

DISSERTATION

**THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE ENGAGED IN CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT**

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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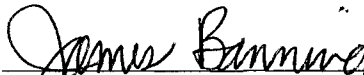
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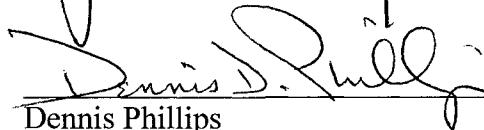
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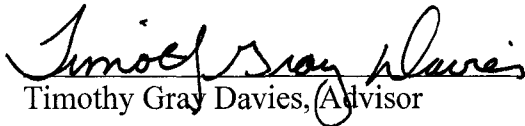
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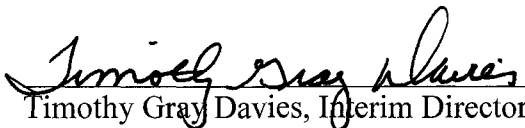
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGAGED IN CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The study explored both the internal and external considerations that have shaped the culture of Midwest County Community College (Midwest, Midwest County—all pseudonyms) a comprehensive community college in Central City, a community of 12,000 people in middle America. This study approached organizational culture by exploring the contexts in which Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes evolved at Midwest. The study outlines the strategies used to implement change at the College and then reports the by-products of the change. The net effects of the continuous improvement strategies have translated into a more engaging work environment and a sense of purpose among faculty, staff, and administration. Additionally, the College has become a focal point of the community.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Background/Overview

Higher education institutions face pervasive challenges. Baker (1992) accurately described the complex environment of American community colleges—an environment characterized by alarming student attrition, shrinking economic resources, increasingly under-prepared students, and encroaching controls by state government. Kerr (1995) identified five challenges for colleges and universities: a new clientele of life-long learners, an emerging body of part-time faculty, new governance and finance methods, new technologies affecting learning, and new societal needs. Munitz (1995) also spoke to the challenges facing higher education, adding that colleges are having to make “radical adjustments” with inadequate resources and weakened public support. These authors portray the ever-changing, uncertain contexts in which higher education operates.

The “playing field” has changed. One could argue that organizational strategies implemented in the past might not be effective for future success. As colleges attempt to thrive in this volatile environment, the American Association of Community and Junior College Commission on the Future of Community Colleges (1988) recommended that colleges respond to changes by developing a campus-wide assessment of institutional effectiveness. A central theme of this Commission’s recommendations revolved around new paradigms necessary for colleges’ future success.

College and university leaders are searching for ways to facilitate the organizational learning required to adapt to ongoing changes. These leaders might begin by becoming conscious of their organization's culture. Birnbaum (1992) and Senge (1990) reported that decision-making strategies, organizational culture, and faculty-staff relationships all significantly influence institutional performance. The present study focused on organizational culture as it relates to organizational change.

“Prior to implementing a major change in an organization, the change agent must first understand the existing culture. With this understanding, goals, objectives, and strategies can be designed specifically to accomplish the intended outcomes” (McClennen & Ingersoll, 1997, p. 64). Studying organizational culture allows for insights into changing or strengthening aspects of organizations and why their cultures are difficult to change (Ott, 1989). Schein (1992) added that an understanding of organizational culture is also necessary to identify what may be the priority issues for leaders and leadership. Organizational culture and organizational change, then, are related.

Culture consists of some combination of artifacts, values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions that organizational members share about appropriate behavior....there is some consensus that organizational culture is holistic, historically determined, and socially constructed, and it involves beliefs and behaviors, exists at a variety of levels, and manifests itself in a wide range of features of organizational life (Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000, p. 851).

Drawing upon the definition of Detert et al., leaders, and others, seeking to advance the mission of a college might benefit from understanding the political, social, and economic factors that have impacted the college's organizational culture as well as the behavioral, emotional, and cognitive experiences of the college's faculty, staff, and students at the college.

“The effectiveness of a college is a function of how well it responds to external forces and internal pressures in fulfilling its educational mission” (Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997, p. 256). Dessler (1995) reiterated that an organization’s responsiveness to internal and external factors allows it to change and adapt as needed. The ability to shape a college’s future positively often involves a knowledge and appreciation of the forces that have created its existing culture. With a thorough understanding of a college’s culture, leaders can better assist organizational learning and development.

Pettigrew (1985) embraced the need to study organizational change over time. Pettigrew cautioned researchers to avoid the temptation of extracting change episodes from particular points in time. “Change and continuity, process and structure are inextricably linked” (p. 1). Nord (1985) concurred, arguing that the historical study of individual organizations can provide data useful for understanding the general evolution of organizations and their cultures. A historical look at one college’s change process may offer insights into the elements and functions of organizational culture.

Purpose of the Study

The Present Study

Schein (1992) argued that the challenge of leadership is to perceive the limitations of one’s own organizational culture and then to develop the present culture. He called for leaders to “step outside the culture that created the leader and to start evolutionary change processes that are more adaptive” (p. 2). Krefting and Frost (1985) contended that managers need to be close enough to understand the culture and yet detached enough to see the existing culture as a social construction that can change and be changed. The present study provides community college leaders with that very opportunity--the chance

to reflect upon their own college's culture through contemplation of another college's culture.

The present study explored both the internal and external considerations that have shaped the culture of Midwest County Community College (Midwest, Midwest County—all pseudonyms) a comprehensive community college in Central City, a community of 12,000 people in middle America. This study approached organizational culture by exploring the contexts in which Total Quality Management (TQM) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) processes evolved at Midwest County Community College. Midwest's improvement efforts are well documented through internal records, state quality award applications, accreditation reports, and comprehensive organizational self-evaluations. To reconstruct the history of this endeavor, I depended upon College and community historical records as well as the recollections of employees working at the College during this change process.

Midwest has been involved with continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts since 1991. Midwest's current president has been at the College since 1987. Midwest County is an organization with stable top-level leadership who actively have participated in sustained organizational development.

The engagement by Midwest in a broad, sustained college-wide initiative offered an important consideration for this study. The College's involvement in an extensive change effort allowed for an inductive study of the reciprocal relationships between the College's culture and the contextual elements of a long-term change process. This is a case study design describing the College's cultural characteristics. The research results provide insights that relate to organizations and organizational change. In addition, an

approach by which college leaders can assess change efforts on a college campus emerged from the research.

Each organization's culture will differ as internal and external influences vary. A "thick description" of Midwest's unique culture was necessary to establish the context for the reader (Geertz, 1973). This study attempts to establish an empathic understanding for the reader, conveying to the reader what "experience itself would convey" (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The research is not meant to serve as an evaluation of Midwest's CQI efforts. Midwest County Community College has chosen to use continuous quality improvement processes as a vehicle for organizational change. As such, CQI was a topic of discussion and exploration. However, this research investigated the process of organizational change generally rather than CQI specifically.

Theoretical Framework

This research approached organizational culture and organizational change from a systems perspective and emphasized organizational symbolism as a tool for inquiry (Sackmann, 1991, 1992; Smirich, 1983). Senge (1990) identified systems thinking as a framework for seeing the structures that underlie complex situations. Conceiving organizations as static or fixed inhibits the ability to conceptualize how units relate to the total organization (Irwin, 1991). When thinking about the organization as an integrated whole, employees can begin engaging in decision-making strategies that look beyond functional boundaries within the organization; employees see connectedness to larger processes (Lane & Green, 1994).

From a systems perspective, the organization is both greater than and different from its units. It is theoretically impossible to divide the system into independent parts for study because the behavior of the part depends on the whole (Senge, 1990). Systemic properties are destroyed when the system is dissected (Hubiak, 1995). Changes in one unit lead to changes among all units and the organization itself. Changes build upon each other and are amplified throughout the organization. However, this ripple effect in the system takes time before system-wide consequences are evident, perhaps years or even decades later (Hubiak, 1995). As such, delayed “ripples” mean that the system is in transition at most times.

Given that organizations are in flux almost constantly, managing the change *process* is more effective than managing a change *program* (Betchtell, 1993; Conner, 1993). Effective change may result from removing barriers to change rather than forcing change (Senge, 1990). Systems approaches do not provide a panacea for solving problems in organizations (Kast & Rosenweig, 1972). They do, however, facilitate a more thorough understanding of complex organizations and increase the likelihood of successful change initiatives.

The symbolic conception of organizational culture allows for a global exploration of processes and systems present throughout an organization. This view also considers the expressive, affective impact of culture on individuals within the organization. Robins (1996) contended that adopting a symbolic view of organizational culture can be useful for organizational researchers. “First, unlike constructs which focus on culture as a variable, the symbolic approach suggests that culture is both process and context” (p. 62). Focusing on process as well as context allows for the examination of communication and

the development of symbolic systems. Such an approach allows researchers to study how individuals or groups of individuals “interpret and understand their experience and how these interpretations and understandings relate to action” (Smirich, 1983, p. 351). The study of organizational culture, then, can provide insights into the ways in which organizational members make sense of and respond to change initiatives. Finally, the symbolic approach stresses the importance of expressive, rather than instrumental, leadership in the construction and maintenance of systems of shared beliefs and meanings (Robins, 1996).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) spoke of “symbolic managers” within organizations. Symbolic managers take the lead in supporting and shaping the culture and are distinguished by the following attributes: they are sensitive to culture and its importance for long-term success, and they place a much higher level of trust in their fellow employees. Symbolic managers can be contrasted with “rational managers.” Rational managers focus on formal systems of human resource management. Symbolic managers do what is right for the culture, regardless of the bureaucracy.

Symbolic managers often make use of organizational rites (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Ceremonial, expressive rites can either reinforce or undermine cultural values (Beyer & Trice, 1987). Managers and leaders may fail to see the importance of organizational rites and the symbolic meaning they provide for the organization. “The appropriate role for the manager may be the evangelist rather than the accountant” (p. 21). Effective managers can assess whether to continue, modify, or eliminate existing ceremonial activities, depending on the effect such rites may have on organizational goals and planned change.

Research Questions

Based on the theoretical perspectives of systems theory and organizational symbolism, the following research questions guided the study:

1. In what cultural contexts have the change processes evolved at Midwest County Community College?
2. How have these cultural influences shaped the change processes?
3. How have the change processes influenced the organizational culture?
4. What relationships exist among organizational leadership, organizational culture, and organizational change?

Significance of the Study

A study of a particular college's culture is important for several reasons. It allows college leaders to become aware of cultural elements that may not be evident to them on their home campus. The case study method, by design, encourages the reader to connect the case to other frames of reference, to draw parallels from the study to other colleges' cultures. Stake (2000, p. 442) clarifies this assertion:

When the researcher's narrative provides opportunity for vicarious experience, readers extend the memory of happenings. Naturalistic, ethnographic case materials, to some extent, parallel actual experience, feeding into the most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding.

Second, knowledge of cultural processes and interactions allows leaders to analyze work processes. By truly understanding the social construction of organizational culture, leaders can better appreciate and respond to the different perspectives within their organization. Leaders can reflect upon the ways in which employees perceive the purpose and meaning of their work (Strom, 1992). The study of organizational culture helps leaders make sense of faculty and staff behaviors, including resistance to change.

Schein (1985) observed that the culture of an organization can be changed only when “implicit and silent assumptions are brought to the surface and confronted” (p. 306). An awareness of organizational culture allows leaders to recognize unstated perceptions and suppositions that can hinder organizational focus and performance.

Third, the discernment of a college’s culture can lead to the identification of priority initiatives for a college and offer an indication as to the strategic success of those efforts (Schein, 1992). Simply stated, familiarity with the culture of an organization affords insights into the organization’s strengths and weaknesses (Strom, 1992). Perceiving the organization’s socially constructed culture allows leaders to build upon adaptive values and work to redirect maladaptive assumptions.

Finally, this particular case may have special significance. As previously stated, Midwest’s current president has been at the College since 1987. The College has been engaged in CQI since 1991, and this initiative is well documented. A case study of Midwest County Community College offers an examination of an organization that has been sustaining a long-term change effort under the same chief executive officer.

This study contributes to the existing literature relating to organizational culture and change. The research offers a lens through which college leaders can examine an organization’s culture and reflect upon their own organization’s culture. Robins (1996) discussed the fact that little attention has been given to the construct of organizational culture in the community college literature. Stating that culture is a rich construct by which to study community colleges, Robins noted that further studies exploring the role of culture in the academic environment are warranted. Robins also called for more studies to explore the role of symbolism to both the theoretical and practical understanding of the

importance of organizational culture in community college settings. Babione (1995) and Elliott (1995) recommended cultural studies to investigate the interaction between organizational culture and the implementation of continuous quality improvement. Babione suggested the exploration of continuous improvement strategies as they relate to the values, assumptions and behaviors of organization members. This study is well-suited to address this specific gap in the current literature.

Researcher's Perspective

I am a 34-year-old Caucasian male, happily married with two children. The oldest of three boys, I was raised by middle-income parents in a small town in North Central Kansas. I attended Pittsburg State University, a regional university in Southeast Kansas, where I graduated with both a Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Psychology. I taught social sciences courses at Garden City Community College in Garden City, Kansas, before accepting the position as Dean of Instruction. My experiences as the chief academic officer at Garden City Community College for eight years now have influenced my research interests relating to both organizational culture and quality improvement. My attention to quality improvement initially developed from working with student learning outcomes and identifying measurable objectives for student learning. With oversight of the College's assessment program came a desire to improve student learning and institutional effectiveness through a systems orientation--a focus on college-wide systems and processes. The appeal of quality models and paradigms has been fostered through workshops and training seminars relating to quality. Garden City Community College made the decision in Spring 2002 to utilize the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP) as the College sought regional reaccreditation.

My affinity for the study of organizational culture has developed from two distinct experiences. Through coursework in the Community College Leadership Program at Colorado State University, I was exposed to the literature promoting cultural leadership. These readings prompted my own conceptual journey of the value of cultural leadership and leaders' obligation to provide cultural leadership within the community college. The second direct impetus for researching organizational culture came from a presidential succession at Garden City Community College. Experiencing the transition from one chief executive officer to another, I have witnessed the impact—positive and negative—a new college president can have on an established organizational culture. The new president's entry onto the campus increased my awareness of cultural characteristics and outcomes. This consciousness piqued my interest in studying the dynamics of organizational culture. I believe that by understanding the interactions of organizational culture, college leaders are better able to encourage professional growth and development of faculty and staff, promoting change from within the organization and improving student learning.

As a Caucasian male holding a senior-level position within a community college, I am cognizant that my perspective is limited by influences and experiences relating to race, class, and gender. Organizational culture is created through the experiences of all members of the organization, not just those in positions of power or authority. Accordingly, throughout this study, I closely attended to the impact of difference and diversity as it influences the organization's culture.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review frames the discussion of organizational culture and organizational change as these concepts relate to this particular study. The review begins by offering a context of the development of organizational culture as a construct. The discussion then proceeds to the relationship of organizational theory to organizational culture. Elements of organizational culture are presented, and the functions of organizational culture follow. The review explores factors which influence organizational culture. Before engaging in an overview of organizational change, a synopsis of continuous quality improvement is presented.

The Development of a Construct

Framing the Construct of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture as a construct originated from the field of anthropology (Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000; Giese, 1995; Sackmann, 1992). Kluckhohn (1962, p. 72), offered the following definition of culture:

Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning influences of further action.

Several elements from this anthropological view of culture apply to current perspectives on organizational culture: an emphasis on patterns of behaviors, the

transmission of behavior through symbols and artifacts, historically developed values, and the reciprocal effect of behavior and culture. This section will chronicle some of the developments, which have led to present notions and ideas regarding organizational culture.

Pettigrew (1979) is generally credited for introducing the study of culture into the field of organizational theory (Detert, Schroeder, & Mauriel, 2000). Publications regarding organizational culture proliferated in the 1980s and early 1990s. Pettigrew discussed the way in which the culture provides meaning within the organization:

In the pursuit of our everyday tasks and objectives, it is all too easy to forget the less rational and instrumental, the more expressive social tissue around us that gives those tasks meaning. Yet in order for people to function within any given setting, they must have a continuing sense of what that reality is all about in order to be acted upon. Culture is the system of such publicly and collectively accepted meaning operating for a given group at a given time. This system of terms, forms, categories, and images interprets a people's own situation to themselves (p. 2).

Pettigrew emphasized that culture creates a social context for organizational activities. The culture of the organization shapes the work environment and working conditions.

Contrasting Notions of Organizational Culture

Louis (1985) compared efforts to understand organizational culture to the Sufi story of the blind men's efforts to analyze the elephant. This analogy is evident in Keesing's (1974) description of the two schools of cultural anthropology that have generally influenced concepts of culture: the *adaptionist* concept is based on directly observable artifacts; the *ideationalist* concept is based on the common beliefs, values, knowledge, meanings, and ideas of the people. Stated differently by Graves (1996), one perspective (the adaptionist perspective) researches specific aspects of culture

(knowledge, artifacts, ideas); the other perspective (the ideationalist perspective) sees culture as a whole (a unitary or integrative view.) Pacanosky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1983) illustrated their belief in the integrated nature of culture by contending that organizational culture is a dynamic social construction that is undergoing continual reconstruction—*the puzzle*, “not just another piece of the puzzle” (p. 194).

Some theorists argue that organizations can be understood as cultures. Other theorists contended that culture is a characteristic of an organization (Smircich, 1983). The argument surrounding culture involves the question whether culture is something an organization *has* or something an organization *is* (Peterson & Spencer, 1990).

