Perspectives of Leadership Competencies by Multi-Campus
Community College Leaders

by
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Perspectives of Leadership Competencies by Multi-Campus

Community College Leaders

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explores the unique characteristics of a multi-campus community college system and how the organizational structure and associated operating norms can impact the perception and execution of critical leadership competencies. To date, limited research has addressed the unique nature of the multi-campus environment. The data from this exploratory study support and expand on the findings of existing research.

The significance of the study is that the increased need and demand for education and vocational training at the community colleges is colliding with a projected shortage of leaders. Because of their wide-ranging missions, different populations served, and the size of the institutions, it is understood that not all community colleges are the same. While generalization in leadership development plans cannot be avoided to some extent, one size does not fit all. In order to increase the ability to prepare future leaders for growth and success in a particular environment, individual districts need to become self-reflective and purposeful in determining how to best address the needs within their own system. This research offers insight into that quest by offering perspectives of how multi-campus community college structures impact the mid-level leader’s perception and execution of the American Association of Community Colleges competencies. Specifically, the investigation identified the characteristics of those competencies that are unique to the multi-campus environment. Determining how current and past leaders perceive the competencies and how to best execute those skills for effective leadership in their respective organizational structure will enable leadership development programs to
more accurately support efforts to ensure that future community college administrators meet the challenges they will predictably face.
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Figure 1. American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) six core competencies (CC) for community college leadership. 62
This work is dedicated to my father, Dr. William R. Gerald, who was the biggest inspiration and guiding light in my life.

It is because of him and his incredible love and wisdom that I sought to become the next Dr. Gerald.
CHAPTER 1—INTRODUCTION

Introduction

With some 1,764 public and private 2-year colleges in the country, the impending turnover in leadership is staggering. In 2007, 44% of community college presidents were reportedly over 61 years old (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). The changing of the guard in community college leadership prompted the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) to form their Leading Forward initiative (Ottenritter, 2004). Leading Forward established a set of six competencies to guide leaders and their institutions in developing skills required to successfully lead community colleges in the following areas: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. Those leadership competencies were developed with input from community college leaders from around the country and have been vetted, ranked, and expanded. The question of how to develop and transfer those skills to emerging leaders has become as important as the identification of the competencies themselves (Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010). The rapidly increasing attrition rate, coupled with the current budget crisis, have made it difficult for community colleges to address leadership development in a way that matches the need. With high attrition comes a significant loss of institutional knowledge and diminishes opportunities for formal and informal mentorship by senior leaders.

In a 2001 survey by Weisman and Vaughan (2007), 79% of sitting presidents indicated they intended to retire from their positions no later than 2012. However, the economic crisis of the late 2000s has impeded the pending exodus of some of those presidents along with other senior and mid-level leaders. The 2006 Career and Lifestyle
Survey of community college presidents, conducted by Weisman and Vaughan (2007), indicated that 84% of sitting presidents reported they planned to retire by 2016. Those deferred retirements may have provided the community college system with an extended grace period to prepare future leaders to take the wheel. However, the value of that grace period will be diminished if community colleges do not develop focused and relevant strategies to properly prepare emerging leaders.

This study will look at past and current efforts to build a strong capacity for leadership within the community college system, specifically those related to multi-campus districts. The quest to identify critical competencies for effective community college leadership has been a topic of research and discussion for many years. However, the high rates of retirement and other attrition expected to occur over the next 5 to 10 years have increased the level of importance and urgency in this area (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007).

In the 2005 study conducted by AACC, the great majority of community college executives across the country agreed on the relevance and importance of the six core competencies presented; however, it was also clear there was some variance in the priority ranking of those competencies from one geographic region to another across the United States. Furthermore, the value ranking of the competencies varied depending partially on the size of a particular institution. The structural differences between a multi-campus and single campus create natural variations in identity, culture, leadership roles, responsibilities, political acumen, decision making structures, and resources sharing. This study will explore how mid-level leaders from multi-campus colleges
serving urban areas believe their environment impacts the execution of the core competencies.

Conover (2009) asserted that in addition to the competencies presented through AACC, the need for leaders to learn to artfully navigate their operational and political structure is essential to successful CC leadership. Specifically, he noted that an administrator operating in a multi-campus district will have needs unique from those operating in a single-campus environment.

According to Murray and Eddy (2007), it is “known that community colleges vary tremendously by geographic location and size” (p. 1). The commonly held belief that significant differences exist across the nation’s community colleges suggests the leaders of these institutions face a wide-ranging set of challenges (Murray & Eddy, 2007). Based on these dissimilarities, it is reasonable to expect that leaders from colleges of different sizes, operating structures, and varying populations served would need to employ leadership styles differently depending on the varied challenges, situations, and conditions they encounter. It is likely that the leaders of these colleges will consider some of the competencies identified by the AACC (2005) as more important and relevant for the effective leadership of their particular colleges (Kools, 2010).

Understanding which competencies community college leaders judge to be of highest importance and how those competencies are best employed in their respective operating structure will provide data that will inform selection, staffing, and leadership development efforts. It will enable a more focused customized design of internal and external leadership development efforts particularly for leaders of multi-campus systems.
Multi-Campus Community College

In 1992, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO, as cited in Krueger, 2009) attempted to define a multi-campus as a location of an institution that was geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution, permanent in nature, and offered programs leading to a degree or other recognized educational credential. This definition aligns with current Federal Regulation 34 CFR 600.2 (Electronic Code of Federal Regulations [ECFR], 2014), which defined a branch campus as a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location of an institution is considered to be independent of the main campus if the location:

1. Is permanent in nature.
2. Offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential.
3. Has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization.
4. Has its own budgetary and hiring authority.

Some of the main reasons given for the establishment of multi-campus operations were to expand the geographic size of the college service area, to make the college more accessible to district residents, to meet the diverse educational needs of the residents of the service area, and to keep each campus to a reasonable and functional size (Bond, 1983; Jensen, 1984; Sammartino, 1964). However, Sasser (1978) reported that the primary reason for establishing most multi-campus was that it was an effective way of taking education to the people.
Cohen and Brawer (2003) suggested that multi-campus institutions were more complex, structured, and formalized than single campus institutions. Research in the early 1970s began to look at the unique dynamic of the multi-campus college environment. Wynn (1972) noted that the questions that often demanded early answers pertained to the definition of the authority, control, and decision-making responsibilities that were assigned to each level of the organizational structure, how to structure the administration of the campus, and how to organize the relationship among the multiple campuses. In addition to the relationships between the campuses, the relationship between the campus and the central office plays a significant role in defining the leadership competencies needed for multi-campus environments. Ewers (2000) asserted that all institutions with multiple campuses suffer from the perception that one campus is being preferred over the others. No campus believes that it receives the attention and resources that it needs.

The effectiveness of multi-campus structures was found in their flexibility to offer the educational services that respond directly to community needs (Norby, 2005). Each campus was unique; no campus was exactly like the original campus, or any other campus, and Holland (2001) asserted that to be truly responsive to its community, each campus required differentiated operation and organization. Although every campus story was unique, the majority of multi-campus community colleges grew from a single campus concept to multi-campuses as the population of the colleges’ service areas grew and their original campuses reached capacity. The colleges expanded enrollment by adding off-campus or multi-campuses at convenient locations instead of opening new colleges (Bond, 1983). This often allowed colleges to be responsive to community needs,
without having to alter the core culture and programs of the main campus (Holland, 2001). As the colleges grew to multiple sites, some college-wide functions were centralized with the goal of greater efficiency, while others were delegated to other sites.

**Multi-Campus Community College Administrators**

N. I. Bailey (2002), Hermanson (1993, 1995), Krueger (2009), Mertzer (2008), and Stahley (2002) asserted that the role of the multi-campus executive officer was pivotal to the success of the multi-campus, since all daily administrative responsibilities of the campus were typically overseen by this individual. Hermanson (1995), Hill (1985), Mertzer (2008), Norby (2005), and Stahley (2002) all reported that multi-campus administrators generally operated as part of the middle management level in community colleges. N. I. Bailey (2002) and Gillie-Gossom and Pelton (2011) equated the role of the multi-campus community college administrator to that of a circus ringmaster. Like the ringmaster, the multi-campus administrator was required to “juggle the demands of senior administration, faculty, career service, and community constituents and must be comfortable in each environment” (Gillie-Gossom & Pelton, 2011, p. 4). Multi-campus administrators typically had responsibility for the successful implementation of the college’s mission on the campus, and just as campuses were unique, so were the multi-campus administrators that led them.

Mid-level community college administrators affected the tone, manner, and style of the institution, and their daily actions affected the quality of relationships with faculty, students, and the community (Rosser, 2000; Scott, 1978). Hence, the success of multi-campus administrators was integral to the success of the college as a whole (N. I. Bailey, 2002; Sethi, 2000). Unfortunately, unlike other administrative positions in the
community college leadership hierarchy, the role of the multi-campus administrator was not clearly defined (N. I. Bailey, 2002). Typically, the multi-campus administrator was responsible for oversight of campus resources and assured that they were managed effectively and efficiently (N. I. Bailey, 2002; Honeyman, Wattenbarger, & Westbrook, 1996; Moses, 2001). However, at times they were not always given the authority to make local decisions (Jensen, 1984).

**Organizational Structure**

Research by Lee and Bowen (1971) contended that multi-campus organizational structures had strengths over single-campus institutions. Among these strengths were the efficiencies brought about by the overlap of certain functions, the utilization of existing governance boards, and the promotion of specialization, diversity, and cooperation in academic planning and budget preparation. Chang (1978) described eight advantages of multi-campus structures for community colleges:

- Permitted financial flexibility.
- Permitted the economy of a large scale operation while maintaining the flexibility to respond to local needs.
- Increased the college’s ability to attract top talent for key administrative positions.
- Avoided unnecessary duplication of specialized high-cost programs.
- Provided opportunity to share ideas, staff, and equipment among the campuses for program development and problem solving.
- Increased effectiveness of efforts to interpret college financial and educational programs to state and federal governments.
- Permitted ease of student transfer from one campus to another within the college.

**Administrative Structure**

While earlier studies presented some advantages to the multi-campus structure, Fonseca and Bird (2007) asserted that one of the critical questions in the administration of multi-campuses surrounded the relationship that the multi-campus had with the main campus. Wygal and Owen (1975) suggested that a multi-campus college experiences special problems and tensions as a consequence of its size, complexity, and the distance separating its units. Dengerink (2001) pointed out that the relationships between the campus and the main campus were complex, dynamic, and labor-intensive. Jensen (1984) noted that, as a community college goes multi-campus, the role of the central office becomes crucial, as does the question of how much autonomy each campus should have and/or can legally have.

Hermanson (1995), Hill (1985), Mertzer (2008), Norby (2005), and Stahley (2002) all reported that multi-campus senior administrators were generally either the second level of administrator within the institution’s organizational structure and reported directly to the college president/chancellor, or they were a third level administrator who reported to a second level administrator. Thus, in some environments the multi-campus senior administrators could be viewed as part of the middle management of the institution. This factor alone creates a very different operating experience from that of a senior administrator in a single campus college. In the single campus college, the
president or senior administrator has fewer layers of reporting and is most commonly considered senior management.

Mid-level community college administrators in a multi-campus environment manage relationships between senior administration, other campus administration, central office personnel, campus faculty, staff, and the community (N. I. Bailey, 2002; Johnsrud, Heck & Rosser, 2000). Unlike single campus community college administrators, they also engage in shared decision-making with the main campus, limiting their autonomy and decision making authority. Lack of autonomy and authority to effect changes and participate in decisions creates another unique characteristic within the multi-campus environment.

The quest to understand the impacts of varying operating structures reflects cultural, political, and practical factors. American higher education is characterized by a large variety of institutions and institutional types, and the uniqueness of our colleges and universities is celebrated (Clark, 1992). It seems logical to expect this uniqueness to manifest itself in distinctive outcomes. Knowledge of how operating structures impact the need and employment of select leadership competencies can inform interventions to improve educational quality. This study offers insight into how community college leaders at multi-campus community colleges define the need for the AACC (2005) core leadership competencies, their perceived importance, and how they are being addressed.

**Statement of the Problem: The Leadership Crisis in Community Colleges**

Community colleges, like many organizations throughout the country, are facing increasing levels of attrition in the leadership ranks (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). The
high rate of retirements will not only come within the ranks of presidents and other senior level executives, but will also impact middle and entry level leaders. Because middle managers are often sought as the replacement for executive leadership, the large and looming number of retiring baby boomers is of great concern (Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). There are national organizations, like the AACC, that have worked to address the impending gap through research, conferencing, structured academies, and mentoring. In 2010, Hassan et al. reviewed the six essential competencies for community college leadership identified in 2005 by the AACC. As previously noted, the AACC released a set of core competencies that has been vetted by sitting practitioners. Those competencies have served as a foundation and guide for those seeking to support professional development of leaders within the community college system. The essential competencies identified include: organizational strategy; community college advocacy; communication; professionalism; collaboration; and resource management. In addition to the ranking of the competencies, sitting community college executives offered additional competencies they believed essential and chimed in on their beliefs as to the best way to gain these critical skills. The six leadership competencies presented by the AACC in 2005 have become a guiding source in the preparation of community college leaders.

The intent of the AACC was to promote these leadership competencies to the community colleges as a guide for effective leadership development. Given the impending wave of community college leader retirements (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002), the AACC reiterated the importance of implementing a leadership development framework in the curricula of university and internal leadership development programs. The AACC survey participants identified additional competencies beyond those presented
in the survey. In addition, research suggests the leadership dynamics driven by operating structures (i.e., single- and multi-campus structures) should also be reviewed and considered in the implementation of leadership development efforts.

There are unique differences related to decision making, reporting structures, resource sharing, relationship development, and duplication of roles that exist between single-campus colleges and multi-campus environments. The identification of those unique traits can serve to inform focused and customized leadership development efforts for those respective populations.

**Significance of the Study**

An increased demand for education and vocational training at the community colleges is colliding with a projected shortage of leaders. Because of their wide-ranging missions, different populations served, and the size of the institutions, it is understood that not all community colleges are the same. While generalization in leadership development plans cannot be avoided to some extent, one size does not necessarily fit all. In order to increase the ability to prepare future leaders for growth and success in a particular environment, individual districts need to become self-reflective and purposeful in determining how to best address the needs within their own system. This research offers insight into that quest by determining how community college leaders at multi-campus colleges interpret the relative importance and execution of the AACC (2005) competencies. It further seeks to identify the characteristics of those competencies that will be unique to the multi-campus environment. Determining not only how current and past leaders perceive the competencies, but how to best execute those skills for effective leadership in their respective organizational structure, will enable leadership
development programs to more accurately develop efforts that ensure future community college administrators are able to meet the challenges they will predictably face.

**Purpose of the Study**

This research serves to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, it will use proven methods of data collection to shed light on the influences of organizational structure as it relates to the ability of community college leaders to successfully implement and execute critical leadership competencies.

**Research Methodology**

As a research methodology, phenomenology seeks to recognize and describe the subjective experiences of research participants by studying their everyday experience (Schwandt, 2001). A phenomenological format allows the researcher to write about a combination of objective reality and individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). The aim of this research approach is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience (Polkinghorne, 1989), in order to reveal the essential structure of the phenomenon under investigation. The focus on the experience of the interviewee and the reality that is derived from that experience was core to this research. Thus, phenomenology was the qualitative methodology used in this study.

**Research Questions**

The research questions presented in this section guided the qualitative study and were designed to assist in data extraction. The purpose of the study will be fulfilled by addressing the following research questions:
1. How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?

2. How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?

Definitions

Terms and concepts utilized in this study are defined as follows:

*American Association of Community Colleges (AACC)*: The leading professional organization for the nation’s 2-year degree-producing institutions. The AACC is reported to have as much as 95% of all accredited community, technical, and junior colleges in the nation as members (AACC, 2005).

*Community college*: A community college is a public, not-for-profit 2-year institution from which the most common degree earned is an associate degree (arts or science) but, with increasing frequency, offers a limited variety of 4-year degrees.

*Competency*: A cluster of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that affects performance of one’s job and correlates with performance on the job that can be measured against well-accepted standards.

*Constituent*: A person or group of people who are a part of the organization.

*Leadership*: The establishment of a clear vision and sharing that vision with others so they will follow willingly; providing the information, knowledge, and methods to realize that vision; and coordinating and balancing the conflicting interests of all members or stakeholders.

*Management*: The organization and coordination of the activities of an enterprise in accordance with certain policies and in achievement of clearly defined objectives.
**Multi-site campus:** Colleges that have more than one location but a single administration, faculty governance structure, and governing board.

**President:** The chief executive officer of the organization.

**Senior-level administration:** The administrative personnel in the organization.

**Succession planning:** The identification and development of potential successors for critical positions through a systematic evaluation process, mentoring, grooming, successive duties, and responsibilities increasing in scope, complexity, and training.

**Delimitations**

The study is delimited by responses obtained from sitting community college administrators in public, not-for-profit 2-year community colleges and can only be generalized to public, urban multi-campus community colleges.

**Limitations**

Because this study was limited to a sample of volunteers from multi-campus 2-year (public) community colleges, its external validity was limited. It is possible that all trends were not consistent across the national system. Findings may not represent the experiences of all community college administrators. Only public, not-for-profit community colleges classified as multi-campus institutions serving urban communities were studied to gain insight into the perception of the importance of the AACC’s (2005) six core competencies. The information obtained through this research was limited to aggregated results from survey responses of leader’s perceptions related to the AACC’s competencies as being essential for effective community college leadership within their operating structure.
CHAPTER 2—REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Organization of Literature Review

This research examines leadership development in community colleges and specifically seeks to identify how multi-campus leaders relate to the identification and execution of critical competencies for effective leadership. Research and study pertaining to the unique nature of a multi-campus environment has increased somewhat since the very limited research and discussion noted in the 1970s.

