more opportunities. (Manny)

Manny believed that the college valued him for his business background and his experience working in the real world. He acknowledged that the college took a risk when they hired him but they wanted the skill sets that he brought. He recognized that he would need to establish credibility and that he would need to rely on those skills as he transitioned into the college.

Each dean's story of transition is unique. The stories provide insight into who the deans are, the skills they bring, and the culture and needs of the community college. The quality of the transition is dependent on the culture of the institution and the deans personally. Their perceptions were both personal and professional, about themselves and

their personal success, about how this would impact them professionally, about the culture of the institution, and their impressions of the first year. Their confidence and belief in their skills and abilities helped them in the transition as well as their savvy and sound business skills.

The deans' reflection on why they believed the college selected them begins their acknowledgement or recognition of their non traditional pathway. It also reflects their self awareness and confidence in their skills and abilities. The deans believed that they were valued for their knowledge of their specific career, knowledge of and being known in the community, specific business skills such as management, leadership, budgeting and human relations skills, and simply being in the right place at the right time. They discussed their unique characteristics, and their perspective of why they were interesting to the college. It is important to the deans that their skills be recognized and valued by the colleges. They realize that they are different as a result of their non traditional pathway but they believe that they and the colleges can adapt. They are confident that they will be successful in the position because of who they are and what they bring to the college.

Now that you have become familiar with the deans, I will develop the themes that emerged to develop the structure of the phenomenon: what it means to be an academic dean who has taken a non traditional pathway to the position.

Structure and Essence of the Phenomenon

The traditional pathway for the presidency and chief academic officer positions includes a requirement for academic experience. This traditional pathway begins as a faculty member, moves to department chair, dean or division chair, chief academic

officer and then the presidency (Amey, VanDerLinden, & Brown, 2000; Moore, Salimbene, Marlier, & Bragg, 1983; Moore, Twombly, & Martorana, 1984; Vaughan, 1990). For my study, the non traditional pathway does not include time spent as a full time or part time faculty member or any other full or part time community college position.

The deans also defined their interpretation of a traditional pathway that was consistent with this definition. Their interpretation of the traditional pathway focused on the need for an appropriate academic credential/degree and teaching experience. They also noted that most of their fellow deans had extensive work experience in an academic environment. Therefore, academic credentials, teaching experience, and work experience in education give legitimacy or credibility in the educational environment.

As the deans told their stories of transition to the community college they reflected on the reasons they came to the community college, their values and self confidence, the strategies they used to gain acceptance and fit in, and the recognition that their pathway was non traditional which made them unique in the community college. From these stories, the structure and essence of the phenomenon of being an academic dean who has taken a non traditional pathway and working in that environment emerged. The structure of the phenomenon is a story of altruism and entrepreneurship, credibility and acceptance, assimilation and adaptation, and replication. The essence of the phenomenon is a story of paradoxes balancing the traditional beliefs and values of educators, the business perspective and values of the deans, and the alignment of those values and beliefs to accept those from a non traditional pathway.

Altruism and Entrepreneurism

The deans reflected on why they were motivated to come to the community college. The deans were motivated by their desire to give back to the community and their chosen career, their altruism. They also were motivated by their self confidence, skills, challenge, and willingness to take risks, their entrepreneurial spirit. The deans were motivated to give back sharing a strong desire to help others and aligning this need with the mission of the community college. They also discussed their motivation beyond giving back which included a family or financial framework for their decision, the interest in making connections between their past career and education, and their entrepreneurial spirit.

Motivation to Give Back.

The deans' altruism is articulated as a personal desire or need to do more, to give something back to the community, to develop youth, or to have an impact on their career area (e.g. nursing). Their expressed need to give back was consistent among all the deans.

The deans' altruism became apparent as they talked about being known in or having knowledge of the community. Several deans identified that they were well known in the community or had extensive knowledge of the community through previous positions or volunteer work. Several had influential roles or positions in the community or education. The deans perceived that service on school boards or other volunteer positions in education allowed them to give back to the community and helped them to understand education. They also clearly saw that the move to education was an opportunity to give back to the community. The deans reflected on why they chose to

make the transition to education and what they perceived to be the values of all educators, the unique needs of community college students, and their role in improving the future of these students. These concepts are intertwined as the deans articulated them.

I'm just interested in helping the community. (Ray)

I think for many of the people that come from outside academe into the community college systems, they have some of that motivation, even though they may not articulate it. They really want to give back in some kind of way. They want to live a life of service at some level. We're trying to make a difference in people's lives. It's hard for me to describe how important that's been to me throughout my career within the community college. It is that we make that kind of difference. (Pat)

And the move to education is not something to do lightly. To be successful in the position, there needs to be a strong desire to help people.

Realize that this is really what you want to do. If you really want to be in education, you want to be in a position where you could really serve people. (Nate)

You have to have some of that background of wanting to help people and having that strong desire. You can't just design up a job, and education turns out to be the chip, something you want to try. (Adam)

It appears that the deans have reached a point in their careers where they feel it is important to give something back and the move to education provides that opportunity. Based on these data, this may be a result of where they are in their lives, their age or financial security, their personal values and belief structures, or simply that their last job was no longer interesting to them. Many held volunteer positions in the community and seem to view education as a logical next step to pursue their altruistic goals. They believe that their perception of the values of educators and the mission of the community college are consistent with their need to give back. As they made the transition, several did note

that there needed to be a strong desire to help people to make the proper commitment to the field.

The deans saw a correlation between the needs of community college students and their desire to give back. The community college students were exactly the group they believed could benefit from their experience and expertise. It gave them satisfaction to help these students to be successful and improve their futures and fulfilled their altruistic needs.

It's being able to interact with people and to be a part of their lives and to know you are a part of what made them successful. (Nate)

I think that's part of what drives me is seeing students have new opportunities to make their lives better and to advance themselves. (Linda)

My goal was to help motivated adults and students get an education and get into the job market. I always had this interest in helping people get a rung or two up on the ladder and be happier and able to take care of their family better. (Adam)

I was a big advocate of education even before I got into education and that was part of the attraction for me. I love education. I love working with students and really showing them how valuable education is to their lifelong goals. I have a real desire to help. (Cole)

I think that I found where I was supposed to be my whole entire career. I have had the chance to work with a lot of academically and economically challenged and diverse students. Because I was a first generation college student who couldn't afford college and went to a community college to start that provided me with an opportunity to really have an impact in some way that I might not have had otherwise. (Amy)

Mary focused on the professional perspective and her ability to impact the career of nursing.

Nurses tend to be helping individuals. The dean position allowed me to prepare beginning level health professionals and to try and shape the future of nursing. (Mary)

The deans' altruism is consistent with the mission of the community college to provide educational opportunities to a diverse population of students to prepare them for transfer to a four year institution or for employment. The colleges can provide opportunity and hope and improve the current and future lives of students. The deans came to the community college with a perception of how they could give back providing assistance to the students by sharing their knowledge and expertise to help students be successful and improve their futures. The deans clearly see the correlation between their altruistic desires and the mission of the community college. This match helped them to find a home at the community college because their altruistic goals were a strong motivation for why they came to the community college. The deans also had other motivations as they made the transition.

Motivation Beyond Giving Back.

The motivation the deans had for coming to the community college went beyond their altruistic goals to include their entrepreneurial spirit. This motivation had a practical side including a family or financial framework for their decision; the interest in making connections between their past career and education; and their entrepreneurial side of challenge, interest, and risk taking.

The deans were motivated by family and financial considerations. Several of the deans had financial security, either from retiring from a prior career or selling a successful business. The lure of the challenge of the move was either to provide better for their family or to provide the deans with the personal satisfaction of succeeding.

I was motivated to succeed. I knew this was a new ballgame and I had a lot to learn. I had a motivation not to fail to provide my kids with an income. This position was more money and allowed me to provide for my family better. I was going to make it work. (Harry)

After earning the MSN, I really only thought I would be faculty, and at that a part time faculty position. I'd come to the point where I was able to make that choice and economically that did not present a struggle for me. (Linda)

I have a lot of money and financial independence. I don't need to work. I don't need this from a financial perspective. From a personal perspective, it was a challenge for me. I dug in my heels and said I was going to make this work. (Tom)

My retirement is in the bank. When I turn 65, I'll pull two pensions from industry and Social Security. This provides me with freedom. Yet, I work 12 – 15 hour days to get the job done here. I'm also more comfortable in the sense that if you don't want me in this job, I'll leave. (Adam)

Because the deans are at different points in their lives, the transition to education was influenced by financial and family needs. Either the deans are motivated to succeed because they need to be successful to provide for their families or they are financially secure and are simply motivated by the challenge. Either way, the deans agreed that the transition to the dean position presented a challenge and that was interesting to them.

I was really looking at something that was interesting to me. I decided that the dean position would present to me a good challenge and an opportunity to do something that I'd never done before. I have always been an achiever. I think I can contribute some things and so it was something that was going to be a challenge because it's so different than what I've done. I had done a lot of other things and this would be one more thing that I thought I could do. (Linda)

This is a challenge and I've always read these things build character. I'm not a quitter and I didn't want to walk away feeling like a failure. I know I can do this. I know I have the skills. (Mary)

The deans' strong sense of self and confidence in their skills and expertise is apparent. To motivate, the dean position needs to be interesting and present a challenge. They viewed the move to education as a good mix of their skills, the opportunity to give back, and the challenge of succeeding at a new career.

The deans went on share their insights into what made the dean position interesting to them. These responses were a mix of the philosophical and the practical ranging from the need for a job or a readiness to try something new to a discussion of increasing impact in the community. The deans reiterated their desire to help the community, aligned the dean position with their area of expertise, and discussed components of the dean position that were interesting to them.

The dean position is the perfect combination of business and education. What I love about this position is it broadens my reach into the community. My influence in the community is broader and bigger things happen. I can develop something and see how it benefits the community and the college – it's win-win. (Ray)

I saw the connection between my love of economic development and the community college and I wanted to capitalize on that. Bringing the two together makes me unique and I took that on as a challenge. (Manny)

There were a couple of things that were attractive about the first dean position – it was a legitimate job and it was pretty clear that I would be engaged in a wide variety of things. What we have within the academic environment is a broad range of influence, being able to participate in discussions outside my content area and having broad influence does appeal to me. (Pat)

I'd already counted enough beans in my life. I decided this was something I wanted to give a try because I was motivated to help motivated adults and students. It was half my drive to work. It lowered my stress level. Occasionally I make a \$20,000 decision where in industry my monthly budget was larger than the budget of this whole college. (Adam)

As the deans reflected on why they were attracted to the dean position, their insights were a mix of the practical, their altruistic goals, and entrepreneurial spirit. The deans aligned their experience and expertise in their past lives with education. The elements that drew them to education included the ability to expand their influence and ability to help the community, marrying their business expertise and education, and working with students to share their experiences. It also became apparent that the deans were ready for a

change and education provided them with a challenge and they were willing and able to take the risk.

Their confidence and self awareness and understanding is evident in their comments and their perceptions. They have confidence in their skill sets, their ability to do a task, and their ability to be successful at the community college. They have had significant life experiences. Several are secure financially which allows them the freedom to take risks. Many are known in the community and are recognized for their contributions. Many came to this position because they were encouraged by others, by those who saw the quality of their work in business or in the community. This confidence helped them to achieve the dean position, to make the transition, and they perceive it will help them to be successful in the position.

It was interesting to see the common participants' motivators. They came to the position acknowledging a genuine desire to help others. They quickly were able to align that personal desire with the community college mission or to see the alignment with the purpose of education and the values of educators. The ability to mold and provide for future professionals was also a motivator. From this altruistic perspective, the deans wanted to make a difference in people's lives, to share their knowledge and expertise, and to provide future professionals for their field. They saw the potential to make the future better for students and for their chosen profession.

The position needed to satisfy their need to help the community and it had to be challenging, of interest to them, and use their skills. Through their entrepreneurial spirit, the deans are motivated by the challenge, the ability to use their skills in a new environment, and the impact they can have on others. But, the position must hold their

interest. They are taking a position and moving to a new environment that is outside their comfort zone. That risk taking is interesting to them and reinforces their confidence in themselves and their skills. They began to align their understanding of the position with their skills and interests from their past positions. They articulated this through their perceptions of why the college hired them. This alignment of skills and their past lives with the dean position and the field of education helps the deans to recognize that their skills and past experience have value to the college and that they and the college can benefit from the transition.