Organizational development theorists often considered the concept of culture as an integral organizational variable. This perspective is referred to as “Corporate Culture” (Smirich, 1983). Advocates of corporate culture tended to identify strategies and processes by which organizational leaders could manipulate culture for managerial purposes. Accordingly, this perspective views organizational culture as an element of the organization that can be strengthened to facilitate management objectives. The call to pay attention to the value of a “strong culture” has had its proponents. Deal and Kennedy (1982) noted that the construction of shared values, a core function of organizational culture, is central to high organizational performance. Peters and Waterman (1982) contended that a strong organizational culture is one of the most important elements to the success of the companies they studied. These authors spoke of culture as a tool of management to direct the success of the organization.

Other authors have departed from the conceptualization of culture as a variable of an organization:

In strategic terms we need to think about organizations as being cultures rather than having cultures. It is the conception of organization rather than the object of study that makes the culture perspective unique. The important point, therefore is not *what* we study, but the different way we look at the organization: the task for the culture strategist is not to think *about* culture but to *think culturally* (Bate, 1994, p. 17).

Ott (1989, p. 50) reiterated this perspective:

The first step toward understanding the essence of *organizational culture* is to appreciate that it is a concept rather than a thing. This distinction is crucial. A thing can be discovered and truths established about it, for example, through empirical research. Unlike a thing, however, a concept is created in peoples' minds—that is, it must be conjured up, defined, and refined.

Sackmann (1991, 1992), and Smirich (1983) proposed a construct labeled “organizational symbolism”—the view of organizations as systems of shared meaning. According to Robins (1996), organizations are cultures in the symbolic view. From this perspective, “...organizations are understood and analyzed not mainly in economic or material terms, but in terms of their expressive, ideational, and symbolic aspects” (Smirich, 1983, pp. 347-348).

The Influence of Different Disciplines

Organizational culture research has been impacted by anthropology, learning theory, social psychology, clinical psychology, and transactional analysis (Ott, 1989). Synthesis and analysis of a common definition is difficult. Louis (1985) argued that cultures vary in sociological, psychological, and historical penetration. Sociological penetration is the degree to which the culture is shared across different groups or subcultures within the organization. Psychological penetration occurs when members internalize the values, meanings, and assumptions of the culture. Historical penetration is evident when the culture's values remain stable over time.

From a sociological perspective, an organization's culture provides continuity, control, integration of new members, and an identity within the group. Sharing ideas and values across generations of members offers stability to the organization. Behavioral standards conveyed in the commonly-held ideals serve a control function of deviance detection and reduction (Louis, 1985). As the culture communicates expectations of its members, members become socialized as to the behaviors that will be rewarded, tolerated, ignored, and punished. Members learn to perceive behavioral cues from the culture and act accordingly. Organizational reality is consequently constructed for new members and reinforced for existing members.

Contrasted with the sociological perspective, the psychological context interprets culture as a schemata through which individuals negotiate meaning from the organization and then embed their meaning systems in the culture. Smirich (1983, 1985) reported that culture may be regarded as the expression of unconscious psychological processes. Louis (1983) purported that the construction of organizational culture develops at both the individual, the psychological, and the group, the sociological, level. This perspective was advanced by Michael (1984, p. 3) in his study relating to organizational change:

Few efforts have been made to analyze change at an encompassing or what is analogous to a social psychological level. At this level, organizational change would be examined in terms of organizational members' combined psychological reactions to change as they are shaped, defined, or molded by membership in the organization.

Michael's statements parallel those of Kluckhohn (1962) in referencing the impact of culture on individuals' actions and reactions.

Sackmann (1992) also stressed the cognitive influence of organizational culture on behavior. "Despite the different perspectives on culture in organizations, the focus on

cognitive components such as assumptions, beliefs, values, or perspectives as the essence of culture prevails in the literature” (p. 140). Sackmann discussed the cognitive structures and mechanisms for collective sense-making. Such collective sense-making allows members to perceive and interpret the culture to which they belong.

What differentiates collective sense making or cultural cognitions from individual ones is that the former are commonly held by a group of people in a given organization, even though members of the same cultural group may not be aware in their daily activities of what they hold in common. In the process of enculturation, cognitions become rooted in the group and ultimately exist independently of an individual group member, even though individuals are carriers of the culture” (p. 141).

Once again relating back to Kluckhohn (1962), Sackmann’s description of cultural cognition demonstrates how organizational values become embedded over time.

Organizational Theory In Relation to Organizational Culture in Higher Education

Handy (1993) distinguished among seven schools of thought that have shaped the history of organizational theory. Knowledge of this development provides a context for comprehending the transformation of perspectives on organizational culture. The schools of thought as discussed by Handy are: (a) Scientific Management, (b) Human Relations, (c) Bureaucratic, (d) Power, Conflict, and Decisions, (e) Technology, (f) Systems, and (g) Institutional.

Ott (1989) also outlined the historical development of organizational theory. Considerable overlap occurs between Ott’s (1989) and Handy’s (1993) taxonomies. According to Ott, the evolution of organizational theory includes six perspectives: (a) Classical, (b) Neoclassical, (c) Human Relations, (d) Structural, (e) Systems/Contingency, and (f) Power/Politics. Ott chronicled the historical development of these perspectives by presenting their major tenets. For example, the classical perspective

(1920s, 1930s) argued that organizations exist to accomplish economic goals and should be structured according to systematic, scientific principles. According to classical theorists, people act in accordance to rational economic principles, and their production can be maximized through a division of labor.

Adams and Ingersoll (1985, p. 230) discussed the “managerial metamyth” surrounding the rational approach to organizations presented from the classic perspective. All work processes cannot be broken down into parts in order to be understood and completely controlled. Certain organization ends may supersede economic objectives. Finally, efficiency and predictability may not be the most important considerations in the workplace.

The rational perspective uses a closed-system strategy (Thompson, 1967). This approach, based primarily on performance or efficiency, does not account for uncertainty. When dealing with a system that contains more variables than can be simultaneously comprehended, or includes influences that cannot be controlled or predicted, a different model is needed. A closed system is required to predict the future state of a system. Only through a closed system would there be few enough variables and relationships involved to comprehend, control, and reliably predict future relationships (Thompson, 1967). Higher education’s present state, however, is not influenced by a few variables or predictable external forces. Therefore, the results of any change initiative are not easily forecasted; “instead, the best-laid plans of managers have unintended consequences and are conditioned or upset by other social units—other complex organizations or publics—on whom the organization is dependent” (p. 283).

Collins (1998) reiterated that organizations do not exist in a vacuum and cannot be separated from their environment. Katz and Kahn (1966, pp. 279-280) presented many of the same concerns regarding responsiveness to external forces:

Traditional organizational theories have tended to view the human organization as a closed system. This tendency has led to a disregard of differing organizational environments and the nature of organizational dependency on environment. It has led to an overconcentration on principles of internal organizational functioning, with consequent failure to develop and understand the processes of feedback which are essential to survival....we can not understand a system without a constant study of the forces that impinge upon it" (p. 278).

Historically, organizations have been studied using a reductionistic approach (Louis, 1983).

In contrast to the traditional reductionistic approach, considerations of culture require, support, and themselves imply a more holistic and integrative approach to studying organizational phenomena. The themes and images characterizing particular cultures are lost when examined piecemeal" (p. 517).

The neoclassic school (1940s, 1950s) initiated movement away from the oversimplistic, mechanized view of the classical school and served as a precursor to the perspectives that followed (Ott, 1989). The neoclassical school concluded that organizations exist to accomplish goals other than production-related and economic goals. Accordingly, there is no one best way to organize for production because people do not behave according to rational economic principles. As a result, production is not necessarily maximized through specialization and division of labor. Through a brief examination of the neoclassical school, one can notice a shift in the beliefs surrounding organizations. Flexibility of operations and a greater respect for human behavior become the zeitgeist. These premises are reflected in current conceptions of culture.

MacGregor (1960) contrasted the classical and human relations approaches to management by placing the managerial assumptions at two ends of a continuum and

labeling them *Theory X* and *Theory Y*. MacGregor's work represents a pivotal transition in organizational theory and present ideas regarding organizations. The human relations approach puts the employee in the forefront of the organization. Peters and Waterman (1982, p. 280) gave credence to the human relations perspective:

The basic philosophy, spirit, and drive of an organization have far more to do with its relative achievements than do technological or economic resources, organizational structure, innovation, and timing. All these things weight heavily in success. But they are, I think, transcended by how strongly the people in the organization believe in its basic precepts and how faithfully they carry them out.

Bolman and Deal (1984, p. 65) identified major tenets of the human relations perspective (1950s, 1960s.) From this viewpoint, organizations exist to serve human needs; humans do not exist to serve organizational needs. Therefore, organizations and their members need each other. Collins (1998) summarized the human relations perspective by postulating that since people are emotional, not simply economic-rational actors, organizations should be thought of as cooperative and social, as opposed to mechanistic, systems. As such, the operation of organizations owes more to group norms and values than it does to structures and procedures. An emphasis on human relations allows for the examination of organizational values, an essential aspect of organizational culture.

Structural organizational theory signaled a 1960s movement back toward a more rational, goal-oriented, mechanistic view of organizations (Ott, 1989). Bolman and Deal (1984) identified the tenets of the structural perspective. These tenets are nearly identical to those of the classical perspective.

The systems perspective (1960s-1980s) accelerated the paradigm shift away from the humanistic view of the human relations perspective (Ott, 1989). Differing from both

the classical and structural perspectives, though, systems theory is open to situational variables. For these theories, there is no “one best way”—no absolutes or universals; rather, systems theory allows for organizational variance. Burns and Stalker (1961) argued that organizations working in unpredictable, change-oriented environments were more likely to develop more organic, rather than mechanistic, forms of management. Mechanistic organizations rely on traditional control systems like rules and procedures while open systems depend more on “normative control,” directing members through the organization’s underlying values that guide their behavior (Dessler, 1995). Attempts to control open systems often produce results opposite of those intended (Senge, 1990).

Because social organizations are acutely dependent upon their external environment, they are conceived as an open, rather than closed, systems (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

Schools and universities, for example, are viewed as open rather than closed systems, as integral parts of a larger environment not as bounded entities isolated from their environment. They receive inputs, process them, and return outputs to the environment. Inputs are presumed to be diverse and output demands often conflicting. As a result there is constant interplay between school and environment” (Sergiovanni, 1984, p. 6).

Open systems maintain themselves through constant contact with their environment—hence a continuous input and output of energy. No social structure is self-sufficient or self-contained; it draws renewed supplies of energy from other institutions, people, or the environment, and then exports some type of product into the environment. Through a constant cycle of activity (inputs-outputs), social structures are dynamic rather than static.

A theory which evolved from systems theory has been labeled “complexity theory” (Underwood, 2002). Underwood defined complexity as “the nonlinear or

unpredictable interaction of systems within the global system in which there are still elements of predictability” (p. 2). Lewin (1992) stated that complexity theory perceives organizations as being organic, nonlinear, and holistic. Complexity theory has also been referred to as chaos theory (Turner, 1997). Chaos refers to the chaotic or unpredictable manner in which elements of a system may interact (Underwood, 2002). Cutright (2001) presented complexity theory as a more encompassing concept than chaos theory.

Underwood (2002) argued that social systems such as organizations are nonlinear. Kiel and Elliot (1997) defined linear systems as those characterized by stable relationships within their environment; such systems respond to change “in a smooth and proportionate manner” (p. 5). In nonlinear systems, changes in the environment may result in dramatic structural or behavioral change. Small alterations in the system can produce large changes over time (Bird, 1997; Lorenz, 1993). Nonlinear systems consequently produce complex behavior over time. Such systems can benefit from focusing on identifying changes that, with minimal effort, can result in lasting improvement.

With the myriad of influences on organizations (economic forces, political forces, social forces, etc.) interactions among systems in the macro environment produce events which are unpredictable. From a complex viewpoint, organizations are not seen as concrete, well-defined, stable entities, but rather dynamic, simultaneously interacting, continuously evolving systems (Wytenburg, 1999). Prediction of behavior in complex systems is not possible in straightforward sense. Because the system is chaotic, an organization’s behavior can not be predicted any more accurately than long-range weather forecasting (Mihata, 1997); too many factors influence the outcome. However,

Levy (1994) noted the importance of developing guidelines and decision rules to deal with such complexity. In essence, leaders can anticipate and prepare for uncertainty in the same way one can anticipate and prepare for a snowstorm.

Anderson (1996, as cited in Lissack, 1999) noted that complex systems resist reductionist analyses. From a complexity perspective, it is not possible for a complex system to be studied by holding its subsystems constant. Complex systems can not be held constant. Lissack (1999) posed that organization science of the past (including systems theory) has focused on “controlling uncertainty.” Complexity science, according to Lissack, focuses on understanding uncertainty in order to channel its energy.

Underwood (2002) contended that linear planning methodologies will not work in complex environments. Senge (1990) suggested that systems thinking was sufficient to deal with complexity, assuming that leaders seek interrelationships within organizations rather than linear “cause-and-effect chains” as well as processes of change rather than “snapshots” of events. Swenk (2001) reinforced the importance of flexibility in organizations and organizational cultures and the ability to recognize change while embracing disorder and experimentation.

Elements of Organizational Culture

Chaffee and Tierney (1988) discussed three components of culture: structure, environment, and values. The structure of the organization is the way it accomplishes its activities, including formal and informal relationships among individuals and units. The environment is the larger society in which the organization identifies itself, such as community, customers, and constituents. The values of the organization are the beliefs and priorities of the organization. Galpin (1996) conceptualized organizational culture as

a mosaic of interrelated elements: (a) rules and policies, (b) goals and measurements, (c) customs and norms, (d) training, (e) ceremonies and events, (f) management behaviors, (g) rewards and recognition, (h) communication, (i) physical environment, and (j) organizational structure.

Elements of organizational culture as proposed by Schein (1985) include (a) the *observed behavioral regularities* of organizational interaction, such as language and rituals, (b) the *norms* that evolve in working groups, (c) the *dominant values espoused* by an organization, (d) the *philosophy* that guides an organization's policy toward employees and customers, (e) the *rules* of the game for getting along in the organization, and (f) the *feeling or climate* that is conveyed in an organization by the physical layout and the interactions of members with customers. According to Schein, these elements *reflect* the organization's culture but none of them *is* the essence of culture; "...the term 'culture' should be reserved for the deeper level of *basic assumptions* and *beliefs* that are shared by members of an organization, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organization's view of itself and its environment" (Schein, pp. 492-493).

Schein (1985) distinguished three "levels" of culture: artifacts, values, and assumptions. Schein proposed that artifacts were the most visible level of the culture, constructed from the physical and social environment of the organization. Artifacts of a culture (Level I) are easily observed, including tangible "products," technology, written and spoken language, and overt behavior of members. "Artifacts are also helpful for studying organizational culture. They can be identified readily, often just by looking or

listening. They provide clues about the less tangible, more ethereal levels of organizational culture” (Ott, 1989, pp. 35-36).

Level II of Schein’s (1985) cultural taxonomy is referred to as values. According to Schein, values reflect a sense of what “ought” to be as opposed to what is. Values can serve a normative or moral function, guiding members as they deal with uncertainty as well as serving as a source of group identity. Values are subtle control mechanisms that informally prohibit or sanction behavior (Wellins, Byham, &Wilson, 1991).

Values can be used to predict the behavior that is observed as artifacts. Attention to the values of an organization can indicate the priorities within the organization (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). Additionally, values help align organizational behavior, providing a common direction and focus for employees and leaders (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Howard, 1990). Members learn organizational values by noticing what leaders pay attention to, how they react to critical incidents, and how they model the values (Schein, 1985). The more individuals identify with an organization or its leader, the more likely they are to internalize the values of the organization or its leader (Lutze, 1994).

Argyris and Schon (1978) argued, though, that when values are not based on prior cultural learning, they are more likely “espoused values”—values that are stated but not present in members’ behavior. Ouchi (1981) advocated making the organization’s mission and vision explicit, raising the underlying values to a more conscious level. By doing so, the organizational values are more likely to be acted upon. Dowling (2001) also emphasized the importance of a mission statement in communicating the organizational culture to employees. The mission statement expresses the priorities of the organization and can impact the values and attitudes employees bring to the workplace. Dowling

contended that morale and confidence among employees tend to be higher when employees can see clearly how and why the organization operates the way it does.

Wilkins (1989) discussed the importance of symbolic learning in communicating values (such as through stories, myths, artifacts.) Organizational stories provide schemas—cognitive structures used to organize and interpret knowledge, helping employees understand organizational behavior (Pennington & Hastie, 1991). Dandridge (1985) argued that symbols allow people to make an emotional connection to a value or idea. Ott (1989, p. 32) agreed with this notion, "...messages are retained longer by organization members when they are transmitted in stories than through more explicit and less vivid communication modes." The process of internalizing values involves an affective as well as cognitive component (Shuell, 1990). If employees can connect with the organizational values on an emotional level, they are more likely to internalize the values and make them their own.

When an organization shares a value, and the value is acted upon, Schein (1985) contended that a process of cognitive transformation begins. If the value continues to operate throughout the organization, Schein postulated that the value will begin to be taken for granted, becoming an unconscious assumption of the organization (Level III.) Because these assumptions are unconscious, it is extremely difficult to relearn or change basic assumptions of an organization.

Many organizational behaviors and decisions are almost predetermined by the patterns of basic assumptions existing in the organization. These patterns of assumptions have continued to exist and influence behaviors because they have repeatedly led people to make decisions that usually worked for the organization. With repeated use, the assumptions slowly drop out of people's consciousness but continue to influence decisions and behaviors—even when the organization's environment changes" (Ott, 1989, p. 3).