In 2006, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching led the effort to further establish subclassifications for public colleges to include multi-campus and single-campus designations. This reclassification came in part as recognition of the unique nature of each environment. Thus, a brief review of literature related to the history and mission of community colleges is presented, followed by a historical perspective on the development of the multi-campus environment. The literature review then provides information related to the multi-campus administrator’s role as part of the community colleges’ leadership team. Additionally, much literature exists on community college leadership, and that makes up the next part of the literature review. The predicted shortage of leaders creates the need for research about leaders or why leadership development is needed. Leadership is examined by studying presidents or top leadership positions and mid-level administrators. The review of literature continues with what is known about leadership development and types of leadership development opportunities, which is necessary to address the community college leadership crisis.
Community College Background and History

Community colleges have come to be known as the “people’s colleges” (Boone, 1997, p. 2), a term originally associated with land-grant universities that were developed with the mission of extending educational opportunity to all. The land grant acts increased access to public institutions of higher learning and withheld funds from states that continued to deny admissions to land grant colleges based on race or other discriminatory factors. In 1947, following World War II, the Truman Commission solidified the role of community colleges as institutions that served their local community and offered open access to education for a larger portion of the population (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). In 1947, the President’s Commission (as cited in Ratcliff, 1994) established the community college model as a network of public colleges that would charge little to no tuition, be responsive to the community’s needs through a comprehensive set of offerings, and create a deep attachment and anchor to the community where it was located.

Since the days of the Truman Commission, the community college mission has continued to center around the concept of service to the needs of the surrounding community. However, each campus or district personalizes and adapts their particular mission to reflect the unique characteristics and the changing dynamics of their constituencies (Blong & Bedell, 1997).

According to Vaughan (2006) the community college is more strongly connected to its community than any other postsecondary institution. Community colleges contribute significantly to their communities and assist business and industry in preparing a trained labor force (Levin, 2000). College supporters and contributors will often
include local businesses that have an interest in the educational outcomes of the students, as they are likely to employ their graduates (Zeiss, 1994). Community college students are traditionally community residents who are invested in the community through family or work ties (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The students also bring a diverse set of goals, including short-term continuing education, retraining, critical intellectual development, certificate and degree attainment, and workforce development credentialing (Pusser & Levin, 2009). State and local funding for public community colleges comprises 57% of the college’s total budget on a national average, as computed by The American Association of Community Colleges (Pusser & Levin, 2009).

The Mission of Community College

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2013), the community college’s mission serves as the fountain from which all of its activities flow. The AACC compiled a mission based on common themes mirrored in most community college missions. Those themes include: serving all segments of society through an open-access admissions policy that offers equal and fair treatment to all students; providing a comprehensive educational program; serving its community as a community-based institution of higher education; teaching; and lifelong learning (Vaughan, 2006).

Accessibility remains one of the top priorities of community colleges (Boone, 1997). The community colleges’ open door policy did much to improve higher education access to those who were previously restrained from entry to institutions of higher education. According to Cohen and Brawer (1996), the proximity of community colleges was the key to increased access:
During the 1950s and 1960s, whenever a community college was established in a locale where there had been no publicly supported college, the proportion of high school graduates in that area who began college immediately increased, sometimes by as much as 50 percent. (p. 16)

During the late 1960s and 1970s, the number of satellite centers and multi-campuses grew substantially in response to the expansions in enrollments. In a 1972 report, M. J. Cohen (as cited in Cohen & Brawer) stated, “90 to 95 percent of the state’s population lived within reasonable commuting distance, about 25 miles [from a community college]” (p. 17). Locale and population growth or decline has a direct impact on the expansion plans of community colleges.

By the late 1990s, the building of new campuses has diminished. According to M. J. Cohen’s (as cited in Cohen & Brawer, 1996) study, as states reached a certain ratio of population to colleges, fewer new colleges were added.

**Multi-Campuses**

Community colleges were organized to accomplish their missions of education, open access, workforce development, and meeting the needs of the local region. From the Truman Commission Report until the mid-1970s, the demand for community college education and services grew quickly. Creating multi-campuses was a typical response to the demand for community college services (Peterson & Dill, 1997). Since community colleges usually were not residential colleges, the proximity of the campuses to the students further contributed to enrollment growth. The adding of more campus sites provided a way to serve more students in highly populated locations (Johnstone, 1999), as opposed to opening new colleges or districts.
The first community (junior) college branch campuses were established in Chicago in 1934 and Los Angeles in 1945. In 1974, 77 multi-campus institutions with 212 campuses existed (Rossmeier, 1976). By 2004, Katsinas and Hardy (2004) reported that one of every three community colleges was part of multi-campus or multi-college districts; and in 2005, the AACC (as cited in Levinson, 2005) reported 500 community college branch campuses.

In 2006, the Carnegie Classification data for 2-year colleges was split into subcategories (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching [Carnegie Foundation], 2006). The categories are based on a classification scheme developed by Stephen Katsinas, Vincent Lacey, and David Hardy. The classification scheme most noted by the reviewers was one developed by Katsinas and Lacey (Katsinas, 2003).

The Katsinas, Lacey, and Hardy 2005 Classification System for 2-year institutions responded to the need to further delineate classifications for community colleges so that researchers had access to data related more specifically to their areas of study (Carnegie Foundation, 2006). These new data improved the ability to separate and identify both the homogenous and heterogeneous characteristics of single-campus and multi-campus colleges, thus informing and improving policy and practice. Kools (2010) notes that each type of institution, whether it be multi-campus, single-campus, urban, suburban, or rural-serving community colleges, has its own story to tell.

Because rural, suburban, and urban 2-year colleges are not a homogeneous group (Katsinas, 2003), the classifications of geographical size, structure, and location are relevant. Mission, culture, and constituencies create differences in critical operational
dynamics that community college leaders must contend with on an ongoing basis (Eller et al., 2003; Leist, 2007).

**Organizational Characteristics of Multi-Campus Colleges**

The multi-campus community college has evolved over the years and has taken different forms. There is not one design for the multi-campus structure; each entity has evolved based on individual needs. Jones, in his 1968 study of multi-unit junior colleges, identified four models of multi-unit community colleges: (a) the one college-branch center model, (b) the one college multi-campus model, (c) the multi-campus district model, and (d) the multi-college district model. Jones argued that multi-unit colleges generally proceeded through these four models as they aged, maturing from a centralized one-college model to a more autonomous, decentralized, multi-college district model.

Fonseca and Bird (2007) distilled this notion down to three basic models for multi-campuses: the centralized model, in which a centralized office located at the main campus made decisions for the branch campuses, the decentralized model that provided full autonomy to the campus sites, and the leadership model in which strategic management functions were campus based, but coordinated with the central office. Levinson (2005) differentiated between two basic types of 21st century community colleges: single- or multi-campus institutions administered and governed by a single board of trustees, and multi-campus systems of several separate and unique colleges governed by a chancellor.

Wolfe and Strange (2003) note that in spite of the large number of multi-campus colleges and the contributions they make to the education of citizens, relatively little research has examined their role or the experiences of those who serve in them. Wolfe
and Strange then went on to conduct a small qualitative study of the faculty culture of one small, rural 2-year multi-campus. Through that study, some characteristics emerged about the campus itself. Subjects of the study were faculty members nominated by their peers as “influential, knowledgeable, and perceptive regarding campus issues and concerns” (Wolfe & Strange, 2003, p. 346). One of the issues raised by faculty regarding teaching at a campus away from the main site was evidenced in their comments about their campus being perceived as a second-class place by faculty from the main campus. These sentiments resonate with Ewers’ (2000) findings that multi-campus districts always suffer from the belief that one campus is preferred over the others. Wolfe and Strange further found that the faculty at the branch campus identified more closely with their surrounding community than with the main campus. They also noted the processes for communication, decision making, assigning roles, and even the overarching philosophy regarding student learning objectives differed from one campus to the other. There was a clear feeling of being separate and unique from their peers at the other location. Furthermore, the growth of multi-campus community colleges over the last quarter century has separated faculty and staff from the fellowship offered in the old traditional single-campus models (Wolfe & Strange, 2003).

Wolfe and Strange (2003) concluded that, in order to properly recruit and retain faculty in multi-campus environments, there is a need to pay closer attention to the orientation and development of faculty in the multi-campus environments. Furthermore, the clarification and delineation of roles both between and within campuses will play an important role in the successful matriculation of personnel in the early stages of their careers. Proper orientation and development that includes reference to the campus and
district’s operating culture can arm employees with tools to successfully maneuver within the environment.

Wolfe and Strange’s (2003) study concluded the following:

Questions raised by this study indicate a need for further inquiry into the lives of those at institutions not usually examined from a cultural perspective. It is all the more important that these kinds of campuses, which are really on the leading edge of accessibility and service to students, be seriously examined and further studied.

(p. 362)

**Multi-Site Community College Administrators**

A study on multi-campus executives in 2002 found that the duties of the multi-campus executive officers were similar to those of the chancellor or president, only in a smaller venue (N. I. Bailey, 2002). Multi-campus executives were to implement college-wide policies and mission and to direct the activities of their location. They typically have budget allocation and financial oversight responsibilities of their campus. The role of liaison between the main campus and the campus operation was expected. The organizational structure of the community college impacts the specific duties of the campus executive officer (N. I. Bailey, 2002).

Research on leading change noted that other studies of leadership often ignore the nuances of systems, such as “nested” leadership (Eddy, 2006, p. 41). Nested leadership in community colleges refers to an organizational structure where the campus president is part of a branch campus administered by a system president, or are under a large district administered by a district president or chancellor, or serves at one of many campuses.
reporting to a state-governed community college system president or chancellor who reports to a governing board (Eddy, 2006).

The multi-campus administrator’s leadership is often “nested” as the community college president provides the larger vision and leadership directives to be implemented by the campus site. While the multi-campus administrator’s degree of autonomy varies from one system to another, the administrator generally is responsible for maintaining the vision and mission of the institution at large, while serving the community at hand (Eddy, 2006).

Conover (2009) further suggests that community college nested campus leaders are in the best position to understand the unique mission of their colleges, to understand their campus cultures, and to articulate a vision for their respective campuses. Institutional culture plays a significant role in community college campuses, including serving as a filtering mechanism and a context for implementing directives and change initiatives (Conover, 2009; Eddy, 2006). For state-wide nested systems, Conover’s observations have important implications. Change in multi-campus systems means organizational change at multiple sites, led by local campus leaders, and occurring in tandem with the vision expressed at the system level. A nested system creates a change dynamic that may be simultaneously external and internal (Cech, 2010). Thus, managing organizational change may represent a leadership competency that is unique to the multi-campus environment.

**Community College Leadership**

Much research exists on community college leadership, especially on the community college president (Duree, 2007; Eddy, 2005; Malm, 2008; McFarlin,
Crittenden, & Ebbers, 1999; Shults, 2001; Sullivan, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007). Other leadership studies have focused on the next tier of leaders: chief academic officers (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002a, 2002b; P. Anderson, Murray, & Olivarez, 2002; Cejda, McKenney, & Burley, 2001; Keim & Murray, 2008), mid-level administrators (Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008; Rosser, 2000; Wallin, 2010), deans (J. M. Bailey, 2008; Watba & Farmer, 2006), and faculty leaders (Miller & Pope, 2003).

The literature about these leaders is applicable to a study on multi-campus community college administrators because leadership development along with all career preparation factors are applicable to all aspiring leaders. Community college presidents are perceived as influential in the organizational functioning and as initiators of change (Levin, 1998; Malm, 2008). This is due in part to the bureaucratic nature of the community college (Birnbaum, 1988; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Levin, 1998) that gives the president a highly concentrated locus of control. When compared to 4-year colleges and universities, which have other loci of influence and authority (for example, from the professorate), community colleges credit their presidents with making significant changes in organizational culture and function (Levin, 1998).

As the national community college movement began its fifth decade, Sullivan (2001) differentiated among the presidents who built the community colleges or the founding fathers, the second generation of good managers who oversaw the rapid growth when resources were high, and the third generation of collaborators who remodeled community colleges and were aggressive in securing funding from diverse sources. The current third generation presidents are more deliberately trained for the top posts than any other generation of community college presidents (Sullivan, 2001). However, this
generation of presidents is retiring at a rapid rate (Shults, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). Therefore, the need to effectively train the fourth generation of leaders is critical to the ongoing success of the community college system.

**Leadership Theories in Practice by Community College Leaders**

Research studies have been conducted on community college leaders and how their leadership is manifested in their positions. McFarlin et al. (1999) studied exemplary community college presidents, their leadership, and preparation factors. Sitting community college presidents interviewed in a qualitative study revealed similar leadership definitions and approaches that had been distilled through practice and refined for the situation (Malm, 2008). In a similar study of community college presidents, Eddy (2005) interviewed nine presidents for self-assessment of their leadership. Her findings also indicated that presidents were influenced by their past experiences but also by the college cultures and mentors, if any. Reflection and feedback from their campus associates created richer opportunities for learning and making sense of their leadership. Presidents without a network or limited access to a network of colleagues for mentoring must rely on past experiences or learning on their own on the job (Eddy, 2007).

Using data collected in a 2000 study, Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) analyzed responses from a cross section of community college leaders to determine if their self-definition of leadership had changed from the traditional hierarchical leader to the participatory or other evolving leadership style. The findings of their analysis were that 47% of the participants still used the traditional concept of leadership linked to position (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).
Leadership Skills

The AACC (as cited in Boggs, 2003) researched appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities by asking presidents in 2001 to identify appropriate skills to guide community college leadership development. The AACC Board Task Force developed the Leadership Skills for the 21st Century (Boggs, 2003). The resulting recommendations were titled, “Competencies for Community College Leaders.” A total of 45 individual competencies were listed under six headings: Organizational Strategy, Resource Management, Communication, Collaboration, Community College Advocacy, and Professionalism (AACC, 2005). The AACC competencies were used in a national research study of community college presidents who rated each of the competencies for importance to community college leadership and for their preparedness of each competency at the beginning of their presidencies (Duree, 2007).

Using the AACC Competencies as a basis to design a study for mid-level administrators, Wallin (2010) conducted a survey of 44 participants to determine what skills they felt were needed for their current positions or future career plans. The respondents rated demonstrating personal ethics as the most important skill, followed by communicating and working with staff; developing shared values, mission, vision for college; and demonstrating enthusiasm and optimism. They listed budget and financial knowledge as the top skills they needed to develop in the next year. Developing teams and developing external partnerships were also named as being needed in the next year (Wallin, 2010).

A survey of 18 community college doctoral programs by Romano, Townsend, and Mamiseishvili (2009) collected data from program participants regarding their awareness
of AACC (2005) Competencies for Community College Leaders, as well as student demographics and background and influences on perceptions of the community college. Only 51.7% of the doctoral students in the survey were aware of the competencies. When survey participants were asked to assess how well their programs addressed the recommended AACC (2005) competencies for community college leaders, they ranked resource management and advocacy as the two categories in which they felt the least prepared. Of the graduate students in the survey group, 68.4% said that they could learn leadership skills in the classroom. When asked to use a president’s viewpoint, students rated collaboration and organizational strategy as the most important for community college presidents (Romano et al., 2009).

Other researchers have used different approaches to identify skills needed for various groups of community college leaders. Using Mintzberg’s typology from 1973, P. Anderson et al. (2002) adapted the research tool to study community college chief academic officers (CAO) in a national study. The managerial roles were described as a set of behaviors resulting in 10 managerial roles. For the CAOs in the study, data from across all regions supported the conclusion that the three most used were the roles of leader, liaison, and disseminator. The middle three roles were those of monitor, resource allocator, and entrepreneur. Roles of spokesperson, disturbance handler, figurehead, and negotiator were in the group of least used. None of the participants ranked figurehead or spokesperson in their top three roles, indicating that the chief academic officers may be more internally focused. However, the CAOs with more years of experience rated the externally focused roles, in other words, figurehead and spokesperson or higher (P. Anderson et al., 2002). The comparable AACC competencies to leader, liaison,
and disseminator are in the organizational strategy, communication, and collaboration categories.

In a study of chief academic officers, Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) focused on leadership skills preparation and training. They surveyed 300 instructional leaders for their recommendations for skills and areas of expertise needed to be effective community college leaders. The participants rated 48 skills in 10 areas: leadership; communication; institutional planning and development; management; policy; research methodology and application; legal; finance; technology; and faculty and staff development. All survey participants had earned a doctoral degree and noted that they would have modified their doctoral programs to better prepare themselves for community college leadership. They felt that the skills emphasized in the doctoral program were not necessarily those that would have prepared them to be effective community college leaders. Of the 10 most needed skills, communication skills were represented the most. Other individual most important skills were developing and communicating a vision, understanding the community college mission, institutional effectiveness, organizing and time management skills, and curriculum development.

In addition to academics, curriculum, and faculty relations, chief academic officers’ responsibilities and duties now include many areas that require skills in fiscal management, legal matters, enrollment management, resource management, and strategic planning (Keim & Murray, 2008). These researchers found more education doctorates held by CAOs than did previous researchers, indicating that candidates for leadership positions and search committees have begun to recognize the value of the education doctorate to develop leadership and management skills (Keim & Murray, 2008).
Studies on Specific Competencies

In 2010, Hassan et al. reviewed the six essential competencies for community college leadership identified in 2005 by the AACC. In this study, those leadership competencies were reviewed and ranked by sitting presidents and board of trustee chairpersons from Florida and New York. The reviewers from both states substantiated the AACC’s findings and came to consensus on the following ranking order from highest to lowest of importance: (a) Organizational Strategy, (b) Community College (CC) Advocacy, (c) Communication, (d) Professionalism, (e) Collaboration, and (f) Resource Management. In addition to the ranking of the competencies, the executives chimed in on their beliefs as to the best way to gain these critical skills. The survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that on-the-job experiences provided the greatest leadership development opportunities.

The study by Hassan et al. (2010) took a closer look at select competencies. One of those competencies was advocacy. The researchers believed that advocacy skills do have the potential to be developed within the confines of a workshop, class, or other engineered environments for learning. Based on these findings, there is room for additional research on the responsiveness of leadership programs (including doctoral programs) to address the need to integrate the development of critical skills like advocacy within their programs, and specifically to do so using contextualized real world applications that allow experimentation, application, and feedback. With the attrition rate increasing and large numbers of college leaders potentially exiting at once, there is a heightened need to expose the next generation of leaders to the experiences that will allow them to take the wheel.
Basham and Mathur’s (2010) study looked at the skill of collaboration. Collaboration is one of the five essential leadership competencies identified in 2005 by the AACC. In many of today’s community college systems, decision making regarding policy and practice are most often made with the input, guidance, or collaboration from an ad hoc or continuing body that is representative of various institutional stakeholders.