The deans had clear motivation for why they came to the community college. It was important to them to understand those motivations and to acknowledge why the college selected them. The deans have a practical perspective on their continuing success and how they gain acceptance at the community college. Their altruism and entrepreneurship including their confidence, their skills and abilities, their understanding of the community, and their interest in the position, and their ability to give something back all should contribute to that success.

Credibility and Acceptance

The need for establishing credibility to gain acceptance was important to the deans. This recognition came early in the transition. The deans held very traditional beliefs about what was valued in education and articulated the need for an appropriate academic credential, preferably the doctorate, and teaching experience as a method to gain respect from educators. They also believed that they could educate the educators about the importance of the skills they had gained in their past lives and how the skills would transfer to the institution. Each dean talked about the interchangeability of skills

between past life and education. From the deans' perspective, establishing credibility would help them to gain acceptance and to overcome or minimize their non traditional background.

Need for Appropriate Academic Credential.

The deans were aware of the traditional pathway of educators. This may have been their preconceived notion or a view that was articulated when they got in the position. It also was reinforced as they looked at the other deans at the institution. They were also aware that their pathway was not the traditional one.

I meet so few people that have come to education in this way after another career. All the academic deans have been doing this for quite a while and most of them started out as teachers and worked their way into administration. (Cole)

Most deans come from within and they move up the ranks and they've either been a chair or they've been instructors. (Manny)

A couple of them asked me would I ever consider moving over to the academic side but I think that's going to be a more traditional path of the people that have earned it coming through that side as opposed to a newcomer. The technical side takes a little bit of a different fish. (Adam)

The deans were aware that their pathway was not traditional prior to coming to the community college and, in many cases, that awareness increased after they entered the college. The concern that they had not followed the traditional pathway led them to recognize that they were different. From my perspective, this difference was not troubling to them, but it did make them feel unique. The deans place value on being unique yet they were practical in their understanding that they needed to gain acceptance from educators so that they could assimilate into the culture. They articulated their strategy to gain acceptance and to establish credibility.

The deans articulated the need to establish similarities with educators. One element to help them establish credibility was having or obtaining the appropriate educational credentials. All of the deans, except one, came to the position with at least a master's degree. It is logical to assume that the dean position was posted and advertised with a minimum of the master's degree required. The one dean who came to the community college without the master's degree compared the need for a degree in education with the need in business.

In private business an MBA or upper division degree means nothing. When I came in here, and I saw that it (the degree) meant something, I went back and got my MBA. When you are competing against 25 or 30 other applicants, I think it's very important to have at least the minimum qualifications and not have to go through the equivalency process. (Cole)

Four of the deans hold the doctorate degree and two are pursuing the doctorate degree. The traditional view articulated by the deans placed importance on the doctorate. Again, this view came from their preconceived notions as well as from the institution once they arrived. Manny and Nate saw the degree as the method to gain the position and actively sought the degree as they made the transition. Others noted that the degree made them more similar to the traditional academics and that helped with acceptance. Others voiced their frustration with academia's reliance on the doctorate.

The doctorate gave me credibility. Having that doctorate name in front of you weighs a lot more, gives you more credibility in the academia world and the community world. In the business world it does to some degree but not everyone is impressed by it. In the interview process I proved to them I could this. I have this PhD, and I can do the required duties for the position. (Manny)

I took classes that got me the theory of higher education to back up the practice of higher education experience. (Harry)

The traditional perspective on the importance of the doctorate degree when supervising faculty was also articulated.

I also felt very strongly that my master's degree from an educational perspective was enough, but not really enough. A dean should have the academic credentials, at a minimum, one level higher than any of those that they supervise. There is that whole philosophical perspective that a dean of arts and sciences should have a PhD or an EdD. (Amy)

There was also a practical perspective about the importance of the doctorate degree that was articulated by the deans. They acknowledged the importance of the degree but recognized that the degree alone was not going to make them successful or effective leaders.

I'd had some fairly prestigious academic tickets that I'd punched but the faculty were dubious of me as a colleague and a peer. An Ivy League PhD and a Master's from University of Michigan and I had kind of gotten first class tickets to get on the train. On the other had that's about all that's good for. It doesn't perpetuate your reputation and it certainly doesn't make you smarter than your peer group. (Pat)

Although I don't have a PhD, I had two degrees. I believe that we all have a job to do and it doesn't matter what the letters are after our last name. It's that we all are a team and that we achieve things together. (Linda)

I feel frustration when deans tout alphabet soup. I don't have a doctorate and I never desired one. That gets thrown out occasionally as a reminder or way of striking back. I don't have as high a credential as I could have to be more acceptable to all of these people. I do feel insecure about not having the Ph.D. that I never really had the motivation to get. (Tom)

The deans saw the need for a degree through a very traditional lens. They recognized that they needed to have credentials equal to the educators for credibility and the appropriate degree was the most obvious. From the deans' perspective, the master's degree was appropriate for the position and the doctorate was even more valued. This reinforces their traditional viewpoint and the perspective of their institution. Several of the deans had the doctorate or were working on the doctorate as they transitioned.

Several others are currently pursuing the doctorate. The deans' business mindset may not value the degree but they quickly perceived its importance to establish credibility as they made the transition. The deans also wanted to put the degree in perspective acknowledging that it was not the only element that would help them to gain acceptance and be successful at the community college.

Need for Teaching Experience.

The dean's traditional perspective on education included two elements, the need for the appropriate academic credentials and the need for teaching experience. The deans felt that teaching was important to establish credibility because they felt it was expected by educators. They also perceived that it would help them to understand the role and responsibilities of faculty, a position they may not have encountered in their previous lives. As they discussed the need for exposure to teaching, they identified formal and informal teaching experience that they achieved in previous roles. From their perspective, lack of teaching experience was correlated closely with the non traditional pathway and they felt the need to draw the correlation between their past and their perceived qualifications for the dean position.

First, the deans articulated their traditional viewpoint on the need for teaching experience and how they addressed that need for establishing credibility.

I define my pathway as nontraditional because I have not taught in the community college. I did teach classes at a university because I knew that I needed to build that credential of academia around my experience. If I had strategically thought about becoming that kind of person, I would have got the credentials to teach in a two year school and worked my way up. (Harry)

You're not going to be credible with faculty if you can't hold your own in the classroom. They'll sniff that out in a heartbeat if they don't think you could hold your own in a classroom. (Pat)

Skill in the classroom does not necessarily come to play in the area of the vice presidency. From the academic viewpoint, or the instructional vice president's viewpoint, the only way that knowledge and skill is going to be there is to have come through the classroom. (Nate)

For credibility, I teach a course each semester. It keeps you connected. I teach so I understand the world of education. (Tom)

I sought experience teaching at a local four year institution. And that experience for me was essential. I had a good relationship with that institution which I knew would be something that I would want to have coming into the dean position. It gave me an opportunity to be in a higher education teaching position so then I knew what my faculty were facing or at least I could relate to a lot of what my faculty were facing with students. But for me, that was preparation for the dean position. (Linda)

The deans provided a variety of examples about their perception of the need for teaching experience to establish credibility. They discussed actively seeking teaching experience to connect with the world of educators or to build relationships with educators. They also acknowledged the value faculty placed on teaching experience. Faculty and the role of faculty was an unknown to the deans and they perceived that it was very important to understand what faculty do. The deans perceive that lack of teaching experience underscores their difference to educators and their non traditional pathway. This led the deans to articulate formal and informal types of teaching experience they had acquired in past lives.

The deans identified examples of formal and informal teaching experience they had acquired. They were drawing the correlation between their past lives and the requirements of the position. They were able to make the connection between informal experiences they had that were like teaching so they could establish that they had that credential.

On the job, I enjoyed teaching patient education types of things. I had also done some guest lecturing. (Mary)

I guess I call myself a teacher. In business, I would teach the people how the new system was going to run and help them learn the culture of the new business. At home, I had a large shop home and I would teach friends of my children how to do automotive repair and basic mechanical stuff. So, I've taught, but I haven't taught in the academic realm. (Adam)

I taught at the Air Force Academy. I applied for many faculty positions, was not terribly successful, but was very successful getting interviews for administrative positions. (Pat)

I taught in the military so it's not like I don't have experience in that respect. I taught health care related content. I decided, well, I taught in the military so it's not like I don't have experience in that respect. I believe I got the position based on my master's degree in health care administration and the fact that I had taught in the military. The fact that I taught was probably more emphasized than what they perceived as my experience in higher education administration. (Amy)

It was important to the deans to establish that they had teaching experience as they transitioned into the community college. They drew the correlation between both the formal and informal experiences they had that could be considered teaching experience. I assumed that this was something they had thought about as they prepared to interview for the dean position. It was important to them to be able to establish that they had teaching experience because they believed their traditional perspective that teaching experience was very important when establishing credibility with educators.

One of the deans discussed the transitions that he had observed of faculty to administrative positions. It belies the traditional view that experience in the faculty position acts as preparation for the dean position.

There isn't a whole lot about classroom teaching that prepares one for the sorts of things that you encounter as an administrator. People that take a very traditional academic route into administration find themselves in that first administrative position very poorly equipped to handle it. Some stumble around for awhile before they find their legs or find the training

and the professional development that will help them along the way. Most people taking a direct route from faculty into a dean position don't have much opportunity to develop that skill set. (Pat)

This perspective comes from a dean with over 15 years experience in education. It questions the traditional viewpoint that academic experience is a requirement. It raises the issue of whether or not teaching experience is preparation for the dean position. Teaching experience would help deans understand what faculty do and the values of educators. It would help them establish credibility and a better understanding of faculty which could help the faculty to accept the deans. The deans recognize that teaching experience is not the only skill they need. It does not replace the need for administrative and human relations skills.

It was important to the deans to draw the correlation between their past lives and experience and education. They had articulated the strategy to establish credibility through the appropriate academic credentials and formal and informal teaching experience. They continued the discussion on establishing credibility as they discussed the transferability of skills between their past life and the current one.

Interchangeability of Skills.

As another mechanism to establish credibility, the deans drew a correlation between their past lives and education. Many articulated this as the interchangeability of skills or transferability of skills. The deans applied a business concept or philosophy to education articulating their belief that management skills are interchangeable. A manager can move between businesses or industries and apply skills learned in the past. They also believed they could apply those skills to education. This is a traditional business perspective that the deans are applying to education. Again, it seemed apparent that the

deans had given thought to how their skills would align with the needs of education as they prepared to interview for the dean position.