Ott compared the unconscious, or preconscious nature, of assumptions to applying the brakes while driving an automobile. “After years of pushing the brake pedal and the car slowing, we quit thinking about brakes and braking; we just hit the brakes instinctively, *assuming* the car will slow down” (p. 42). Ott distinguished beliefs from assumptions, contending that beliefs are conscious and can be easily identified. Assumptions, however, are unconscious and, therefore, more difficult to recognize. Assumptions are not necessarily rational; rather they are “secret coping devices” that help organizations deal with problems and change (p. 44).

Functions of Organizational Culture

An organization’s culture contains deeply embedded patterns of organizational behaviors, shared values, and assumptions among members. Organizational culture is holistic. It can be seen as (a) instrumental--providing a form of member control or a vehicle for organizational change, or (b) interpretive--creating a sense of meaning for members regarding organizational values (Peterson & Spencer, 1990). Trice and Beyer (1993) suggested that an organization’s culture helps manage shared uncertainties; create social order; promote continuity; create collective identity and commitment; and encourage ethnocentrism. The culture created through shared values may discourage members to consider opposing viewpoints.

Bolman and Deal (1984) discussed the importance of symbols and symbolism in a culture: “The meaning or the interpretation of what is happening in organizations is more important than what is actually happening....People use symbols to reduce ambiguity and to gain a sense of direction when they are faced with uncertainty” (pp. 149-150). Customs and symbols are bearers of organizations’ traditions and norms, and they help to

perpetuate organizations' social patterns (Cohen, 1974). As such, these elements provide stability within the organization, ensuring that behaviors that have served the organization in the past continue. This stability can have a negative impact, however, on the organization's ability to adapt to new situations.

Other authors have emphasized the use of cultural ideologies to deliver "sense-making practices" to members. "Culture is to the organization what personality is to the individual—a hidden, yet unifying theme that provides meaning, direction, and mobilization" (Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1985, p. ix). Boje, Fedor, and Rowland (1982) asserted that an organization's language, symbols, metaphors, and myths create a sense of rationality in uncertain environments. Trice (1985) reinforced Boje et al.'s notion that culture produces a stabilizing force on members:

In sum, organizational culture provides members a series clues and messages that enable them to into the routine ongoingness of organizational life. It teaches them how to act appropriately and anticipate accurately the behaviors of others. Organizational cultures are the source of behavior in a given organization. In sum, culture performs as a social-control mechanism of behavior. In the process, cultures produce an unavoidable feature of organizational life—ethnocentrism—an assumption that those inside behave in the proper and desirable manner, that they can judge other cultures by their standards, that obviously they are right and proper" (p. 225).

According to Ott (1989), organizational culture serves at least four functions within an organization. Culture provides shared patterns of cognitive interpretations, guiding organization members as to the proper way to act and think. Organizational culture also affords shared patterns of organizational values and moral codes so members know what they are expected to value and how they are expected to feel. The culture identifies members and nonmembers as well as functions as an organizational control system, prescribing and prohibiting certain behaviors.

Organizational Learning

The Use of Language and Other Cognitive Structures

Language not only serves as a means of communication, it disposes people to selectively perceive their environment and others' behavior. This postulate is presented in the Whorf hypothesis (Brislin, 1981; Kuhn, 1962). As an example, the Eskimos have many words for various kinds of snow; snow conditions are vital to their day-to-day lives and survival. Cultures tend to have several words for concepts that are important to them. Similarly, Ott (1989) noted that the Navajo language contains no words for *superior*, *subordinate*, or *hierarchy*. The Navajo people typically do not think about people in those terms. Peters and Waterman (1982) contended that if an organization is truly people-oriented, its culture will have several words to describe how people should be treated. Greenfield (1984, p. 154) contended, "Language is power. It literally makes reality appear and disappear." Pondy (1975, as cited in Pettigrew, 1979) noted that language is a key tool of social influence, arguing that a leader's effectiveness is influenced by the language "overlap" with followers and the extent to which a leader can create words that explain and give order to collective experiences. The language used within an organization impacts the behavior of its members.

An individual's perceptions are filtered through his or her language, basic assumptions, and cognitive structures. This filtering process is used to make sense of events (Lane & Green, 1994). Unfortunately, individuals tend to seek out information that supports existing views, beliefs, and hypotheses—information which does not change opinions (Wason & Johnson-Laird, 1972). Therefore, unless one recognizes his or her own mental "blindness," that individual is not likely to be open to new information

(Marsick & Watkins, 1994). Senge (1990) argued that such mental processes are below our level of consciousness and remain unexamined. As such, people most often remain unaware of their perceptual biases in thinking and consequent actions. Unless individuals notice their own motivation for behavior, the likelihood of producing shared values and increased organizational performance is remote.

Opinions can change and new learning can occur if enough disconfirming evidence accumulates and cognitive dissonance occurs (Festinger, 1957). In such a situation, tension is created by the disconfirming information, and an individual's cognitive schema must be modified to accommodate the new knowledge. The degree of modification in existing schema will depend on the flexibility of the cognitive structures through which individuals filter information (Hubiak, 1995). Some individuals' existing schema are more flexible and more easily adapted than others. Also, the normative power of dominant opinions may keep marginalized perspectives silent. Generally speaking, though, improvement efforts should utilize disconfirming information to produce the cognitive dissonance required for change.

Personal Learning as It Relates to Organizational Learning

Reflective learning is necessary to assess one's existing assumptions (Senge, 1990). Senge posed that organizations can learn only through people who learn. "Individuals' learning is doubtless important in organizational learning. Organizations have no other brains and senses than those of their members" (Hedberg, 1981, p. 6). Hedberg continued, "As individuals develop their personalities, personal habits, and beliefs over time, organizations develop world views and ideologies. Members come and go, and leadership changes, but organizations' memories preserve certain behaviors,

mental maps, norms, and values over time” (p. 6). The quality of the decisions taken by leaders depends on the quality of thinking within the organization (Heirs & Pehrson, 1977).

Seymour (1992) contended that an organization can enhance the quality of its culture by encouraging the continual development of its members. Roberts, Ross, and Kleiner (1994) identified essential characteristics of learning organizations. In learning organizations, people feel they are doing something that matters—personally, as well as to the larger world. Everyone in the organization is stretching, growing, or enhancing their capacity to create. Employees are invited to learn what is happening at every level of the organization, and free inquiry is facilitated. Within learning organizations, people demonstrate a mutual respect and trust in the way they interact regardless of their position; everyone is encouraged to experiment, take risks, and openly assess the results.

Contextual Factors

Handy (1993) noted several other factors that can influence the culture of an organization. These factors include the organization’s history, its size, technology, goals and objectives, the environment, and its people. The organization’s history can reveal much about its present culture (i.e. centralized versus diffused leadership, power versus task orientation.) High levels of innovation are related to decentralization and the low formalization of codes and rules; these properties encourage the generation and acceptance of new ideas (Child & Kieser, 1981). The rate of innovation relates positively to the decentralization of decision-making and authority (Cillie, 1940). Low formalization facilitates the initiation stage of innovations (Duncan, 1976). Formalization at the implementation phase reduces ambiguity and potential resistance as the innovation

is implemented. Through formalization, individuals can better understand how the innovation fits into the existing procedures of the organization. Decentralized structures should be used in the initiation phase. More centralized and formal structures should be used in the implementation stage (Duncan, 1976).

Handy (1993) argued that the size of the organization may be the most important variable in influencing the culture of the organization. As evidence, he posed that large organizations tend to be more formalized due to the number of specialized groups that require systematic coordination. The goals of the organization (i.e. student learning, retention, increased enrollment) influence the culture, but the culture also influences goals. Goals can change as the culture changes. Components of environment include the economic environment, the market, the competitive scene, and the geographical and societal environment. "The nature of the environment within which an organization works is often taken for granted by those who work within it but it can be crucially important in determining the culture....Change in the environment requires a culture that is sensitive, adaptable, and quick to respond" (pp. 195-196). As for an organization's people, Handy contended that a match between the organizational culture and individuals' values should lead to employee satisfaction, thereby strengthening the culture. This perspective reinforces the need for organizational learning to allow for the alignment of individual and organizational values.

Continuous Quality Improvement

Defining Quality

Quality models and strategies in business and in education have taken different forms and have been called different names, i.e., Total Quality Management (TQM),

Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), Continuous Process Improvement (CPI). The term Total Quality Management seemed to be the moniker of choice in the 1980s, with Continuous Quality Improvement perhaps predominating in name in the 1990s and beyond. For some authors, continuous quality improvement is seen as an outcome of Total Quality Management (Feigenbaum, 1991; Goetsch & Davis, 2001). For most purposes the terms Total Quality Improvement and Continuous Quality Improvement can be interchanged without affecting the general meaning of the term. Such is the case in this discussion and the corresponding research.

According to Uselac (1993, p. 20), “There is little agreement on what constitutes quality. In its broadest sense, quality is an attribute of a product or service that can be improved. Most people associate quality with a product or service. Quality is *not* only products and services but also includes processes, environment, and people.” Goetsch and Davis (2001) defined Total Quality as an approach to doing business that attempts to maximize the competitiveness of an organization through the continual improvement of the quality of its products, services, people, processes, and environments.

Rationale for Adopting Continuous Quality Improvement

Continuous quality improvement is one example of a long-term change effort that can have a substantial influence on the culture of an organization. Other change efforts, such as a move toward long-term strategic planning, can also impact organizational culture. Weick (2000) pointed out that any framework that is adopted will improve organizational performance if it does three things: (a) gets people to engage in action, (b) gives people a direction, and (c) supplies legitimate explanations that are energizing and enable actions to be repeated.

Grider (1996) compiled an extensive list of colleges and universities that have implemented quality improvement strategies, either in departments or across the organization. As the list of organizations is lengthy, motivation for the adoption of such strategies deserves attention. Tuttle (1994) addressed some of the various reasons why organizations decide to implement quality principles. The explanations given by organizations that have incorporated quality principles include the fact that existing management systems are outmoded and can no longer ensure success in the present environment. The reduction of public funds has also led higher education institutions to look for improved methods of operation. According to Tuttle, many colleges and universities have adopted continuous quality improvement because they are looking for a competitive advantage in attracting students.

One might wonder what distinguishes the total quality approach from traditional ways of doing business. Goetsch and Davis (2001) stated that the distinguishing characteristics of total quality include a strong customer focus, the use of scientific methods (data driven) in decision making and problem solving teamwork, employee involvement and empowerment, continual process improvement, education and training, and unity of purpose. Saylor (1992) simplified the list somewhat, stating that quality consists of four essential elements: continuous improvement, a strong people orientation, an emphasis on data collection, and a focus on the customer. The quality movement stresses the interrelatedness of organizational units, participatory decision making, and long-term focus for improvement (Harris & Baggett, 1992).

Hackman and Wageman (2000) presented common assumptions of TQM. Quality is believed to be less costly to the organization than is the cost of poor quality. TQM

assumes that employees naturally care about the quality of their work and will take initiatives to improve their performance. Organizations are seen as systems of highly interdependent parts, and that the central problems they face cross functional lines. A systems view allows an organization to understand how its own actions can sometimes create the problems it experiences. Systems thinking is implicitly a key tenet to total quality (Friesen & Johnson, 1995).

Banta (1993) described features of a quality-oriented institution. Such an organization identifies its stakeholders and their needs as well as the values that guide the organization's actions. A quality-oriented organization aligns its activities with its mission and values. Banta portrayed such an organization as a learning organization—one that provides continuing educational opportunities for all employees while continually developing and monitoring organizational processes.

The characteristics of continuous quality improvement make it an intriguing approach. However, some may question whether the principles that were originally implemented in industry can be applied to higher education. Chaffee and Sherr (1992) suggested reasons why quality initiatives should be successful in higher education. They argued the likelihood of success is high due to the fact that Continuous Quality Improvement is a comprehensive philosophy, with core principles and flexible tools. In addition, CQI employs many known principles and tools of good management while providing a clear and understandable framework for vision and leadership. Finally, Chaffee and Sherr contended that CQI is already working in enterprises similar to institutions of higher education as well as in a number of colleges and universities.

Gore (1993, p. 355) reinforced the adoption of Total Quality Management in higher education:

The central concept of TQM, continuous improvement, is fundamental to education. Where else could the idea of a culture oriented to continuous improvement be more appropriate than in institutions whose purpose is to support improvement and individual growth? TQM can enhance the quality of the educational experience by addressing the entire organization.

The Benefits of Continuous Quality Improvement

Seymour and Collett (1991) discussed discernible benefits of the quality improvement paradigm. These benefits include employee empowerment, a stronger focus on stakeholder needs, and a reduction of bureaucratic steps. With its emphasis on identifying critical processes within the organization, CQI can help organizations prevent future problems as well as correct present problems. Decisions can be based on facts, and less duplication of effort can result. In addition, functional barriers can be broken down. A key contribution of TQM has been the emphasis of processes that “cut across” the organization (Lawler, Albers Mohrman, & Ledford, 1992).

Costs and Barriers to Implementing Continuous Quality Improvement

A paradigm shift to continuous quality improvement requires an investment of time, energy, and money. The organization must rethink its aim; the design and management of processes must be changed; and new communication efforts must be initiated (Seymour, 1994). Ryan (1995) asserted, though, that, all too often, nothing substantial changes in organizations that adopt TQM: organizational rewards stay the same, employees still fear making mistakes, resource development training does not occur, and employees do not become empowered. Seymour identified “hurdles” to successful implementation of total quality. One dominant hurdle involves individuals’

perceptions that they are already working at capacity and can not contemplate taking on the additional time commitment and responsibilities of TQM. Another hurdle involves the difficulty of overcoming many people's perception that TQM this is just another fad that will pass with time.

Grider (1996) agreed that one of the most common concerns voiced by employees is the amount of time required for implementation. Individuals can become frustrated that quality training, team activities, and more methodical decision making take time away from regular duties. Sanders (1999) concurred that the financial cost of implementing TQM is significant. Expenses include expenditures for consultants, trainers and training materials as well as the substantial number of labor hours lost while training is being conducted. Coate (1992) reminded leaders, however, that the price of choosing not to implement TQM may be higher when colleges consider the cost of "rework"—duplication of efforts that can result from not refining organizational processes. Atkinson (1990) also asked leaders to consider the consequences of not dealing with problems in a preventative manner; time and resources are wasted, negative stereotypes may be reinforced, and customer service decreases.

Atkinson (1990) offered several factors that lead to resistance of total quality implementation. Such factors include the fear of change and the personal uncertainty that comes with a new paradigm. Employees may wish to see results from the initiative before becoming involved. They may fear that their own performance will not meet standards. Coate (1992) also documented barriers to TQM, including skepticism ("How long will this last?"), the issue of time (time to train, time to reach decisions, time to implement), the barrier of language (students as customers, jargon), and barriers of attitude (the quick

fix, suspicion, unwillingness to change, “We don’t need help.” Banta (1993) added other potential barriers, including the perception that products and services are already excellent and can’t be improved, and the idea that faculty know what is best for students and see no value in assessing student needs. In other words, resistance can be encountered when the need for change is not apparent to those involved (Howard, 1996). Goetsch and Davis (2001) called upon leaders to understand the concerns of potential resisters and not summarily dismiss them.

The issue of shared governance deserves particular attention as it relates to impeding continuous improvement. Coate (1992) noted that many faculty members are already empowered, and the higher education system puts them in competition with one another for tenure and promotion, making real teamwork difficult to achieve. Sanders (1999) recognized that the decentralized structure of colleges and universities produces a fragmentation of departments that encourages isolation and orientation toward special interests. Seymour (1992) likened the organization of higher education to a disconnected, isolated system of pigeonholes with little capacity or incentive to respond accordingly. Even if the “professional bureaucracy” has the will to change, coordination problems make it difficult (Seymour, 1992).

Only one-fifth to one-third of TQM programs implemented in the United States have actually achieved significant improvements (Brown, 1993; Harari, 1993). Korukonda, Watson, and Rajkumar (1999) noted that the total quality approach continues based largely on faith and anecdotal evidence. TQM rhetoric is more prominent than its substance (Hackman & Wageman, 1995). Howard (1996) identified the tendency for organizations engaged in TQM to become too focused on internal processes instead of

results. Howard contended that is easy for organizations pursuing TQM to become overburdened with a “quality bureaucracy.” Consequently, many organizations attempting to implement TQM create dual structures—separate committees and teams responsible for the management of the process. For a TQM program to work effectively, it must be integrated into the organization’s daily operations (Brown, 1993).

Other organizations have focused on one aspect of TQM and then become frustrated with the organization’s lack of improvement (Howard, 1994). Crosby (1992) contended that TQM trivializes the concept of quality, and leaders are not taking the time to understand the meaning and responsibilities of quality management. Kovel-Jarboe (1994) stated that organizations should not be concerned with the perfect adoption of TQM, but develop a system for and a commitment to quality.

The Need for a Change in Culture

Organizations that typically succeed at implementing TQM do not approach the model as just another management innovation or, even worse, as a quick fix. Rather, they see quality as a new way of doing business (Goetsch & Davis, 2001). For continuous improvement to be successful, “The culture needs to be transformed. And cultural transformation does not come cheap” (Seymour, 1994, p. 5). Woods (1997, p. 49) put it succinctly: “Increasingly, organizations are discovering that quality management is more about cultural change than it is about any specific practices.” Jha, Michela, and Noori (1996) included organizational culture management as a success factor for continuous improvement. They argued that leaders who understand the nature and management of culture are well positioned to accomplish the major organizational changes often required for quality improvement.