In 1988, California Governor George Deukmejian signed Assembly Bill (AB) 1725. Among other things the passage of AB 1725 promoted a shift of power on issues related to hiring and budgets from the legislature to control of the local boards. That shift included new responsibilities to both local senates and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges. While the phase “shared governance” is not present in this legislation, it has become a common term used to describe the process that provides for faculty and staff input. Assembly Bill 1725 cites 11 areas of academic and professional matter in which the board must consult collegially with the academic senate in relationship to decision making. Those areas are commonly referred to as the “10 plus 1.” Assembly Bill 1725 goes on to state that the board must either rely primarily on the recommendations from the academic senate, or they must reach mutual agreement with the senate. The 11 areas identified as “academic and professional” matters are as follows:

1. Curriculum, including establishing prerequisites.
2. Degree and certificate requirements.
4. Educational program development.
5. Standards or policies regarding student preparation and success.
6. College governance structures, as related to faculty roles.
7. Faculty roles and involvement in accreditation processes.
8. Policies for professional development activities.
9. Processes for program review.
10. Processes for institutional planning and budget development.
11. Other academic and professional matters as mutually agreed upon.

Each college will determine exactly how the shared governance process will be implemented. However, all California community colleges at a minimum are required to ensure they provide a system for collegial consultation on the areas represented in the 10 + 1, thereby ensuring the input of faculty in key decision making processes. Thus, the ability to effectively participate and lead collaborative decision making teams has grown into an essential skill of community college leaders. While the skills associated with the effective leadership and management of a group is often associated with technical knowledge relevant to specific disciplines or subject matter, Basham and Mathur’s (2010) study found that soft skills like collaboration and communication were equally important.

Along those lines, a study by Goleman (2004) found that the most effective leaders are those with a high degree of emotional intelligence. In other words, it is the ability to build relationships and manage the various and often unexpected dynamics of the team that will often make the difference between a highly functional group and one that is dysfunctional. Goleman’s work defines the key characteristics of emotional intelligence as self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Assuming emotional intelligence is indeed a significant predictor of successful leadership, it again raises the question as to how many of these skills can be taught or refined within the confines of a classroom program. Additionally, if Goleman’s (2004)
findings regarding emotional intelligence have merit, further research on the assessment of emotional intelligence as part of the selection and evaluation of future leaders may be a worthwhile investigation.

As described earlier, the AACC (2005) released a set of core competencies that have been vetted by sitting practitioners. Those competencies have served as a foundation and guide for those seeking to support professional development of leaders within the community college system. The essential competencies identified by the AACC include: organizational strategy, CC advocacy, communication, professionalism, collaboration, and resource management. In addition to those competencies, CC leaders surveyed in this study added the following list of skills and competencies they deemed as also critical for success. Those competencies included fund raising/institutional advancement, mentoring, strategic thinking, community development and leadership, working with diverse groups, collaboration with their K-12 partners, and data-driven decision making. With that knowledge, the challenge then becomes to appropriately identify those competencies that can be developed through an engineered program like that of the university doctoral program.

**Leadership Readiness—The Importance of Leadership Development**

The preparation of community college leaders by moving through the academic ranks is acknowledged by community college research studies and scholars (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002a; Cejda et al., 2001; Duree, 2007; Keim & Murray, 2008; McFarlin et al., 1999; Wallin, 2010; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007).

There is an abundance of research available on career pathways to the presidency. In a 2000 research study, Amey and VanDerLinden (2002a) investigated community
college career pathways. They found that for the immediately prior positions leading to a presidency, 37% had been a provost, 25% had been a community college president at another college, and 15% had been either a senior academic affairs or a senior instruction officer. Weisman and Vaughan (2007) reported 55% of the presidents in their research had been in academic administration before their presidencies. For CAOs, Amey and VanDerLinden (2002a) reported 50% had been assistant or associate deans of instruction immediately prior to becoming CAO. Over 50% of other senior administrative officers also came from within the community college ranks.

Their research indicated that the career path for 2000 presidents was substantially different than a comparable study in 1985, indicating a need to explore new pathways to fill community college leadership gaps and to develop leadership at all administrative levels (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002a).

**Mid-Level Leadership**

McFarlin et al. (1999) noted in their national study of community college presidents that mid-level community college professionals move into most of the next level of leadership spots as they opened. They recommended that these mid-level administrators who aspire to senior level or presidencies would be well advised to emulate career preparation of successful community college presidents. Within the largest group of administrators in higher education, midlevel administrators are defined as academic or nonacademic support (Rosser, 2000). A career path from an entry-level position within the unit is common as these leaders are often appointed or promoted. However, career development and further career growth consistently are absent for
midlevel administrators. As a result, mid-level administrators such as multi-campus directors or deans may be more managers than leaders (Rosser, 2000).

Faculty members often have a negative view of a fellow faculty member moving to administration or “going to the dark side” (Cooper & Pagato, 2003, p. 29). They note that the skills needed to advance to senior faculty are not exactly the same as those skills of leadership for administration. They recommended that college leaders provide opportunities for faculty to develop leadership skills, since serving as faculty is a typical step in the career pathway to administrative leadership positions within the community college.

**Leading From the Middle**

The Research & Planning Group for California Community Colleges (RP Group, 2013), an association of researchers and planners that support evidence-based decision-making and inquiry for the California community college system, asserts that the current California community college landscape requires a new type of leader. Today’s leader must be able to mobilize both personnel and students to change the agendas for community colleges. Furthermore, community colleges need committed leadership at all levels—particularly in the middle, where so much of the innovation and sustainable changes are taking place (RP Group, 2013).

The RP Group (2013) further reiterates that many middle managers find themselves in leadership roles even though that was not their plan. Once in the position, most will find it both rewarding and isolating. Middle leadership is in the unique position of being pulled in a myriad of directions, with a need to lead, respond, and connect at all levels of the organization. For instance, deans will often serve multiple divisions and
disciplines. Community college deans are uniquely positioned as connectors and bridge builders and thus need strong communications skills, as they may serve as the defining element when implementing broad-based change initiatives (RP Group, 2013).

“Ironically, despite the strategic importance of the faculty and administrative middle leaders for the colleges, there is a dearth of professional learning opportunities for this sector” (RP Group, 2013, para. 8). Despite a multitude of internal professional development opportunities offered at community colleges across the state, most provide more of an overview or orientation to the system. While that is important, there is very little that specifically addresses the need to sustain and fortify middle managers and the important role they play (or can play) as change agents and community builders (RP Group, 2013).

McCarthy (2003) further affirmed that moving from faculty to administration is difficult without leadership development opportunities. He commented on the negative feelings of faculty for administrators. As he progressed through the career stages to a presidency, he found that leadership development opportunities were more available at the senior executive level than in any of his past positions or in any graduate work. Since he felt that he did much of his learning on the job, he recommended that leadership development be offered at each administrative level. If a community college president progresses through the predictable positions, faculty to academic leader to president, that individual will not be adequately prepared to be a president based on work experiences alone (Duvall, 2003; McCarthy, 2003).

Recognizing that mid-level community college administrators are needed to fill the leadership gap, a qualitative research study by Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) asked
mid-level leaders at a small rural community college about their leadership preparation and career aspirations. Most were “accidental leaders,” assuming their leadership roles at the request of a supervisor. Since they had not prepared for their positions, they had to spend time learning on the job. In the predominantly male-gendered organization, the females in this particular study chose to stay at their levels, as the demands expected of leaders at the next level would have required that the balance of their home and work lives be disrupted. They felt that accepting career advancements would have given them less control of their personal time and activities.

One of the areas of similarity between the rural and urban campus was the fact that across the board many of those surveyed had no desire to move into leadership roles. As the attrition rate increases at the senior level, the system will need to find ways to attract individuals into senior leadership roles. If their college had offered intentional development activities or training to individuals with an interest in leadership, they would have been better prepared for their roles. Experiences that would have allowed them an opportunity to practice leadership skills would have enabled the new leaders to assume the positions with greater ease and perhaps made advancement more attractive (Eddy & Rao, 2009; Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008).

Professional Development Efforts

The need for community college leadership development has grown and evolved in response to the changing needs. According to Gardner (1986), there are several types of leadership development strategies that are most commonly used to address the growing need for leadership development in community colleges. These include the traditional university-based graduate programs; short-term institutes, workshops, conferences, and
succession planning; or Grow Your Own (GYO) leadership development programs (Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Hassan et al., 2010; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011; Piland & Wolf, 2003; Shults, 2001). According to Piland and Wolf (2003), these various strategies are currently disjointed, as they have been developed in silos and lack a systemic approach that would link efforts and create a more orchestrated effort.

University Doctoral Programs

The university doctoral program focused on developing community college leaders emerged in response to the growing demand for specialized skills and credentialing of community college leaders in the 1950s (Young, 1996). However, these programs cannot keep up with the increasing demand. In addition, the size, complexity, and needs of the community college have changed since the 1950s. University-based programs initiated in the 1950s and 1960s must ensure they are in a state of continuous response and improvement based on the changing needs of community college leaders (Young, 1996).

Eddy and Rao (2009) explored the impact of doctorate programs in the development of community college (CC) leaders. Many aspiring leaders seek doctoral degrees to both expand their knowledge and add value to their resume. Overwhelmingly, the members of an executive leadership team within the CC system will be found to hold doctorate degrees. The EdD is one of the most often sought after doctorates in the community college system. As of 2007, 73% of community college leaders hold a doctorate in education (American Council on Education [ACE], 2007). It is generally considered a more practical application than the PhD, which is often considered more research oriented. Regardless of the doctoral degree pursued, the fact that many of the
current and future leaders of the community colleges have and will pursue a doctorate degree demands a direct connection between program and participant need.

Between 1950 and 1970, university-based doctoral programs led the national efforts to develop community college leaders. However, according to Merriam and Caffarella (1999) those programs lacked the experiential component noted in adult learning theories as essential for constructing new knowledge. The sentiment that university doctoral programs are unable to create a real-world context and application was repeated in the review of literature.

In 2001, the PEW Charitable Trust (as cited in Brown et al., 2002) funded an extensive 2-year study focused on the redesign of the doctoral program. The 2001 study, entitled Revisioning the Ph.D., surveyed hundreds of community college and university administrators, faculty, leaders, doctoral students, and accreditation agencies seeking input on improving of the doctoral programs (Brown et al., 2002). Results of this study indicated that the curriculum lacked content that was specific to the community college. In a study of doctoral programs conducted by Eddy and Rao (2009), survey respondents expressed some skepticism regarding the ability of doctoral programs to actually prepare future leaders. They noted that real world experience and mentoring provided the best opportunity for development. In examining graduate programs focused on developing leaders in community colleges, Friedel (2010) states that the education doctorate (EdD) programs must ensure they are providing a level of rigor and relevance that matches the current landscape of the community college system. Finally, Li, Friedel, and Rusche (2011) also conducted a study of doctoral programs and, in conclusion, questioned whether the doctoral programs could provide enough context and connection to the actual
practices related to community college leaders. Results of the study suggested that doctoral programs might be better suited to play the role of creating a basic framework and foundation around the AACC competencies and then collaborate with internal or external partners to provide experimental or on-the-job learning as a way to further strengthen critical competencies for leadership.

**Short-Term Leadership Development Programs**

The literature supports a growing need for supplementary leadership training as a mechanism to increase knowledge, skill, and networking among community college leaders. J. A. Anderson (1997) suggested the development of more leadership training institutes as a way to supplement the university programs. The concept of the short-term institutes would be to address current trends, build specific skill sets, and provide a forum for extended professional networking.

Nationally, the AACC provides leadership institutes and annual conferences for community college leaders from across the country. American Association of Community Colleges institutes include the President’s Academy, Future Leaders, Workforce Development, and the Washington institute. The League for Innovation is another large national community college based organization. The League for Innovation hosts an annual conference and the annual Executive Leadership Institute for leaders who are qualified for a presidency.

At the state level the Community College League of California (CCLC) provides professional development for CEOs and also hosts the Asilomar seminar for women. In addition, they offer the Great Teacher Seminar for faculty and the Classified Leadership Institute. The Association of California Community College Administrators (ACCCA)
hosts the Administration 101 and 201 seminars, along with an annual conference and mentorship opportunities. The Community College Leadership Development Initiative (CCLDI) was established in 1999 by a group of community college leaders at Claremont Graduate University (Barnes et al., 1987). It provides workshops through a statewide center for community college leadership. The CCLDI initiative formed a network of doctoral institutions within the state of California in order to facilitate interaction among student and faculty. The CCLDI Foundation continues through the University of San Diego (USD) School of Leadership and Education Sciences (USD, 2011).

Short-term leadership development workshops, institutes, and conferences provide an opportunity to effectively address the need to increase knowledge, develop skills, and provide a forum for professional networking. They are effective strategies to supplement professional development efforts (J. A. Anderson, 1997; Ebbers et al., 2010; Li et al., 2011; Shults, 2001).

**Grow Your Own Programs**

Succession planning is a systematic, long-term approach for building internal capacity and bench strength within an organization. Succession planning involves understanding the organization’s long-term needs. Traditional components of a succession plan include recruitment strategies, capacity building, career planning, and retention practices designed to meet the mission and goals specific to an organization (Ebbers et al., 2010; Luna, 2010; McNair et al., 2011).

Grow Your Own (GYO) represents a succession planning trend designed to create a pipeline of trained employees prepared for future leadership positions within an organization (Ebbers et al., 2010; Luna, 2010; McNair et al., 2011). Beginning in the
early 2000s, community colleges began to increase the number of GYO programs in response to the projected increase in retirements. The primary goal of these GYO programs has been to prepare mid-level employees for leadership positions (Benard, 2012).

McFarlin et al. (1999) projected that 90% of all community college leaders will come from within the organization. Thus, they recommend creating an internal pipeline that provides for leadership development opportunities that serve as building blocks for aspiring middle managers.

Grow Your Own leadership development programs have the benefit of being more nimble than the university-based doctoral programs and can be customized to the unique needs of the college and the participant’s background and skills. Grow Your Own programs prepare mid-level employees for career advancement using experiential learning, structured learning components, and organizational networking.

Jeandron (2006) reports that colleges or districts with multiple campuses and dedicated professional development funding are more likely to offer GYO programs than the smaller, single campus colleges that do not have the ability to earmark funding for staff development. Those campuses that cannot dedicate the resources for internal professional development efforts tend to rely on state-level programs and local universities to support the development of leadership competencies within their organization.

Reille and Kezar (2010) conducted a study of GYO programs, interviewing key personnel nationwide that supported or directed home grown programs. As a result of their research, they recommended institutions begin to customize curriculum to address
campus culture. Further recommendations included the development of programs based on national standards related to pedagogy and the use of the AACC’s six essential competencies for effective leadership when developing program outcomes. Reille and Kezar also cautioned GYO designers to be aware of local biases in curriculum development and making decisions on program design based on convenience rather than the application of proven adult learning theories.

Colleges participating in national studies conducted by Jeandron (2006) or Reille and Kezar (2010) noted increases in communication, collaboration across disciplines, community and campus involvement, and the participant’s self-confidence levels as a result of participation in the GYO programs.

**Summary of Current Literature**

Necessary skills and competencies for community college leaders have been studied from many perspectives, but limited literature exists that addresses the multi-campus college administrator. This review included the history and development of community colleges and the evolution of the multi-campus systems. With the growth of multi-campus systems (reported as almost a third of all community college systems), the traditional roles of community college leaders has expanded and diversified. There has been a substantial amount of research on the need for strong leadership and leadership development efforts within the country’s community colleges. That research has included a look into motivations and the various career paths to the most senior positions. Much of the research has concluded that middle managers will serve as the primary pool for future leadership. However, research has also shown that many middle managers have expressed a lack of strong motivation to ascend to higher positions. With the knowledge
that there is potential reluctance of the middle manager to step into senior positions, there may be a need for further research on the implications for recruiting future leaders. However, that research is not within the scope of this study.

The existing strategies most commonly used to address the need to develop the fourth generation of leaders includes the university-based graduate programs; short-term developmental institutes, workshops, and conferences; and succession planning or GYO leadership development programs. Studies have shown both strengths and weaknesses of all three strategies. Beginning in the 1950s, universities took the lead in supporting leadership development in community colleges. They continue to play a leading role as evidenced by over three-fourths of all community college leaders holding doctorate degrees. Recent studies have challenged the universities to create more real world applications in their programming. Short-term institutes and workshops have been proven effective. However, they are designed to be supplemental to other leadership efforts. Finally, researchers found that succession planning or GYO programs could be improved by contextualizing curriculum to address the campus culture. Effective GYO programs have been shown to increase confidence, engagement, and communication among the participants. But developers of these programs are cautioned to beware of bias and programs borne of convenience rather than proven pedagogy.

In reviewing the operating dynamics related to the multi-campus community college administrator, the existing literature adds support to the idea that community college administrators in multi-campus systems are faced with unique challenges. This research will reveal how multi-campus community college leaders experience their
organizational structures and how it impacts the execution of the AACC-recommended competencies.
CHAPTER 3—METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership development in community colleges and, specifically, to reveal the unique needs of multi-campus leaders as they relate to the perceptions and execution of critical competencies for effective leadership. As outlined in the first two chapters, there is a leadership shortage at all levels within the community college system and an urgent need to prepare a new cohort of leaders to take California community colleges into the future. The pressing need to prepare future leaders, in turn, presents the opportunity to assess and improve leadership development efforts. Along that continuum of assessment and reflection is the opportunity to create real-world, contextualized developmental opportunities that meet the participant where they work and explore ways to learn and execute certain leadership competencies differently depending on environment and organizational structure—that is, multi-campus environments.

Research Questions

The research questions presented in this section guided the study and were designed to assist in data extraction, eventually leading to theme development within the phenomenology research model. Two questions formed the basis of the research described herein. The purpose of the study was fulfilled by addressing the following research questions:

1. How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?
2. How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?

**Research Design**

The research design for this study employed a qualitative methods approach. It is worth stating that leadership development in community college has been fairly well researched and documented. However, when exploring the unique needs of multi-campus leaders as it relates to the perceptions and execution of critical competencies for effective leadership, limited research has been conducted. Qualitative research was conducted as it permitted the researcher to review information related to leadership through the lens of organizational structures.