I see the move from the ministry to education as a natural progression. The ministry involves teaching and counseling. I don't know of any better training background. Because of the multiple responsibilities that fall on the shoulders of that individual who is in the ministry. I feel those skills would transfer easily over into the field of education. (Nate)

I mean that's a business, a hospital's a business, and college has a business as well. They have different customers but you need to look at those customers and address their needs. Those kinds of things are parallel. A budget's a budget. You just have to figure out what's in it and once you figure out what's in it, how to manage it and how to be the most efficient with it. So those are parallels and also just working with a plethora of different people and different ideas. (Linda)

It doesn't matter if it's in education or it's in a trucking firm. If you're working with people, time, space, money, and equipment, and you put everything together, you come up with a plan and you execute the plan. Not one person carries all of the knowledge, so you have to work with your peer group and draw on everybody's expertise. Little did they know that I was just using the military model within an academic environment. The trick within education is no different than the trick within business. It's to achieve results within a specific kind of environment. (Pat)

I really believe that I could go and, I know nothing about the airline industry, I mean I fly on airplanes but I know nothing else about it, and I firmly believe that if I was hired tomorrow as some kind of upper level manager at whatever airline, I believe I could have a positive impact on that organization. I just believe that I have the right people skills and the ability to grasp concepts that I can get it done in whatever situation or industry. The challenges I faced in private business are similar to the challenges I faced as an athletic director and they're going to be very similar to the challenges I face as dean. The interchangeable skills you can bring to a job far outweigh most types of experience. A big part of what we do is just working with people and working out issues and I just have great confidence in my ability to do those types of things. I really think, at the core, at the fundamental level, if you're a good manager and you have good people skills and you bring a certain amount of intangibles to the table, you can succeed in whatever industry you're in. I feel like I've grown a lot just learning about a new industry and trying to apply the skills that I brought to the college, trying to get them to apply them in the context of how they're needed here. (Cole)

I put it together from a business perspective as to how much revenue they were walking away from. Some of it is using the cunningness of how you do deals in business to do deals with administration. (Adam)

It was difficult for them (the college) to look at it as a transferable skill. When you think about administration, it's a lot of managing and supervising and depending on the position, leadership. I'd already had experience. All that was transferable skill. (Amy)

In their stories of transition, the deans discussed how they prepared for the position and what they did in the first year to integrate into the culture. A common element in this discussion was the transferability of skill from their past lives to the current. This transferability of skill was important to them to establish credibility and to make the educators understand the value of their past lives. It became apparent that the deans had given thought to transferability of skills as they prepared for the hiring and selection process at the community college. From my perspective, the deans drew this correlation first for themselves to determine if they had the qualifications for the position and then worked to educate the educators about the quality and transferability of their skills. The deans identified specific examples of how their skills would transfer including budgeting skills, identifying revenue sources, strong administrative and organizational skills, and interpersonal skills. These skills are equivalent to those that they identified as being valued by the institution as they transitioned in. It was important to the deans that their skills gained in the past be valued by the educators because they saw these skills as a mechanism to gain acceptance. They were confident in their skills and their ability to do the tasks of the dean position and believed that the colleges should value the transferability of their skills.

Gaining acceptance at the community college was important to the deans. They felt that they needed to establish credibility to gain acceptance at the point of interviewing and hiring and that this need continued as they transitioned into the college. The need for the appropriate academic credential and teaching experience were identified as critical components to establish credibility. The deans also believed that the colleges should recognize and understand how their past lives, skills, expertise, and experiences correlated to the dean position.

The need for the appropriate academic credential and teaching experience are very consistent with a traditional perspective of education. They also are identified as elements of the traditional pathway. The traditional pathway includes time spent as a faculty member. That time spent as a faculty member would require an appropriate academic credential dependent on the content area and, of course, teaching experience. The deans expanded on that thinking to reflect on the need for the doctorate. Again, there is a traditional viewpoint that an administrator should have an academic credential and that it should be equivalent to or greater than the credential of those that they supervise. This traditional viewpoint was reflected in the deans' thinking. Many prepared for the transition to education by pursuing the doctorate or by completing individual coursework in higher education. They believed that this would provide them with knowledge they would need on the job and help them at the point of hire. Also, they recognized that the knowledge would help them to learn and understand this new environment and career. Their confidence was apparent in that they felt they could learn apply that knowledge successfully on the job.

This was consistent with their discussion on the transferability or interchangeability of skill. The deans drew a correlation between their past lives and experiences and the dean position. It was apparent that they had begun to reflect on this as they prepared to interview for the dean position. They felt the need to educate the educators about their skills and abilities, and understanding of education and how they would and could translate to education. If the college was able to understand that interchangeability of skills, the deans would have credibility equal to someone coming from the traditional pathway. Again, their confidence in their skills and abilities was apparent. They believe in themselves and they are cognizant of the need to establish credibility with educators to gain acceptance.

Harry summarized the concept of credibility, again introducing the practical nature of the deans with,

It all goes back to an understanding which I think is a serious flaw of most people, especially administrators, that they don't understand that credibility is earned. You own my credibility and I own yours. Just because I have the title or the doctorate, some people expect to have the credibility in everything they say and do but they don't understand that their actions and their words have to earn them their credibility and it's a very thin layer of ice there. (Harry)

Assimilation and Adaptation

Each dean's story is unique and is dependent on the culture of the institution and them personally. Their perceptions were both personal and professional, about themselves and their personal success, about how this would impact them professionally, about the culture of the institution, and their impressions of the first year. The stories did have some similarities particularly as the deans discussed what they did to be successful in the position. To apply for the position, the deans were motivated by altruism and

challenge. To stay in the position, they were motivated to be a success. For some, their need to succeed was practical (e.g. need for a salary) but for all there was an intrinsic motivator (e.g. need to succeed for their personal self worth). Their confidence and belief in their skills and abilities helped them in the transition, as well as their savvy and sound business skills. Yet, even with their extensive experience and business savvy there were issues to address as they made the transition. The first was their surprise as they confronted the culture of education. Then, they identified the gaps in their skills and how they overcame those gaps. The importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships also became apparent. Finally, the deans reflected on the skills needed to be an academic dean.

Culture of Education.

The deans discussed their surprise as they were introduced to the culture of education. They compared the college culture with the organizational culture to which they were accustomed. They discussed the slowness, the importance of money, the bureaucracy and the political nature of education, and the monetary compensation. Some of the deans had been forewarned and some learned of the educational culture first hand.

You can't rush the education process. Education is more malleable, much more willing to adapt to a changing world than state government. (Tom)

I came here and saw what the academic process was and how slowly and sometimes painful the process is. I found myself getting frustrated with how slowly things work. How slowly the academic wheels turn, and it was quite frustrating for me to have to deal with that. (Mary)

This issue of shared governance, as a rule, it's different than you see in private business. You see a lot of top down management in private business, that's never been my style. Whereas in education, we've got to have four or five committees look at it for a month or two before we act on it. Some of those things really move at a slower pace in education, it's tougher to get things done. My colleagues could tell when I would get

frustrated with the process. Sometimes they actually worried that, they knew that I was thinking it wasn't moving as fast as it should and they'd say, now don't get frustrated, we don't want to lose you. They were very concerned that I was getting fed up with all the processes that we have in education and just kind of throw in the towel. I knew what I was getting into when I came to education. (Cole)

Education is not results oriented. They are more accepting of how it is and the other being driven toward how it really has to be. (Ray)

The shared governance and complex decision making processes were new to the deans and a source of frustration. Many had been forewarned about the culture of education, yet the deans were still surprised by the slowness of the process. From the deans' perspective, the business concepts of being results oriented and fast decision making for competitive edge were not apparent in education. The deans needed to adapt to these differences and overcome their frustration.

The deans also discussed the importance of money to education particularly in small schools and the differences in for profit versus not for profit institutions.

In a small school, you wear multiple hats. Every dollar makes a difference. In this new, larger school, the money runs like a river around here compared to what I had. In my previous institution, we tried to do miracles with nothing. (Harry)

I have lots more respect for what happens in education. We have to fight for our portion of the budget every year and we have restrictions in terms of how that budget is used. It's pretty easy to make a business roll. You bring in more money than you spend. In education, you've got a bunch of other restrictions like the ratio of full-time to part-time and a bunch of other different things and we have to juggle to make it all come out right in the end. (Cole)

The deans acknowledged the impact and the importance of money to education. Educators needed to be innovative to accommodate the lack of funds and the competition for funding. The deans also needed to work with numerous other agencies for funding and were accountable for a variety of responsibilities to which they were unaccustomed.

This was a new experience for the deans and again, they needed to learn to adapt to this tighter access to funds.

The deans also were surprised by the political nature of education and how bureaucratic education can be.

Education is more political than it is in private business. (Cole)

I'm not quite sure why I felt that education in general was probably a little less bureaucratic than the military. I really thought this would be a lot less bureaucratic than what I'm used to. Actually what I found out was it was probably more bureaucratic than what I was used to! Education is highly political and probably more so than most other places I've worked. I think that just based on people that I know in other community colleges that, it's unique to education in general but certainly in the two-year community college system, I think it's a very political sort of environment that I was very surprised by. (Amy)

Shared governance, bureaucracy, the political nature, and access to funding were surprising to the deans. From my perspective, the deans believed that these components came together and created the culture of slowness of education in decision making. The deans had experience working with bureaucracy and a political environment but had little or no experience working within a shared governance structure. They also had more access to funding and, from my perspective, they believed that money could have been used to overcome some of the issues of the culture of education.

Money also became important to the deans as they discussed compensation such as their salary and being compensated for the experience they brought to the college. Several were surprised by low salary levels and several felt that their prior work experience should have been factored into their salary rate. They believed that their compensation was negatively affected by their non traditional pathway.

I must admit, I wasn't prepared for how low the salary levels were. In business, I was looking to live my life financially which allowed me to

have the luxury. Of course, I know that's laughable to those of you that are in academia. I just never could walk away from the industry money even as a young man to teach, into education. I was able to accept the salary that I could live under, because my retirements are in the bank. I could either tap into them now or wait until I'm 65 and have a good life. (Adam)

One of the most disappointing things to me is that none of my experience that I brought with me was really evaluated for my pay. When I was hired I was told you'll be at the bottom of the dean (salary scale) because you don't have any dean experience. And that's absolutely ridiculous. I gave myself a chance, permission to take a position which I think is very much underfunded. I think that sometimes people don't really understand that you bring all this experience with you and why you wouldn't expect that to be appreciated, addressed, or rewarded. (Linda)

I think that if you came into this position not having the desire to help people, you really wouldn't understand that passion that educators have. And it's a passion that's hard to understand because you basically go, why are you so excited about something that you can hardly make a living doing? The pay is so low that most of those people, just as soon as they see what the pay is they walk away anyway. (Adam)

Availability and access to funds is a difference between profit and not for profit institutions. This difference was very obvious to the deans from how to access funding to how they were compensated. From my interpretation, they perceived that in business great value was placed on skills, background, and expertise and employees were compensated to recognize or acknowledge those skills. Achieving that status, then, was a motivator. In education, those motivators were not apparent. Therefore, it was important to be motivated by other values such as altruism, challenge, or success to maintain their interest in the educational environment. Understanding the culture of education was a constant challenge for the deans and one they felt that they must address successfully. Pat summarized the culture of education and its openness to change.

Many of the traditions associated with academic environments have developed over the last 2000 years so you're not going to change that

overnight. Little things like tenure, little things like faculty autonomy. You're not going to change that culture overnight. (Pat)

Understanding the culture of the education was important for the deans as they made the transition. They needed to recognize and adapt to the culture of education and the specific institution. It is not uncommon to need to adapt to the culture of a new institution but it is unusual to need to adapt to the culture of a new career. The deans had been forewarned about how slowly education can move, yet they were surprised by the bureaucracy and political environment. They relied on their skills to transition into and adapt to the culture of education. They also struggled with their need to be recognized and to put their imprint on the culture.

Gaps in Skills.

The deans identified the tasks and responsibilities at the community college that they encountered that were surprising to them or for which they were unprepared. These gaps in skills were specific to education such as the terminology used, the different departments, and how they interact. They also identified some tasks that they were familiar with, such as budgeting, that they needed to learn how they worked at the institution. They also noted the need to continue learning and how that would be accomplished.

The deans first identified specific skills in education for which they felt they were unprepared.

I anticipated needing more knowledge of the internal operations of that particular institution. The only way to prepare for that was to jump right in and start doing it. (Amy)

The biggest gap for me was just not knowing the various departments and how they interact with our particular division and who they go to people were in those areas. I needed to learn what a contact hour means and what

overload means. I needed to understand the college's concept of general education. (Mary)

I spent half my life going to school so even though I can't speak education-ese fluently, at least I know what some of the basic words mean like contact hour, or credit. I needed to understand faculty assignments and how that's driven by a faculty contract. (Adam)

I needed to become acquainted with the budgeting process and how it operates in a state responsible entity. I needed to become knowledgeable of all those state regulations and the concept of retaining a sense of responsibility to the local taxpayers. (Nate)

Linda also felt that because she was new to the college that she needed to pay special attention to the budget. She also shared her surprise about dealing with student issues.

I think a lot of decisions for funding that are made and the proportion of what my area gets compared to other areas is unfair and unbalanced and I will pursue that until I see more balance in that. I think one of the biggest surprises has been the intensity of the student issues. I think that can be a little numbing at times. (Linda)

Harry talked about the need to address his interpersonal skills. He had faculty complete an evaluation of him and he identified the common response from the evaluation.