Goetsch and Davis (2001) offered several reasons why cultural change must either precede or at least parallel the implementation of total quality; positive change cannot occur in a hostile environment. Moving to total quality takes time, and sensitivity to cultural processes increases the likelihood of successful implementation. Grider (1996) contended that ownership of and commitment to TQM will never happen if change does not occur within the organization. Harris and Baggett (1992) argued that this change revolved around the organization's willingness to learn about and improve system interrelationships. Seymour (1991, p. 2) spoke of the qualitative change that must occur within an organizational culture to implement quality: "In the higher education context, we must recognize that quality is not a by-product of external tests or standards; quality is a healthy intra-institutional state of mind."

Changing an Organization's Culture

Schein (1990) argued that organizational change and resistance to change cannot be understood without understanding organizational culture. Cultural problems are complex and require systematic and careful attention to a large number of influences if successful, sustained change is to take place (Allen & Kraft, 1982). Given the complexity of social interaction and change management, organizational change can not generally be conceived in a sequential or well-ordered manner (Collins, 1998).

Bate (1994) referred to a cultural change strategy as a paradigm—a *way of thinking* about an organization. "If organizations are indeed cultures, no conceptual distinction should be made between a 'strategy for cultural change' and a 'strategy for organizational change'; cultural change *is* organizational change" (p. 14). A cultural view of an organization, as opposed to a linear view, sees organizational change as a process,

not a product—a series of questions to be asked rather than a series of answers to be gathered (Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997). The way individuals interpret the organization to themselves and outsiders is a key focus for the organization.

In order to understand the change process, Dawson (1994) suggested that researchers study the substance of change, the politics of change, and the context of change. Bate (1994) stated that a comprehensive strategy for cultural change needs to consider the culture to be changed, its origins and developments over time, the environmental context within which the organization is situated, and the goals and objectives of the change process. Leaders should have a good understanding of the desired outcome before implementing change strategies.

Resistance to Change Within Higher Education

Kerr (1995) wrote of higher education institutions as loosely-coupled organizations where individual units have little connection with each other. Autonomy of units at a college or university produces what Cohen and March (1974) call “organized anarchy”—a situation where higher education functions without a clear consensus of goals and direction. The system of shared governance often found in higher education has also strengthened colleges’ resistance to change (Kerr, 1995). As a result, short-term, dramatic change is seldom seen in higher education (Birnbaum, 1988). This inertia may be due the fact that colleges and universities are conservative institutions that will not explore significant change unless required to do so (Kerr, 1995). Clark (1970) posed that changes that fundamentally alter the character and practices of an organization are rare and occur incrementally over decades. Dowling (2001) contended that the culture of large, mature organizations often requires a major external event to produce change. The

nature of higher education institutions makes significant change a difficult prospect. Many colleges and universities have well-established cultures that reduce the likelihood of a major change from within. At least two avenues exist for those wishing to pursue change strategies: long-term, incremental change generally produced inside the organization or a more sudden external change.

Much of the literature relating to organizational resistance to change offers advice to internal change agents as they work to shape the culture. Kimberly (1981) discussed the importance of the way in which innovations are presented to the organization. Kimberly presented additional design options to reduce resistance, including introducing the innovation so it is seen as compatible with organizational values and offering the change on a pilot basis. Individuals with high tolerances for ambiguity and who desire experimentation should be recruited as change agents (Hedberg, 1981). Allen and Kraft (1982) asserted that cultural change can start with small groups. Innovations are more likely to be adopted if subunits are allowed to experiment with the innovation in their own context (Kimberly, 1981). Additionally, change efforts are more successful when leaders understand the source and context for organizational resistance. "Managers will encounter less resistance if they understand and appreciate the existing culture before they try to change it, and then use that understanding and appreciation to affirm and reinforce the direction of the desired change" (Beyer & Trice, 1987, p. 22). Bate (1994) directed leaders to get to know their culture before deciding what change is desired and how to implement the change. Openness, tolerating failure, and concern for individuals lessen the probability of member resistance to organizational change (Nord, 1985).

The Change Process

Cultural change usually begins with one or more “triggering events” (Lundberg, 1985). Such an event can be initiated from inside or outside the organization. As stated previously, the change impetus can be sudden or incremental. Dissatisfaction with the current system is needed to trigger action (Hedberg, 1981). Times of transition also act as conditions under which culture can be changed. Transition creates opportunities to invoke thoughts of a different, better future (Siehl, 1985). In addition, a transitional period provides for a time of “unfreezing” with a “refreezing” of the newly-intended culture (Lewin, 1952).

Dowling (2001) outlined forces driving organizational cultural change. According to Dowling, pressure for change, along with the shared goals for change, the organizational capacity to change, and appropriate rewards for change behavior, leads to cultural change. Lundberg (1985) posed four permitting conditions for organizational change: (a) a surplus of change resources (including time, energy and financial resources, (b) system readiness (the willingness of most members to live with the anxiety that comes with “anticipated uncertainty,” (c) informational linkages (communication), and (d) agent power and leadership. Eldridge and Crombie (1975) also spoke to the surplus of resources needed for organizational change, arguing that complex adaptive systems need to have built into them some redundant (spare) capacities in order to respond appropriately to the variable demands of their environments. Cyert and March (1963) coined the phrase “organizational slack” to describe the available resources required for organizations to undergo change efforts.

Dowling (2001) expressed the need for a clear, shared vision of the direction of organizational change. Dowling also recognized the importance of rewarding change efforts and celebrating early successes in the change process. Collins (1998) reinforced the importance of clearly defined ends and objectives for change programs. “In successful cultures, the goals and purposes are kept constantly in view as the change process develops and work gets underway in installing and sustaining successful norms” (Allen & Kraft, 1982, p. 37).

Deal and Kennedy (1982) made several recommendations for managing change. They suggest the leaders recognize that peer group consensus will be the major influence on acceptance or willingness to change. Given the influence of colleagues, it is imperative that leaders convey and emphasize two-way trust in all matters related to change. Deal and Kennedy also cautioned leaders to allow enough time for the change to take hold.

Changing the structure of an organization without being sensitive to employees’ comfort level with the new structure makes successful change unlikely (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Berg (1985, p. 298) also discussed the need to value employees and their role in creating the change:

A true strategic change program does not impose anything but makes people aware of and illuminates certain aspects of the culture in which they exist. In this sense, it is a creative process; by bringing values, principles, and behaviors to the surface, and by providing people with a framework with which they can interpret what they see, a creative and emancipatory process is started.

“Treat people as adults. Treat them as partners; treat them with respect. Treat *them*—not capital spending and automation—as the primary source of productivity gains” (Peters & Waterman, 1982, p. 238). An often overlooked factor in the success of a change effort is

the development of a sense of community and openness among members (Allen & Kraft, 1982). Bate (1994) reinforced the notion that participation, involvement, and collective dialogue are all essential aspects of cultural change; “Cultures are produced interactively and, therefore, can only be changed interactively” (p. 222).

Argyris and Schon (1978) argued that long-term change is not possible without revisions in employees’ basic assumptions. *True* cultural change does not occur if changes do not reach the value and assumption level of cultural meaning (Lundberg, 1985). Dessler (1995, p. 330) concurred, “...to change employee’s actions, you usually have to change the organization’s culture—its underlying values.” Sathe (1985) proposed two strategies for changing organizational values: (a) minimize reliance on extrinsic motivations to change, concentrating on intrinsic motivations, and (b) nullify inappropriate justifications of behavior. Change is created when individuals “own” the outcome, and it becomes a part of *their* operation. Effectively, the change comes from the employees. Effective leaders encourage organizational participation and the organizational learning necessary to precipitate change; they must discourage negative reactions to change initiatives without diminishing involvement.

Austin (1990) offered other suggestions to institutional leaders interested in utilizing cultural values to improve organizational performance. Among those recommendations is the need to analyze and understand the mix of cultures within the organization. Subcultures within the organization may have competing or conflicting value sets. Astute leaders understand and appreciate the various subcultures, the subcultures’ emphasis on different values, and the subcultures’ differing responses to change. By considering cultural influences on faculty and staff perceptions and reactions,

leaders can forecast potential reactions to prepare best ways to present plans to the campus at-large. Goldhaber (1983) recognized the importance of an organization's informal networks in communicating the organization's culture. Effective managers recognize the existence and importance of a cultural network within the organization; they participate in that network (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

Austin (1990) called upon leaders to establish clear institutional priorities.

Institutional goals and priorities allow members the opportunity to evaluate their own values and determine ways they can contribute to the organization. In addition, leaders should help faculty and staff across the campus better understand each other.

Lack of understanding easily breeds disregard, underestimation, and inappropriate conclusions...Institutionally sponsored opportunities to discuss goals, values, and criteria for excellence in the different disciplines and fields would help diminish problems arising from mutual ignorance of others' disciplinary cultures. (p. 71).

Siehl (1985) noted that the most effective ways to manage culture are through one-to-one verbal communication and role modeling. Leaders within the organization provide role models, symbolize the company to the outside world, preserve what makes the company special, set a standard for performance, and motivate employees (Deal & Kennedy, 1982).

Creating a value system that encourages the kind of behavior you want is not enough. The challenge is then to engage in those practices that symbolize those values [which] tell people what is really O.K. to do and what not [to do]. Actions, in other words, speak much more loudly than words" (Dessler, 1995, p. 400).

Wilkins and Dyer (1988) indicated that cultural change programs often fail to adjust for the nature of the culture to be changed. Cultural change is not independent of the kind culture that is to be changed. This notion follows the premise that leaders must understand the culture before attempting to change it. Differences in organizational

cultures will warrant the use of different change strategies. Bate (1994) addressed the timing of a change effort. Change leaders should initiate change within the context of organizational “momentum.” Bate analogized organizational energy to tidal waves. Effective leaders know when to “ride the waves,” create their own waves, or wait for another wave when the organization is more receptive to change.

Leading the Change Effort

“Culture is a multidimensional phenomenon which needs a multidimensional process of leadership” (Bate, 1994, p. 238). Bate argued that leaders must engage the creation and communication of the change effort, the policy decisions impacted by the changes, the development of moral standards surrounding the new culture, and the activity of putting the new cultural meanings into practice. Collins (1998) posed that managers can shape and change culture by scanning the environment to analyze opportunities and threats, looking for opportunities to foster and initiate change. By demonstrating a commitment to change and encouraging commitment from others, managers can begin the development of a tangible, shared vision for the organization.

Disagreement exists as to the amount of influence the leader or leaders of an organization have on cultural change. According to Bate, (1994, p. 239, p. 245):

Leadership is a collective activity not an individual activity. The idea of a single leader creating culture is nonsense....Leaders cannot control or manipulate culture, much as they might like to—and much as the old model might say they can. What they can do is initiate, influence, and shape the direction of the emerging culture, making its birth as painless and trouble free as possible.”

Krantz (1990, p. 52) offered the following thoughts regarding an interaction of leadership.

In systems terms, leadership is a property of the overall system and stems from the ongoing process of interaction among the important elements of the system. From this perspective, leaders and followers mutually co-produce overall system leadership.

Other authors, however, believe that the chief executive has a greater responsibility for the organization's culture. Schein (1985, p.2) offered the infamous quotation, "The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture." Pettigrew (1975) argued that the leader was responsible for the creation of organizational symbols, language, and beliefs. Tierney (1992) added that the role of leadership is to communicate and interpret the values and goals of the community.

Irrespective of the impact of a single leader, cultural inquiry requires attention to and discovery of previously unattended phenomena (Lundberg, 1985). Becoming competent in understanding organizational culture is a critical skill for institutional leaders (Smart, Kuh, & Tierney, 1997).

CHAPTER 3: METHOD

This research involved a case study of a comprehensive community college engaged in continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts for several years. Through this study, I explored the interaction between the College's culture and strategies for continuous improvement. I investigated the reciprocal nature of culture and organizational change strategies; specifically, I focused the case study on ways in which the cultural context influenced the development of the CQI processes and ways these processes have affected the organizational culture.

Research Rationale and Design

Rationale for a Qualitative Approach

Three major differences in qualitative and quantitative emphasis deserve attention: (a) the distinction between explanation and understanding as the purpose of inquiry, (b) the distinction between a personal and impersonal role for the researcher, and (c) a distinction between the knowledge discovered and knowledge constructed (Stake, 1995). Qualitative approaches to research share three fundamental assumptions: (a) a holistic view of the topic of study, (b) an inductive approach to data collection and theory development, and (c) naturalistic inquiry which studies data in naturally occurring environments (Patton, 1990).

Using a holistic approach, the whole is seen as a complex system (Patton, 1990). Such an approach assumes that a description of the social and political environments is

critical to understanding observations. The inductive approach begins with specific observations to discover patterns and interrelationships, which emerge from the case. Guba and Lincoln (1982) noted that the naturalistic nature of qualitative research keeps all antecedent and output conditions open to investigation. Patton (1990) posed that it is best to study dynamic organizational processes and complex systems without predetermined hypotheses. With inductive analysis, general questions begin exploration, and the researcher interprets observations as they occur. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed--how they make sense of their experiences. This sense-making is mediated through the investigator's own perceptions (Merriam, 1998).

A qualitative research perspective is best suited to portray the complexities surrounding organizational culture. The study of organizational culture offers a prime example of the multiple realities expected in qualitative case studies (Stake, 1995). The search for complex meaning can be neither completely premeditated nor retrospectively measured (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative studies seek patterns of unanticipated as well as expected relationships (Stake, 1995). Organizational culture, operating at a variety of levels and with multiple manifestations, necessitates qualitative inquiry.

Case Study Design

I centered the research design around a single case, instrumental case study (Stake, 1995). I chose this case not only for the College's unique involvement with quality strategies, but for the value that studying this culture offers community college leaders in understanding the elements and functions of organizational culture. Merriam (1998) described this characteristic of case studies as *heuristic*--meaning that the purpose

of such a case study is to illuminate the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study. Case studies can bring about the discovery of new meaning, extend the reader's experience, or confirm prior knowledge. Olson (1982, pp. 138-139, as cited in Merriam, 1998, p. 31) presented other heuristic purposes of case studies, including: (a) to explain the reasons for a problem, the background of a situation, what happened, and why, and (b) to explain why an innovation worked or failed to work.

Case studies are the preferred strategy when exploratory questions are asked, when the investigator has little control over events and when real-life contexts are studied (Yin, 1994). Merriam (1998) contended that a case study is an appropriate design if the researcher is interested in studying process. Previously unknown relationships are likely to emerge from case studies (Stake, 1981). "To the qualitative scholar, the understanding of human experience is a matter of chronologies more than of causes and effects" (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The emphasis of this study was on exploration, understanding, and discovery rather than causal determination and prediction.

The case study allows for the exploration of complex social units (Merriam, 1998). According to Collins and Noblit (1978), field studies (case studies) are better able to assess social change than are more positivistic designs. Case studies, however, are not research designs that optimize generalizations (Stake, 1995). More traditional, quantitative research methods are available for that purpose. The case study design seeks to understand the case itself. It is through the thorough understanding of the *particular* case that I and my readers can begin to examine meaning in the research findings and those interpretations might apply to other situations. The case study approach was chosen

for its value in gathering in-depth information in the natural environment through the exploration of multiple sources of data (Patton, 1990; Yin, 1994).

Conceptual Framework

Austin (1990) proposed that the mission and goals of the institution, the governance structure and leadership style of administrators, the curricular structure and academic standards, the student and faculty characteristics, the student-faculty relations, and the size, location, and physical structures of the campus are all key influences that contribute to the culture of an institution.

Miles and Huberman (1984) created a conceptual framework for a multicase “school improvement” field study. Miles and Huberman’s model contains several components that relate to a long-term change process, i.e. internal and external contexts, implementation issues, transformation within the organization, and outcomes. Aspects of this model seemed well suited for my present study.

I modified the “school improvement” model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984) and superimposed a revised framework onto the components of culture presented by Austin (1990). The “new” model (Figure 1) keeps the cultural components identified by Austin in the forefront of data collection as issues relating to change within the organization are investigated. In essence, the model allowed me to overlay and cross-reference organizational culture and organizational change. As specific aspects of developments in organizational change were investigated, the reciprocal influence between culture and change was explored.

As I conducted the inductive case study of Midwest County Community College, this new model was used as a framework for exploration—a tool to examine and discover

the cultural contexts in which the continuous quality improvement process evolved. Accordingly, the conceptual framework served as a “researcher’s map of the territory being investigated” (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 20).

An example of the way in which the model was applied may be helpful in demonstrating its value to the research. Through an investigation of the internal contexts that have influenced CQI at Midwest, I explored the College’s prior history with innovation. Certain components of the College’s culture, such as the mission and goals of the organization, the governance structure, and the curricular structure, have influenced and have been influenced by Midwest’s history with innovation. The same reciprocal impact existed between the development of organizational rules and norms and other components of Midwest’s culture. This conceptual framework allowed such relationships to be explored several times through the research.

Research Plan and Timetable

Due to the emergent nature of this research study, a flexible schedule was needed. The inductive exploration of organizational culture and change necessitated revisions to the research plan and timetable proposed. The research was divided into three phases. The distinction of phases was important to the participants and to me. Phases in the research design allowed for focused data collection, assisted in the development of targeted interview questions and guided the general direction of the research. By dividing the research into phases, the research plan also benefited participants in their comprehension of the progression of research activities.