The highly complex nature of the role and responsibilities of multi-campus administrators in the modern community college required a holistic design that incorporated the multiple dimensions of qualitative inquiry. Qualitative design facilitated the exploration of the essential attributes and abilities needed for successful leadership in a multi-campus community college environment and investigation of the unique demands that this structure requires. Interviews and field notes including both observational and reflection were synthesized to develop a broad lens in which the data were interpreted. Yin (2003) suggests that exploratory research is often intuitive by design. The exploration of literature, data, and documents may draw the researcher to discover a theory or support existing research.

Furthermore, Creswell (2007) expressed that a qualitative paradigm is appropriate when (a) a problem or issue needs to be explored; (b) we need a complex, detailed understanding of the issue; (c) we want to understand the contexts or settings in which
participants in a study address a problem or issue; and (d) quantitative measures and the statistical analyses simply do not fit the problem. Creswell and Miller (1997) stated the use of a qualitative approach to research places a substantial emphasis on how participants in a study make sense or meaning of a situation. Maxwell (1996) finds qualitative research is well-suited in studies where the knowledge sought involves: (a) understanding the meaning for the participants in the study of the events, situations, and actions with which they are involved; (b) understanding the particular context within which the participants act, and the influence that this context has on their actions.

Denzin and Lincoln (1994) ascertain that in qualitative research, the role of the researcher is to study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of meanings people bring to them. As data are analyzed, interpretations are made by the researcher who is viewed as the primary instrument of the study.

Data collection utilizing a qualitative method enables the researcher to understand the subject’s point of view and then provide a basis for describing these perspectives to others (Patton, 2002). Additionally, qualitative research provides an avenue to explore human or social issues as described from individuals who are experiencing the issues themselves (Creswell, 2009). These combined descriptions were the motivation for choosing the qualitative method for a research design.

Phenomenology

As a research methodology, phenomenology seeks to recognize and describe the subjective experiences of research participants by studying their everyday experience (Schwandt, 2001). A phenomenological format allows the researcher to write about a
combination of objective reality and individual experiences (Creswell, 2007). The aim of this research approach is to produce clear and accurate descriptions of a particular aspect of human experience in order to reveal the essential structure of the phenomenon under investigation (Polkinghorne, 1989). The focus on the experience of the interviewee and the reality that is derived from that experience was core to this research. Thus, phenomenology was the qualitative methodology used in this study.

Phenomenology had its origins in the European tradition, which emerged from the philosophy of Husserl, a late 19th century German mathematician who developed a philosophical phenomenology and a phenomenological psychology (Giorgi, 1989). Many different research methods and techniques are practiced under the banner of phenomenological research. This study focuses specifically on the approaches of psychological phenomenological. Giorgi (1989) has stated that there are four core characteristics that hold across all psychological phenomenological variations. The first two characteristics include the rigorous description of subject experiences and the practice of reduction in order to analyze the descriptions. It is in these first phases that the researcher ensures the suspension of assumptions or bias toward the phenomena as they scan for key phrases and statements within the subject’s responses. The final two characteristics relate to the intentional relationship between persons and situations, which discloses the essences, or structures, of meaning inherent in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation. Together, these four themes constitute a core component of phenomenological psychology (Giorgi, 1989).

Phenomenology seeks to describe basic lived experience. As a research method, it is the study of essences. “The essence of phenomenon is universal which can be
described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations of the essence of that phenomenon” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 10). Research using phenomenology seeks to uncover the meanings in our everyday existence.

Phenomenology as a type of research is both the “description of the lived-through quality of lived experience and the description of meaning of the expressions of lived experience” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 25). In this study, it is the use of text that interpretations were made of life experiences.

A phenomenological psychological approach was deemed appropriate to use in this study because it provides insights into understanding human lived experiences by producing accurate descriptions of these experiences while humans undergo and live through the experience. Specifically, the phenomenological method of study was chosen to establish a better understanding of how multi-campus leaders perceive and execute the AACC critical competencies—how their organizational structure impacted their perceptions and execution of critical competencies for leadership.

According to Tesch (1984), the appropriate number of participants in a phenomenological study depends upon the nature of the phenomenon to be researched. While Tesch has suggested that between 10 to 15 participants is usual, she also mentioned as few as 6 and as many as 25 participants have been successfully used in phenomenological studies. In this study, six community college administrators from a multi-campus environment agreed to participate. Consistent with data collection methods pertinent for phenomenological psychological studies, participants were asked to describe their experiences.
Research Protocol

The research described in this section outlines the gathering of information from human subjects in the form of interviews, parsing the interview transcripts into codes, and then finally placing the codes into themes for eventual theory development. Since all data originated from human subjects, research conducted as described herein conformed to Title 45 of the Code of Federal Regulations (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). In order to proceed with the data collection, the researcher sought Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from the host university. After obtaining IRB approval (see Appendix A), the researcher began the process of recruiting participants.

Recruitment of Participants

Community college administrators serving in urban and suburban California community colleges were identified through the use of Southern California community college web directories. College administrators were contacted based on titles (dean, associate dean, director) and on several variables including responses to the initial email and subsequent phone calls. The respondents in this study were invited to participate via an email. The email invitation (see Appendix B for email recruitment document) briefly introduced the study and invited Southern California mid-level multi-campus community college managers who were interested in participating to respond directly to the researcher. The invitation email specified the purpose of the study, assured participates that the study was voluntary and confidential. The participants who volunteered to participate were notified that their individual interview responses would be confidential and that no individually identifiable information would be used or released.
Those that responded to the email received a follow-up phone call (see Appendix C for phone script) from the researcher, who again reviewed the purpose and plan for the study. Six of the volunteers were selected and schedules were arranged to meet with each participant separately for the individual interviews. Two weeks after the completion of the individual interviews, participants were asked to participate in a focus group activity that included sharing of current findings and opportunities to add to the findings. The six participants who were selected to take part in the study received the Consent to Participate in a Research Study form electronically when the researcher made the appointments for the interviews (see Appendix D for the consent form).

**Data Collection**

For the purpose of this study, the researcher played the role of unbiased interviewer, observer, and interpreter while the findings were being discovered and the story was revealed. According to Creswell (1998), data collection is a series of interrelated activities. The goal of data collection is answering the proposed research questions. The phases of collecting data included: (a) locating a site/individual, (b) gaining access and making rapport, (c) purposefully sampling, (d) collecting data, (e) recording information, (f) resolving field issues, and (g) storing data.

Data collection was conducted by engaging participants through individual and group interviews. Creswell (2009) suggested that the major characteristic of qualitative research involves the researcher interacting with participants in the field site of the issue under study. In this case, the field site was southern California community colleges, and the researcher interacted with study subjects at their location. The volunteers for this study were provided a consent form (Appendix D) prior to their interview appointment.
date that included written assurance of strict confidentiality between the researcher and
the interviewee during the individual interviews. Each participant was informed that all
interviews were to be audio taped and then transcribed. All participants were asked not to
discuss questions with anyone after leaving the interview so as not to introduce bias to
other possible participants of the study. Two weeks after all the individual interviews
were concluded subjects were invited to meet as a group to respond again to the interview
questions and express shared and divergent experiences. Participants were reminded that
this was a group dialogue, and therefore confidentiality in this environment could not be
assured. Participants were asked to only contribute what they felt comfortable sharing in
the group. While study respondents were asked to respect each other’s confidentiality,
they were also reminded of the consent form that included language informing
participants that there is no legal recourse if confidentiality was not upheld (see
Appendix D).

Data collection, review, and synthesis was conducted through the use of personal
computer software SATURATE. Transcripts from all interviews were stored on
computer disk as text files and then imported by the software into a local directory and
converted to appropriate data files accessed and managed by the software. The researcher
then created subdirectories that were used to assist coding development.

Research activities for the purpose of this investigation required subjects to
declare personal data (which then makes them identifiable) that included their name and
contact information as they were asked to review transcribed data for correctness when
they became available. Upon research completion, those parts of the data having personal
identification associated with the research were permanently expunged from all research references.

Privacy and confidentiality for this research project were also observed during the course of research. Privacy, which is defined as the seclusion or isolation, or secrecy ("Privacy," 1996), was applied to the subject’s personal information as part of the confidentiality agreement between the researcher and all human subjects. Paper records containing personal information were stored in locked files that resided in the researcher’s home. Electronic information containing subject’s personal information and all data and documents were kept confidential and maintained in a locked file in the researcher’s home.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection. Patton (2002) states that the purpose of interviewing is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective. Interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit. Merriam (1998) agrees by asserting, “In qualitative research, interviewing is often the major source of the qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study” (p. 91). The interviews with the participant administrators will be undertaken using a conversational approach in a relaxed setting. Yin (2011) contends that conversational interviews are preferred. He specifically stated that throughout the interview process, you have two jobs: (a) to follow your own line of inquiry, as reflected by your study protocol, and (b) to ask your questions in an unbiased manner that also serves the needs of your line of inquiry.
Individual interviews were conducted once for 90 to 120 minutes. Before beginning the interviews, the researcher again went over the consent form and presented the Research Participation Survey Questions form (see Appendix E), which included the two study questions, the purpose of the study, confirmation they were mid-level multi-campus leaders in the Southern California region, and asked them to identify the length of time in their job (presented in 5 year ranges). A postinterview statement, which reminded the interviewee about transcript review, also was read by the researcher to the interviewee(s) upon completion of the interview. Interviewees were provided a printed copy of the consent form and interview questions at the beginning of each session to use as a reference during the course of the interview. These printed materials were collected at the conclusion of the interview.

The group interviews took place 2 weeks after the last individual interview was completed. During the 120-minute group interview, the two interview questions were again posed with the opportunity for group discussion and input. The findings and themes based on the individual interviews were shared with the focus group. Throughout the group process, the researcher used open-ended prompts like, “tell me more about that” to encourage the group to expand, clarify, or add to the data and evolving themes. That conversation was audio recorded, and transcripts were produced from the tapes. Because all participants were middle level leaders from Southern California multi-campus community colleges, the pool was homogenous enough that one individual interview followed by a participant focus group was deemed sufficient for gaining insight into the lived experience of mid-level multi-campus leaders.
The data generated from both the individual and group interviews provided the basic source material for my interpretation. Other information found in the literature review also provided insight into the experience of multi-campus community college leaders.

The study involved multi-campus mid-level community college administrators in order to gain their perspective on the research subject. This case is bound by time and location; therefore, participants were all from urban or suburban Southern California community colleges.

**Interview Protocol**

The interview questions used for this study were the two open-ended research questions presented in the Research Questions section of this chapter. These questions sought to shed light on the perceptions of multi-campus leaders when relating to critical competencies for effective leadership. The questions were as follows:

1. How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?

2. How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?

Participants were encouraged to share stories, analogies, and examples that help define the unique operating dynamics that exist in multi-campus environments, particularly in relationship to the execution of effective leadership strategy.

As explained earlier, the interview questions mirrored the research questions and revealed participants lived experiences in a multi-campus environment.
Data Analysis

The SATURATE software program assisted the researcher in reviewing the interview transcripts and then to create codes and themes. Transcripts were first read for familiarization. In the first read, the researcher reviewed the transcribed interviews verbatim in order to become familiar with the language of the subjects and in order to grasp a sense of the whole of the subject’s experience (Giorgi, 1985). Upon gaining a sense of the whole, the protocol was divided into what Giorgi (1985) calls meaning units. The units were divided by identifying key terms, aspects, attitudes or values. The breaking down of data into smaller units presented the opportunity to do a more detailed analysis of the data. Based on that analysis, the units where then further listed and clustered into common themes (Creswell, 1998). Each cluster was assigned a designator based on the perceived meaning that dominated each section.

Using the four characteristics of the phenomenological psychological method: rigorously descriptive, phenomenological reductions, exploration of the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and disclosure of the essences, or structures of meaning in human experiences through the use of imaginative variation (Giorgi, 1989), concepts and categories yielded from the individual interview transcripts (in the form of coding as data) were compared to each other and the commonalities, as well as differences were noted.

Limitations to the Methodology

Limitations to the methodology used in this study included the following:
1. Since the sample was chosen from among leaders in a Southern California community college, then the outcomes from the study may not be typical for a similar population elsewhere.

2. Participant responses in either the individual interview or focus group setting may be influenced by negative or positive feelings unrelated to the subject matter being studied. For example, if a participant received a poor evaluation during a review period (justified or not), then this participant may express dim views toward one environment or another.

3. Another limitation is that of the role of the researcher. Coding of transcripts formed the basis of data that eventually led to themes. Since the codes were developed from the efforts of the researcher, unintended researcher bias may have affected theme outcomes.

**Role of the Researcher**

With respect to data collection and analysis, the researcher was the primary instrument for data collection and conducted the data analysis. This being the case, inadvertent researcher bias may have been introduced to both of these processes. The fact that the researcher works as an administrator in a multi-campus environment may have enhanced the respectability of participants and encouraged openness in their responses. At the same time, the researcher must acknowledge some individual perceptions regarding factors that might impact the execution of effective leadership strategies in a multi-campus environment. Although no bias can be completely eliminated from a study such as this, the researcher did her best to remain faithful in reporting the facts of the study as they were presented by the data. As interviews were taking place, every effort
was made by the researcher to listen and interpret all conversations in an unbiased manner. All interview transcripts were reviewed for accuracy and understanding with the interview participants prior to entry into the SATURATE data collection and analysis process. The researcher was careful to enter data as stated and did not rephrase or paraphrase respondent’s words.

**Trustworthiness and Credibility**

Member checking provides an opportunity for members (participants) to check (review and approve) particular aspects of the interpretation of the data they provided (Merriam, 1998). It is a “way of finding out whether the data analysis is congruent with the participants’ experiences” (Curtin & Fossey, 2007, p. 92). Creswell (2009) further recommends member checking as a way of increasing the validity of data collection. In this process, the researcher takes the information they have gathered along with the themes back to the members to check if this adequately represents their reality. They would also ascertain whether themes and interpretations are fair and representative (Creswell, 2009).

In this study, participants were given transcripts or particles from the narratives they contributed during interview sessions and asked to verify their accuracy. Participants were invited to edit, clarify, and elaborate in their own words from the narratives. Member checking took place both as part of the individual interview process and as part of the focus group setting.

Member checking helped the assembly of the outcomes to be trustworthy, thus ensuring themes generated by the collective interview data were accurate. Participants were interviewed twice; first individually and then as a group to enhance the benefits of
data collection. Transcripts made from interview data were reviewed by the persons who took part in the interviews to ensure accuracy. During an interview, the researcher restated or summarized information and then questioned the participants to determine accuracy.

Ensuring accuracy reinforced interview validity and allowed continuation into the next step in the process; without the foundation of interview accuracy, the outcomes of this study would have been unstable. Secondly, the researcher coded the interview transcripts based upon the transcripts that were reviewed by the participants; coding was further developed into themes. In addition, participants were gathered for a focus group following the completion of all second interviews. This allowed for a peer debriefing and review of the themes that were coded from the reviewed transcripts. The purpose of the peer review was twofold: to verify that theme development was based upon the accurate collection of data and to ensure the themes were formed on the basis of balanced data sources.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), ensuring credibility and the reliability of the interview data are critical areas for concern. Specifically, the researcher must conduct member checks or host verifications to ensure the accuracy of perceptions from the interviewee and those of the researcher. The method of host verification offered is the opportunity for each interviewee to edit the transcription of the interview. As an ethical consideration, the study respondents had the right to change their own material or withdraw from the study at any time.
Summary

The research design chosen for this study was qualitative and was based upon firsthand data gathered from participants, who were interviewed both individually and as a group. Within the qualitative research design, a psychological phenomenological methodology was used as the paradigm to guide the coding and themes developed based on collected data.

Study participants engaged in both an individual and group interview. The individual interviews lasted between 90 to 120 minutes, while the group interview lasted 120 minutes. Member checking was used as a method to help enhance the level of trustworthiness and credibility, thus ensuring themes generated by the collective interview data were accurate. Findings resulting from this study were applied to the overall theoretical framework of the study, which was to ultimately understand leadership development in community colleges and specifically to explore the impact of organizational structures on multi-campus leaders as it relates to their ability to successfully execute critical leadership competencies.
CHAPTER 4—RESULTS

Overview

Current U.S. Federal Regulation 34 C.F.R. 600.2, defines a branch campus as a location of an institution that is geographically apart and independent of the main campus of the institution. A location of an institution is considered to be independent of the main campus if: the location is permanent in nature; offers courses in educational programs leading to a degree, certificate, or other recognized educational credential; has its own faculty and administrative or supervisory organization; and has its own budgetary and hiring authority (Code of Federal Regulations, 2014).

The purpose of this study is to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, it will use proven methods of data collection to shed light on the influences of organizational structure as it relates to the ability of community college leaders to successfully implement and execute critical leadership competencies.

The rapid growth of attrition among community college leaders prompted the leading professional organization for the nation’s 2-year degree-producing institutions, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), to initiate the Leading Forward initiative (Ottenritter, 2004). Through the Leading Forward initiative, a set of six leadership competencies were identified as critical for successful leadership in community colleges. Those competencies are identified in their ranked order in Figure 1.

The great majority of community college executives across the country agreed on the relevance and importance of the six core competencies (CC) presented; however,
there was variance in the priority ranking of those competencies from one geographic region to another. Furthermore, the value ranking of the competencies varied depending partially on the size of a particular institution. The structural differences between a multi-campus and single campus creates a natural variation in identity, culture, leadership, communication, roles, responsibilities, and other operating norms. This study explored how mid-level leaders from multi-campus colleges serving urban and suburban areas believe their environment impacts the perception and execution of the core competencies.

**Participants**

The study participants were all mid-level community college leaders working in urban and suburban multi-campus districts in Southern California. Participants were kept to middle level leaders representing multi-campus urban and suburban community colleges, in order to keep the pool homogenous enough that one individual interview for
90 to 120 minutes followed by a participant focus group lasting 2 hours was sufficient for gaining insight into the lived experience of mid-level multi-campus leaders.

Interviews were conducted in accordance with the standardized open-ended format, but supplemented by the informal conversational format allowing the researcher flexibility to probe or inquire as needed, in order to allow the respondent to fully express their ideas.