I was certainly rough around the edges. I made sincere corrections because I could not fail. A deficiency noted on the evaluation was basically how I interacted with people. What I'd said at different times that they thought was inappropriate. How I acted at different times that they thought was inappropriate. I have a carpenter background and you call a shovel exactly what it is. But that is not how faculty want to see their deans. (Harry)

The skills that the deans identified were a mix of those specific to education (e.g. understanding contact and credit hour) and those common when entering a new organization (e.g. understanding the culture of the organization). The deans depended on their skills and business savvy to learn this new terminology to understand education and to assimilate into the culture of education. A need to understand the budget was also logical to the deans. Acknowledging the importance of money to education, the deans

needed to be aware of and competent with the distribution of money. Interpersonal skills and the need for good relationships were very important to the deans and become even more important when they discuss filling the gaps in their skills. These skills will help them to work with faculty and students to resolve issues and conflicts.

The deans also recognized the need to continue learning.

There are definitely things that I'll have to continue to learn, specific to the dean's position even though I've been the de facto dean here for five years. (Cole)

I feel that I don't get told things sometimes. I feel like I have to discover things on my own. So, it's a learning process for me. I know I feel very comfortable with my management skills and I figured I could learn the things that I didn't know about the dean position and figure it out. I'm still pretty new in the position so I don't know if I've filled all those gaps. I think that I've established myself with a strong presence here with the faculty and the administrative group. (Linda)

The only way to prepare for that was to jump right in and start doing it. I had a lot of people who really helped me with that and supported me in terms of learning the internal policies and procedures and processes and that sort of thing. The deans in the career area were very helpful in taking me under their wing. (Amy)

The gaps in skills that the deans identified are specific to education. In their stories of transition, the deans discussed the lack of orientation and training. This was a source of frustration and hindered their ability to learn. The skills the deans needed to learn included terminology specific to education and the structure of education. Those gaps are logical because they are specific to education and the deans could not have acquired these skills in their past lives. The deans overcame their gaps in skills by relying on their confidence and business savvy, their perception of their strong skill sets, and their ability to adapt and change, and their willingness and eagerness to learn new skills.

Filling the Gaps in Skills.

Many of the deans talked about filling the gaps in their background through learning and hiring the right people to support them. They also discussed the importance of relationships and building rapport with other administrators and the faculty. The deans advocated using these strategies to aid in gaining acceptance and in establishing credibility. It was logical to them that they would identify the gaps in their skills, hire people who had those skills, and the deans would then focus on the tasks that were most appropriate to their skills.

My experience is more of a broker finding the appropriate people and managing the system. I'm more about finding the appropriate academic people to run those programs. (Tom)

I use my coordinators to put all the details down on paper. I'm driving the direction, making more company contacts, providing more training, meeting with people. We'll talk about the content in conceptual terms, but then the coordinators will put all the details down on paper. I won't really make out the details...my staff does that. (Ray)

The dean needs to have the ability to work with people and get along with others. I believe in surrounding myself with people who have more experience than me and to learn from them. I guess my way of working is to let others take over and work. I let them do what they do best and not micromanage and I work on the outside. You have to earn people's trust and to have them like you. They have to trust me to empower them, and let them do what they do without supervision. Right now, I'm struggling but they know that the curve line is going to jump up and I'm going to open up more opportunities. (Manny)

You need to support and utilize the staff. Try to work through the system. Nurses tend to be helping individuals and they are collegial. (Mary)

I'm very pro faculty and they know that. I have a wonderful assistant to the dean who is like a program director. She has been absolutely instrumental in helping me. (Linda)

Relationships within the college became very important to the deans because good relationships helped them to assimilate and adapt, and ultimately, to be successful at the

college. The deans shared their strategies for establishing and maintaining good relationships including how they empowered employees and structured their areas to recognize the skills of their staffs. These strategies are not unique to education or to the dean position. The deans presented these strategies as good management or leadership skills that were logical for anyone to use who is making a major transition.

It was important to the deans to establish relationships within their peer group, with the other deans, with members of the community, and with the faculty. Their non traditional pathway had an effect on some of these relationships and the deans presented their strategies to assist with the development and maintenance of good relationships.

There was a feeling among other deans that I did not possess the qualifications to be a part of their group. They view me as being at counter purposes with them because I design fast track programs designed to get a degree fast with little or no general education courses. Acceptance has more to do with interpersonal relationships than it does with organizational structure. My acceptance was based more on me as a person, my knowledge of the community, the contacts I have, and with bringing revenue resources to the college. My acceptability had more to do with bringing revenue resources to the college than anything else. We are beginning to subsidize some of the academic areas. I've become more popular as we do more of that. (Tom)

I work closely with the other dean at the college and consult with him daily. (Manny)

The Instructional Council and the department chairs meet with the vice president every six weeks. Everybody gets to know everybody else and everybody gets to hear what is going on. The academic deans and I, we're comrades. The majority of what I do with the academic side is I help them with my financial background. I developed a financial forecasting model that I've shared with everybody on this campus. We want to make sure that we are interfacing and talking with people. We serve on a lot of committees together. (Adam)

Linda had a slightly different experience.

A couple of the deans chose to challenge me in my territory within the first three months that I was here. I think they kind of wanted to see what

I was made out of. We've developed a very good relationship. One of the deans was a good resource, but I think he was pushing me to see just how far I could be pushed. I think he wanted to see academically where I stood, or if I had the background, if I would do the homework, to figure out what was going on. (Linda)

Establishing relationships and gaining acceptance from the other deans was pivotal to the success of the new deans. These relationships ranged from being very good, collaborative and supportive, to being confrontational. The deans perceived that their non traditional pathway was a factor to overcome when establishing relationships. The deans relied on their interpersonal skills to establish relationships with their peers and to overcome any perceived deficiencies.

Amy and Linda talked about relationships with faculty and shared their strategies for developing effective relationships with faculty.

I had a good relationship with other administrators. The faculty had a little bit of a difficult time. I'm a pretty straightforward sort of person and I don't always make decisions necessarily that the faculty appreciate or like and don't particularly want me to make. But I feel pretty strongly about some things and if it's the right decision, I'll make it even if it's not going to be the most popular decision. Sometimes the faculty struggle with that a little bit but overall I think that my relationship is good with faculty in general. Every now and then something happens that people don't like and there's a little discord and then you get back on track and move forward again. I think the discord is faculty-administrative issues, nothing more than that. (Amy)

I think that faculty were very impressed that I went into the clinical setting. I don't think that's something that the dean before me did. There were evaluations to be done – I made sure that they are done on time and every one of them said we've never had these done on time and that doesn't make us feel very important. There is discord but sometimes it makes me stronger and even when things don't end up like I want them it strengthens my resolve to maintain my standards. I think in that way it reaffirms my values. That's the role of the dean, you're in between with administrators and faculty sometimes. I'm learning and I'm getting better. (Linda)

Developing and maintaining relationships was important for the deans because it helped them as they entered the institution, to gain acceptance, and to be successful in the role of dean. The deans acknowledged the differences between the relationships with faculty and administrators in the institution. They identified the major groups on campus that they needed to work with and focused on building and maintaining good relationships because they recognized the importance of these relationships to their success. These good relationships also helped with overcoming any negative perceptions of the non traditional pathway.

The deans' strategies for success at the community college included identifying the gaps in their skills, learning what they needed to know about education to overcome the gaps in their skills, working to their strengths, hiring the right people to fill the gaps in their skills, and developing and maintaining relationships with key people on campus. The deans were confident that they would gain acceptance at the community college and relied upon their confidence, business expertise, and understanding of good management and leadership practices. They believed in the transferability of skills. They were also very willing and eager to learn about education and to develop the relationships they perceived were necessary.

Skills Needed to be a Dean.

In their stories of transition, the deans identified those skills they believed were valued by the community college as they transitioned. These were skills that comprised their expertise and business savvy. In education, these skills would be equivalent to administrative skills, such as supervisory skills, financial and budgeting skills, visioning, and human relations skills. These skills provided the deans with a core on which to base

their transition and ability to fit in, gain acceptance, and ultimately be successful at the community college. Building on this base, the deans then identified those skills that they felt were needed to be an effective dean.

The skills the deans identified as necessary to be a dean were a mix of specific business skills, content area skills, and managerial and human relations skills. The need for budget skills was identified frequently. The majority of responses focused on managerial and human relations skills.

Deans need to be superb listeners. They need to easily digest facts and not overreact to faculty and students. They need to be able to make valued judgments. They need to be able to say no to people and have them leave smiling. They need to listen and counsel, and communicate with both faculty and students. They need financial abilities, to be able to manipulate budgets, recognize the association between enrollment and reimbursement and funding, keep their budget out of the red, and be able to supply services for faculty to be successful in the classroom. (Nate)

Deans need to understand how things get done. They need to understand what leadership is. I need to ask the right questions so I understand their needs. I need to know how to spend our dollars appropriately. I also need to be able to separate needs from wants. Deans have to have communication and listening skills. An administrator needs to say what's on their mind and be clear about how they say things. There are lessons you learn as the rubber hits the road such as asking works a whole lot better than telling. (Harry)

I encourage the department heads to include the faculties in the decisions made within the department. I include my department heads in everything that I do. My job description says I'm an advocate of the student, of the faculty, and the rules and policies of the administration of the college. All should be weighed equally and that's what it says in the first sentence of my job description. (Adam)

You need to understand what your next move is, where you need to be, when is the right time to plan things to change. I am a big picture person. You learn to be open to things. You learn to try to understand perspectives and try to understand priorities of an institution or an organization and why things have to be that way. I am very much a collaborator. I like to hear other people's ideas. I like the business aspects of it as well as the personal and people aspects of it. I really believe in

excellence and part of that is academic excellence. I expect that out of my faculty. I expect them to do their job well. I expect that out of myself as well. I believe in collaboration and respect for individuals. I believe in really trying to make people feel comfortable and making them feel appreciated. I believe in building relationships and in supporting the people that I need to support. As issues are arising, I believe in addressing those right away and trying not to make a judgment until I understand and I have heard both perspectives. I think that I require a lot of myself and I require a lot of my faculty. I expect them to be honest with me and I expect them to fulfill the requirements of their positions and I expect them to keep me informed about issues that I need to be informed about or issues that are brewing. (Linda)

Pat shared his thoughts about the success of faculty moving into the dean position.

At the lowest level, there's the supervision and again most faculty are not prepared to supervise other human beings. Dealing with people with the notion that you really expect them to follow the rules, abide by the expectations and if they don't, that you will take the right kind of action, is a developed skill set. The other piece is managerial in the operational sense of the organization. How you manage time, money, space, and equipment to accomplish something. Where faculty can actually excel when they move into administrative positions sometimes is in the leadership realm. They can develop a vision or they have a vision of what the future should look like and can articulate that fairly well. Where they tend to fall down, is you need that kind of management layer down to know how to get to that end. (Pat)

The skills the deans identified are a mix of specific business skills, content skills, and human relation skills. They identified those skills that helped them to fit in at the community college reiterating that they came to the college with strong skills that could be adapted to the educational environment. They indicated their willingness to learn and to grow expanding on those skills. They also shared their successes at the college defining what they had learned about education and how they and the college adapted to be successful in the position.

The deans began their discussion of success and fitting in at the community college with their stories of the transition to the position. Each story was unique to the

individual dean and the respective institution. The deans' confidence in themselves and their skills assisted them in the transition. It also provides an underlying philosophy for their success. The deans discussed their surprise at the culture of education and how they adapted to it, and the strategies that they used to fit into the position and the culture. Finally, they identified the skills they perceived to be important to be successful in the dean position.

The deans' stories of transition provided insight into how they felt coming in to the community college. Their descriptions ranged from easy to overwhelming. Each of these stories was unique to the individual and the institution. They identified areas that were a surprise to them, strategies they used to cope with the change, and how they relied on their past experiences to be successful at the community college. Their stories identify how they were accepted into the organization and their understanding of what they needed to do to be accepted. Many of the deans reflected on their non traditional pathway some concluding that it had an impact on the transition and others feeling no effect.