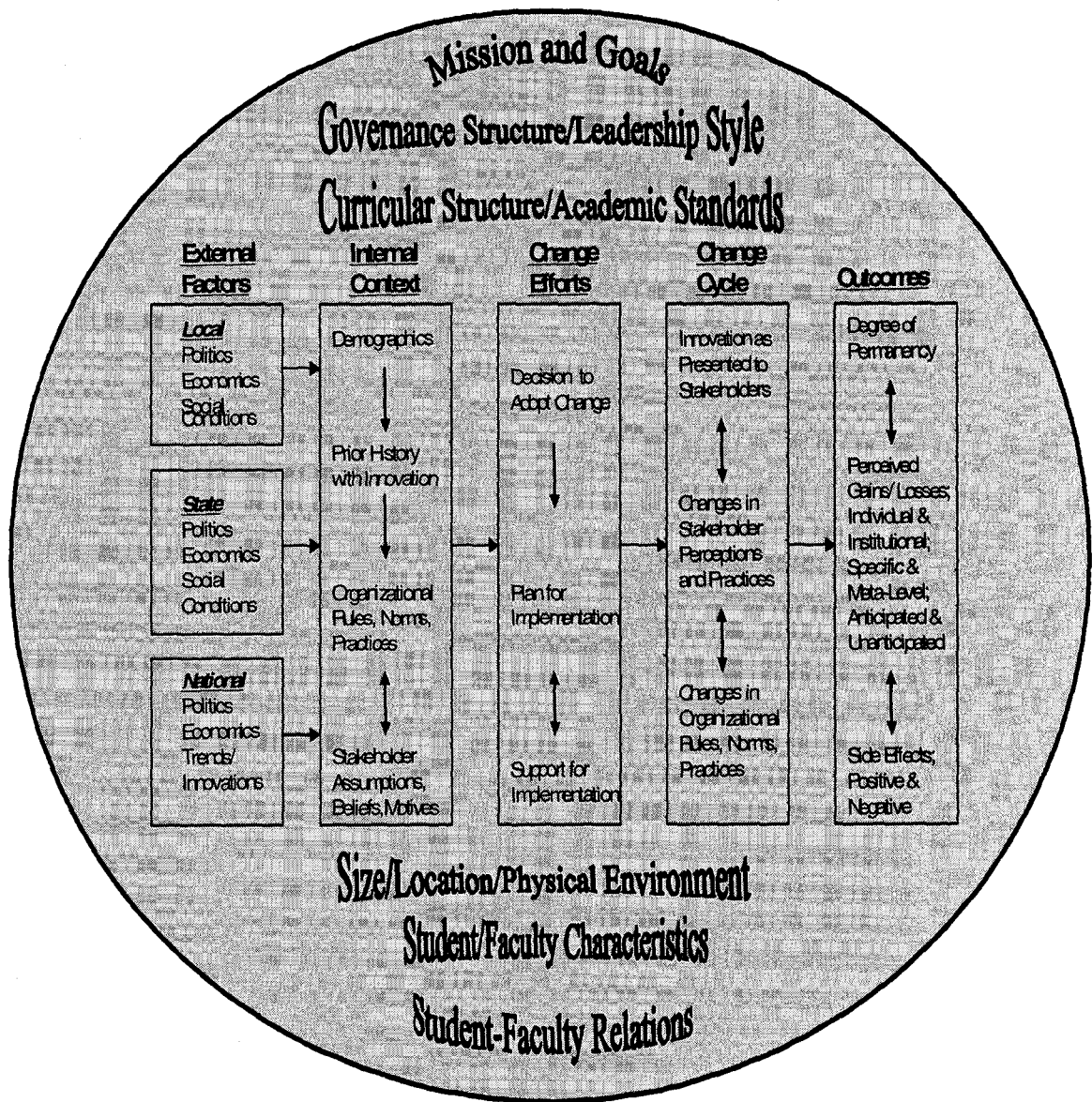


Figure 1. Conceptual model for understanding the cultural contexts in which the continuous quality improvement processes evolved at Midwest County Community College.

Phase 1 – External Factors and Internal Context

Phase 1 research relied heavily upon historical documents collected to recreate the context in which Midwest County began implementation of its continuous quality improvement processes. I reviewed documents including newspapers, annual reports, and academic catalogs were reviewed. My interviews with College faculty, staff, and administration employed by the College during the early 1990s, along with one Board of Trustees member, helped clarify and supplement data gleaned from documents.

Phase 2 – Change Efforts and Change Cycle

Phase 2 research primarily involved interviews. Interviews with faculty, staff, and administration included questions relating to the decision to adopt CQI and issues in implementation. Cyclical aspects in the change process were also investigated through interviews. During Phase 2, document analyses followed the interviews. Documents were reviewed to verify, validate, and supplement data from interviews.

Phase 3 – Outcomes

Phase 3 research included campus observations, interviews, and document analyses. It is during this phase that I explored systems theory and organizational symbolism was most carefully explored. Campus observations and document analyses were especially useful during this phase in exploring the degree of permanency of the CQI implementation. Interviews focused on perceived gains and losses as well as side effects relating to this change process.

I visited Midwest County Community College on two separate occasions in week-long intervals during the Spring 2003 academic semester (Phase 1) and the Fall 2003 academic semester (Phase 2.) Phase 3 interviews were conducted via telephone during

the Spring 2004 academic semester due to the fact that I broke my leg in January 2004. Time between visits was spent transcribing the interviews.

Participants and Site

Midwest County Community College and Area Vocational-Technical School is a typical comprehensive community college in the sense that it provides the curricular functions of academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). The community college's comprehensive mission makes it a diverse environment in which to study organizational culture.

Midwest County's uniqueness comes from its reputation for continuous quality improvement. The College has been engaged in CQI processes for twelve years under the same president. Midwest County's quality efforts have been recognized by the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD). The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Universities used Midwest County as a "model institution" as it developed the Academic Quality Improvement Project (AQIP,) a quality-oriented alternative for institutional reaccreditation (Academic Quality Improvement Project, 2002). Midwest County is also a member of the Continuous Quality Improvement Network (CQIN.) The College participated in the inception of the state quality award for educational institutions and has competed regularly for this award. Midwest County Community College has used CQI as a vehicle for long-term change; as such, this college provided a fertile setting for research on change. Given Midwest's national and statewide recognition for continuous quality

improvement, I was interested in understanding the context of the change effort and processes used in implementing the change.

Data Collection

Data were collected through participant observations, interviews with College employees, and document analyses. During each observation and interview, I recorded field notes. I used *asides*, *commentaries*, and *in-process memos* as appropriate during and after composing field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As soon as was feasible after each session, I wrote field notes and incorporated additional details and insights. Detailed field notes, as value-free as possible, were separated from notes geared toward interpretation. Reflections, issues, ideas, or new questions that emerged were pursued in future questioning or analyses of related data. Values and biases that were triggered during the data collection phase were captured in a reflective journal.

Interviews

Individuals to be interviewed, either individually or collectively, were informed as to the nature of the research, that their participation was strictly voluntary, and that I would divulge information regarding their participation. Employees in the organization received a letter outlining the research restraints and guarantees. Interview participants were reminded of these research requirements before they were interviewed.

Data from interviews consisted of direct quotations from participants about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge with organizational events and processes. A significant commitment was made to represent the participants' experiences in their own terms. Interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured. Questions were

revised as the research progressed. The general nature of the interview questions was based on key issues identified in the conceptual framework.

I asked interview participants for permission to record interviews, using an audio cassette recorder, in order to facilitate the creation of verbatim interview transcripts. In addition to recording the interviews, handwritten notes were taken. Immediately following the interviews, observations and additional information needed to establish a context for interpreting the interview were recorded. Each respondent was assigned a code number for all tapes, notes, and transcripts. I then used pseudonyms in Chapter 4 to refer to College personnel and to identify quotations from respective participants. Interviewees were not identified to other College personnel. Interviewees were able to review their particular interview transcript(s) only.

Campus Observations

The leadership style of administrators, the student and faculty characteristics, the student-faculty relations, and the physical structures of the campus are among the key elements that contribute to the culture of an institution (Austin, 1990). These elements can, and in some cases must, be deciphered through observation. Observations of cultural artifacts and behavioral interactions among faculty, staff, and students on campus added further insights into Midwest's culture.

A primary method used for data collection was participant observation. I worked to develop ongoing relationships with employees, recording observations in regular, systematic ways (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As participant-observer, I attended to aspects of the organizational culture that have become routine to members—

characteristics that led to understanding the cultural context. Observations were used to triangulate emerging findings (Merriam, 1998).

Merriam (1998) argued that the conceptual framework determines what is to be observed. The conceptual framework used in this study will guide observations. Merriam suggested that observations start with the physical setting, the participants, activities and interactions, conversations, subtle factors such nonverbal communication, and one's own behavior. Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995) advised researchers to first note their initial impressions of the physical environment and the people and then move on to observing key events or incidents, attending to the indigenous meanings of relations and interactions.

My role as observer or participant might have affected the surrounding activity (Merriam, 1998). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) recommended that observers be relatively passive and unobtrusive, attempt to put people at ease, and learn how to act in the given environment. Merriam (1998) discussed the importance of adapting to participants' routines, establishing a rapport by finding a "common ground," and showing interest in participant's activities.

Review of Documents

To further understand and corroborate the historical and social contexts of the cultural developments, a review of institutional documents was necessary. Particular attention was given to those documents that relate to quality implementation strategies: strategic plans, annual reports, accreditation documents, staff manuals, institutional budgets, College catalogs, and promotional materials. In addition, documents containing a visual history of the College, including newspaper articles and brochures were reviewed

for historical information. Determining the authenticity and accuracy of documents was essential. Merriam (1998) encouraged researchers to diligently ascertain information regarding the origins of documents as well as the reasons for and the context in which they were written. Inferences drawn from various documents were beneficial in focusing interview questions and guiding campus observations.

Ethical Considerations in Data Collection

I considered the ethical implications involved in the research. Conducting interviews and observations entails potential risks for the participants. Interview participants may feel their privacy has been invaded, may be embarrassed by particular questions, or may disclose more information than they intended (Merriam, 1998). Regarding observations, ethical issues arise if the observation itself changes the nature of the activity observed or if the observer witnesses questionable or illegal behavior (Hopper & Moore, 1990). Taylor and Bogdan (1984) concluded that canons of research ethics support a noninterventionist perspective in fieldwork. Stake (1994) reminded researchers that they are guests in another environment and should adhere to a strict code of ethics. “The best a researcher can do is to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process and to examine his or her own philosophical orientation vis-à-vis these issues” (Merriam, 1998, p. 219). In the present study, standards of confidentiality and voluntary participation were vigorously maintained. As such, transcripts of interviews were made available only to corresponding participants, at their request or through member checking of data.

Data Analysis

Stake (1995) noted that data analysis does not begin at a particular time; analysis should not be separate from efforts to understand the research context. Data collection and data analysis were dynamic and ongoing. Taped interviews were transcribed following the interviews. An initial coding of each transcription was completed to label themes and group data. Essentially, analyses were conducted to identify, code, and categorize the primary patterns in the data that illustrated key issues relating to the organizational culture of the College. Strauss and Corbin (1990) identified the process of open coding, searching for categories or themes in the data, and axial coding, making connections between categories. Care was taken to examine the indigenous concepts represented by participants, particularly during the open coding phase of analysis. Caution was taken to ensure any researcher bias was not present that would impose meaning on the participants or their articulations (Patton, 1990).

In the process of analyzing data, *initial memos* were written, developing insights into phenomena, topics, or categories. Memos allowed me to step back from the field setting to identify and develop broad analytic themes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). As ideas or themes emerged, research memos became more focused and began to relate data elements to each other. These *integrative memos* clarified and linked analytic themes and categories.

After an initial phase or cycle of data collection, I created a coding scheme to reduce the data to make the data more manageable. More refined coding followed after salient themes had been identified. Themes emerged from the process of constant comparative analyses, initially on an interview-by-interview basis, and then across

interviews. Two strategic ways that researchers construct new meanings from data elements are through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances as a class (Stake, 1995).

The data collected through the interviews were coded and integrated with data coded from written documents and campus observations. The conceptual framework was used as an initial guide for data collection and analysis. Codes were derived from the data (emic codes), but etic codes derived from the literature or conceptual framework were used also (Stake, 1995). Research analyses remained open to looking for alternative patterns in the data (Patton, 1990).

Trustworthiness

Triangulation methods contribute to the internal validity or trustworthiness of qualitative analysis (Patton, 1990). Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation, using a variety of data sources; (b) investigator triangulation, utilizing several different evaluators; (c) theory triangulation, using multiple perspectives to interpret a single situation or event; and (d) methodological triangulation, using multiple methods in the study (i.e. written documents, observations, interviews.) In this study, data triangulation, theory triangulation, and methodological triangulation were implemented. Individuals from multiple levels of the organization (faculty, staff, administrators) and with varying perspectives were interviewed and observed. Analyzing organizational actions from the perspectives of various stakeholders also served as a version of theory triangulation (Patton, 1990). For example, teaching faculty had different perceptions of organizational decisions and decision making than administration or administrative support personnel. In addition, methodological

triangulation occurred through the analysis and interpretation of College documents, interviews with faculty and staff, and observations of artifacts and behavioral interactions on campus. The gathering of data from several distinct sources provides a contrast among the data elements (Robins, 1996).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified four criteria by which qualitative studies should be judged: *credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability*. Robins (1996) addressed ways in which these criteria applied to a case study of organizational culture and change. Credibility refers to a study's ability to demonstrate that the subject was accurately described (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). A comprehensive description of this College's organizational culture was embedded with data derived from the setting in order to increase the study's credibility.

Transferability refers to the ability to demonstrate how one set of findings applies to another context. Although case studies are of a *particularistic* nature, Olson (1982, as cited in Merriam, 1998, pp. 30-31) stated that case studies can examine a specific instance but illuminate a general problem. Olson also asserted that case studies could be used by the reader to draw conclusions, thus increasing potential applicability.

Dependability refers to attempts by the researcher to account for changing conditions in the phenomenon of study and to modify the research design as a result of the researcher's increasing understanding as the study progresses (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). An inductive approach with no predetermined hypotheses allowed for flexibility in modifying the research design as needed.

Confirmability refers to the degree to which the researcher can demonstrate the degree to which the research interpretations are grounded in the data (Lincoln & Guba,

1985). Stake (1995) addressed this issue explicitly as it relates to qualitative studies. “The intent of qualitative researchers to promote a *subjective* research paradigm is a given. Subjectivity is not seen as a failing needing to be eliminated but as an essential element of understanding” (p. 45). Robins (1996) offered that it is the subjective frame of qualitative research that makes possible the thick description and multiple data collection procedures that are seen as strengths of case studies. For qualitative researchers, subjectivity is appropriate; researcher bias is not. Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggested several strategies to control research bias and assist in the neutrality of the research. To increase the confirmability of the research, I searched for negative instances that contradict research findings and recheck data to explore alternative explanations of research interpretations.

Prelude

Midwest County Community College was established in 1922 as the Central City Junior College. The College originally operated under the governance of the Central City School District and was created primarily to serve the local high school students. The College and Central City High School shared space until 1952 when a new building was constructed to house the College’s instructional programs. The College’s official name became Midwest County Community Junior College (later changed to Midwest County Community College and Area Vocational Technical School) in 1966 with a separate Board of Trustees elected by citizens of the county at-large. In 1968, Midwest County Community College became the first institution in the state to operate a combined community college and area vocational-technical school (The President’s Annual Report, 1991).

When asked, “What is the College’s story?,” participants’ responses clustered into several common themes: the origin of the College itself, sharing space with the high school, the importance of the merger with the technical school, presidential longevity, fiscal responsibility, and growth and change at the College. Although the College’s tale starts with a humble origin, the account illustrates the significance of strong leadership and the benefits that come from seizing opportunities.

I begin at the beginning.

I would say the College's story is that a group of [Central] City High School students got together back in 1922 and they were just, you might say, hell bent on getting a community college. And they were extremely influential. They ran a campaign to get it started and they did (Staff Member Jones).

These students began a grass-roots effort to launch a two-year college in the community. The community supported their cause, and Central City Junior College was initiated. The campaign to establish the College was remembered as part of the commencement ceremonies in 1994 when the College recognized outstanding alumni, including a member of the first graduating class of 1924. Her comments are included below:

Sometimes I think about the fact that I had just finished high school in 1922 and there was no junior college. I was amazed at the small group (of high-school) graduates who campaigned door-to-door to get a favorable vote to establish the junior college. The people of [Central] City were very much in favor of it. The vote was four to one in favor of it. (The President’s Annual Report, 1994, p. 8).

Since the College was first housed in the high school’s basement, the moniker “Basement U” was given to the College during this period of “cohabitation” with the school district. Many residents who attended the College at the time still refer to the College by this name.

The College's story is that it used to be Basement University is what we called it. My husband and I went to Basement University in the basement of the high school which was here... I think that's a good story about the basement, and people will refer to it, people of our age, will refer to it, 'Did you go to BU-- Basement University?' (Board Member Stevens).

"Basement University" continues to be a significant recollection to many alumni in the community. Graduates of "BU" have fond memories from being a part of the College before the campus was built.

The people who live in this community, people that are my age that grew up here, many of them attended this college for their college and at that time it was in the basement of the high school building I believe on this property. And they brag about being from "Basement U." That's a big deal around here, being from "Basement U," which says a lot about their tradition of this place. I have a lot of good friends today that will brag about that they went to "Basement U." I have trouble grasping that, but they don't. "Basement U"--they take a lot of pride in it. (Faculty Member Baker).