As part of the interview process, participants were asked to confirm their role as a multi-campus mid-level community college leader, which was defined as a dean, director, or associate dean. Additional study participant demographics were captured in Table 1.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study Participant Demographics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in service as a mid-level community college administrator (dean, director, associate director)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Questions

There were two research questions in this study:

1. How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?

2. How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?
Themes and Patterns

The open-ended questions were designed to allow the participants to share their lived experiences in a way that was natural and comfortable for them. Participants were provided an overview of the AACC six core competencies and asked to reflect on how they perceived them as a mid-level multi-campus leader. The interviewees were encouraged to share stories and analogies that reflected their experiences and their perceptions of the AACC core competencies. Participants were assured there was no correct answer and that the researcher was exploring if and how their operating structure might impact their perceptions and then execution of these competencies. Perhaps because the researcher was identified as a mid-level multi-campus leader, they felt the researcher would have a common understanding and could relate to various nuances that help describe their lived experiences. When responding to the two research questions, study respondents universally shared key characteristics they believed defined their operating norms. Those traits provide insights into the view from which they perceive the AACC core competencies, as well as how they execute those competencies. The discussions were free flowing and not intended to be linear. The researcher offered simple prompts, such as, “can you say a little more about that?” or, “did that have an impact or influence on you?” when wanting to encourage respondent to share more on a subject or expand on a concept. Participants were also allowed to clarify, challenge, and add to the findings presented.

As the two research questions were closely tied to one another, the responses wrapped themselves around both questions, and thus the patterns and themes that arose are related to both questions. Common words, concepts, and phrases were used to
identify the primary themes and their associated subthemes. Table 2 identifies the themes and subthemes in the order of the frequency in which they occurred.

Table 2

*Interview Themes and Subthemes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Subthemes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Silos</td>
<td>1.1 Unique and separate campus cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2 Identity, pride, and loyalty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.4 Campus boundaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.5 Decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. District/central office</td>
<td>2.1 Disconnection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2 Resource control</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3 Favoritism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Advocacy</td>
<td>3.1 Championing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2 Alliances</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.3 Senior leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Support network</td>
<td>4.1 Strength in numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2 Resource sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3 Common visions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Interview Data and Themes*

The following provides a more in-depth look at the themes and the related subthemes that emerged from the analysis of the study participants’ responses.

**Theme 1: Silos**

One of the most prominent themes expressed by all participants was the idea of *silos*. The most often mentioned trait of the multi-campus environment was the sense of disconnection and separateness that existed between operating sites. This theme was further defined through reoccurring dialogue expressing the individual nature and culture of each campus and the sense of identity, pride, and loyalty individuals developed toward
their home sites. As a result of those silos, a sense of competitiveness across campus boundaries has developed. Because individual cultures are so prevalent within these, system decision making and other operating norms have become unique to each site, as well.

Participants spoke of the *individual nature and culture of each campus*. According to respondents from this study, each campus forms its own identity, and through that process the inhabitants form an alliance and sense of belonging to their individual campus community. That sense of *identity, pride, and loyalty* attached to the home branch will most often far outweigh any identification with the larger district. This finding was in concert with the Wolfe and Strange (2003) study that found faculty at the branch campus also identified more closely with their surrounding community than with the main campus. Each of the interviewees spoke of the personality of their home site and also shared their thoughts on the perceptions of other sites. Respondents noted that in order to be successful in their respective districts one must understand the personality, culture, and operating norms of each site. Three of the respondents attached various labels to sites as a way of expressing their perceptions of the personality and position each campus holds in the district. Respondent 5 stated:

In my district there are five major entities and I would describe them this way:

- The queen bee
- The favorite child
- The recalcitrant child
- The underdog
- The step child.
The labeling or assigning of characteristics to the various campuses was not uncommon among study participants. Many of the respondents used similar words or phrases as a way of labeling the various sites in their district. Consistently, all participants expressed a strong sense of connection and pride in their individual sites regardless of the site’s characteristics or perceived ranking within the district. None of the middle managers expressed a desire to move to another site. At the same time, the perception of their campus did seem to have some impact on the respondent’s self-perception and motivation as a leader. Evidence of that finding is shared later in this document.

As the connection to one’s home site grows a sense of competitiveness between the individual branches also develops. Each site will watch to see where and how resources are spent and what outcomes each branch can produce to demonstrate it has been worthy of the resources received. Five of the six study respondents identified the senior leader as the individual that often establishes or maintains that sense of competitiveness. Respondent 3 exemplified this concept with the following comments:

I can’t remember the last time I was in an administrative meeting, particularly when led by the senior campus leaders, when we didn’t compare our outcome data to another campus, and of course we always come out on top. Even if another site produced data that appears stronger than ours, we always have a great rationale to explain that away. By the way, I must confess these conversations seldom happen without a little sarcasm toward at least one of our sister campuses.

Three of the respondents shared similar experiences and agreed that the sense of competitiveness was an integral part of the culture. As Respondent 2 noted:
It is expected that you embrace and even emulate the unique nature of your home site; fierce loyalty is expected of the leaders.

Limited planning across campus boundaries was another subtheme that came up often when discussing the silos that exist within the multi-campus environment. As the respondents continued to discuss this phenomenon, four of the six seemed to reach the same epiphany. They expressed a sudden realization of the limited amount of dialogue that happens between leaders across the campuses even within their own district. Two even noted that they probably spoke more with various partners from outside their district, including 4-year institutions than they did with those in their sister campuses.

Furthermore, the interaction with colleagues from other sites was most often a brief dialogue that occurred if there was a common issue that needed to be resolved. However, the leaders tended to take a band aid approach rather than taking the opportunity to address systemic problems or create change. One noted that the differences in the sites had become a convenient excuse to perhaps avoid adding another thing to an already overflowing plate. It was easier and acceptable to just say, “They are just too different.” So rather than look for ways to connect, more often than not they cared to admit they just went back to tending their own garden. Respondent 2 gave this example:

I’ve actually talked about meeting more often with fellow deans to discuss programming issues and work together to strengthen all programs within our district, but we’ve just never followed through. It is such a shame—we really should because we have a really strong group of deans that could bring great value to the organization. I don’t even know why we don’t. I think I could go my
whole career and just talk primarily to the people on my site. I wouldn’t be the most effective dean, but I could get by.

The other arena in which mid-level leaders met across campus boundaries was while attending an occasional district-wide management meeting that generally provided more of a monologue by a speaker than an opportunity to interact and plan together. Four of the six respondents spoke of the desire and intention to reach across campus boundaries. Three related it specifically to leadership in a multi-campus environment, sharing the belief that, in order to move into senior leadership, a middle leader must gain exposure at all district entities. The challenge to more communication and exposure across campus boundaries is getting past the amount of need within your own campus, long established patterns of focusing on the home site, and creating the opportunities to build stronger relationships at the other sites. Respondent 4 emphasized the point in the following way:

You’re not going to get ahead just keeping to the status quo. You have to think out of the box and out of your comfort zone and bring forward some creativity and new ideas. And you have to do that at a district-wide level so people know you outside of your home boundaries.

Respondents further shared that another of the unique factors related to a multi-campus environment and the silos created was the decision-making process. A multi-campus environment is multi-layered and includes the need to communicate and collaborate both within and across systems. In addition, there is a definite silo between the district and the branch sites. Respondents shared that, while collaboration was integral to the campus decision making process, the district office was more prone to a
top down approach. Therefore, multi-campus leaders need to be proficient and know how to succeed in both arenas. As noted by Respondent 6:

The campuses can take an issue and work it through the system from the grassroots level all the way through to senior administration, making sure to get the appropriate buy in and support along the way. In fact, the other campuses can do the same and we can all come to agreement. However, that doesn’t mean the decision is going to be adopted at the executive level or a completely different direction won’t be taken. The top down nature from the district can create conflicts within the system. And you have to be prepared to flex and work within that reality.

Two of the other respondents shared the same concern regarding the differing methods by which decisions are made in their district. The fact that each campus will interpret and execute decision making based on the processes and norms that work best in their environment creates a wider chasm between the sites. Respondents acknowledged that these factors continue to make it easier to focus internally and lose sight of the broader vision of the larger organization. When a leader must reach across campus boundaries, they must learn how to maneuver and execute based on the culture of each individual campus. Both also agreed that this represented another example of why leaders need to develop strong communication channels throughout the district. As one respondent noted, those leaders who do not know how to be flexible and adjust to a different environment find themselves easily locked out of communication and support at that other sites. When you have good lines of communication throughout the system, there is much less of a chance that you’ll be surprised by the final result.
Theme 2: District/Central Office

Another prominent theme that persisted in this dialogue with mid-level community college leaders from multi-campus districts was the relationship between the campus and district/central office. In this study the term “district office” was used to describe the offices that coordinated administrative functions for the entire district. The district office is often described as a support center to the campuses; however, the respondents saw it more as a governing agent and resource controlling agent. When discussing the district office, respondents often revisited the theme of silos and a sense of being disconnected. Many described it as a separate entity and all except one respondent, who had spent many years at the district office before coming to the campus, felt strongly disconnected from the central office. Respondent 1 expressed it in the following way:

I don’t feel like we are part of the same team at all. I feel very disconnected; all of our communication is really one way (from them to us). They send information or resources and we respond where appropriate. Beyond that I am completely separate. If they had to evaluate me, I don’t think they could do it because they don’t know me. Now, granted, I could take more initiative and ask to serve on some district committees. That might increase my sense of connectivity to them, and I’ll take ownership of my responsibility to develop that relationship. But beyond a district committee, I don’t see where the real opportunity to better connect would develop.

This sense of disconnection to the district office which often translated to the senior leadership created the biggest challenge for the study participants when discussing the following two leadership competencies: organizational strategy and resource
management. The respondents vacillated between knowing these were ranked as the most important competencies for leaders and the fact that they were not called upon to execute these competencies at a very strategic or district-wide level. Respondent 4 expressed it this way:

You can get pretty far in this district before you do much more than just have a preset budget handed to you for your oversight. All of that happens at the district office. I’m not even sure if anyone on the campus is really that involved in crafting the budget or being part of the strategic plan in a way that really matters. I assume the president is in there somewhere; hopefully, they have a voice.

Because the interviewees felt they were more likely to be involved in the implementation and oversight of these areas versus participation at the policy or development stage, they were torn as to whether they too would rank them as the two most essential competencies for leadership as was done through the work of the AACC. However, four of the participants identified these competencies as the areas where they would most like to receive professional development. Respondents mentioned strategic planning, data-driven decision making, enrollment management, and understanding all aspects of the budget as highly valued areas of skill and knowledge where they felt rather left out of the loop and less prepared to lead.

The discussion of silos, competitiveness, and the relationship with the district office lead the respondents very naturally to another strong subtheme of favoritism. All respondents spoke of the strong role favoritism played in their districts. As noted in Chapter 2, Ewer’s (2000) study found that multi-campus districts always suffer from the belief that one campus is preferred over the others. Those findings stood true in this
study, as well. There was complete consensus that a proverbial pecking order existed within their districts, and three of the respondents used the phrase “Flagship site” to describe the most favored location within the district. As respondents continued to discuss this theme, it became clear that the sense of favoritism was associated with the relationship with the district office. There was a belief that certain campuses received more accolades and a larger share of the resources. Additionally, it was believed that the favored site was more prone to have their initiatives implemented before (or instead of) those from another campus.

Two of the respondents identified themselves as being from the favored site. In the case of the first administrator who claimed to be from the flagship site, there was a strong sense of identity associated with being from that site. In the interview, the respondent discussed the burden of having to carry and correct the other sites and even confessed to an occasional desire to explore secession from the district. The idea was that this campus was strong enough to stand on its own and thus rid itself of the inadequacies of the other sites. In addition, the second respondent who also identified herself as being from the flagship site acknowledged being shocked when first arriving to the site and sitting in meetings where the president said, “Well we are the flagship college so this is what we are going to do (we don’t need permission).” She noted that this attitude rubbed off on the whole campus community who had taken on the characteristic of leadership and entitlement. She related this attitude to the mantra, “act now and ask for forgiveness later.” Because this particular study respondent had transferred from one of the sites that tended to feel less favored, she stated that she did indeed now feel more empowered and confident in her standing within the district:
Although I do feel empowered by the type of confidence and superior stance my site seems to present and find acceptance for within the district, I would never personally walk into a meeting and expect everyone to do things my way because I am from the favored site. On the other hand, I am still only a year into this campus, and maybe I haven’t been fully indoctrinated. I certainly do see those behaviors demonstrated by some of my colleagues.

On the other end of the spectrum were those who identified themselves as being associated with one of the campuses seen as less favored within the district. It is interesting to note that two of the individuals from the same district, but from different campuses, thought their campus to be on the lowest end of the totem pole. For the leaders residing in these campuses, the projection of confidence and empowerment took on a less optimistic tone. Their overall outlook seemed less optimistic, and the sense of being able to make a real impact within the district was limited, as well. Because they did not feel that their site was perceived as holding the same value as the other sites, they felt rather resigned to focus on the limited areas they lead. Both felt that without the right senior leader, this dynamic was not likely to change. Four of the respondents felt they could make significant impacts at the campus level, and three felt confident in taking initiative, reaching beyond the campus boundaries, and the potential to move up in the organization. However, the two that self-identified as from the less favored sites seemed to have taken on a somewhat defeated outlook. One of those respondents stated that they felt terrible, dismissed, and the campus entity had developed a poor self-image. When asked how that outlook might impact their perception and execution of the AACC’s six core competencies, Respondent 5 stated the following:
I have resolved to focus on the areas where I have a sphere of influence. I believe I do well there, and that is all I can do. I do not see our circumstances changing anytime soon, and thus I do not anticipate an opportunity to reach beyond my sphere. Our campus has bowed down and accepted less than what we need for too many years, and it has impacted how we feel about ourselves and our outlook. In terms of the competencies, I think they are well stated and right on. I can only relate to them within my current sphere of influence and probably would not pursue additional development in these areas, as I have been doing this for about 15 years, and I think this is as far as I go.

The perception of favoritism was confirmed by all participants, and based on the findings of this small study, the impact of that characteristic seemed to have some correlation to the mid-level leader’s motivation and outlook as it related to their self-perception of themselves as a leader that can make a real impact on the larger organization.

In addition to how they were perceived or perceived themselves, respondents also acknowledged a belief that there were different rules for different campuses and an inequitable distribution of resources based on your position within the district. It is perhaps not surprising that those who considered themselves favored and “first” have a sense of confidence, took some personal accountability for expanding beyond their comfort zone and saw the potential for future growth as leaders. Those who felt less favored did not speak of moving forward and, in fact, one respondent clearly stated a commitment to keep to her own small perch. These findings may add to data regarding
motivational factors related to mid-level leaders. This may become relevant as the attrition rate among senior leaders continues to rise.

Respondent 6 summed up the impact a multi-campus environment with separate branch identities and a sense of favoritism played when reviewing the AACC’s six core competencies for community college leadership in the following way:

When reviewing these competencies for leadership, I have to say that my response would be totally dependent on where I am in the district. I can answer from where I sit today, but I also feel my perception, execution, or even ranking of these competencies would change, depending on where I was housed within this district. The campuses, the district office, and all the associated dynamics are just that unique to one another, and it would certainly be different if I was in a single campus environment.

**Theme 3: Advocacy**

While several of the respondents identified resource management as the most important competency, all six of the respondents repeatedly came back to the theme of *advocacy*. The theme is best represented by the following comments by Respondent 4:

It is the leaders that know how to get their voices heard and can work the system and build alliances that are successful in this district. You have to know how to advocate, it is the most important thing you can do to move your career along.

Respondent 2 further stated:

You have to have connections and alliances at the various sites in order to move forward with those things that require alignment across the campuses. Curriculum is one of those things that you really need a strong relationship with your faculty
and your counterpart at the other sites in order to get your programs focused on what is best for students. Not only do we have separate campus cultures but we also have different student populations, so this can be a challenge. You’ve got to be able to advocate for the students you serve.

The interviewees further shared that the challenge in a multi-campus environment is that there are so many different entry and exit points and levels of individuals that you need to connect with in order to obtain your goals. One of the respondents noted that there are so many moving parts, it is hard to put into words all the factors you must be aware of in order to effectively advocate for students and programs. For instance, while you are meeting with your faculty or peers, the senior level administrators may be having a similar discussion that is complicated by their inter-dynamics, separate agendas, and perhaps even feelings of favoritism. Additionally, if it is an issue that will be discussed at the other campuses, you have to be aware of the likely outcome as the initiative makes its way up the separate campus chains. As a leader, it is important to know who to tap, partner with, and how the various campuses tend to lean in their decision making. As one respondent noted, if the leader has made the right inroads, they may be able to have some input or at least know what to expect. In addition, there is also the district office that will have several levels of management that could be peer, subordinate, or senior to the mid-level leader, and they will have their input and agenda. Respondents noted that this factor was common, and a leader must learn how to maneuver within that operating structure.

Advocating for students and programming by community college leaders often results in campaigning for funds to support your needs. All respondents agreed this was
critical for successful leadership and two of the six identified advocacy as the most important competency for success. In particular, Respondent 1 stated:

You have to have a good relationship with your senior leader. A lot of the advocating you need done will require their support if not their direct leadership of the efforts. As a mid-level leader you won’t always have access to those that hold the purse strings, so you have to rely on your senior leadership to champion your need for those funds which are very finite. It is probably the same in a single-campus environment, except in a single campus environment even if you don’t receive all the funds you are seeking, at least the money remains on your site and hopefully will serve your same student population.

As previously noted, senior leaders are called upon to vie against one another for access to limited funds, and that helps fuel competitiveness between campuses. Thus, the importance of having a leader who could hold their own in senior level meetings and successfully champion the needs of their campus community has become a highly valued competency. Additionally, that same competency for the senior leaders was expressed as critical for the mid-level leader who plays a significant role in preparing the senior leader to be effective advocates and must also mirror that ability to successfully campaign for the needs of the students, staff, and programs they represent.

**Theme 4: Support Network**

The support network provided in a multi-campus environment also came through as a strong theme. Mid-level leaders spoke of finding strength and comfort in size and all agreed that it helped to be a part of a larger organization when you needed to ban together. In addition, it helped to know that, if you did want to move an agenda forward,
you do not have to go alone, and you could build momentum from different areas of the organization. The respondents also spoke of having more diversity in experiences and backgrounds with the larger group and being able to pull from those different experiences. In addition, it was better for students because you could offer a wider set of experiences and paths to support their goals. Finally, multiple branches meant increased access to public education. Respondent 3 noted: “If you were looking for someone with a particular expertise, you could ask around, and your chance of locating an individual or group of individuals increased as your network increased.”