The deans also reflected on the culture of education. Some deans had been forewarned about the differences between education and the environment from which they came. Others were surprised by it. They discussed the slowness in education and shared governance and the need for committees. Many were surprised by the bureaucracy and political nature in education. These elements are a part of most organizations so the deans felt prepared to address these issues. Understanding the culture was important to gain acceptance and to fit in.

The deans discussed the skills they brought to the position and the gaps in skills for the dean position. These gaps were specific to education and the position including such skills as understanding the terminology used in education and the structure and interaction of departments. With no experience in education, the gaps identified are not surprising. The deans indicated their need to learn these specific tasks and shared their confidence that they could learn and address these skills. They also shared their strategies to overcome these skills and adapt to education. Their strategies included hiring the right staff to fill in the skills they lacked, working to their strengths or adopting the tasks that used their strengths, and developing and maintaining relationships within the college with their peers, the community, and the faculty. These were successful strategies for the deans because they helped to supplement their credibility and to fit in.

Finally, the deans reflected on the skills they brought to the position and the skills needed to be a dean. The skills included a mix of specific business skills, content area skills, and human relation skills. The deans identified skills such as budgeting, knowledge of the careers in their division of responsibility such as nursing, and interpersonal skills such as listening, good communication, and relationships with others.

The deans were aware of the culture of education, the culture of their individual institution, and why they had been selected for the position. They were also very aware that their success was dependent on their ability to fit in and yet stay true to themselves and why the college was initially attracted to them as individuals. Their confidence in themselves and their skills is always apparent in their responses. As they spent more time in the institution their non traditional pathway assumed less importance to them. As they moved from gaining acceptance to fitting in their differences became less evident and led

them to share their advice with others who may be interested in this non traditional pathway.

Replication

The deans recognized that they were unique in the community college and wanted to offer advice to others interested in taking this non traditional pathway. They also wanted to reflect on whether the community colleges were a closed system and the colleges' willingness to hire non traditional deans. The common theme throughout this discussion was the unique quality of their journey and whether or not their journey could be replicated by others who are interested in taking a non traditional pathway.

Advice to Others.

The advice the deans offered was practical and realistic reflecting their values. Their advice included how to prepare for the transition and the skill sets needed, how to gain acceptance, and the need to establish credibility through the appropriate academic credential and teaching experience. Their advice reflected their experience as they transitioned and their opinions about the culture of education.

If someone tried to do the same thing I did, make sure they have a varied background and experience. Each experience prepared me for the next and they all came together to give me this unique qualification. You need to be exposed to education theory, and the impact of education and translate that into vision, inspiration, and motivation. (Ray)

They will have to believe in themselves and be prepared to have to prove themselves to the internal and external communities. Be prepared to show how that skill set is going to improve or change the academic world. Be prepared to convince people that you may not know or be at a disadvantage, but that you're prepared to bring something new. (Manny)

It would be beneficial for the individual to have a familiarity with the institution. Familiarity with the institution gives you a feel for what is the climate of the institution. If I had known those things prior to coming, I probably would not have taken the job. Do some exploration of the

institution that you're considering. Visit on campus. Try and walk around and talk with folks and see how they like working here and what are some of the benefits and the problems. Try to get honest input from folks. Try to connect with some of the individuals in the department and gain some insights from those individuals. Try to ramp up by either reading or visiting and talking to people on campus to put the pieces of the puzzle together. (Mary)

Become very, very familiar with all of the regulations, both federal and state that control your life. You have the rules of academia and then the technical rules on top of that. So become aware of what regulates you. Get to know those regulatory agencies and understand what their roles are. Prepare yourself. If you're coming from the outside world and you're coming in to work with educators and deal with educators you have to understand that the skill sets are going to be a lot different than yours. You need to work with them and understand that they consider their skills sets valuable. Try to understand why they believe that. But one of the things I think makes you more accepted is walking in their shoes. You're going to have to recognize that you are going to have rough time gaining acceptance because you really haven't ever been a true educator. (Adam)

Be open to really do a lot of listening, and try to make sure that you're giving yourself a chance, an opportunity to make a few mistakes. The more experience you bring with you the better sense of self you have. I really think that you just need to build relationships. You need to look at winning people over and establishing yourself. Hopefully, you're someone who's fair – fair minded and really respects people and the contribution that they can make. (Linda)

You really need to get ready to get out there and be a salesman. Once they see that you're willing to help them maintain their jobs, help them maintain their goals in getting people in, help them keep their classrooms full, they will accept you. You can be the salesman for them and you can take care of that and share that burden with them. (Adam)

Offering advice to others was important to the deans. They saw themselves as unique and felt that they needed to share their experience with others who might be contemplating this same move to education. Their business and work experience had them acting as mentors in their former roles and they naturally wanted to continue in that role. Their advice is practical including suggestions such as learning about education and education theory, learning about the institution and the rules and regulations that govern

it, and the importance of establishing relationships. They continue to reiterate their strong belief in the need for human relations and good interpersonal skills. Their advice reflects their experience as they transitioned to the community college.

The advice the deans offered turned to the need to understand the culture of education, the need to establish credibility, and the need to gain acceptance. The deans made the point that it was important for those considering the transition to be prepared because education is different from industry.

I hear people in private business talk about maybe one day going into education or teaching or whatever because they feel like they have a lot to share and they do. But they have to be sure that it's right for them because if you don't have that real desire to jump in and learn something new, you might struggle and become frustrated. (Cole)

You have to be prepared for a big change and you have to like change. You have to like a system that has some antiquated ideas at times, even though, I think that they think they're very progressive. Things move slowly sometimes, too slowly for my taste, but that was something that I was told about. Things are going to take longer sometimes, and they do. You have to realize that it's a different culture. It's a different path. It's not like industry, and I'm not sure that you'd want it to be like industry. (Linda)

The one item that many, many of my friends from industry suggested that I would have the most difficulty with, and they were right, was having patience with the slowness of decision making in education. The second was the inability oftentimes to understand legislation. Trying to read through the legislation and get some ideas where the legislators are coming from. (Adam)

Think about your future and not about your past. People that are transitioning often want to talk about their past experience and the importance of it. But, you've got to make that translation, you've got to make it relevant to the future of the institution that you want to work at, not the one that you used to work at. (Pat)

You have to be able to adapt to your environment. One of the things that I would caution anyone on doing is do not use your political connections to get into one of these roles. If you're not able to do the job, you're going to

get found out pretty fast, and then your life, your job is going to be very difficult to do. (Adam)

The deans want others to understand that the culture of education and the culture of other industries are different. The deans believed in the transferability of skills and they worked diligently to draw the correlation between their past lives and current positions. It was interesting, then, that they wanted to make the point that education is not like industry. In their mentor role, they wanted others to understand that the decision to move to education is not one to do lightly and that others would need to be prepared for the transition. They would need to have the entrepreneurial spirit, openness to change, and ability to adapt that the deans had. The deans then segued into the need to establish credibility.

The deans' advice returned to the need for teaching experience and the appropriate educational credential.

To get into academe, get some teaching experience. It'll tell you whether or not these are people that you'll want to hang out with. Make a deliberate effort. Teach part-time, get to know some of the faculty. Get to know the administrators of the college. Ask yourself, is this an environment that I'll feel comfortable in? You really need to make a deliberate effort at developing that kind of internal network to see if this environment is an environment that you'd feel comfortable in and one that you'll thrive in. You're not going to be credible with faculty if you can't hold your own in the classroom. Learn how the rubber meets the road, gain some credibility, learn what it means to teach, and why that is challenging. Many people assume that teaching is an easy job. It's extraordinarily difficult, if you care about it. (Pat)

I actually don't believe anyone should try to think about even entering into college administration with anything less than a masters degree. And have given some thought as to whether you want to get your PhD or your doctoral degree in some fashion. Even though I am respected, I know that on the academia side at a community college, it's not a big thing but when I go and meet with people from the four year colleges, they say how can you be a dean without being a PhD? I think that the amount of education you have is a measurement that is used and you need to either come up to

that measurement or you need to have an explanation for why you don't. (Adam)

If I knew somebody who wanted to move into a community college and they didn't have any community college experience or didn't have any educational coursework or something along those lines, I would encourage them to seek that out. (Amy)

Regional accrediting agencies and the requirements placed on graduate hours are a challenge. This presents a hindrance to people coming from business. (Nate)

I'm thinking about applying for presidencies, it's not clear that I have 40 years of experience. It's real clear that I have about 15 years of experience within the community college. I've constantly got to overcome that issue of I took an indirect path. I talk about the commitments and how one experience base played into another experience base. What you need is to focus on are your skills and your accomplishments with those skills that are directly relevant to your prospective employer. Make that translation for them because they're not going to do it for you. (Pat)

In their mentor role, the deans continued to reinforce the need to establish credibility and to gain acceptance. They recognized that the components of the traditional pathway are valued by educators. They encouraged others to learn more about education before making the transition. They also reinforced the need to make the connections for educators between their past lives, skills and expertise, academic credentials, teaching experience, and the academic dean position.

The advice the deans offered to others is consistent with their experience transitioning into the community college. They are building on their work experience outside of the community college and correlating it to their experience at the community college. They talked about how to prepare for the transition, skills needed, and the importance of building relationships. They again reflected on the differences between education and industry and the components of the culture of education. They also reflected on their pathway acknowledging that it is non traditional and discussed what

they needed to do to overcome the pathway. Some of their advice is specific to education, but the majority is good business practice for anyone transitioning to a new position. It was important to the deans that others acknowledge that they were unique and that led to a discussion of the willingness of colleges to hire those who had taken a non traditional pathway and whether or not the community colleges are closed systems.

Community College as a Closed System.

The deans reflected on the community college system as a closed system meaning that the system was predisposed to hiring only those who had experience in the community college and opposed to hiring those with a non traditional pathway. They noted that they were aware that their non traditional pathway was unique for the dean position. The deans reflected on the history of hiring within the community colleges including the past and present day practice. They also reflected on why they believe the community colleges are a closed system.

Most of the deans believed that their pathway was unique for their respective institution. Adam noted “I’m probably the first in the history of this college ever to do it.” Linda and Ray have a different experience, noting that “several deans were hired from outside the college.” One dean noted that the hiring of people from outside education is not a new trend in community colleges.

When I came on board in 1980, the college was new, 15 years old, and a great many people were being employed from the outside because that is all they had to choose from. My district is prestigious and, being new, people were excited about getting in on the ground floor. They wanted to come and be a part of this founding and be in on the ground floor. People were hired out of the public school system, and the business world. They came out of the hospital classroom. There wasn’t a great deal of stigma that they looked upon someone coming from the outside because so many of them had also come from the outside. Now, we are having some people who are applying out of industry, especially in the computer area.

Computer folks see the great opportunity in education. The Millennial generation is looking at a different idea of what success involves and it's not a job that is going to pay me a million dollars a year. There's got to be something that is more satisfying, that gives me an inner feeling of success and satisfaction. (Nate)

Many of the deans believe that they are the first in the history of their colleges to be hired with a non traditional pathway, yet there is a recognition that the community colleges have a history with hiring from outside education. From my perspective, the colleges hired those from outside education in the beginning because there were many positions and not enough available staff, or they needed a person with a certain expertise. At this point, many of those initial non traditional hires may have retired or left the institution and the memory of being open to hiring those with a non traditional pathway may have retired with them. The deans also reflected on the current hiring practices at their institutions and the community college as a closed system.

We pride ourselves on not having a big turnover rate in this district. The district has been here for 40 years and there has been within itself a lot of inbred promotion. The district is proud that people are willing to and want to stay here and work here and be a part of this their entire career in the community college. I don't know that it is necessarily true that an individual has to come from within the ranks. You are never going to get rich in education and there are a lot of qualified people who will not apply because the financial remuneration is not anywhere near what they are currently making in the business world. So we've created the situation where the ones who apply are with the field already. Maybe we have created the vicious circle. (Nate)

I have been to several state-wide conferences and I've met people and I can see where there's that closed culture. Unfortunately from the college I work for, I don't think they practice it enough. I think I would have an order of succession. In this college, I don't see the succession. I don't see the college preparing people for new positions. The new chancellor, he's from the outside. He seems to be filling all of the internal positions, especially all of the positions that pay in the six figures, from the outside. I'm really kind of startled about that, but I guess it's because they really haven't built succession. When I am at conferences, I do meet other administrators and they do say well three years from now I'll be the dean

of this and four years from now I hope to be the vice president. In Texas there seems to be a lot of migration. They seem to migrate once they feel like they've developed the skill sets or the education, or just in their own personal beliefs, that it's time to be a vice president, then they take off after that. That seems to maybe even be a national trend. These folks are originally from education and moving within education. (Adam)

The deans' perception about the lack of training and succession planning within the community colleges again becomes apparent as the deans discuss the personnel practices at their colleges. They also introduce the concept of the value of hiring from within or from outside the organization. Either way, the common element in the dean's comments is that these potential applicants have experience in education, are recognized and rewarded for that experience, and that the colleges have created this experience.