Just as the relationship with the high school and Basement University holds obvious sentimental value to many people working at the College and living in the community, recalling the merger between the "junior college" and the area vocational technical school also stirred emotion—pride mixed with some early anxiety—, perhaps mirroring typical responses to later changes and innovations at the College. A tension developed between the functions of transfer and technical education. Concern arose over the potential erosion of academic rigor with the integration of the technical-vocational programs.

Another part of the story is that we were the first vocational school and community college to be aligned together and became a community college and an area vocational technical school. That in itself created a lot of uproar. I can remember that we just knew, we were convinced that was going to do away with the academic quality of the College because ...technical things were the auto mechanics and the welders (Board Member Stevens).

Decades later, the merger with the technical school is seen as a positive attribute of the College. Technical education serves a vital role at Midwest Community College, and employees' comments reflect the value of both technical education and transfer education.

I think our story is how we've combined a transfer curriculum with a technical curriculum to offer something, because to me that's two segments of our population. Not everybody can weld and be a draftsman and get their hands dirty underneath the hood of a car. And not everybody is cut out to transfer. So, for more than thirty-five years now, we've offered both to students, which I think has been valuable (Staff Member Jones).

Equally impressive was the recognition and understanding that change has been an essential component in the College's success throughout its history. The College has adapted to the community's changing needs and the region it serves.

I think that we filled a need in the community for about 80 years. We have changed with times going clear back when we were the old Central City Junior College and then we became the Midwest County Community Junior College. Then we added the AVTS and then, after we added the AVTS, we moved the programs to credit-hour basis and associate degree programs, on through all the changes that have taken place over the years. We have basically adjusted and we've done that by remaining with a stable employment base and staff. ... We've never lost sight of where we wanted to go. We've made a lot of changes, a lot of adjustments. I think that's the key--that we've adjusted to our markets whether it's in the activities or whether it's, you know, in the education field, instructionally (Administrator White).

An appreciation for the balance between tradition and innovation was apparent early in the interviewing process. Remembering the College's roots and history has created school pride and a respect for the traditions that continue. A focus on the future has kept the College moving forward. Envisioning upcoming opportunities has become a "new" tradition in itself.

My sense is that, since I've been here, we value tradition; we value the traditions that have been developed during those 80 years. But we're also forward thinkers too; our administrative team...we want to preserve our tradition, but we don't want to let tradition keep us from advancing. ...We're proud of our history. We're proud that we were the first community college in the state to combine vocational education with academic. (Staff Member Jones).

The College has only had three presidents since opening in 1922. This accomplishment was noted by several employees who stated this fact with a sense of satisfaction and approval. "We've only had three presidents, so there's quite a history there. The community and the campus have really supported their presidents over the years." (Administrator Hansen). Another staff member proudly proclaimed, "The traditions that are most valued here are excellence of delivery in education, the fact that we've had very few leaders, that we have a lot of longevity in our leaders, and that we always practice fiscal restraint, and are good stewards" (Staff Member Parker).

The fiscal restraint or fiscal responsibility shown by the College over the years was a common point of pride expressed by faculty, staff, and administrators. Many employees appreciate the College's solid financial position and credit former administrators for leaving the College in good stead.

We are a very solvent, viable institution. I don't want to say we have deep pockets, but we certainly have a strong financial foundation because of the position the previous presidents and the previous business managers have done through their tenure to put us where we're at (Staff Member Henderson).

The hesitation or resistance to spend money in previous years is generally seen now as a positive contributor to the College's welfare. The College has never experience extreme financial hardship, and, as a result, is better able to operate today.

We had a different business officer at the time who was very close-vested with the money. There were times when we didn't spend a lot of money. A lot of the employees probably thought, 'Why?' But, we never ever have been in fiscal disarray. It's always been a pretty tight ship. And I think we're better for that today (Staff Member Jones).

The enrollment growth the College has experienced over the last 15-20 years is also a significant aspect of the College's story. The College's enrollment growth has coincided with the administrative decision to implement Total Quality Management (TQM) strategies (later termed Continuous Quality Improvement) at the College. The College has received national attention and recognition, both for its impressive growth for a rural community college and for its implementation of TQM.

I think it's the story of tremendous success. It's considered very strong in the community by community members. It's considered a model of excellence for TQM. ...I know we're considered a good model for rural management and rural growth. The growth of the College speaks for itself. We just, by leaps and bounds are growing, just tremendous amounts. I really thought it would plateau and level off in the mid-90's, and it's just continued to grow and grow and grow and grow. It's just unbelievable to me. And I think that really speaks for itself as an important story, important legacy (Staff Member Parker).

Many at the College take great pride in what the College has become and the reputation that has resulted due the College's growth, its traditions of quality and innovation, and its adoption of TQM.

I think if I were to make one statement about what is the College's story is that it grew from a little operation that was only an extension of high school to this fantastic facility that is known all over the state [and region] as one of the finest community colleges and technical schools in the area (Board Member Stevens).

The College's history is an important consideration in a case study on organizational change and organizational culture. The College's co-location with the high school, presidential longevity, and pattern of fiscal restraint create a context for the organizational changes that occurred with a new president. The College's tradition of

excellence coupled with enrollment growth helped facilitate acceptance of TQM by College employees.

Chapter 4 of this dissertation chronicles the College's implementation of continuous quality improvement strategies and the reciprocal affects on the College's organizational culture. The chapter begins with an exploration of the organizational culture before the current president and then moves into the transition of viewpoints with the incoming president. Challenges that faced the College in the late 1980s are also documented. The results section details the College's venture into Total Quality Management and describes the changes in leadership styles required to successfully implement TQM at Midwest. Remnants of the old culture are also identified. Chapter 4 continues by outlining the strategies used to implement change at the College and then reports the by-products of the change. The chapter recounts the leadership's influence of organizational culture, and highlights the reciprocity between continuous quality improvement and organizational culture.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The Culture Before the Current President

Any time an organization replaces its CEO, change is expected. To understand the change process that evolves with a presidential transition, it is necessary to comprehend the organization's culture before the transition occurred. Midwest County Community College has had three presidents since it opened. I explored the presidential transition involving the second and third College presidents, Dr. Fredricks and Dr. Winters, respectively. It is important to understand the perceptions and memories held by current and former employees regarding the past president in order to create (or re-create) the organizational context before the new president arrived.

Dr. Fredricks was remembered and portrayed as a strong man--a powerful leader in the sense that he held deep-seated beliefs about how the College should be managed. From the accounts I was given, Dr. Fredricks operated the College in a very efficient, effective manner. However, he was not likely to engage the College in activities which expanded the College's mission.

Before Winters was Fredricks, and Fredricks was tremendous. He helped [the College] grow tremendously, helped it organize itself. But, we always talked about [the College] being the greatest secret in [the region.] No one knew about [the College.] No one knew anything about it. Fredricks did a wonderful job, but he ...didn't expand the College. He had a chance to go into different areas. He had a chance to go into [a metropolitan area,] as they are now, and he didn't take that opportunity. ...He built a tremendous base but he was not entrepreneurial... Fredricks built a really loyal, a really well organized faculty, staff, administration, really a well functioning school (Faculty Member Cook).

Several employees recalled the ways in which President Fredricks acted conservatively in operating the College. He had the opportunity to grow the College by seeking new markets; he chose not to make that decision. He was credited for building a well-functioning institution with a solid base that included financial resources and human resources. Fiscal responsibility was mentioned repeatedly as an asset and strength of the former president, but this attribute was often paired with his propensity for not taking risks. The president's fiscal restraint was lauded, but this characteristic was frequently used as the reason he did not expand the College's activities. President Fredricks' lack of "entrepreneurial spirit" was mentioned repeatedly. "We had had the same president since, well I believe like it was like '68 when Fredricks was here. And he was a wonderful person. But it didn't seem like we, I mean we just grew as we needed" (Staff Member Anderson).

Some employees' portrayed the College during this time period as a much smaller College in its vision and service to students. No centralized computer database tracked students through the admission process. Recruiting was not a strong focus of the College; student scholarships were not identified easily.

When I came in [date removed] we were just basically a pretty not very aggressive innovative organization...we had no on line computer, we had no recruiters even. We had no idea who was coming to the College or why they were coming. We had no idea how many scholarships were out. We had one part-time recruiter who was in a closet downstairs in the basement.the philosophy was just keep it tight knit, keep it close to the vest and just basically, not do anything out of the ordinary or do anything do develop any new programs or to try to serve any more new student populations. It was just 'keep it right here'--close knit. And so, the enrollment at that time was about 600 FTE I think when I came. And there was just not a whole lot going on (President Winters).

President Fredricks was traditional and conventional in running the College. He did not develop any new programs or actively market to new students.

President Fredricks' personal health during the mid 1980s contributed to some organizational stagnation. During the president's last years in office, it was perceived that his health interfered with his leading the College.

As far as working conditions goes, '85, '86, '87 were kind of down years here. Our president...was getting close to retirement and just wasn't as energetic as he was when I came in '75. And, so the last couple of years...our former president had health problems. And everything was kind of a status quo. We were here, we worked, we did our job, and we carried on day by day. So, we kind of lost our leadership in that '85 to '87 time period (Staff Member Foster).

Staff Member Foster refers to a lack of progress being made at the College during the middle 1980s and references a status quo and a loss of leadership characterized in comments made by other employees I interviewed. During that time, the College's daily operation was the primary concern. The College did not progress during these years. Real concern was expressed regarding the lack of progress and direction. Comments from employees indicate that, as a result, the College was perhaps primed for something (or someone) different.

In remembering the past president, employees also discussed his decision-making and leadership style. Participants noted that he was an autocratic leader. Rather than solicit regular input from front-line employees to help make decisions, he "ruled" from his position atop the organization.

Fredricks was a much different president. I think he was more autocratic and openly autocratic. ...he wouldn't have claimed to be dictator, but he would have been very proud of his position and his authority to rule. And, beginning in the early '80's his health and personal problems had deteriorated his leadership somewhat, so his last few years here I don't think were nearly as boisterous as his previous ones. He was very much a top down leader (Staff Member Parker.)

Employees were not encouraged to contribute their ideas; in fact, they were discouraged from sharing new ideas. Employees were expected to perform their duties as assigned and directed without question or challenge.

In comparison to today, I think it was a lot more structured, a lot more regimented than it is right now. I think there was almost a fear among employees...they weren't as open of sharing new thoughts and ideas. They were to do their job as directed. And there wasn't a lot of room to expand your any new ideas (Staff Member Thompson.)

One faculty member reminded me, however, that if such a conservative, hierarchical culture was in place (and it appears that it indeed was,) it became embedded over time. With the College having had only two presidents at this point, it is important to note that the administrative influence would have been transmitted through several deans as well.

The employees at this College felt that they did not have the authority to bring about any improvement, any changes without going through administration. And not just one administrator, but in some significant depth. ...I think it comes about from the historical position that administrators in the past had. I wasn't here in prior administrations, but some of the stories that I hear about prior administrators would say, yeah, 'You'd better not change anything.' And that, once that's embedded fairly deep it doesn't come out with just a few words. And you can sit there and tell people, but they don't necessarily buy into it with those words (Faculty Member Baker).

Such a structure is not created quickly; it develops over years. Conversely, a new culture would take time to develop as well. A new president could cause a cultural shift; that is precisely what happened.

A Transition of Viewpoints With the Incoming President

President Winters arrived and brought new ideas, new energy, and a focus on growth and expansion. The contrast between the two presidents was noticeable in the viewpoints and perspectives faculty and staff shared with me.

I came on board in January of '88, and that was the transition period from an old established President who had been here 100 years, I suppose. And the existence of the College was status quo, don't rock the ship, [the president was getting ready to retire]...and serving out his time. [He] did a very admirable job and left in a prestigious fashion. Here come the new kid on the block, [the current president,] and things started rocking and rolling. The attitude that existed was thrown out the window. The new attitude of growth, expansion, enrollment...became the theme of that period. And, in fact, still is as we speak today. But, it certainly was a transition from one philosophical view to another philosophical view (Staff Member Thompson).

Expanding faculty thinking was one of the new president's top priorities. He and his administration challenged the faculty to look beyond their traditional teaching role and to explore new opportunities. Faculty now were encouraged to become involved in recruiting and program development, whereas these activities has not been emphasized under President Fredricks. The focus on an expanded role for faculty signaled that expectations were being raised and that changes were in store for the College.

We really worked hard at changing the role of a faculty member from one of just going into that classroom doing their thing to a multi-faceted role that you're called to be a part of making this institution better in a variety of ways, whether it's recruiting or program development or involvement in committees on campus (President Winters).

Faculty attitudes regarding the College's operations were changed by this new leadership. "It was making this transition from the traditional transfer college to one of broadening your horizons and looking at new things and new ways you can do things" (Faculty Member Cook).

I stated earlier that the College combined its academic curriculum with vocational-technical training in 1968. Yet, as Faculty Member Cook recounted the period of the late 1980s, reference was made to the "beginning" of a more comprehensive college focus (20 years later.) This perspective offers evidence of both a narrower mission present at the College under President Fredricks and the perceived drastic change

that occurred with President Winters. President Fredricks ran the College in a more traditional manner. Transfer education was separate and distinct from technical education. Faculty taught their courses, but they were not expected to recruit or to be held accountable for program growth and development. The College did not reach out to the community or to business and industry.

Faculty remembered the ways their roles changed with President Winters and how different the expectations were from what they were accustomed. Recruiting became an important and valued activity. Faculty were expected to take a more active role in growing the College by being involved in the community and making recruiting visits to area high schools. The administration also began to solicit ideas from the faculty.

[We were encouraged] to grow, to come up with new ideas. 'If you've got an idea, we want to know about it.' We were constantly challenged to go out and recruit, bringing in students. If you needed to take off a day, they were supportive of that, to go out and talk to high schools (Faculty Member Olson).

While President Fredricks was portrayed as being more directive regarding faculty's daily activities, President Winters encouraged innovation from within the organization. Faculty and staff were supported as they implemented their new ideas. "Dr. Winters and Dr. Riley (the chief academic officer) would let you try your wings. They would let you fly as much as you thought you could fly within reason, within the parameters of the community college" (Faculty Member Cook).

When I asked what College traditions remained from the late 1980s, faculty and staff recalled the empowerment they received from the administration. Faculty's newfound ability to engage in new activities led to an increasing desire to improve the College. I was impressed by the frequency with which I heard faculty speak of continuous improvement.

I would say the tradition of being entrepreneurial and the tradition of giving people a chance on campus to, again, spread their wings and try new things and look at their particular areas differently and seeing how they can improve those areas, seeing how they can improve the College through adjusting those areas if necessary is still there (Faculty Member Cook).

Others connected the emphasis on innovation to a focus on the community and business and industry. These College stakeholders previously had not received much attention until President Winters arrived. Responding to business and industry would, over time, become an integral function of the College.

I think [the College is] tradition minded in the tradition of excellence. And, I think, the tradition is being innovative and cutting edge. It seems almost contradictory, but it seems to me like that's the tradition is... 'Let's not be afraid to try something new and grow and respond to the needs of the community and business' (Staff Member Smith).

This philosophical change occurred not only with a new president; it was supported by a new chief academic officer as well. The president and the chief academic officer fed off each other's energy and complemented each other very well. Both men recently had finished doctoral programs, and they had new ideas they wished to implement. They led the charge to grow the College.

He [Winters] was a young president, coming in here new. And Riley [the chief academic officer] was just right out of his PhD. ...they hit it off very well. They both enjoyed each other; they enjoyed what they were doing. It was new to both of them. I think that they really set a pace when [Winters] kind of hit the ground here; that has carried on. A lot of it is contagious (Faculty Member Edwards).

The new president brought new expectations to the College. The College and its employees were beginning to lay a foundation for change. Faculty was expected to assist in the growth and development of the College, and the College was beginning to respond to the needs of the community.

Challenges: Late 1980s

In order to understand the changes that have taken place at the College (and to understand how far the College has come in the last 20 years,) it is important to know what challenges the new president faced when he arrived. Three areas of concern were reiterated in participants' interviews: the lack of student services, the need to integrate technical education into the College, and the ability to respond to business and industry.

Increasing Student Services and Integrating Technical Education

A reoccurring theme relating to this leadership transition involved the development of student services across campus. Prior to the late 1980s, the student services offered by the College were minimal. "There were no student services at all to speak of [in the late 1980s.] There was not anything in terms of health services or student activities or anybody really overseeing any kind of student services at all" (President Winters). In a short time, the emphasis on student services would change drastically. The College worked to address the students' social concerns as well as their academic issues. One staff member contrasted the 1980s student services focus with that which exists today:

I think we're just much, much, much more aware, and perhaps this is just a dynamic of community colleges nation wide anyway, but much more aware of student services, specific academic as well as social needs that students have and responding to those. All of that is very much a part of the culture of being here (Staff Member Parker).

To make student services a priority, the College divided its student service functions. The Vice President of Student Services position was split into two positions: a Dean of Student Living and a Dean of Student Learning. These positions reported to the Vice

President of Student and Academic Affairs. The Deans' titles conceptualized the College's approach to student services.

Student life is now separated. It used to be that student affairs was everything having to do students. And now there's definitely academic life and then there's the student support services. ...so the dorm life and the health and mental health areas and student activities are all under another umbrella (Staff Member Thompson).

Integrating technical programs and traditional transfer programs also presented a challenge during this time period. The technical faculty and the general education faculty were at odds over course scheduling and program offerings; the College needed to bring these two factions together to support new initiatives.