These managers also spoke of an appreciation for the opportunity to share resources and take advantage of the economies of scale. One of the respondents used the example of applying for a grant. He noted that when applying for a grant, the ability to collaborate and gather districtwide data and resources was a benefit. In addition, sometimes the sheer strength of a large district gives you an advantage when competing at a regional, state, or national level. In addition, with a large multi-site system, there is always movement, and that presents more opportunities to move around and gain exposure to different aspects of the operation.

Because each campus tends to take on a unique personality, one of the respondents further noted:

If you don’t like one campus, you can always try another location that might be a better fit. Each campus is different, and some of us are better suited for one environment over the other. The trick is to remember that you never know when you are going to see someone again or end up working with them so you don’t
want to burn too many bridges. You have to remember that people talk and are watching, so you always want to be professional.

All respondents agreed that along with the challenges there were great advantages to being in a multi-campus environment. They universally appreciated being part of a network that provided lots of entry points to public education and was focused on student success.

The themes presented above represent a compilation of the study participants’ overall responses. As previously noted, the respondents universally discussed characteristics of their overall operating structure and culture while reflecting on the AACC core competencies for effective community college leadership. Those reflections help provide a more vivid image of the cultural and organizational norms in which these multi-campus mid-level leaders function.

**American Association of Community Colleges Core Competencies of Effective Community College Leadership**

The themes and subthemes presented helped to define the operating landscape from which the inhabitants perceived and executed critical competencies (CCs). The perceptions included their belief in the level of importance of the competencies and what relationship they had to that particular competency as they sought to serve the organization. They also discussed what they believed was important to know in the execution of the competencies, including how one gains development in these areas and how to effectively navigate their environment as they sought to successfully execute those strategies. The findings from the data analysis are presented next in the context of these critical competencies, as seen in terms of perceptions and execution.
CC1: Organizational Strategy—Perceptions and Execution

Perception: The study participants found it rather difficult to express their perception of this competency. They were torn between acknowledging the importance of this competency and the fact they had moved through the system pretty successfully without being called upon to demonstrate great levels of proficiency in this area. As the middle manager is not held to a very high expectation in this area, the competency can find itself off their immediate radar although still of great interest to the respondents. All but one agreed this was a critical competency for community college leadership. The respondents varied in their perception of what organizational strategy meant. Of the six respondents, two saw it as understanding how their organization was structured and how to tap into resources, give input, and strategize to move initiatives forward. These two respondents felt fairly confident that they understood the system and how all the arteries and veins worked. They expressed a satisfaction in knowing where the decisions were made and how different parts of the district functioned. It might be interesting to note that both of these respondents had spent time working at the district office, as well as on the campuses. One of the respondents did not think organizational strategy was particularly critical for leadership and would not have ranked it as the most important competency. This respondent stated, “You can have the best laid plan, but it doesn’t necessarily mean you are on the right track. Things just change too quickly based on the swings of funding and legislation.” She further explained that people get caught up in the rigidity of strategic planning and lose sight of the flexibility needed to stay afloat. Another respondent spoke about enrollment management and data-driven decision making when thinking about organizational strategy and felt they were growing in this
area but needed to know more. Two of the respondents noted that their perception and competency in this area was again limited to the role they play at the middle management level.

Execution: The respondents felt organizational strategy was typically learned through on-the-job experiences and was a competency that senior leaders were expected to pick up quickly once in a senior level position. A leader new to the senior ranks would have to be fortunate enough to have a strong mentor or be very good at a swim or sink style of learning in order to become effective in the execution of this competency. Furthermore, they understood that one must know the dynamics of their organization and strategize within those operating paradigms. Organizational planning has to include the realities of the terrain one is navigating. The middle managers were seeking a map that would provide a more global view of the entire organization so they could play a more significant role in helping to guide the organization to its goals. As a group, they were working at varied levels of proficiency and success in the execution of planning, evaluation, and continuous improvement efforts with faculty and staff. They expressed a thirst for more information and exposure to organizational strategy and planning.

**CC2: Resource Management—Perceptions and Execution**

Perception: The discussion of resource management was perhaps the most challenging for the mid-level community college leaders. As previously noted, the belief that this competency was critical, and in fact considered the most important competency by two of the respondents, was tempered by the fact that all six respondents felt somewhat stifled in their ability to play a more significant or strategic role in resource
management. However, the respondents wanted more, felt out of the loop, and still saw it as rather a mystery. One of the respondents echoed this sentiment, saying:

I want to learn more. I want to see it. I want to know how it works from beginning to end. I don’t feel we get enough of that I feel like I have had very limited exposure and opportunities in this area.

Execution: In terms of execution, three of the six respondents explained it this way: “I am just handed a budget.” They went on to explain that beyond a budget that is given to them, and for the most part already assigned to a specific action, activity, or object, they are not involved in budget development. Their task may be better described as watching the budget and noting when it is coming to a close. Some said they were starting to see efforts at the campus level that would involve more stakeholders in developing resource allocation plans based on the priorities and goals set through campus based strategic planning. They were pleased to see this and looked forward to opportunities to work more closely with the budget. However, this competency presented a quandary. There was clear agreement this was a critical competency for successful leadership; however, this was another area where one could ascend quite far through their multi-campus systems, even as far as campus president, before they were required to execute or demonstrate much proficiency in this area. Two respondents said resource management was the number one area where they desired more professional development. One respondent stated that workshops on the budget had represented the best formalized professional development they had ever received. Two respondents said resource management was the number one area where they desired more professional development.
CC3: Communication—Perceptions and Execution

Perceptions: Through the interview process, mid-level community college leaders began to focus on and discuss the critical need for effective communication skills, particularly as it relates to breaking through the thick silos that have become so prevalent within multi-campus environments. All respondents expressed a belief that effective communication was the key to success in virtually any environment, and two interviewees identified communication as the most important competency for successful leadership. Yet, they all also acknowledged that they had allowed valuable communication channels with colleagues at other sites to close or become far less productive.

Execution: Study respondents went on to state they had received sufficient amounts of formal and informal training on effective communication strategies, and each identified themselves as a strong communicator that had demonstrated successful execution of those skills at all levels. However, the multiple communication layers that operate in a multi-campus district require a strategy that includes a multitude of exit and entry points within the campus, across campuses, and up and down the hierarchal levels of multiple sites. The network can be complicated and taxing. The effective multi-campus leader must learn how to manage all the various platforms and vehicles for communication in order to successfully communicate and advocate within the district. In addition, the culture of separateness amongst sister sites and even among other districts in the region has oriented the mid-level leader toward a more myopic view of where and how to use those communication skills. All respondents mutually agreed that this was unfortunate and seemed to limit the opportunity for growth of future leaders and even the community college system as a whole.
CC4: Collaboration—Perceptions and Execution

Perception: The study respondents felt this was an area of strength for community college leaders because in California collaboration and shared decision making are core operating principles that guide communication, planning, problem solving, decision making, and evaluation practices. It is an operating norm that orients and molds most community college leaders. However, like communication, the competency of collaboration can be complicated by the multiple communication and decision making entry and exit points throughout the organization.

Execution: This is another area where collaboration seems to take place primarily within the structures that already exist on the individual campuses. While there are some committees that provide an opportunity to engage in broader collaborative efforts across the district, the primary templates for collaboration exist at the home site. The respondents again noted that the successful multi-campus leader will either find or make opportunities to expand collaborative efforts. That effort can raise the leader’s visibility, open avenues for relationship building and allow the leader to become more strategic as their understanding of the broader district community grows. Finally, several of the respondents noted a sense of conflict between the culture and expectation of shared decision making and collaboration at the campus level, while top down decision making seemed more the norm from the executive leadership.

CC5: Advocacy—Perceptions and Execution

Perception: The expectation that multi-campus leaders effectively advocate within and across all communication networks to ensure the voice of an individual program or campus is heard and satisfied became the lens through which these community college
leaders perceived the concept of advocacy. Two of the respondents assessed this competency as most important for successful leadership. While the other four did not specifically identify it as the most important of the AACC core competencies, it was the skill that resurfaced most in the discussions with multi-campus mid-level leaders.

Execution: Participants noted this competency can be complicated and requires strong skills in understanding how to execute these skills within a multi-layered system. That system includes multiple individuals at each level that hold the same title and decision making authority and are not culturally required to agree. While it was understood that the high value assigned to the skill of advocacy by community college leaders across the nation included the ability to advocate in areas related to legislation, policy development, and fund raising, the mid-level leader’s immediate need was to effectively campaign within the realm of their campus and district. Most mid-level leaders will be assessed based on their ability to adequately move their individual program toward its goals. All respondents felt this competency was developed through trial and error on the job. None of the study participants felt they had received any formal training in this area and certainly not in preparation for higher level advocacy needs.

CC6: Professionalism—Perceptions and Execution

Perception: Professionalism received the most universal and general response. All respondents thought it critical to always demonstrate professionalism and know that as a leader all stakeholders will observe you with an expectation of ethical and professional behavior. As one participant noted, “Those that have not behaved professionally have not lasted long. A leader should always remember that they are representing the campus, the district, and the whole community college system even after
working hours.” Professional development is an important element to developing professionalism, and participants consistently expressed a desire for more development, particularly in the areas of organizational strategy, resource management, and advocacy.

Execution: The execution of professionalism is identified through behaviors that the organization judges as ethical and in keeping with the cultural norms of the citizenry that makes up that community. Leaders must learn and adapt quickly to the expectations of leadership behavior. Additionally, community college leaders can enhance their level of expertise, thus making them stronger in their profession, by seeking opportunities to gain more development in critical competencies. Respondents expressed a desire for more development, especially in organizational strategy, resource management, and advocacy. While districts will vary in the level of professional development they offer, the respondents agreed they would need to seek out opportunities to develop skills through on-the-job experiences or seeking a mentor. In addition, there are many external sources like the AACC, The League for Innovation, ACCCA, and RP Group which has launched the Leading from the Middle series specifically focused on strengthening the mid-level manager and preparing them for future leadership. Many of the respondents spoke of taking more initiative, and the development of one’s professionalism is an area that requires self-motivation and initiation.

**Summary**

Four major themes emerged from the data analysis. Those themes offered a snapshot of prominent characteristics of a multi-campus environment as seen through the lens of the study participants; the primary themes presented were:
The study respondents described the multi-campus structure as a complicated network of sites that exists for the most part as separate entities. Each campus forms its own identity, and the mid-level leaders become part of that identity, which includes a great sense of loyalty and belonging to their assigned site. That relationship to the home site is stronger than any identity with the overall district and has evolved into a competitive nature between the sites. Mid-level leaders must learn to balance the expectation of site allegiance and its accompanying sense of competitiveness with the need to reach across campuses and build relationships throughout the system. This is particularly important for mid-level leaders that aspire to senior leadership.

The relationship with the district office is important within a multi-campus environment and can impact the self-identity of the site and the people associated with the site. The main office is seen as a governing body that controls the flow of much of the campus resources. That characterization then creates strong feelings toward the district that may sway and adjust depending on how much the campus feels their needs are addressed and/or satisfied. Leaders from campuses that felt they received appropriate recognition and support expressed a higher level of confidence and were more likely to discuss the possibility of moving forward in the organization. Those who felt they were less favored took on a more myopic view and tended to stay focused within their small sphere of influence.
When reflecting on leadership qualities that are essential in their multi-campus environment, study participants universally repeated the need for strong advocacy. Because there are likely just more people in a multi-campus environment, the leader must become astute at getting his/her voice heard. Respondents stated that leaders with the ability to navigate the system in a way that gains the appropriate support are those that will be most successful. Thus, the artful navigation of a multi-tiered and multi-campus environment is another essential skill for the mid-level multi-campus leader.

Finally, respondents spoke of the sense of comfort and strength that develops through membership in a large network that offers economies of scale and a multitude of opportunities, experiences, and working environments. Having that diversity allows individuals to stay within the same organization while seeking the right fit for their career or gaining exposure to all sides of the community college mission. Study respondents shared this was a great advantage that could be strengthened through more collaboration and planning across campus borders.

The communication and decision making patterns in a multi-campus environment are multi-layered and include complicated networks that not only include internal and external communication between multiple sites, but also includes a set of duplicated hierarchies at each site that may each have to be satisfied in order to move an initiative forward. This element represents an area where leadership competencies like communication, collaboration, and advocacy require unique tailoring to fit the needs of a multi-campus environment.

When reviewing the top two ranking competencies for community college leadership—organizational strategy and resource management—as presented by the
AACC, the respondents were in agreement they had limited exposure and opportunity to build their knowledge and skill in these areas. Most leaders were not exposed until they stepped into a senior level position. Once in the ranks of senior leadership, the leader is expected to pick up this skill rapidly. This pattern of delayed development may be hindering a more effective transition for middle managers succeeding into senior positions.

The findings from this study add to the limited research on multi-campus leadership. Characteristics that appear specific to a multi-campus community college system were identified, and insights into the perception and execution of leadership competencies in this unique environment have been presented in this chapter.

The findings from this study may provide valuable information for future developmental efforts related to the middle manager in a multi-campus community college district. The following chapter will discuss the findings of the study and offer recommendations for moving the research data into a developmental plan for future community college leaders.
CHAPTER 5—SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following chapter will review the problem and purpose of this study and revisit the research questions. Major findings from this study will be presented and discussed within the context of existing literature. Because so much of the existing literature presents the perspective of the senior leader, the voices of the senior leaders will be used as a platform to elevate the perspective of the middle manager. Based on the findings, several recommendations for action are offered along with recommendations for further study.

The Problem and Purpose

The problem being addressed in this qualitative study is the high rate of attrition among the community college leadership and the resulting urgency to create an effective succession plan for the next generation of leaders. The participants were current mid-level multi-campus community college administrators in Southern California who have held a leadership role in a multi-campus environment for at least 1 year. Phenomenology was used as a way to explore the lived experiences of the multi-campus leader.

The purpose of this study was to explore leadership development efforts in community colleges and specifically to explore the impact of organizational structures on multi-campus leaders as it relates to their ability to successfully execute critical leadership competencies. The purpose of the study was fulfilled by addressing the following research questions:

1. How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?
2. How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?

**Major Findings**

This study found that the operating and cultural dynamics within the multi-campus system create specialized needs and challenges for the multi-campus leader. The multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions and execution of the critical leadership competencies are influenced by their operating structure. To better address leadership development, there is a need for contextualized curriculum that is tailored to the culture of an organization.

**The Leadership Competencies in Practice**

The mid-level multi-campus leader’s perspective regarding the AACC core competencies will be presented through the context of existing literature of a similar nature that provides the perspective to the community college leader (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002a, 2002b; P. Anderson et al., 2002; J. M. Bailey, 2008; Duree, 2007; Eddy, 2005; Hassan, 2008; Keim & Murray, 2008; Malm, 2008; McFarlin et al., 1999; McNair, 2010; RP Group, 2013; Shults, 2001; Sullivan, 2001; Weisman & Vaughan, 2002, 2007). In that the majority of existing literature is focused on the input of the community college president, the voice of the presidents will provide a context for exploring the core competencies in practice, while shedding light on the nature of leadership development and succession planning in the community college system.

In presenting the voice of the community college presidents, three studies will be used most prominently, although not exclusively. One such study is by Duree (2007), who looked at the challenges of the community college presidency. Another is the
Hassan (2008) study that explored community college presidents and trustees’ perceptions of the six essential competencies. In addition, McNair’s (2010) study of the leadership competencies as they related to developmental efforts will provide additional context to the perspectives of the mid-level multi-campus leader.

**Organizational Strategy and Resource Management**

In reviewing the AACC’s competencies for leadership, Duree (2007) found that all six competencies were rated as important or very important by the 415 community college presidents that responded to his survey. Duree also found that presidents agreed on the importance of the organizational strategy and resource management competency, but also reported that they did not feel fully prepared to execute the skills necessary to meet the challenges inherit in this competency. In fact, a fourth of the responding presidents did not rate themselves prepared or well-prepared in maintaining and growing college personnel, fiscal resources and assets, or using a systems perspective to assess and respond to the needs of their communities.

This finding is important, because the majority of the middle managers in this study also stated that organizational strategy was extremely important, and all agreed that resource management should be ranked as one of the most important competencies for leadership. But like the college presidents, the middle managers identified organizational strategy and resource management as the two areas where they wanted more development and felt less prepared to execute successfully. For the middle managers, organizational strategy and resource management represented the areas where they expressed the greatest desire for development. In both competency areas, the multi-campus middle managers felt torn between the desire to develop skills that would allow them to play a more
valuable role in the organization and the fact that they were held to limited expectations in the execution of this competency, which in turn greatly limited their exposure and opportunity to develop those skills. Because expectations were fairly low in terms of a need to demonstrate great proficiency in this area, the respondents did not anticipate many opportunities to develop stronger skills in organizational strategy or resources management while on the job. The assumption was that these skills would be developed as you moved up the ladder and entered more senior positions. So it is interesting to see the response of many community college presidents that also still do not feel adequately prepared to meet higher standards of effectiveness in these competencies. This information may signify a false assumption as to when and how leaders receive appropriate development in these critical competencies. In fact, based on the current research, there may be large pools of leaders that never receive the appropriate development in these areas.

**Communication and Professionalism**

Hassan (2008) found that communication and professionalism are broad and relevant to most experiences and thus have the greatest opportunities to be developed through a wide variety of experiences. Again, like the middle managers, the senior leaders ranked both areas highly important and consistently self-described themselves as proficient in this area. The Weisman and Vaughan (2007) study suggested that, because many presidents had previously served as vice presidents, they had likely developed the skills to work across multiple departments and campuses and had on-the-job experience developing those skills. Perhaps because effective communication is critical at all levels
of the organization, and also based on the feedback and response they have received, the middle managers also felt they were strong communicators.