Most of the deans felt that the community colleges were closed systems meaning that the community college preferred to hire those with community college experience and traditional pathways. If the dean could not articulate it as a closed system, he/she could discuss the college's propensity for hiring from within. From my perspective, the colleges may have been more open to a non traditional pathway when they were founded because the colleges were staffed by educators wanting in on the ground floor of a new educational experience or they sought employees from outside of education who had an expertise they needed or interest in something new. The colleges may have become less open to hiring non traditionalists as the colleges matured and were influenced by the traditions of higher education. This would be consistent with the life stages of a corporation as it hits maturity. The natural life stages, in a bell curve, of an organization would move the colleges from maturity to a decline. At this point, the colleges would need to reinvigorate or decline to the point of closing. This reinvigoration stage may bring them back to a willingness to hire those with a non traditional pathway.

The deans reflected on their non traditional pathway and how that made them unique in the community colleges. They also offered a variety of reasons why the colleges could be considered closed systems.

If you're not in a community college, I don't think you can go to another community college or go to be an administrator. It might be possible for the president, vice president, faculty, and non academic positions. I did it, but I don't see a whole lot of that happening. I can't think of a non academician who's ever been hired to be an administrator in a school. I might come in to a community college as a director and work my way up but today it would not work like it did 20 some years ago. I was in a unique situation where they had desperate needs and I had a track record but I don't think that would work today. With the number of programs out there to train administrators, to find folks who are building their career and who have studied higher education is easy. I hadn't really thought about how lucky I was to have this opportunity but it was definitely a school of hard knocks. And how I survived? I have no idea. I don't know how many times all the non traditional people can say that this just jumped out at me and that was what made it non traditional. Not that I had a strategy to do this. (Harry)

Yes, I do believe that community colleges are a closed system. I think that every now and then a fluke occurs and somebody gets lucky. We actively solicit what we're looking for in individuals for positions. We actively look for individuals who have experience in higher education and community college experience preferred. I think that more people get hired with experience in the community college system than the way I came into the community college. (Linda)

In the more traditional academic areas – the transfer areas – liberal arts faculty really want their dean to be a liberal arts educator. It becomes a little less true within the career and technical education areas. There is some opportunity there for people from outside academe to move into positions within academe. There is some expectation that they would pay their dues first, that they would teach and then move into administration. Outside of the academic areas, the further you get from that kind of core traditional academic mission, the easier it is to move in from the outside. (Pat)

Do I think I would be hired today? No, I don't. I think the individual coming in, in a non traditional way can be very successful. I'm not so sure that individuals employed in the community college are ready to look at it from that perspective. I mean we talk the talk but I'm not so sure that they're really ready for that. I just don't see individuals who may apply

who might be a little bit non traditional in their pathway being hired. So that's why I don't necessarily know that it would occur. I'm not convinced yet that we're at a point where we're so concerned about the lack of individuals wanting to be presidents or vice presidents to look at the other alternatives. I don't look at it as a credibility issue. I look at it as the perception of lack of experience. I do believe they would be perceived as less credible because the perception is that they didn't have the correct experience, or the right experience. (Amy)

This was a rare instance because I had to go out of my way and prove myself. If I would have just applied straight out, without them knowing who I was, the committee would have discarded me because they want to see those years of experience. I believe it's erroneously covetous to request that experience. That is why you're not going to see very many deans with a non traditional pathway because the colleges request that experience, and it's not right. The colleges need to open up and understand that the world is changing and no longer do you need only people who have the traditional path. (Manny)

The deans believe that the community college is a closed system. They believe that the colleges make a choice to actively solicit people who have experience in the community college or higher education. They believe that the colleges perceive deans with a non traditional pathway as lacking experience. They also believe that it is not a correct perception. The deans also noted that the colleges may not yet be experiencing the impact of retirements within the community college system and until they felt that impact they would not be open to hiring those with a non traditional pathway.

The deans reflected on the reasons they were hired identifying colleges with a dire need for talented professionals which made them willing to hire outside of the traditional pathway to the dean position. They recognized that in some cases the history of the community colleges shows that colleges were open to hiring employees from K-12 or universities, and from industry because they had many positions to fill. The deans wondered if these trends would continue. They recognized that impending retirements would have an impact on the community college system but did not believe that the

colleges were poised to address the numbers of positions that would need to be filled noting the lack of formal succession planning. All of the deans believed that the culture of education lent it itself to believing in and reinforcing the need for the traditional pathway with experience in the community college with an appropriate academic credential and teaching experience equaling credibility.

At the end of the interviews the deans were surprised that they had so much information to share. They wanted to acknowledge that they are unique, yet they have worked hard to establish credibility, gain acceptance, and assimilate into the culture of the community college. It was natural to them to take a mentoring role, to offer advice to others who might be interested in transitioning with a non traditional pathway and to offer a strategy for others interested in making this transition. Their altruism and entrepreneurial spirit was also apparent in this mentoring role.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who have take a non traditional pathway to the dean position. The structure of the phenomenon of coming in as a non traditional dean and working in that environment is a story of altruism and entrepreneurship, credibility and acceptance, assimilation and adaptation, and replication. The essence of the phenomenon is a story of paradoxes. The common elements of the stories of transition for the deans include the reasons why they came to the community college, a reflection on the skills they brought to the college and how those skills were valued, the strategies they used to gain acceptance and to fit in, and the recognition that their pathway was non traditional which made them unique in the community college.

The deans were motivated to come to the community college by their altruism and their entrepreneurship. The deans had a strong desire to give back and to improve the lives of students and felt that desire correlated well with the mission of the community college and the values of educators. They also were motivated by the challenge and risk of trying a new position in a field in which they were not familiar. The deans are a mix of altruism, entrepreneurship and practicality. They are confident and self aware, motivated by challenge and risk taking yet savvy enough to recognize that gaining acceptance and fitting in at the community college would be critical to their success.

They worked to gain acceptance first by establishing credibility using those criteria that they perceived to be valued by traditional academics, the appropriate academic credential, and teaching experience. They reflected on the skills that they brought to the position that were valued by the community college as they went through the hiring process. They shared their belief in the transferability of skill from their past lives to their current lives. The deans believed that the mix of those criteria valued by traditional academics and their skills combined to help the deans gain acceptance at the community college.

As the deans transitioned into the community college they focused on assimilation and adaptation to the culture of education. The deans were surprised by the culture of education including the slowness of processes, the bureaucracy and political nature, and the importance of money in funding and compensation. They also focused on the practical, identifying the gaps in their skills which included tasks and terminology that were specific to education. They then shared their strategies for filling those gaps including continuing their learning, hiring the right people to support them, and the

importance of establishing relationships and building rapport with faculty and staff. The deans reflected on the skills needed to be an academic dean in the community college. These elements combined to provide them with the knowledge and skills to assimilate and adapt to the culture of education.

As the deans assimilated and adapted to the culture of education, they reflected on replication questioning whether others could make the same transition. They recognized that their non traditional pathway made them unique and offered advice to others interested in making the transition. The deans' advice was consistent with their experience reflecting the need to gain acceptance and to employ strategies to fit in at the community college. Most of the deans believed that the community colleges were closed systems meaning that the colleges preferred to hire those with community college experience and traditional pathways. They recognized that the number of impending retirements would have an impact of the community college system but did not believe that the colleges were poised to address the number of positions that would need to be filled. The deans wanted to be recognized as being unique yet they acknowledge that they worked hard to gain acceptance and to fit in. Their altruism and entrepreneurship, and their ability to assimilate and adapt to the culture of education helped them to make the transition and their experience will help others who want to replicate their pathway.

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who had taken a non traditional pathway to the position. From the data provided, the structure of this phenomenon was a story of altruism and entrepreneurship, assimilation and adaptation, and replication. The deans shared their insights about their transition and identified strategies for gaining acceptance and fitting in at the community

college. They also identified themselves as unique as they made this transition and reflected on the ability of others to make this same transition. In the next chapter, I will identify how their experience is consistent with and adds to the literature and identify topics for future study.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the lived experiences of academic deans who had taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. I defined the academic dean as an administrator responsible for the oversight and leadership for a grouping of academic content areas. The traditional pathway for an academic dean was defined as beginning as a faculty member and then moving into administrative positions. The non traditional pathway did not include time spent as a full time or part time faculty member or any other full or part time community college position.

I interviewed 11 deans who had taken a non traditional pathway to the dean position. The deans came to the community college from positions in government, health careers, the military, the ministry, and the corporate world. They came to the community college into positions with titles such as Dean Continuing Education and Professional Education, Dean Workforce Development and Economic Development, Dean Health Sciences or Professionals, Dean Career Education, Dean Business and Technology, Dean Business and Social Science, and Dean Liberal Arts. These job titles represent the various entry points of the deans. Four of the deans were hired into positions responsible for non credit courses in workforce development or economic development. Most of these positions were money generating positions outside the bureaucracy of the credit side of the house. Six of the deans were hired for positions responsible for career areas such as health science, technology, or business. The commonality between these positions was

that the deans were responsible for educational content that was consistent with their non educational background. One dean was responsible for Liberal Arts preparing students to transfer to four year institutions.

In this chapter, I will present the findings from my study responding to the research questions and relating those findings to the literature. I also will present my findings from my perspective as a practitioner. Finally, I will make recommendations for practice and further research.

Findings Related to Research Questions and the Literature

This study describes the structure of the phenomenon of being a non traditional dean entering and working in a community college environment. The following research questions were used in the study:

- What have been the lived professional experiences of academic deans who have taken this non traditional pathway to the position?
- What preparation do they perceive to be necessary to achieve the academic dean position through this non traditional pathway?
- What skills and abilities do they perceive to be needed to be successful in the academic dean position?
- How did their previous professional experience relate to their academic dean experience?

Findings: Lived Professional Experience of an Academic Dean who has taken a Non Traditional Pathway

The traditional pathway as defined in the literature begins with time spent as a faculty member, and then moves to administrative positions with successive amounts of

responsibility leading to the vice presidency and presidency positions. The definition of non traditional pathway that I used for this study included no time spent as a full or part time faculty member or any other position in education, thus having no academic roots. There is nothing in the literature focused specifically on academic deans in the community college and nothing that traces their pathway to the position. Therefore there is nothing in the literature that presents the lived experiences of deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the academic dean position. The findings in this study provide research into this topic.

The structure of being an academic dean who has taken a non traditional pathway to the position is a story of altruism and entrepreneurship, credibility and acceptance, assimilation and adaptation, and replication. The stories of the deans' transition to the academic dean position included the reasons why they came to the community college, the strategies they used to establish credibility and gain acceptance, their ability to fit in, the recognition that their pathway was non traditional, and their reflection on whether or not their path could be replicated. I will present the components of the structure of the phenomenon and then relate these findings to the literature.

The deans were motivated to come to the community college by their desire to give back, their altruism. They were also motivated by their desire for challenge and their willingness and ability to take risks, their entrepreneurship. The deans recognized that their pathway was non traditional. This led to their focus on the need to establish credibility as they made the transition to education. The deans perceived that educators placed value on the traditional pathway and aligned their past experiences with this traditional perspective. Establishing credibility included having or acquiring the

appropriate academic credential, identifying formal and informal teaching experiences, and aligning their skills and abilities acquired in their past lives with the requirements of the dean position reinforcing their belief in the interchangeability of skills.