The other problem that we had was that the technical faculty, because this college was an area vocational technical school and a community college. They merged under the laws...so they could get two-for-one funding; they merged to become both a community college and a technical college. But, the College was split and the technical college was doing their own thing and the academic side was doing their own thing. In fact, on the technical side, the way they were scheduling there was no way any student could get their degree because they were scheduling against each other. There was no way they could get the general education requirements they needed for the Associate of Applied Science. ...they would have to take three or more years to get through it because ...the way they had their classes scheduled. And there was a real split and really distrust between really the two factions (Administrator Hansen).

The College and the technical school merger occurred in 1968, yet the academic and technical programs were not working toward common goals in the late 1980s. Although the pieces were in place to operate a comprehensive community college, the College had not functioned in that manner.

Responding to Business and Industry

A significant challenge that would later help shape the entire college culture revolved around the College's ability to respond to the business and industry community. Central County continued to be blessed with industrial businesses. "[The College] is in an

area of [the state] that... it's like the third or fourth highest light industry county or area in the state.... there are several different light industries out there' (Faculty Member Cook.) This industrial concentration provided the College an opportunity to reach out to these businesses, because few training partnerships had been developed. "The good thing...the county had when I came was it was diversified with business and industry. But absolutely nothing had been done with the educational community blending with the business manufacturing community" (President Winters).

Business partnerships and business training soon became an urgent priority as the state economy turned bleak. The community suffered a plant closing that created a domino effect with other closings and business downsizings. The College stepped in to help.

[During the late 1980s] I think that was about the time we'd had some major layoffs. We have had a packing plant close, [a manufacturing company] and [a refinery.] All through that time period we had hundreds of people laid off. And the way the College responded to that was with job fairs and training. And the College has always been, at least with Dr. Winters, very involved in local agreements and partnerships and helping with economic development (Administrator Hansen).

The economic impact of these plants closing was felt throughout the area. When the refinery closed, more than 180 people were unemployed. The state hospital and training school relocated, laying off 1,000 people. It would take some time for the economy to recover.

It was a growing area and then, all of a sudden, some industrial contractions that kind of created some difficult situations for folks. County evaluation, for instance, was up in the \$180 million range in the mid to late '80's. And when I came we were in the \$150 million range. And we were about four more, five more years after I got here getting back to the level that they were at the highest peak (Administrator Payne).

The business and industry closings led to retraining programs and job fairs, activities that the College had not focused on prior to this time. The downturn in the economic cycle brought retraining to the forefront. A new demand was created to which the College responded.

With all the layoffs and business and industry closures that occurred at that time I think a priority for the College was workforce training. And we have a workforce development center that opened a few years ago. But, really, we were not doing a lot of that type of training years and years ago. The economy kind of made that a priority for us ... We stepped in pretty quickly with a retraining programs. I think we had about 20 to 25 people, former employees of [the refinery,] go through our machine tool technology program. So responding to area business and industry needs was, and still is, a challenge (Staff Member Jones).

The College instituted a division of business and industry with a full-time director and expanded its community role. Retraining programs and industry-specific offerings in computer software and customer services skills launched the College's endeavor into business skills training.

The opportunities were tremendous I felt like for the community college at that point in time. I just felt like the economic situation, the economic development situation was such that community colleges could reach out and be a true comprehensive community college (Faculty Member Cook).

The desire to become a comprehensive community college was a frequent refrain as faculty and staff recalled the College's initial involvement with business and industry. A *comprehensive* community college is a community college whose curricular functions include academic transfer, vocational-technical education, continuing education, remedial education, and community service (Cohen & Brawer, 1996). Due to the need to become involved in economic development, the College was moving beyond the roles of technical and transfer education.

The College was in a position to assist business and industry. The economic downturn in the College's service area made it necessary for the College to step outside its traditional view of what a community college was. In doing so, the College would not only meet its community's needs, it would become a better, stronger institution.

The College Ventures Into Total Quality Management

As it began working much more intensely with business and industry, the College received several requests for specific training needs relating to Total Quality Management (TQM). (The reader should refer to Chapter 2 of this dissertation for a more detailed explanation of TQM. For most purposes, the terms Total Quality Management and Continuous Quality Improvement can be interchanged without affecting the general meaning of the term. Such is the case in this discussion.) Midwest County Community College was asked to develop training workshops and seminars in TQM. Prior to this point, the College had no exposure to or experience with the principles of TQM.

In that time frame of the late '80's, [an electric company] ...and [a rubber plant] were very interested in quality management....[The electric company] asked us to begin to look at that and develop some courses in that area. As we developed the individual courses then [the company] wanted another course and another course and by the time we were through [the company] wanted a program....We started working with [the rubber plant.] We started working with several companies around there on the quality management side (Faculty Member Cook).

Businesses asked for training in areas of TQM that were initially foreign to the College. Specific training involving detailed aspects of TQM was needed for the College staff who would train business and industry. The College looked to other institutions that had TQM experience in this arena and received advice and training from Forest Hills Technical College in Wisconsin.

They [businesses] asked us then to set up a quality management program and degree programs--customer service, on data, on establishing quality cultures, statistical, all those things that go along with quality management. And we knew nothing about it. So then we got into it... Forest Hills Technical College in Appleton was really big in it and been it some time. We started hooking up with them, made trips up there and looked at what they were doing (President Winters).

Dr. Schmitt, former president of Forest Hills Technical College came to the campus in August 1992 to work with faculty and staff. Dr. Schmitt returned in March 1993 to conduct quality training workshops for the Board of Trustees and the administration. Topics that initially were discussed included an overview of the tenets of TQM, developing the steps to a quality process, team training, using data, building the TQM culture, and identifying TQM leaders (The President's Report, 1992-93).

The administration engaged the help and support of two faculty members at Midwest County Community College who were interested in learning more about TQM; these two faculty developed the curriculum for the courses and program. As these employees (and the College staff) became more familiar with quality principles and processes, they soon realized that the College itself needed to implement TQM. Businesses requesting TQM training expected the College to be using these principles on their own campus, thus lending credibility to the training the College provided.

We were approached by some companies to do some training for them. And we thought, 'How can we train and do these things if we aren't experiencing some of that ourselves?' So, that's when we ...started training our people to do training and then ...become a center for that (Administrator White).

Beginning to incorporate TQM into the College's operation also created some political value for the College as businesses often inquired about the College's success using TQM. "And then [industry] people...would say, 'Well, that's a wonderful program. How are you using this in the College?'" (Faculty Member Cook).

Although the College first adopted TQM for increased credibility with the business community, TQM created opportunities within the College itself, producing some leverage as an organizational change strategy. TQM would eventually provide a mechanism that would be used to increase involvement and participation among faculty and staff, thereby reducing hierarchical decision making.

It really was seeing it in action with the businesses that we were working with and saying, 'This is a model.' And, like it or not, we are running a business here. And I know everybody on the faculty hates to hear anybody say that. And I get lambasted quite regularly for saying that we're running a business. But we are running a business. And it is a business model and it works. And, Dr. Winters was really looking for a way to get the organization more involved in the decision making. And this was a natural fit (Administrator Payne).

Administrator Payne's comments mirror the beliefs of others in regard to the president's motivation for adopting TQM. TQM offered a vehicle for organizational change. "I just think he saw it as a means to move the institution forward, and he's just an extremely visionary man. ...I always think he's ahead of his time. And, in this particular thing he really was" (Administrator Waters). TQM also provided a way to promote positive working relationships within the College. As noted earlier, divisiveness was present among the technical and general education faculty. "I think that's what Dr. Winters probably saw was that [TQM] was a tremendous opportunity to bring people in and assist in the growth of what potential could be. He does believe in his people" (Staff member Thompson).

Creation of a Quality Council

It is easy to say that the College would engage in quality principles and practices but something quite different to follow through with that intention. Carrying out the initiative would present some challenges as well as opportunities to shift the

organizational culture. Midwest County Community College patterned itself after Forest Hills Technical College as it began to develop a quality framework by implementing a Quality Council. The Quality Council's primary function was to act as a "sounding board" for new ideas brought forth by faculty and staff. The Quality Council would review improvement proposals and provide suggestions; if an idea had sufficient merit, the proposal would be forwarded to the Administrative Council (the president's senior administrative team) with a recommendation for implementation. The Administrative Council included the president, the chief academic officer, the chief financial officer, the chief student officer, the athletic director, and the director of endowment.

We copied ourselves after Forest Hills Technical College in Wisconsin. And we went up there and visited them ...and had them come down. They trained us. ...we did training of the trainer and the cultural environment and all that with Forest Hills. And from everything we looked at it looked like that we should have a Quality Council. And so we ultimately established a Quality Council that ultimately made recommendations to the Administrative Council. And anybody in the organization that had any idea about how to make the institution better could submit those ideas to the Quality Council. ...we made all kinds of changes in programs and ideas about how to improve the College (President Winters).

The Quality Council was one administrative attempt to involve the campus by promoting shared governance and collective decision making. Such change did not happen quickly, however. Because the original Quality Council was administratively heavy, the faculty felt they did not have a real voice. Slowly, though, faculty and staff perceived they had significant input into the decisions made by the Quality Council. Over time the Quality Council implemented enough proposals that change began to occur at the "grass roots" level. Faculty and staff were bolstered by the tangible results that their ideas produced.

The internal structure, at that time, was Quality Council which, in the early part of the mid '90's, consisted of mostly administration. But, towards the end of the '90's it became less and less administrators and more diversified among all staff members and faculty, so that a lot of different people had a voice. ...issues for improvement were brought to Quality Council and then went up to the administration for decision and then back to Quality Council for implementation. (Staff Member Parker).

The Quality Council was an important development in implementing TQM. The Quality Council signaled a philosophical shift in the College's internal governance.

If you can improve yourself and somebody's got an idea about how to do that then you ought to do it. And if you had a whole organization thinking that way instead of just the President or the administrative team, it seem to me you'd be infinitely better off (Administrator Brown).

The Council became a credible structure that faculty and staff used to present ideas. The Quality Council symbolized the administration's recognition that TQM required faculty and staff involvement.

The Beginning of Quality Teams

The Quality Council allowed for quality teams to form on an ad-hoc basis to address issues and concerns. It was common for a quality team to be initiated to address an improvement proposal. A Quality Council member served as liaison between each team and the Quality Council. The College created a recognition program designed to showcase and highlight the best ideas presented to the Quality Council. The College administration made a conscious effort to reward quality projects brought forward by faculty and staff. "People were encouraged that if there were ideas to come forward; there were even initiatives that would be rewarded and recognized. There were plaques given for teams that formed and started initiatives" (Staff Member Thompson). The Quality Council established procedures for idea submission.

The basic process was if someone saw an area that needed to be worked on they would get together a team and tackle it. They'd come up with a plan, and they'd submit it to the Quality Council. Then they (the Quality Council) would give them feedback. There was a facilitator that would work with the team too. Then they would go in and make a proposal to the administration as far as 'Here's the problem. Here's what we think we should do about it.' Depending on the funding and the validity of it, they (the Administrative Council) would approve it or send them back to the drawing board. And then every year at in-service they gave awards for the best improvement plans. And some of them... got a plaque, and there was cash attached to some of them I think (Staff Member Smith).

However, over time, this recognition process was stopped. "That's kind of fizzled over the years so that everything is done now more by structural committees" (Staff Member Smith). Many of the projects that once would have been addressed by a quality team have recently been referred to standing committees within the organization's governance structure. While this change provides some evidence that the concept of quality teams has become institutionalized, the lack of this recognition program for quality teams has not gone unnoticed.

We haven't done that for several years. That was here a few years and then fizzled...I thought the idea that anyone in the institution could help make change was really, really a great idea and really brought about some good things (Staff Member Smith).

When asked why the recognition was discontinued, this same staff member responded:

It seems like any recognition like that that we've had on campus has pretty much been considered not consistent with the quality philosophy...that we honor everybody and recognize everyone's contributions. Which I don't think is so wonderful. I think people need recognition and I like to see people recognized (Staff Member Smith).

Several faculty and staff viewed quality teams as a positive directional change. Quality teams offered a specific procedure to handle an issue or a concern. "The opportunities would be that if there was something that you didn't like the way it was

going or the way process was, you had the opportunity to form a team to address those directly” (Faculty Member Robinson).

The whole quality improvement concept proved to be difficult for many to embrace, however. The initial design requiring projects to be submitted to the Quality Council may have hindered some from taking initiative. Some ideas may not have been brought forward due to the “public” scrutiny inherent in the submission process the Quality Council devised.

If you wanted to make a change in the institution we were encouraged to create teams, create ideas and present them to the total quality team, which involved a variety of people in the institution. But we were encouraged to conceptualize those ideas and then get on board. So I think that a lot of those ideas tend to come from big thinker people (Staff Member Parker).

In other cases, conservative or traditional administrative styles made change complicated. Some administrators had difficulty allowing the Quality Council to be involved in recommending improvement. Even though the initial quality improvement process required Administrative Council approval, the Quality Council inherently changed the governance of the College; for some administrators, it reduced their decision-making authority.

There was some frustration ...because there were administrators who were, ‘I make the decisions, and this is the way it's going to be’ type. And, not that they were bad decisions. ...But that's just the way they were used to doing it. They were behind this and bringing it in. But, it's one thing to say ‘Let's do this,’ and another one to relinquish control (Faculty Member Olson).

Even the President had to learn to conduct business differently. TQM was creating front-line participation in decision making. Employee involvement in the College’s governance was a foreign concept for many leaders in the 1980s. President Winters had to integrate TQM with the style of leadership he had previously practiced.

[TQM provided] an opportunity to try to embrace a different management style. We had the opportunity to make it more of a ground-up type of management in that we were trying to get more employees involved and let everybody have a voice. So, that was ...a drastic change to the old management style. Which I think Dr. Winters would probably admit to you when he first became president in the late '80's, ...he ruled or managed. 'It's going to be my way or no way.' So, I think that the administration adopting a different management style gave employees a great opportunity to have a voice. (Staff Member Jones).

The Quality Council and quality improvement processes contributed to the president's changed leadership style. "In the Administrative Council I think he was more the leader and you-make-it-accountable-to-me type of person, whereas in the Quality Council it was more of a team approach" (Staff Member Smith.) In essence, TQM and a quality framework necessitated a leadership adjustment and provided an opportunity for President Winters to embrace a new leadership philosophy, one which included all College employees.

Quality Training

For TQM to take root across the campus, faculty and staff had to become more familiar with quality principles and processes. Internal TQM training was needed. The administration made a concerted effort to inform employees about TQM by requiring training for all faculty and staff. "Initially training was required. Everyone went through training initially and then new faculty and new staff when they would come in would have a training session also, to go through quality training principles" (Faculty Member Robinson). This initial new employee education was intense. "Each staff person that was hired received a two-day quick course on what TQM was and how we could participate in it" (Staff Member Parker). New employee training covered several aspects of TQM. Quality teams were emphasized.

We were made aware of the history of the movement, some of its shortcomings and failures and ...how it sort of was interfacing here. And we were encouraged to develop teams, think of the system as a team process, and that a lot of this was already happening (Staff Member Parker.)

TQM was emphasized continually during the early 1990s through inservices and departmental meetings. "Back in those early years we were bombarded...with workshops, seminars, videos, departmental meetings. And everything was based around the theme of TQM." (Staff Member Henderson). After the initial instructional sessions were complete, TQM training continued regularly. TQM speakers were brought in to complement the training conducted by the College's faculty. Again, the development of quality teams was reinforced.

We received several ...in-service trainings and workshops. We were encouraged to go to other workshops or training sessions that were held around. People were brought in that had used it in business and in education and taught us what to do and what to expect. We were encouraged to have quality improvement teams where we would have initiatives. Anything that we felt like we wanted to work on we would form a team and present it. And we had a lot of success with that (Faculty Member Olson).

The message delivered during these TQM tutorials clearly communicated the administration's attempt to culturally embedding TQM. The training strengthened continuous improvement concepts, specifically as it related to service to students and other College stakeholders.

Just the communication that comes from administration to the institution when we're all together in in-services or in e-mail or whatever. You truly are being trained or influenced to think in the way of what we can continually do to serve our students, what can we continually do to serve our stakeholders better. So, I think that those are definitely things that are being threaded across the institution (Staff Member Thompson).

The creation of a Quality Council, the development of quality teams, and the increased communication as a result of quality training really solidified the foundation for

TQM at Midwest. Looking back, while improvements could have been made to the processes, the overall impact of these strategies greatly influenced attitudes toward TQM.

Being Perceived As a “Quality” Institution

Having adopted “quality” strategies and techniques, the College set out to prove its worth. The administration wanted to assess its TQM success relative to educational institutions and business organizations across the state.

[We were] getting real serious in the mid ‘90’s about not only implementing TQM but testing ourselves by participating in [the state] Award for Excellence. And I think 1996 was the first year that we actually submitted a report to the [state] Award for Excellence applying for their award. I know we did that ‘96, ‘97, ‘98, ‘99 and 2000 (Administrator Payne).

The College spent considerable time and effort completing and presenting “quality” applications; the College soon was recognized as a leading TQM institution. This recognition was important to many people at Midwest, especially those who had worked so hard to earn it.

The College won lots of awards during that time for their work with Quality Improvement. And [the president] was recognized several times. The College was and still is recognized for leadership in those areas. It was to me and to others that are pretty interested in [TQM], a really, really exciting time (Administrator Hansen).

The College’s recognized success made many faculty, staff, and administration proud. “We were winning awards from the state and all kinds of things. And I think people were pretty proud of that” (Administrator Hansen). Others, however, were skeptical; they doubted whether the institution truly was practicing Total Quality Management. A few employees I interviewed believed that the administration was more concerned with a quality appearance than actually adopting the TQM principles. “At this particular time I think the priority was to give, whether we truly did or not, the perception

that we're involved in the quality principles, we were a quality institution and relied on teamwork" (Faculty Member Robinson). While the motivation behind seeking the awards may have been questioned, the distinctions bestowed on the College proved to be meaningful for some. "I think just being perceived as a quality institution is important to a lot of people. And I think, for the most part we are. When we go to various conferences, [Midwest County Community College] tends to stand out" (Administrator Meyers).