For the multi-campus community college leaders, there is an additional need to manage communication across multiple sites and at varied levels that are duplicated throughout the system. In the multi-campus system, communication is further impacted by a sense of competiveness. What is communicated and how it is communicated is measured against the need to hide weaknesses from other sites and win favor and limited resources for your site. In order to successfully accomplish that goal, the leader must learn the nuances and political undertones of each system. The middle manager must become politically astute in order to continue to serve as an effective communicator within the system. The RP Group (2013) stated that community college deans are in unique positions to serve as connectors and bridge builders and therefore need strong communication skills, as they may serve as the defining element when implementing broad-based change initiatives.

In terms of professionalism McNair (2010) found that the presidents most often perceived this as an understanding of the history and philosophy of community colleges and effectively managing stress. Once again, the presidents expressed some regret that they did not learn more about the history, philosophy, and culture of the community college earlier in their career. Many also said it would have been helpful to have implemented more work-life-balance strategies into their daily life. The multi-campus leaders also felt pretty confident in this area and generally perceived professionalism as the way one conducted themselves and their level of ethics and integrity.
The AACC included professional development as part of the professionalism competency. Both middle and senior leaders consistently expressed a desire for more development. The senior leaders spoke often of what they wished they had experienced prior to becoming a president, and the middle managers spoke of the desire to learn more now.

Collaboration

Of the six competency areas, collaboration probably presents the widest variance as it relates to the perceptions and execution of the community college president and the middle manager. Not surprisingly, the reflections of each group were impacted by their scope of influence and the areas that they believed to be the biggest challenge in the execution of this competency. In McNair et al.’s (2011) study, the presidents spoke often of the challenge in working with local boards and foundations. Many said they wished they had spent more time learning about the dynamics involved in working with the local boards. They also noted that this was an area in which the president stood mostly alone in terms of having to manage these relationships. In terms of specific skills, the presidents also commented that they wished they had developed stronger skills in facilitation, team building, and serving as a change agent.

The middle managers in this study felt fairly confident in the area of collaboration, as shared decision making has played a foundational role in most California community colleges. Since they tend to have limited interaction with the board of trustees, their perceptions were based more on the need to collaborate within the campus across multiple sites, as well. For the multi-campus leader, the additional challenge is in the need to collaborate across thick silos that have become core to the operating structure.
One must manage a collaborative approach, while still meeting the expectation of maintaining their first alliance to the home site. So the need to be open to shared decision making, while still championing your individual needs, is an important skill for the multi-campus leader.

**Advocacy**

Hassan (2008) found that the community college presidents and trustees who responded to his study ranked advocacy as the most important competency, noting an ever changing political environment and the need to adequately adjust and advocate for community colleges. McNair et al. (2011) reported that, based on 22 sets of comments from community college leaders, there was a consistent theme of expressing a desire for better skills in the area of advocacy, particularly as it related to the legislative and political processes. Many of the presidents indicated they wished they had been more adequately prepared so that they could do a better job in advocating for their organization.

For the multi-campus mid-level leaders, the response to advocacy as a critical competency for leadership received agreement as to its importance and in many ways supported the response of the presidents by highlighting the limited exposure and development received in this area. The multi-campus mid-level leader’s perceptions were generally limited to advocacy within and for the programs they managed. They also felt the silos within their system had prohibited the opportunity to stretch beyond those limits and serve as an effective advocate at a more global level. Like the organizational strategy and resource management competency, the middle managers assumed there would be opportunities to develop those skills once in a more senior leadership position. This is certainly true to some extent, as the presidents have acknowledged more involvement and
thus development in the political process. Yet, they also expressed the desire to have been better prepared prior to becoming a president.

Hassan (2008) noted that while community college presidents in some studies ranked advocacy as the most important competency, it is also the competency that offers the fewest opportunities for development. The responding presidents identify far fewer opportunities to develop this skill through either informal or formalized trainings. The study found that advocacy may have the fewest development opportunities because it appears to be the narrowest in scope across most experiences. This resonates with the middle managers’ narrow perception limited by their scope of influence. The study further states that, due to the limited number of experiences that contribute to the development of this skill, there is an implied need for targeted developmental efforts in this area.

**The Voices of Leadership**

Throughout much of the research conducted on the AACC core competencies for leadership, there evolved a reoccurring theme from presidents across the country wishing they had more developmental opportunities prior to becoming a community college president. In addition, the presidents in some studies still did not feel adequately prepared to execute critical competencies like organizational strategy, resource management, advocacy, and certain aspects of collaboration (with board members). These findings, coupled with those from the middle managers in this study who felt inadequately prepared in the same competency areas as those identified by the presidents, creates a strong appeal to address the need for more professional development within the leadership ranks. The community college system must pay more attention to the unique
needs of its leaders at all levels and check the assumption that one size fits all or that leaders will be fully developed simply by performing the job. Based on the findings of this study, more community colleges need to provide professional development that better prepares its leaders to effectively execute critical leadership competencies.

**Recommendations**

There is a need for customized and contextualized internal development programs that focus on the development of essential leadership skills that are tailored to the middle manager in a specific operating environment. The following recommendations provide a framework to build leadership competencies among multi-campus mid-level community college leaders. The recommended model requires systemic changes that include internal policy and funding revision, broader inclusion of middle managers in strategic applications, contextualized internal development strategies, real world applications, coaching from senior leaders, and networking in order to build a stronger leadership base.

- **Systemic change:** Multi-campus systems would be well served to continue to evaluate their current systems and identify ways to elevate the engagement of the middle manager. Even a small study like this one could be conducted in-house or through an outside facilitator to unearth themes and characteristics of the organization that are both supporting and hindering the opportunity to enjoy the full benefit of the human resource capital that middle managers represent. In addressing the middle manager, the RP Group (2013) noted there is very little to sustain and fortify middle managers and the important role they play (or can play) as change agents and community builders. The wealth of knowledge, creativity, and dedication to the mission among the
middle managers creates an exceptional resource that can be tapped more fully to the benefit of both the individual and the organization.

Community college systems should seek ways to encourage middle managers to step out of their silos and become part of system-wide initiatives. Organizational strategy and resource management are two areas that present good opportunities to better utilize the input and support of the middle manager. Middle managers have voiced a desire to know more about the budgeting system and contribute at a higher level of decision making and accountability. The middle manager should be given a strong grasp of the funding system, along with historic examples of the efficient execution of those funds. This type of knowledge building would better prepare the leader to support fiscal responsibility, rather than simply serving as a compliance monitor who oversees a pre-prescribed budget. Similarly, community colleges are expected to maintain strategic plans that serve as a road map for resource allocation, action planning, and evaluation. Community college districts should consider opportunities to give the middle manager more responsibility in the creation, updating, and monitoring of the plan and also understanding the plan from a global perspective. With an elevated understanding and level of input, the mid-level leader should also be responsible for connecting decision making, communication, and advocacy efforts to the overall plan. This builds a sense of common ground and unity within the leadership ranks and also enhances the middle manager’s ability to understand the system beyond their own silo.
• Self-reflection: Again, districts would be well served to conduct their own internal review to explore the characteristics and themes of their working environment and reflect on how structures and cultures are impacting the experiences of leaders within their system. As an example, for the participants in this study it would be important for senior level administration in the respondent’s corresponding district to look more closely at the idea of favoritism and pecking orders within a multi-campus system. The literature has consistently shown (Ewers, 2000) that individuals working in multi-campus systems tend to believe that one site is favored over others. It would be valuable to look at the impacts of those beliefs in order to understand more about the motivational factors of the middle manager. This is particularly important as more middle managers will be asked to step into the increasing levels of vacancies left by retiring leaders. In this study, there was a correlation between the confidence and motivation level of those in the more favored sites versus those who perceived themselves as less favored. For those middle managers who perceived their site as lower in the pecking order, there was a clear sense of resignation and lack of desire to expand beyond their individual scope of influence. It is unfortunate to lose the human potential of those that could play key roles in supporting change and impacting the overall morale of the organization.

Another element related to the issue of favoritism, as well as the sense of separateness between the sites, is the use of language. In this study, participants spoke of the use of the term, “flagship campus.” Terms like those
when reserved for select campuses help create a greater divide within the college community. In the study presented in this document, one manager self-identified herself as reigning from the “flagship campus.” This is the same manager who at times felt her campus should succeed from the district and start its own system, so that it would not be burdened by the need to carry the others. This sense of superiority becomes translated throughout the district and ultimately helps form the peaking order. For those leaders who work in campuses that are not met with empowering labels, the enthusiasm and initiative had clearly diminished. When supportive labels are not attached to each campus, a sense of disconnection and low morale seems to set in among those in the “less favored” campuses.

Using language that creates a sense of divide can move the community members from a healthy sense of competitiveness to deeper silos and resentment. That resentment then reduces the level of viable, confident managers available to support critical change initiatives; positively affect morale; and serve as a strong, loyal leadership base. Community colleges would be well served to engage in study and reflection of the language and cultural norms in place in their respective environments.

- Develop Internal Programs: Grow Your Own (GYO) leadership development programs represent a succession planning trend designed to create a pipeline of trained employees prepared for future leadership positions within an organization. They have the benefit of being more nimble than the external programs and work best when customized to the unique needs of the college
and the participant’s background and skills. Colleges participating in national studies conducted by Jeandron (2006), and Reille and Kezar (2010) noted increases in communication, collaboration across disciplines, community and campus involvement, and the participant’s self-confidence levels as a result of participation in the GYO programs.

The following three-pronged approach is designed to integrate direct training, on-the-job applications, and senior level guidance as an essential framework of program delivery. This model is intended to extend the learning beyond a formalized classroom and allow real-life and real-time application of the learning principles. In addition, this model calls for high levels of engagement of the senior leaders. By engaging the senior leaders, you increase buy-in and allow the senior leaders to play a direct role in identifying and developing future leaders.

Prong 1—Formalized Training: The first prong is formalized training that has been customized to meet the needs of the specific community college district. This strategy is in agreement with the Reille and Kezar (2010) study of GYO programs that found institutions should begin to customize curriculum to address campus culture. Customization of curriculum includes the integration of the organization’s culture, operating norms, policies, and procedures with key and relevant principles of the subject area (i.e., organizational strategy, resource management, communication). The customization or contextualization of curriculum allows the participants to better relate to the key principles taught. Participants are provided familiar
workplace themes, patterns, and characteristics through which they apply the learning principles. The use of real world applications also helps expose the middle manager to a larger picture of the organization and gain knowledge of aspects of the operation that would not normally be accessible. All activities and exercises associated with formalized training and education should be contextualized and reality-based. This concept is further supported by the J. A. Anderson (1997) study that found community college leaders need both theoretical and practical skills to govern community colleges in the 21st century. Leaders need a learning environment that provides a combination of practice and experience in related circumstances. Furthermore, the curriculum should address issues that are global and strategic to the growth and sustainability of the organization as a whole.

Prong 2—Real Time Application: The second prong of the development efforts should include an opportunity for the group to take on more global project(s) that will have current relevance and address facets of the whole organization or larger community college system. Ideally, the participants would use the knowledge gained through the teachings to present a plan, strategy, or change to the organization and then attempt to get the change adopted. This effort will allow participants hands-on applications and build stronger competencies in the subject area. This project-based model also allows for participants to build skill and knowledge in the areas of organizational strategy, communication, collaboration, and professionalism as they work with others from around the district to address an organizational
need. Additionally, the training participants have a chance to learn and practice executing models of advocacy within their own complicated system, as participants strive to champion the initiative. Again, it is important that the exercises have a real life application and the potential of being adopted by the organization. If a proposal is adopted, participants should then have the opportunity to continue in a leadership role in the execution, management, and evaluation of the initiative. This effort should set the middle managers up to continue to play a more prominent role in guiding strategic efforts in the district. This effort should not be limited to a classroom or project that ends, but rather should be a start to institutionalizing a higher level of input and participation by middle managers.

Prong 3—Senior Leadership Involvement: The third prong of this model is senior leadership involvement. Like teaching and learning, good coaching and mentoring can be enhanced through a contextualized application to the environment. An Eddy and Rao (2009) study found that community college presidents believed that real world experience and mentoring provided the best opportunity for development. Another study by VanDerLinden (2005), further found that mentors provided encouragement and opportunities, shared information, acted as role models, encouraged continued education, and taught the protégé how to be politically astute. A mentoring program with those intended goals would provide tremendous value to a middle manager and potential future senior leader. As the participants work their way through the program, gaining new insights and knowledge of critical competencies for
leadership and using real world applications to contextualize the learning within their specific environment, senior leaders can play an extremely valuable role as a guide and mentor through the process. This strategy not only supports the growth of the middle manager but also gives the senior leaders an opportunity to share their knowledge and experience and also help assess the readiness of the middle managers. That assessment in turn continues to inform the continuous improvement and customization of the program. The senior leaders and others with strong expertise should also serve as instructors and presenters in the program which helps to build a sense of internal ownership.

Ideally, the process would end with a presentation by the groups to executive level staff along with a body that is representative of all stakeholders. If a proposal is adopted, the individuals in the group, including the senior leader, should maintain leadership in its execution and ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts. If not adopted, the participants should be provided concrete feedback and offered an opportunity to refine and revisit the proposal if possible. The mentor can play a very significant role in helping this process be a great learning opportunity regardless of the outcome.

- Networking: Because a formalized GYO program will be limited in the number of individuals that can participate at one time, it is further recommended that the community college districts and regions host more networking events in order to expand opportunities to support and develop leadership staff. Networking can take on many forms from purely social to a
combination of information sharing and socializing. With the theme of silos occurring consistently in the current research data, networking can provide a good opportunity to create a stronger sense of connection to the overall organization, rather than just the home site. This is another area where senior leaders can engage the middle manager and share experiences and knowledge. Districts should look to build on existing events or structures in order to increase networking efforts. As an example, many community college districts will have a management association that meets quarterly or semi-annually. These meetings normally include leaders from multiple levels within the organization. Prior to or following the business portion of that meeting, district leaders can provide an opportunity to socialize and learn more about each other personally and professionally. This can be done informally by simply allowing time for them to interact or can be coupled with a facilitator that engages individuals in dialogue and exercises designed to learn more about each other. The choice of how to facilitate the process will depend on the culture of the individual districts and an understanding of what environments and activities garner a more positive response. These types of events can create opportunities to build stronger bonds and a sense of familiarity between those from the district office and the surrounding campuses.

- Explore Senior Leadership Development: The review of existing literature (Duree, 2007; Hassan, 2008; McNair, 2010) unveiled a potential void in the proper development of senior community college leaders. As previously
noted, the presidents expressed a desire to be more proficient in the execution of organizational strategy, resource management, and advocacy. The president’s request had to do with things like the ability to successfully execute large scale change, create a systemic thinking organization, and to better work with members of the board of trustees. There seems to be a flawed assumption that sufficient levels of skill building will take place simply by performing the job. Community college systems should explore this idea by conducting its own study to identify potential areas for further development among its senior leaders. It will be important to conduct an anonymous study so that presidents can express their experience and feelings in a safe environment, especially considering the competitive nature of the multi-campus districts. The presidents may be reluctant to admit what could be perceived as a weakness without anonymity.

**Recommendations in Practice**

The above recommendations are meant to be executed in concert with one another. The intent is to create systemic change that elevates the engagement of the middle managers and make better use of the human capital potential that exist within the community college system. The effective execution of this three-pronged approach depends on a commitment and involvement at the senior level. The organization must believe that there is room for greater engagement and input from the middle manager and that the development of mid-level managers will enhance transitions from middle to senior leadership. Middle managers should continue to be encouraged to participate at a
more strategic level and bring new ideas forward. The participants from this study all expressed a great desire to play a more valuable role in the organization.

The three-pronged GYO program presented here is meant to be a concept that can be tailored to meet the operating structure, culture, and environment of the offering organization. An example of how this model might be put into practice has been included in the appendix (see Appendix F for the module example). Because the community college leaders expressed a shared desire to learn more about resource management, an overview of how a module on budget management and resource allocation might be presented using this approach has been included (see Appendix F).

One of the other areas in which both mid-level and senior leaders wanted more development was the skill of advocacy. Research has shown there are fewer opportunities for development in the area of advocacy than any of the other core competencies for leadership (Hassan, 2008). The third element of the GYO approach presented here was developed partly in response to that finding. Virtually every topic covered using the three-pronged approach will include the need to develop and advocate for a proposed change within the organization. The change may be a new process, activity, policy, or large system-wide change. The leaders will need to develop and execute plans for advocacy that include articulation of strategies that address factors like duplicated hierarchies, silos, competitiveness, favoritism, and other communication and political innuendos that will need to be addressed in order to effectively advocate within the operating system. The effectiveness of this model counts on the support and coaching of senior leaders that can mentor the middle manager and help them develop strategies to perceive and execute critical competencies appropriately for the environment.
Policy and Funding Implications

Without senior leadership commitment to a systemic change in the level of engagement of the middle manager, programs like this will quickly fade or become ineffective. In order to institutionalize these changes in the role of the middle manager, policies should be modified in order to elevate the role and responsibilities of the middle manager. The recommendations presented here respond to the need of community colleges to break out of their silos and share responsibility for educational success. The process of internal collaboration and organizational change can be slow and may require change to existing policies that would assign a level of responsibility to the middle managers in areas related to resource management, strategic planning, and local, state, and national policy development. For instance, existing policies related to an annual strategic planning process should be modified to include the participation and accountability of the middle manager. When the middle manager is given the appropriate training and tools and expected to participate at a higher level, it begins to move the perception of the middle manager from compliance monitor to strategic partner. If the middle manager is to be held to the expectation of playing a more significant role, it could be better supported by tweaking existing policies and perhaps developing new ones that are consistent with the new contextual features of the operation. Where policy and expectations are modified, so should the leadership feedback process be updated to provide support and feedback that addresses competency development and strategic outcomes.

The ever increasing retirement rates among community college leaders puts additional pressure on districts to address the need to prepare the next generation of
leaders. Yet, the level of fiscal support from the state has not increased proportionally to the level of demand. This is a problem that calls for additional funding; however, the ability to create a shift in thinking at the gubernatorial and legislative levels will require time, and that is a resource that seems to be running out quickly. Therefore, at the local level the community colleges will need to prioritize and institutionalize this effort.

Because community college funding can be volatile, and there is no guarantee of ongoing additional funding to support this effort, the district will have to make the difficult decision to shift funding from other areas in order to demonstrate a commitment and belief in the need to better prepare the leadership ranks as an ongoing part of its long term plan.