As the deans transitioned into the community college they were surprised by the culture of education, the bureaucracy and political nature of education, and the importance of money and funding. They also identified the gaps in their skills including such things as understanding the terminology of education and tasks specific to education such as understanding the budgeting process. They identified the strategies they used to fill those gaps such as continuing learning, hiring the right people to support them, and the importance of building relationships with their peers and the faculty. The deans then reflected on the skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean and how they acquired those skills. These elements combined to help the deans to assimilate and adapt to the culture of education.

Finally, the deans reflected on the unique qualities of their pathway to education and whether or not their pathway could be replicated. Their advice was consistent with their experience as they transitioned into the academic dean position. They provided advice on how the deans could establish credibility and gain acceptance. They also reflected on the uniqueness of their transition and questioned whether the community college is a closed system, not open to hiring those without education experience.

There is nothing in the literature focused on academic deans in the community college and nothing that traces their pathway. Therefore there is nothing in the literature that presents the lived experiences of academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway. The deans' stories of transition add to the literature identifying why they were

motivated to come to the community college, the need to establish credibility and to gain acceptance, the strategies they used to assimilate into and adapt to the culture of education, and their beliefs about the ability of others to replicate their experience. Their experience also adds to the literature as they identify the specific skills and abilities for the academic dean position, and their discussion on the community college as a closed system. These discussions are continued later in the chapter. The deans also discussed the impact of retirements on the community college system. The deans were aware of the number of retirements and the majority did not believe that the colleges were feeling or acknowledging the impact of those retirements. The two career deans in the health sciences believed that the colleges had experienced difficulty finding candidates for the position and that they had achieved the position by being in the right place at the right time.

Findings: Preparation to Achieve the Academic Dean Position

In the literature, there are studies that focus on community college administrators and how to create and structure doctoral programs to provide professional development to prepare these administrators for the next steps in their careers. There is nothing in the literature focused on preparation for the academic dean position. This study adds to the literature by focusing on academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway and how they prepared for the position.

Preparation to achieve the academic dean position is an important component of the structure of the phenomenon of coming in as a non traditional dean. As the deans shared their stories of transition it was apparent that they had reflected on the preparation needed to achieve the academic dean position and that they had begun thinking about

how they would structure and present their background and experience as they prepared for the interview. The deans perceived that the traditional pathway was valued by educators and articulated the need to overcome their non traditional pathway by establishing credibility to gain acceptance. The deans articulated that the preparation needed to achieve the position included having the appropriate academic credential, teaching experience, and the ability to identify and sell the interchangeability of their skills between their past lives and education.

The deans agreed that the minimum academic credential for the dean position was the masters degree. One dean did not have the masters degree and completed it once he realized the importance of the degree in education. Several deans believed that the doctorate would be valued by the educators. One dean made the conscious choice to leave his past position to enroll in a PhD program before transitioning to the dean position. Several are enrolled in doctoral programs or have completed courses in education and education theory. The deans perceived that the educators had very traditional values about having the appropriate academic credential and the need for teaching experience.

Again, the deans perceived that teaching experience would be valued by educators. As they prepared for the transition, they identified the formal and informal teaching experience they had acquired and articulated them during the interview process. The deans believed that having teaching experience would help them to establish credibility with faculty. They also felt that they needed to understand the role and function of faculty. Several deans currently teach at their community college or another

university perceiving that this credential helps them to gain acceptance from the educators.

The deans were confident that they had the appropriate skills and expertise to be successful in the dean position. The deans articulated a traditional business perspective about the interchangeability or transferability of their skills from their past life to the dean position. They identified the management and leadership skills they had acquired such as budgeting, planning, visioning, and human relations skills and articulated how they could be transferred to be used in the dean position. They were very confident that these skills were appropriate preparation for the dean position yet realistic enough to know that they would need to continue learning as they transitioned into the institution.

There is much in the literature about preparation for the department chair position, the academic vice presidency, and the presidency. There is nothing in the literature specific to preparation for the academic dean position. There are studies focused on developing doctoral programs for community college administrators and deans who are preparing for next steps in their careers.

In her study about effective doctoral programs, Bragg (2000) identifies six core knowledge areas to prepare current community college deans for leadership positions in the community college: an understanding of the mission and philosophy of the community college, a learning centered orientation to understand the changing student characteristics and their impact on teaching and learning, instructional leadership including understanding what constitutes good learning and how teaching produces active learning, and understanding of information and educational technologies, and understanding of institutional accountability and learner assessment, and administrative

preparation beyond the traditional (p. 76). Bragg's core knowledge areas are focused on mission and philosophy, learning, and then technical skills.

The deans believed that preparation for the dean position included establishing credibility through the appropriate academic credential, teaching experience, and the ability to identify the interchangeability of skills between past experience and the dean position. The deans believed that they learned about the mission and philosophy of the community college through reading, and completing coursework in education. They articulated the need to understand the role and function of faculty members which they documented through their exposure to teaching and their teaching experience. They did not articulate the specific concepts of learning and the learner that Bragg identifies. Those deans who had been in the position longer would be more aware of these specific qualities of learners and learning. Those new to the position may not yet understand this terminology or may view this as the responsibility of faculty. Bragg's study was focused on preparation through a doctoral program. The deans focused on how life experience prepared them for this position and how they continued that preparation after they achieved the position. The deans perceived that they brought the technical skills they would need with them such as accountability, budgeting and financial, and knowledge of their specific career.

This study adds to the literature by identifying specific preparation strategies for the dean position. The deans identified the need for the appropriate academic credential, the importance of teaching experience, and the transferability of skills from their past life as preparation for the dean position. Several deans took a proactive approach as they made the transition to education enrolling in a PhD program, learning about the mission

of community colleges, and taking courses in educational theory. The deans believed that their previous life experiences, skills, and abilities also prepared them for the position.

Findings: Skills and Abilities Needed to be an Academic Dean

The focus in the literature is on identifying the skills to be an effective leader in the community college now and in the future, on CAO's perceptions of the skills necessary for effective practice, and on the role of middle managers in the community college. There is little in the literature that focuses specifically on the skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean. This study adds to the literature because it specifically focuses on the skills and abilities needed for the academic dean position, and in the identification of gaps in skills and strategies to fill those gaps.

The deans were very confident in their skills and abilities and held a strong belief in the interchangeability of their skills. Discussion of skills and abilities was prominent as they worked to gain acceptance and as they assimilated into and adapted to the culture of education. The skills and abilities identified by the deans were a mix of management and leadership skills. The deans identified skills they brought to the position and the skills they perceived were valued as they transitioned. They also identified the gaps in their skills as they transitioned and the strategies they used to fill those gaps.

The deans identified skills they brought to the academic dean position. These skills included experience in their career area (e.g. nursing or business), interpersonal skills (e.g. ability to build consensus, have others share in vision), administrative or management skills (e.g. budgeting), organizational skills, and human relations skills (e.g. ability to hire and evaluate). As the deans reflected on why the colleges selected them,

they believed that they were valued for their knowledge of their specific career, knowledge of and being known in the community, specific business skills such as those identified above, and simply being in the right place at the right time.

The gaps in skills that the deans identified were specific to education. They included knowledge of curriculum and curriculum development, knowledge of the internal operation of the community college (e.g. knowing the various departments and how they interact, and budgeting processes), terminology specific to education (e.g. contact or credit hour), understanding the culture of education, and the importance of funding and money in education. The deans also noted the lack of orientation and training programs to help them overcome these gaps in skills. The strategies the deans used to overcome these gaps in skills included reading and continuing to learn, hiring the right people to support them, and building relationships with appropriate staff and faculty.

The deans believed that the skills needed to be an academic dean included a mix of administrative skills and leadership skills. They acknowledged that the dean role placed them between the faculty and the administration. To maintain the balance it was important to establish and maintain good relationships. The specific skills identified included financial and budgeting skills, visioning, human relations skills, communication skills (e.g. listening and counseling), interpersonal skills (e.g. ability to say no to people and leave them smiling), ability to get things done, understanding of leadership (e.g. collaboration, teamwork), management skills (e.g. planning and organizing), and knowledge of their content area (e.g. nursing or business).

Townsend and Bassoppo-Moyo (1997) surveyed community college academic officers to identify the knowledge and skills required now and those that will become necessary in the next five to ten years based on seven competences (p. 43). The respondents identified four major competences that effective academic administrators should have. The competences included contextual (e.g. curriculum development, and knowledge of federal and state rules), technical (e.g. budgeting and financial issues, and evaluation of people and programs), interpersonal (e.g. knowledge and skill in participatory management, and conflict resolution and negotiation), and communication (e.g. listening, speaking, writing, and technology skills).

The responses of the deans are consistent with these competences. The deans placed emphasis on the need for interpersonal skills, communication skills, contextual skills (learning the requirements of education and the dean position), and the technical skills (budgeting and financial) they brought with them. This is consistent with the abilities the respondents identified as necessary for the future. The deans believed they brought these core skills with them to the position. Each of these competences were identified by the deans as necessary to help them to assimilate into and adapt to the culture of education. They focused on interpersonal skills and communication skills as critical to their success. The respondents identified team building and conflict resolution skills as very important. The deans support this conclusion. The deans were confident in their skills and abilities they believed they could learn the specific contextual skills on the job and refine their technical skills as they learned about the specifics of education.

The deans also discussed more specific skills that were necessary for the position such as listening, negotiating, collaboration, and budgeting. Brown, Martinez, and

Daniel (2002) surveyed chief academic officers with doctoral degrees to identify instructional leaders' perceptions of the skills necessary for effective practice. This study focused on the skills emphasized and learned by the CAOs in their doctoral programs with the goal to improve these programs. The skills that were identified as most important were communication (e.g. listening, feedback, writing, conflict resolution, and negotiation), leadership (e.g. developing and communicating a vision, understanding the mission of community colleges, collaborative decision making, and understanding an application of change), management skills (e.g. organization and time management, evaluation and recommendation of personnel, and board and local governance, policy, and procedure), curriculum development and understanding of teaching and learning methodologies and learning styles, and accounting skills, understanding of legal issues, and budgeting and financial skills. The deans would agree with these specific skills.

Andrews (2005) focused on the role of middle managers in the community college defining the middle manager role as department chair, division chairperson, or dean. The key expectations he identified of the middle manager were: hiring, supervising, evaluating, and representing the faculty; scheduling courses and times to meet student and community needs; developing, submitting, and defending department or divisional budgets; developing improvement opportunities; and demonstrating strong personal traits such as integrity; honesty, flexibility, ability to change, timeliness, humor, and trustworthiness. The deans would agree with these specific tasks. From my perspective, they would categorize these as core skills and suggest that this list is not comprehensive. I believe the deans would add higher level leadership skills to the list including such things as visioning, representing the college in the community,

representing the faculty to upper level administration, and acting as an officer of the institution.

The literature has not focused on the skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean. It has focused on the skills needed to be an effective leader now and in the future, on CAO's perceptions of the skills necessary to be an effective leader, and on the role of the middle manager in the community college. The deans identified the skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean which included a mix of management and leadership skills with a strong focus on the need for human relations and interpersonal skills. This study adds to the literature as the deans identify the specific skills and abilities needed to be an academic dean, the interchangeability of skills, the identification of gaps in skills, and strategies for filling these gaps.

Findings: Relationship Between Previous Professional Experience and the Academic Dean Position

There is nothing in the literature focused on the relationship between previous professional experience and the academic dean position. The literature also does not delve into the non traditional pathway. It does define the traditional pathway with the assumption that previous professional experience includes experience in education and in teaching. There is no discussion of other experience outside education because the non traditional pathway is not discussed.

The deans clearly saw the relationship between their previous professional experience and the academic dean position. They articulated this as they discussed the need to establish credibility and to gain acceptance. They aligned their past experiences with the dean position and discussed the interchangeability or transferability of skills.

The deans believed they were valued for their knowledge of their specific career, knowledge of and being known in the community, specific business skills such as those identified above, and simply being in the right place at the right time. They also believed that they brought an outside view or new perspective to the community college which allowed them to question some of the long held beliefs of educators. They articulated this as their ability to play devil's advocate.

This study adds to the literature by acknowledging a non traditional pathway and identifying how those with the pathway adapt to and assimilate into the culture of education. They do this by aligning skills, establishing credibility, and working to gain acceptance. The deans were confident in their skills and abilities, identified those skills for which they were valued, and perceived it was their responsibility to educate the educators about the value of those skills and abilities. They also identified the need for the educators to adapt to them by continuing to value those initial skills and abilities after the deans assimilated into the community college.

Practioner's Perspective

I am currently employed as an academic dean in a community college, as a result, I needed to aware of the need to suspend bias. I also had several assumptions prior to beginning the study about the quantity of participants who would meet the criteria for my study and their willingness to identify themselves and participate in the study. I also believed that deans with a non traditional background would be more prevalent in career content areas than in transfer content areas. I also had concerns about the use of the job title of dean. As the structure of the phenomenon unfolded, it became apparent to me that the deans' stories of transition was also a discussion of the community college as a closed

system. First, I will present discussion on my biases and assumptions. Then, I will present a discussion about the community college as a closed system.

Biases and Assumptions

Being employed as an academic dean in a community college provided me with unique advantages and disadvantages in this study. I have over thirty years experience in the community college. I began my career in Student Development and later made the transition to Academic Affairs. This was an unusual transition in the college. My first position in Academic Affairs was as an assistant dean with no time spent as a faculty member. My pathway to the position was perceived as non traditional by faculty and other academic administrators thus making my transition similar to the ones described by the deans in my study. My perceived non traditional pathway was what prompted my interest in this study. The advantage of working in the position I am studying is that I have a unique understanding of the position and the community college. This helped me to understand and structure the phenomenon.

It was also a disadvantage for two reasons. First, I needed to bracket my preconceived ideas about the phenomenon to understand it through the voices of my participants. I was constantly aware of this during the interview process and worked to suspend my bias. Second, I believed that the community college world is small and that the deans may be hesitant to share their experiences because I could be aware of who they were and their experiences. I needed to assure them of the confidentiality of my study and to confirm that proper protocols would be used. The deans were aware of my background and experience. I found through my interviews that the deans seemed reassured by my background and believed in my ability to suspend my bias. They

believed that I understood their experiences, both positive and negative, and that I could empathize with their position. Most of the deans were as interested in my experiences as I was in theirs. Several deans also commented, once the interview was complete, that they couldn't believe that their experience was that interesting or involved.

I had several assumptions as I entered into the study. The first was that I believed it was going to be difficult to find participants. The second was that, once found, the deans would not want to be identified as having a non traditional background. The third was that there would be fewer deans from a non traditional pathway working with traditional transfer areas than career areas. Finally, I expected to find a discrepancy in the use of the job title of dean.

It took me approximately eight months to find 58 potential participants and it was difficult to find participants that met my definition of non traditional fully. Again, I believe that the close knit community of the community college had an impact on this in two ways. First, administrators within the community college were very supportive of my study and seemed intrigued by it. They were very willing to assist me by identifying participants that they believed had taken a non traditional pathway. They were very open to identifying those they felt were unique, unfortunately, in many cases their definition of non traditional did not meet my very specific definition of non traditional. Therefore, I needed to contact the potential participants to have them more fully outline their background. I found that teaching experiences crept their way into potential participant's resumes such as teaching assistantships or other graduate school experiences. The potential participants also believed that any education experience outside of the community college would be treated as non traditional such as high school or grammar

school teaching experience. This reinforced their perception that community colleges wanted community college experience.

Another concern that I had was that deans would not want others to be aware of their non traditional pathway. I believed that they may be hesitant to identify themselves as non traditional because they had worked hard to overcome their background and assimilate into the community college. This assumption could very well have been true because I am not aware of the number of deans who may have taken a non traditional pathway who did not identify themselves to me. I am aware only of those who identified themselves to me and these deans did not have concerns sharing their backgrounds with me.

I also assumed that there would be more deans who had taken a non traditional pathway responsible for career areas versus transfer areas. Once I had identified deans who met the criteria for my study, I analyzed their job titles to look at the number working with traditional transfer programs versus those working in career areas. I found that the majority of deans were responsible for workforce development, or career areas. I also found deans responsible for business or technology areas. The minority of deans were responsible for traditional transfer areas such as liberal arts.

Finally, I assumed that there would be some confusion about my use of the job title of dean. I did not find this to be an issue. Either the college used the job title of dean or the deans used the definition I provided and identified themselves as meeting my criteria.

Community College as a Closed System

The story of transition for the deans is also a reflection on the community college as a closed system. My assumption was that the colleges would be experiencing a large number of retirements and that it would be difficult to find qualified applicants for the dean position. I believed that the colleges would be ready to suspend their traditional beliefs and that they would be open to hiring those with a non traditional background. Based on the information provided by the deans, this does not appear to be the case and the deans believe that the colleges are a closed system. The stories they tell of transition are about how they adapted to the traditions of academia and assimilated into the culture of education. Their advice is important to those who want to replicate their journey and for the colleges if they want to overcome the stigma of being a closed system. The discussion of the community colleges as a closed system includes discussion on the value of the traditional pathway, the value of the non traditional pathway, the paradox of traditional versus non traditional pathway, and the ability of others to replicate the non traditional pathway.

The traditional pathway defined in the literature begins with time spent as a faculty member, moves to department chair or division chair, and then to administrative positions including assistant dean, dean, chief academic officer, and president. This pathway is historical and created based on the values of pure academics. The community colleges may have chosen to adopt this belief in the traditional pathway to help them establish credibility with the pure academics. Therefore, the history of the traditional pathway in the community college is dependent on the values of traditional academics.

The traditional pathway is defined in the literature, but the value of the traditional pathway is not defined. It is assumed that the value of the traditional pathway is the time spent as a faculty member and then in the subsequent administrative roles. It could be assumed that the skills learned in each position in the pathway would be needed as the dean moved up the ladder. The deans question the relevance of skills learned as a faculty member and the value of those skills to them as administrators. The deans perceive that time spent teaching helps them to understand the role and function of faculty members and the culture of education. Therefore, it helps them to establish credibility and gain acceptance with faculty which may result in loyalty and buy in. Time spent as a faculty member does not provide them with additional administrative skills or the administrative skills necessary to be an effective dean. The deans are savvy enough to value tradition yet question the value of spending time as a faculty member when these skills may or may not be preparation for the position. The deans question whether the faculty role is required to be an effective administrator.

The value of the non traditional pathway also needs to be determined. The deans believe the colleges selected them for their background, skills and abilities, and the new perspective they bring. They believe that the colleges want to breathe new life in or bring a new perspective into their organizations. Based on the age of many of the established community colleges, the colleges may be entering a time of maturity which may lead to the need to bring in innovation and new insights or face decline. This may require the colleges to eschew the more traditional perspectives. I believe that the four year colleges and universities may already be addressing this need, seeking presidents and deans with fundraising expertise or those with significant business exposure and expertise. The

value of the non traditional pathway needs to be determined. The colleges can introduce those from outside education to bring in new perspectives but they must also value these employees for their innovative perspectives. The deans acknowledge and recognize why the colleges hired them and why they were valued. They believe that the colleges continue to value them for the skills, abilities, and expertise that they brought to the college. The deans are also savvy enough to recognize that they can assimilate only to a point in order to maintain their identity. Those deans who are successful are accepting of traditional values, learn to adapt to the cultural of education, yet maintain their identity. Therefore, the colleges need to learn how to adapt to the deans with a non traditional pathway.

The colleges are then faced with the paradox of valuing those with a traditional pathway and needing those with a non traditional pathway. The colleges may be facing a large quantity of retirements in key administrative roles. The expectation that faculty would fill these roles may no longer be true. Faculty may not be interested from either a financial or personal growth perspective to take these roles. Nor does the role appear to equip them with the scope and breadth of administrative skills to be effective. There are also not a sufficient number of professionals with education experience available to fill these roles. As I explained in Chapter 2 in the review of literature and also illustrated through the eyes of my participants, if faculty are not moving to the dean role and the colleges cannot depend on the traditional pathway, then the colleges are challenged to find other sources for potential candidates. These sources include those who have taken the non traditional pathway. The colleges have sought legitimacy in the world of higher education by embracing the traditional views and pathway now they may be at a crisis

point where they are forced to think differently to fill the immediate need of the positions and the need for innovation. The needs of the future and the traditional pathway therefore become in conflict. Attracting and accepting those from a non traditional pathway then becomes critical for the colleges. The non traditional deans provide a means to challenge the traditional viewpoints, values, and pathway.

This study provides insight into academic deans who have taken a non traditional pathway to the position. The deans are confident in their skills and abilities. They were motivated to come to the community by their desire to give back and their ability to align that with the mission and values of the community college. The deans value challenge and are motivated by taking risks. They also believe that they were valued for those skills and traits and their ability to provide a new perspective for the colleges. Yet they are savvy enough to recognize that they need to assimilate into and adapt to the culture of education. They also have educated the educators about the value of their skills, experience, and expertise and helped the educators adapt to them. The deans' response to the closed system is to align with it as much as possible yet to maintain the identity that the colleges valued when they hired them. From their perspective, it is inconsistent to hire them valuing their skills, experience, and expertise and then to force them to adopt the values of a pure academic or traditionalist.

At this point, the deans do not believe that their journey can easily be replicated by others wanting to take this non traditional pathway. The deans believe that if this does happen that it will still be an anomaly rather than a component of a formal succession plan adopted by the college. They believe that community colleges are a closed system because the colleges are not thinking broadly nor planning for the future. They believe

that the colleges lack formal succession plans for administrative positions that provide for development of current staff within the colleges or recruitment and selection of professionals from outside the college. They also believe that the colleges lack orientation and training plans to assist those with a non traditional background. Finally, the deans believe that the colleges need to build a culture within the campus that values diversity and inclusiveness of non traditional deans.

Recommendations for Research and Practice

The dean position is pivotal to the future for community colleges. It is a significant position in the pipeline for the chief academic officer and president positions. It is also a critical position in the day to day functioning of academic areas in the community college. The skills required for the position include skills such as visioning and planning, organizing, budgeting, building relationships, and interpersonal skills. There will be many dean positions available within the next ten years as a result of retirement, current deans moving into the vice president or president position, and natural attrition. With the large number of retirements in the traditional pipeline to administrative positions, the traditional pools of candidates may not provide enough candidates for these positions and this will provide a challenge for the colleges. Based on this study, I believe that there are several recommendations for practice and future research.

Recommendations for Practice

The community colleges will have the opportunity to fill many key administrative positions within the next ten years. They will need to look to the future to identify their

needs, review their traditional beliefs, and review their current practices and procedures in recognition of their future needs. My recommendations for practice include:

1. Establishing formal succession plans for key administrative positions. These succession plans should look to the future to identify the needs and the goals of the institution. This will require a realistic look at balancing the traditional perspective and the future needs of the organization.
2. Developing realistic job descriptions for these positions. These job descriptions should include the specific skills and abilities the colleges need to move them into the future.
3. Recognizing that there are two potential candidate pools for key administrative positions, those currently working in education or the community college system and those not currently working in education.
4. Developing a college culture that values diversity and promotes inclusiveness.
5. Developing career ladders and professional development plans for current administrators and staff. This will allow the colleges to identify and develop current employees for these positions.
6. Identifying methods to recruit and select potential candidates from outside the organization.
7. Developing orientation and training programs that help new administrators understand and adapt to the culture of the institution.

Recommendations for Future Research

In my review of the literature, there was very little research specific to the academic dean position in the community college. There is research available

acknowledging the impending retirements within the community college system and the impact of those retirements on faculty positions and literature focused on the vice president and president positions. The dean position is pivotal in the pipeline to the vice president and president positions. Therefore my recommendations for future research include:

1. Research specific to the academic dean position in the community college focused on the number of retirements in the community college system to determine the impact on the academic dean position.
2. Research on the academic dean position which includes the responsibilities of the position and the values, skills, and abilities needed for the position.
3. Research on succession planning for the academic dean position.
4. Research on developing a college culture that promotes diversity and inclusiveness.
5. Research on developing and retaining mid level administrators within the community college.
6. Research on non traditional pathway including identifying the number of current administrators within the system who have taken a non traditional pathway, and further study on their experiences as they made the transition.

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