**Summary**

The goal of these recommendations is to begin the process of elevating the middle manager to a more systemic role within the organization. It is time for middle managers to move beyond their silos and limited scope and create a stronger and more shared foundation within the administrative ranks. As senior and middle managers network and come together to address systemwide efforts, stronger bonds can be formed. These collaborative efforts also help to reframe the sense of competitiveness to a more collaborative relationship across sites. Additionally, the project based model for professional development allows an active environment in which to learn essential competencies for leadership, while addressing the realities of the operating dynamics..

**Recommendations for Further Study**

The attrition rate in community colleges will continue to drive the need to explore effective strategies for maintaining a strong leadership foundation and understanding the
needs and motivation of leaders at all levels. The following recommendations for future study present an opportunity to better understand the community college leader.

- Motivations for career advancement: Recognizing that mid-level community college administrators are needed to fill the leadership gap, the motivational factors of mid-level leaders has become increasingly important. In this study, only one of the respondents expressed a possible interest in senior leadership. These findings are in keeping consistent with those from the study by Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) that found that mid-level leaders from both urban and rural campuses consistently expressed a limited desire to move to the next level of leadership. With the knowledge there is potential reluctance of the middle manager to step into senior positions, there is a need for further research on the implications for recruiting future leaders. Because of the climbing attrition rates, the significance of this effort may require the same level of national attention and effort as did the move to identify the six essential competencies for leadership. This study then seems significant enough for a national or state organization like the AACC or the RP Group to explore in more depth.

As a research guide, researchers might ask the following questions:

What factors prohibit movement or create the reluctance to advance into higher positions and what are the factors that encouraged movement? How have entities that have been successful in recruiting strong leaders been able to identify and motivate movement? Do most of the community college leaders who advance from faculty to administrator and then from entry level to senior
administrative positions have any similar characteristics? What is the satisfaction level of middle level managers? What factors impact the satisfaction level of the middle manager?

- The relationship between favoritism and middle manager motivation: Another recommendation for future study evolved from an unexpected theme which developed during this research study. When talking with mid-level community college leaders, it seemed that their level of motivation had a direct relationship to how they believed their individual campus was perceived within the district. Leaders from campuses that felt they received appropriate recognition and support expressed a higher level of confidence and were more likely to discuss the possibility of moving forward in the organization. Those that felt they were less favored took on a more myopic view and tended to stay focused within their small sphere of influence, with very little interest or expectation of moving higher in the organization. This relationship between the perceptions of a site and the potential impact on leaders at the site may present an opportunity for further research into the motivational factors that affect multi-campus mid-level leaders.

In order to seek a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of those in the multi-campus environment, a qualitative study could be employed to seek a better understand of why, how, and if multi-campus middle leaders (and perhaps others) have attached their sense of placement and influence in the district with that of the site where they are housed. Is this common among a larger group of multi-campus leaders? In that research has consistently
shown that there is common sense of favoritism and ranking of sites within the multi-campus system, there may also be room to take a quantitative approach and look for direct correlations between the ranking of the site and the sense of empowerment among the inhabitants of those sites.

- Senior leader readiness: The literature and research presented here created a potential need to further research into the level of readiness and development of the community college president. Much of the current research on leadership development in community colleges notes the benefit of on-the-job training. Many of the leaders surveyed regarding leadership competencies and leadership development shared a belief that on-the-job training was the best way to learn. However, in some competency areas like organizational strategy and resource management, many of the presidents still felt somewhat underprepared. This is not to suggest that on-the-job training will not remain as the best teacher, but perhaps the community college system is missing another opportunity to strengthen its overall systems by providing more developmental opportunities for both today’s and tomorrow’s presidents.

A deeper look into the developmental needs of community college presidents might be an effort worthy of a national organization like the AACC. Potential further investigation could include a survey of presidents to assess ongoing professional development needs, including a look into how to develop those critical competencies specific to their needs, as well as when to begin to build competencies that involve resource management, systemic thinking, political acumen, and working with legislators and boards. Are we
making an assumption that on-the-job trial and error is enough to adequately prepare our leaders? Are we making an assumption that they are gaining the skills through on the job and real world experiences? What could the community college gain by better preparing our presidents and senior leaders to be more proficient in the execution of these competencies? And should the community colleges wait until the person is in the job to start thinking about how to prepare them to be effective?

Conclusion

The themes and perceptions that evolved through the words of the study participants helped to create a peek into the lived experiences of those that serve multi-campus environments. Because research has consistently shown that the multi-campus environment does have unique operating dynamics, it is important that efforts to develop individuals in a particular environment offer contextualized learning that is specific to those factors which impact the artful navigation of leadership competencies.

The recommendations from this study provide a framework to build leadership competencies among multi-campus mid-level community college leaders. Grow Your Own leadership development programs have the benefit of being more nimble than the external programs and work best when customized to the unique needs of the college and the participant’s background and skills. The model recommended here integrates systemic changes that include internal policy revision, broader inclusion of middle managers in strategic applications, contextualized internal developmental strategies, real
world applications, coaching from senior leaders, and networking in order to create a
stronger leadership base.

The time is not only here but is passing as community college administrators,
faculty, and staff exit rapidly. The community college system is feeling the loss at all
levels, and individual systems need to conduct their own studies and reflections to
determine what customized developmental efforts will meet their particular needs. This
is the time for community colleges to contemplate the future and implement strategies
that will better engage and value those that will remain.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval

Exempt Verification
Reg: 46.101(b)(2) – minimal risk

March 13, 2014

Student Researcher: Trudy Gerald
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Caren Sax
Department: Administration, Rehabilitation & Post Sec Educ
vIRB Number: 1416089
Title: Leadership Competencies for College Leaders of Multi-Campus Community Colleges
Re: Exempt Verification

Dear Trudy Gerald:

The above referenced research was reviewed and verified as exempt in accordance with SDSU's Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101). This review applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol.

NOTE: The following Consent Form has been uploaded to your protocol file within the vIRB system, within the Supporting Documents section:
- Research Recruitment Phone Script_final.doc
- Research Participation Consent Form_IRB Final.doc

The determination of exemption is final and requests for continuing review (Progress Reports) are not required for this study. However, if any changes to your study are planned, you must submit a modification request and receive either IRB approval (per 45 CFR 46.110 or 46.111) or IRB verification that the modification is exempt (per 45 CFR 46.101). To submit a modification request, please follow the necessary steps below:

Modification steps:
- Access the protocol via the Webportal (https://sunspot.sdsu.edu/pls/webapp/web_menu.login/)
- Protocol main page click on "Modifications" to enter a report
- Once the report has been fill out completely, click "Submit"
- Make sure to email the IRB (irb@mail.sdsu.edu) notifying them that a modification has been submitted.

Additionally, please notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student).
Graduate Students: This notification may be used as documentation to register in Thesis 799A. Attach a hard copy of this notice to your Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee form prior to submitting the completed form to Graduate and Research Affairs - Student Services Division.

Important information for ALL exempt studies:

a) If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, information obtained must be recorded so that subjects cannot be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

b) If information will be obtained from individual medical records, please check with the organization authorized to provide access to these records to determine whether regulations relating to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) pertain to your research. Likewise, if academic records are accessed, Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements must be respected. Notify the SDSU IRB office if protocol revisions are necessary to comply with HIPAA regulations.

c) If recruitment will take place through an outside agency or organization, confirm with that institution that you have permission to conduct the study prior to initiation of any study activities. If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, confirm with the data owner that you have permission to access the data.

d) Approval is contingent upon the completion of the SDSU human subjects tutorial (found at: http://www-rohan.sdsu.edu/~gra/login.php) by all members of the research team. This certification must be renewed every 2 years.

For questions related to this correspondence, please contact the IRB office (619) 594-6622 or e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu. To access IRB review application materials, SDSU’s Assurance, the 45 CFR 46, the Belmont Report, and/or any other relevant policies and guidelines related to the involvement of human subjects in research, please visit the IRB web site at https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/researchaffairs/hrpp.aspx.

Sincerely,

Jose R Quintanilla
Administrative Support Coordinator
Research Affairs Analyst

Choya Washington
Regulatory Compliance Analyst
APPENDIX B

Recruitment Email

To: SDCCD Deans

From:

Subject: Research Participation Invitation

Hello, you are being asked to take part in a research study of the unique characteristics of a multi-campus organizational structure. Understanding which competencies community college leaders judge to be of highest importance and how those competencies are best employed in their respective operating structure will provide data that will inform selection, staffing, and leadership development efforts.

Purpose of the Study: This research serves to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, it will use proven methods of data collection to shed light on how the operating structure impacts the ability of community college leaders’ ability to successfully implement and execute the AACC-recommended critical leadership competencies (AACC, 2005).

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual and group interview. The interview will include questions to confirm your role as a current or retired community college leader and basic information regarding where you work and how long you have served as a community college leader. In addition, there will be two questions related to how your organizational structure impacts the execution of proven leadership competencies.

Risks and benefits: I do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

There are no monetary benefits to you. This study hopes to learn more about the unique developmental needs of multi-campus leaders. The results of this study may inform future professional development offerings that in turn might benefit you and/or your colleagues.

Compensation: There is no monetary compensation for your participation.

Your answers will be confidential. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. If we tape-record the interview, we will destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within 2 months of its taping.
As part of your participation, you will be asked to participate in a group interview, and the other participants will be privy to your input during that interview. All interview participants will be asked to respect confidentiality; however, there is no legal recourse associated with that request.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or your organization. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Trudy Gerald. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Trudy Gerald at tgerald@sdccd.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the San Diego State Institutional Review Board (IRB) at http://gra.sdsu.edu/research/irb, e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu, or call 619-594-6622.

If you agree to participate, please contact Trudy Gerald via an email reply to tgerald@sdccd.edu.
Hello, thank you for agreeing to discuss my research study further. My name is Trudy Gerald, and I am an educational leadership doctoral student conducting research related to better understanding the needs of mid-level community college administrators. The purpose of the study is to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, I hope to shed light on the influences of organizational structure as it relates to the ability of community college leaders to successfully implement and execute critical leadership competencies. It is possible the results of this study may help inform future leadership development efforts for community college leaders.

As part of my formal study, I will be asking people to complete two questions designed to confirm that participants are mid-level community college leaders who have served in multi-campus environments for at least 1 year. I will then ask participants to answer two open-ended research questions, which will seek to find out more about your experiences as a community college leader and how your operating structure—in this case a multi-campus environment—effects the way you execute leadership competencies.

As noted in my email, we will allow up to 90 minutes for the individual interviews and then you will be asked to participate in a 90-120 minute group interview with six other mid-level community college leaders where the same two research questions will be posed to the group.

I also want to assure you that all information that I receive from you during this process, including your name and any other identifying information, will be held strictly confidential and kept under lock and key. All files that identify you in any way will be destroyed after the research is complete.

At this time, can I answer any other questions for you?

Do you think you might be interested in participating in that study?

{If No}: Thank you very much for calling.

{If Yes}: Thank you. I would like to just ask you two qualifying questions before going any further. The purpose of these questions is only to determine whether you are eligible for my study. Please remember, your participation is voluntary; you do not have to answer these questions and you may opt out at any time. Do I have your permission to ask you these questions?
{If No}: Thank you very much for your time; I’m afraid I do need confirmation of your current role as a community college leader before we can go further.

{If Yes}: Thank you; I just have two questions.

Are you a mid-level community college leader? That would be a dean or director level employee. And have you served as a mid-level administrator for more than 1 year?

(A yes to both questions is required to continue)

Thank you! May I have your permission to email you a confirming email along with the informed consent form? I would like to call you again in 2 days after you have had a chance to look over the informed consent form and answer any questions for you and also determine your availability for both the individual and group interview. Would that be ok?

Thank you I will be in touch in 2 days. I appreciate your agreeing to participate in my research study, and remember all identifying information will be kept in confidence and you may decline to answer any question you are uncomfortable with or opt out of the study at any time.
APPENDIX D

Research Participation Consent Form

You are being asked to take part in a research study of the unique characteristics of a multi-campus organizational structure. Understanding which competencies community college leaders judge to be of highest importance and how those competencies are best employed in their respective operating structure will provide data that will inform selection, staffing, and leadership development efforts.

Purpose of the Study: This research serves to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, it will use proven methods of data collection to shed light on how the operating structure impacts the ability of community college leaders’ ability to successfully implement and execute the AACC-recommended critical leadership competencies (AACC, 2005).

What we will ask you to do: If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in an individual and group interview that will include a total of six current community college administrators. The individual interview will take up to 90 minutes and the focus group will last approximately 120 minutes and will include questions to confirm your role as a community college leader and basic information regarding where you work and how long you have served as a community college leader. In addition, there will be two questions related to how your organizational structure impacts the execution of proven leadership competencies. At the conclusion of the interview, after transcription, the researcher will confirm these guidelines and seek verbal confirmation of your satisfaction and understanding of the process.

Interview Process: The researcher will ask each question one at a time, and you will be allowed an opportunity to respond to each question completely before moving on to the next question. You may ask to revisit or revise anything previously stated. During the interview process, you are welcome to ask any questions for clarification or share any thoughts regarding the questions posed. At the end of the interview, you will be allowed an opportunity to review any and all statements and comments made and revise or clarify as you feel is appropriate. As previously noted, you may also decline to participate at any time or ask for comments to be stricken from the record. At the conclusion of the interview, after transcription, the researcher will confirm these guidelines and seek verbal confirmation of your satisfaction and understanding of the process.

Benefits: There is no direct benefit to you. This study hopes to learn more about the unique developmental needs of multi-campus leaders. The results of this study may inform future professional development offerings that, in turn, may indirectly benefit you and/or your colleagues.

Compensation: There is no monetary compensation for your participation.
Risk: As part of your participation, you will be asked to take part in a group interview, and the other participants will be privy to your input during that interview. All interview participants will be asked to respect confidentiality of the group discussion; however, there is no legal recourse associated with that request. As a result, you will not be asked to share anything you feel uncomfortable with others knowing.

Your answers will be kept confidential by the researcher. The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we make public, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify you. Research records will be kept in a locked file; only the researchers will have access to the records. The researcher will tape-record the interview, and subsequently destroy the tape after it has been transcribed, which we anticipate will be within 2 months of its taping. All participants will be asked to consent to having both the individual and group interviews taped. If you do not wish to be tape-recorded, you may advise the researcher and decline participation in the study.

Taking part is voluntary: Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide not to take part or to skip some of the questions, it will not affect your current or future relationship with the researcher or your organization. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions: The researcher conducting this study is Trudy Gerald. Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact Trudy Gerald at trug@ymail.com or at 1-619-253-3151. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the San Diego State Institutional Review Board (IRB) at https://newscenter.sdsu.edu/researchaffairs/hrpp.aspx, e-mail irb@mail.sdsu.edu, or call 619-594-6622.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.
APPENDIX E

Research Participation Survey Questions

Purpose of the Study: This research serves to add to the limited body of information related to the unique nature of multi-campus administration. In addition, it will use proven methods of data collection to shed light on how the operating structure impacts the ability of community college leaders’ ability to successfully implement and execute the AACC-recommended critical leadership competencies (AACC, 2005).

Participant Profile:
Please confirm you are a mid-level community college administrator (dean or director) serving in urban and suburban California community college in the San Diego region.

Yes: No:

Please indicate the length of time you have been in your current role as a mid-level community college administrator.

1 to 5 years: 6 to 10 years: 10 to 15 years:

16 to 20 years: 20 to 30 years: 30 + years:

The purpose of the study will be fulfilled by addressing the following research questions:
1) How does the organizational structure affect the multi-campus community college leader’s perceptions of the AACC core competencies?

2) How does the organizational structure affect how multi-campus community college leaders successfully execute the AACC core competencies?
APPENDIX F

Grow Your Own (GYO) Program Module—

Resource Management

The following resource management example was meant to provide an overview of the three-pronged approach. It is intended to leave room for individual districts or systems to modify it to fit their needs. Resource management was chosen for this example because of the universal request by middle managers for more development in this area.

Formalized training: Typically, middle managers have oversight of any number of program budgets. Those specific budgets should be used as the tools for teaching. A GYO module on financial management should provide a relevant presentation of the key principles of resource management that explore many aspects of the district’s current budgeting process to include historical relevance, legislation and policy, funding sources, funding pathways with key decision making points, internal and external political factors, and a context of individual budgets to the whole. All examples, exercises, and case studies should involve current active budgets including those the program participant reviews or manages.

Real life application: Participants are challenged to identify strategies that align with the district’s strategic plan. A possible project could include a challenge to participants to review the current flow of budget allocations against organizational goals to identify areas of strength and weakness. Groups representing various sites would then develop proposals to better align budgets with the mission and goals of the organization. The six essential competencies, along with other competencies identified as critical for successful leadership within that
environment, should then serve as the rubric for plan development, implementation, and feedback. Participants must not only develop a plan that includes execution of leadership competencies, but have the opportunity to implement those strategies by working the proposal through the appropriate decision making channels. It is important that the operating culture, political considerations, and realities of the environment are considered and articulated as part of the plan.

*Senior leadership involvement:* Senior leaders serve as active participants in the process. Their role should include presenter, educator, and coach. As the program participants work through the development of their proposal and subsequent execution strategies, the senior leader should be encouraged to be as candid as possible as they offer guidance through the process. In this example, senior leaders can help the middle manager better understand the budgeting process and also serve as an audience and coach, as the middle managers work to develop their proposal addressing system wide strategies for the efficient alignment of resource expenditures and organizational goals. Coaching and feedback should be offered through the lens of the critical leadership competencies and operating norms which will serve as the rubric for evaluation and feedback throughout the process. Both the plan and the feedback should again address political innuendo and other realities like silos, competitiveness, favoritism, communication and collaborative norms, advocacy strategies, and the value of a supportive network. Where a district has identified different or
additional norms that characterize their operating structure, those factors should then be used as the coaching guide.

The process would ideally end with a presentation by the groups to executive level staff along with a body that is representative of all stakeholders. If a proposal is adopted, the individuals in the group, including the senior leader, should maintain leadership in the execution and ongoing evaluation and improvement efforts related to the proposal. If not adopted, the participants should be provided concrete feedback and offered an opportunity to refine and revisit the proposal if possible. The mentor can play a very significant role in helping this process be a great learning opportunity regardless of the outcome.