Campus Reaction to the Quality Movement

Midwest County Community College's efforts to implement TQM were met with a variety of reactions. Employee reactions were varied concerning their own personal opinions of TQM and its acceptance across the campus. Some employees thought it had a positive impact on the College; others did not.

I believe firmly that it was a mixed bag. I think there was a certain percentage that felt like it was common sense and that it was a waste of time, a lot of busy work, 'I don't have time for this' type of thing. But I think there was also a certain percentage that really saw the value in it and really was pleased, to know that, 'I do have a voice and what I say, my opinion counts.' And so, I think, it was a mixed reaction (Staff Member Jones).

Several employees noted the difference in ownership among faculty, staff, and administrators. The administration and many staff members aligned themselves with TQM concepts rather quickly. Faculty as a group was not as likely to accept the changes that TQM brought to the College. For faculty, the TQM adoption would require more time and more evidence of its potential impact.

I will say most of the people in administration, the employees at the College that were not faculty, were nearly all very excited about trying to move more toward this total quality management philosophy. ...I would say initially half of the instructors wanted to wait to be shown, a little reluctant, not too anxious to change. It was interesting to me that the ability to have people moving in this direction was much easier outside the instructional area than in the instructional area (Faculty Member Robinson).

Faculty recognized their own resistance to change. The primary concerns from faculty revolved around the time spent in meetings; more time in meetings meant less time to prepare for teaching. Many faculty were hesitant to commit to TQM until they saw direct benefits.

I think the one problem at the beginning was that we seemed to be attending a lot of meetings and what we wanted to do was to prepare for our classes and just teach. It wasn't until people could see that there was a payoff that was going to really help our situation--that we were going to get a real reward from some of these things. I think the meetings toned down after the initial starting up of this new concept, which helped once everybody kind of understood better (Faculty Member Olson).

Several explanations and justifications were offered regarding the acceptance of the quality concepts. Some stated that TQM's origins made faculty hesitant. Realizing TQM's business roots were not the same as those in education caused several faculty to dismiss its utility on a college campus. "I think there was a certain group of people that really bought into it. But, I think that there was certainly a lot of faculty that never really embraced the TQM concept because it was more of a business model" (Administrator Waters). Faculty recalled how different this approach was compared to what they had experienced previously. In addition, many people didn't understand the purpose and function of TQM. The lack of understanding, along with some typical anxiety toward change, slowed TQM's implementation. "I don't really mean that to say that people were anti-change, they just didn't understand it. None of us understood it. None of us knew where it would lead" (Faculty Member Cook).

Positive attitudes toward TQM were hindered because of the difficulties inherent in providing relevant training to a variety of employee classifications. Employees' skills, abilities, knowledge, and attitudes vary considerably. Midwest County Community

College's employees, like others in higher education, have such a range of talents and opinions that it is difficult to make available meaningful training at all levels of the organization. Everyone does not comprehend the language, vocabulary, and ideas to the same degree.

When you're trying to get training or ideas, people want to have it be meaningful to them personally. Because we all are a huge diversity of people with different backgrounds, you have to look at it from every level of the organization as well as educational background. If anything, we might make a false assumption, assuming that everyone's at one level. We start from that level and start training for that point of reference. Yet, some people that may not be as educated in the realm of even management concepts or change concepts or may not understand. They want to be spoon fed to start with so that they don't feel ignorant (Staff Member Thompson).

Other impediments to TQM's large-scale adoption related to the readiness of employees to listen to the TQM message and to their capacity to absorb the information without becoming overwhelmed. TQM involves many theoretical concepts, making it arduous for some to apply the concepts.

It was, in its initial stages, so theoretical that people couldn't grasp it. I think it was difficult for people to understand exactly what the intent was. There was resentment for being forced to go to classes and sitting through inservice where the speakers were focused on that. Or hearing a fellow faculty person talk about TQM and how the institution was structured. A lot of that stuff faculty just aren't really interested in anyway. They just want to teach their classes and not be concerned about it. So when it's so heavily taught or addressed, in so many different forums I think they got burned out and, and didn't understand it well enough to receive it well (Staff Member Smith).

The above quotation also demonstrates that clearly communicating the intentions, purpose, and goals for the change effort cannot be overstated. The message needs to be clear to be incorporated into the culture.

The Move to AQIP

The business model around which TQM was initiated did not resonate well with all constituencies at the College. Many employees had difficulty assimilating a model that was not developed for education. Midwest needed to find a framework better suited for the organization. The College appears to have found that framework with the Academic Quality Improvement Program.

Midwest County Community College has been accepted into the Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) through the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools. In fact, Midwest County Community College was one of the first colleges accepted into AQIP. AQIP is an alternative model to traditional accreditation processes. By becoming involved in AQIP, the College was able to integrate its continuous quality improvement activities into its requirements for regional accreditation. In addition, the AQIP framework was specifically designed for higher education institutions. The College finally found a model that was tailored for education.

The Academic Quality Improvement Program supports continuous performance improvement in higher education. AQIP provides an alternative process for colleges and universities to maintain their regional accreditation. The Higher Learning Commission launched AQIP in 1999 with a grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts. Currently 127 organizations demonstrate they meet the Higher Learning Commission's accreditation standards through challenging activities that naturally fit with their work to improve their key systems enabling higher performance. By sharing both their process improvements and performance results, organizations participating in AQIP provide the Higher Learning Commission with the evidence to make public quality assurance judgments and nudge themselves to excel in the distinctive higher education mission each has identified. To accomplish these goals, AQIP continuously works to deploy and improve an innovative array of cost-effective, high-tech processes (AQIP.org).

The College's decision to participate in AQIP was mentioned favorably by several employees, particularly since it is a model specific for education. "I think there was some resentment that we were bringing in a business model. We're not a business; we are education. 'You can't force this stuff on us.' ...Now that we've changed tactics a little bit I think that's working better" (Administrator Payne). Everyone who commented about AQIP spoke highly of that process. Employees even attributed increased involvement in quality processes across the campus to the fact that AQIP is designed for colleges and universities.

Now we have started into AQIP; it's the academic quality improvement process. And I think maybe they have hit something that's actually going to work for the College because it is specific for academics. We have just really started rolling on it this year, and everybody is involved. Before I don't think everybody had buy in. There's still some that don't have buy in but they're going to be involved (Staff Member Johnson).

The fact that AQIP is designed for academia and is connected to accreditation appears to resonate with the College's employees. As is sometimes the case with change initiatives, the Quality Council had outlived its usefulness. The Council had served its purpose in bringing improvement ideas to the entire college. However, the time came for a new process to take its place. AQIP offered the organization a new structure through which to embed quality throughout the College.

I think some of our organization then got to seeing it [TQM] as more of a business model, a business and industry model, not an education model. ...I think they thought that it would be better if we moved to something else, that the Quality Council had kind of run its course. ...so that's when we made the transition to AQIP because it appeared to be an educational model with North Central. And it really follows all the lines of thought that we had followed anyway but was pushed by an educational entity. I think the organization feels more comfortable with the fact that AQIP is North Central. ...it looks at educational issues from an educational perspective and so we evolved to that (President Winters).

Several employees highlighted the benefits of AQIP. The connection to accreditation was important to many, as was the increased involvement that seems to have come with AQIP. “Number one: It’s packaged for education. Number 2: You have to keep it in the forefront because of accreditation. Number 3: It has the ability to really encompass a lot of people” (Administrator Waters). The focus on *continuous* quality is iterated through AQIP. Employees can connect better now with the improvement efforts.

If it wasn't important to us [TQM,] we wouldn't be doing AQIP. we got our ten-year accreditation; we could have coasted more or less for the next ten years. And that isn't what we wanted to do. We wanted to involve everybody and honestly take a good honest hard look at ourselves and improve it, improve what we're doing. And so I think it's a very big deal that we've come as far as we have, and I think it's real positive (Administrator Hansen).

The importance of involving everyone in a change effort is highlighted by Midwest’s experience with quality improvement. The TQM model the College first adopted laid a solid foundation around which to create organizational change. TQM allowed the College to engage in real attempts at shared governance through the Quality Council and quality teams. TQM presented a framework around which the College could implement change. However, it became apparent that not everyone at the College had the same ownership in the quality structure. Organizational change strategies must evolve as conditions necessitate. The adoption of AQIP at Midwest has strengthened the involvement of faculty and increased participation in improvement efforts.

Changes in Leadership Style

Implementing quality management required adjustments from faculty and staff and necessitated that administrators, particularly the president, make adjustments as well. Several employees recalled that for TQM to work as it was intended, administrators had to accept employee input in the decision making process. However, shared governance

was a relatively new concept at the College. Input from front-line employees had not been encouraged or expected.

I would describe ...the organizational culture of the College back in the early '90's as pretty rigid, pretty defined in terms of who's the decision maker who, for lack of a better term, were the peons. I don't think a lot was expected of employees back then in terms of their input. I think when something needed to get done, administrators...made the decisions and then maybe passed it up to the Board. But as far as underneath that first level, very very little involvement, very little input (Staff Member Jones).

The changes made possible through adherence to TQM would take some time to take effect. Like many leaders, President Winters tended to make decisions the way in which he was familiar. He was quite accustomed to directing the activities of the organization. His leadership style would need to change for TQM to be effective.

Especially before Dr. Winters came, the culture, as I understand it, was not dictatorial, but definitely decisions were made in a very small select group of people and passed through the organization. After he came I think it probably stayed that way for awhile because that's what he knew. But, as he started getting the feel that there was probably better ways to do things that's when it started changing and he started looking for ways to get organizational input. I think late '80's early '90's it was probably pretty, 'I made the decision, now you can do it' (Administrator Payne).

Not all administrators adopted the TQM philosophy easily. Some did not share their decision-making authority. The administration had made the decision to implement TQM, but not everyone in the President's Cabinet was facilitating TQM processes of input and involvement.

This "old" management style may have been directly related to leadership philosophies of that time period. While TQM most likely accelerated the transition of leadership philosophies at Midwest County Community College, administrators still struggled with the new thinking.

Dr. Winters had a strong hand on things, but he still let you be entrepreneurial. But, whenever you really start talking about teams helping make decisions that's a whole different thing if you've never done it before. If you've never been in that kind of situation that's a whole different process. If you're in charge of the institution that's not a fun thing to think about is that other people are going to be helping you make decisions. But, that probably sounds weird right now, but it wasn't weird in the late '80's. It was a concern (Faculty Member Cook).

Some employees were quick to explain President Winters' previous leadership style—the style he used prior to TQM. These employees needed to defend who he was back then in order to compliment his contrasting style in the present. President Winters appears to have moved to a more inclusive style over the years.

Dr. Winters probably grew up old school. And to an extent he still kind of leads in that. I think he'd be the first to tell you that teams can have recommendations, but he makes the final decision. And you can look at that and say, 'Well, what's the point of having these teams and all these meetings?,' and you come up with this plan, and you've got a book this thick of the plan and then he says, 'That's the dumbest idea I've ever heard.' I don't think he does that too often. I think he respects the process now. But back when he started I think he would tell you that he ruled with an iron hand. So I think he has moved from maybe a 'the buck stops here' approach on everything to a more team approach, collaborative, 'Let's talk about this' (Staff Member Jones).

The president acknowledged that his leadership style has changed. He began his presidency as an authoritarian making many decisions independently. Some suggested he was making these organizational changes too quickly. TQM has allowed President Winters to step back and request employee input. Once certain operational changes were made, he was more willing to accept feedback from others.

I think I was pretty authoritative. I came in knowing exactly where I wanted to go and what I wanted to do and pretty well made the decisions about where we were going and what we were going to do, what we needed to add, what we needed to take out. Came in and knew we had to have a student services. We didn't have any student services at all. And we needed somebody to lead it. And I knew we had to set up outreach centers. We didn't have any at all. And we needed to broaden our base. For the most part, the first few years I came in it was, 'This is what we're going to do, and this is where we're going.' And probably moved too fast initially and had some Board members suggest that.

...what appeared to me to be the glaring issues with the institution that I just feel like we needed to drive them and get them done. ... And then, through continuous improvement I pretty much said, 'Okay, what do you people think?' You know, "Now what do we need to do to really be a better institution? How can we improve anything and everything?' ...I was willing to let them tell me even though I thought I may have things pretty well in place and was running pretty well. They needed to tell me what was wrong. It became more of an open sharing through CQI. (President Winters).

When asked what prompted the philosophical change, he pointed to a stable Board of Trustees, the development of trust with the Board, a comfort level with the leadership team, and the mutual benefits gained by allowing employees to help solve organizational problems.

I felt more secure. I had a stable Board. I've been blessed with having a stable Board. I thought I had a better administrative team. I just felt stronger and more secure and was willing to risk letting it come in and participate in it. And I felt more comfortable with the organization too and the people that were in it... One of the real advantages of spending a lot of time in a place is that you get your trust levels to a point to where you can more effectively move an institution forward. That's one of the advantages of spending a lot of time in a place is that the Board has to build trust levels with you. ...you have to build trust levels with the organization. You have to really value the leadership that's there and reach a comfort level. ...you only have to come to realize that it's in your best interest that they are able to deal with what they think are real problems in the institution. (President Winters).

Long-time College employees noted how the president's awareness of regional and national trends contributed to his leadership transformation. President Winters was influenced by TQM experts and by the movement toward increased employee participation.

We had several Deming experts on campus there in the mid to late '90's to help us form a model. I think that was an influence. ...In all of [the] networking that he does and has done, I think he realized it was important to get employee buy-in as much as possible. I don't think any organization's going to get 100%, but he realized that it was time to lighten up a little bit in terms of how he ran the organization (Staff Member Jones).

Changes in the president's style of leadership are readily recognized by employees and often attributed to TQM. TQM really provided the president with a means to redirect his leadership style and allowed employees to become more involved in the College's operation.

He has mellowed quite a bit. ...when he was first president, it was his way or the highway. He's changed a lot. I think he'd be the first to tell you that the TQM movement has really changed his management style (Staff Member Jones).

College leaders' ability, particularly the president's ability, to adapt to a different leadership style was mentioned by faculty and staff as an integral part of Midwest's implementation of TQM. In order to lead this change effort, the leadership had to evolve as well. This is a case where the leadership needed to set the example by adhering to the new paradigm.

Remnants of the Old Culture Remain

Several faculty and staff expressed appreciation and admiration for the philosophical adjustments administrators made through TQM. "Some real changes have happened, very positive types of things. And, to their credit, administrators who are from that old school had to do some real changing, because it has to be driven. It has to be accepted by the leadership first" (Faculty Member Olsen). The changes, however, were not without their own consequences. Resistance was prevalent and several people left the College during TQM's implementation.

When we started this program of growth and this new philosophy, I think the old timers that had been here and had been under the old regime had their problems. We saw a lot of retirements. We saw a lot of people leave and new people come in. We saw resistance to change. All of these things are typical, to me, in this kind of transition (Staff Member Henderson).

For some, the transition is not complete. Two employees expressed doubt as to whether inclusive decision making is being practiced presently. These individuals contended that President Winters is still directing activities rather than adhering to shared decision making.

I feel that there's still an autocratic hold on things. There's a portion that remains. And [in] the President's Council, I think that there's a lot of the President wants something. I think, instead of 'Hey, guys, let's go get it,' I think he beats on the table a lot (Faculty Member Edwards).

I mentioned earlier that some administrators had difficulty giving up decision making authority as the organization moved to TQM. Those concerns are still present. Some administrators continue to have trouble adopting shared decision-making.

I think there are some power issues maybe or some people who are not willing to let go of their authority or feel like if they did, they would have nothing left. ...I think about organizational structure as being flat or extending from a hub. I don't think of it as a hierarchy. And I think there are people who still think of it as a hierarchy. ...Not many...I don't think that's typical. But I think there still are some who can talk quality, but when it comes right down to living it, they're kind of stuck in, 'Because I said so,' or 'By God, here's how it's going to be' (Staff Member Smith).

These philosophical changes that occurred with TQM created resistance on the part of these particular administrators—resistance that still exists to a certain degree. "I remember one of our top administrators making the comment, 'If it ain't broken, don't fix it,' which is a total missed concept of Total Quality Management. ...that took us back about ten years" (Staff Member Thompson). Skepticism regarding TQM's initial implementation was evident among some staff members. Concerns were expressed that, in spite of all the efforts to include more people in the decision-making process through teams, administrators were making decisions without regard for a team's recommendations.

I'm not sure that they actually were doing what I call TQM, coming from a business world. But, I think they were trying to, and they were just not quite sure how to do it. And, as the years have gone on, we have continued to try and do it. And, we're a quality institution, but I think there was still a lot of top down. ...you might have teams doing things but the top wasn't listening to the teams (Staff Member Johnson).

Similar concerns were expressed about present-day operations. The comment, "I really don't feel we're doing TQM here. I think we get a lot of lip service" (Staff Member Foster) was echoed by "I don't think there's a lot of give and take and total quality stuff going on up there [in the President's Council] (Faculty Member Edwards).

Criticism and skepticism aside, several employees displayed an understanding of just how difficult such a change process really is. A reality in education is that employees often remain at the same institution. While this stable employee base benefits the organization in many ways, it also hinders change.

Our college is probably not unique for an educational institution particularly. But, in the world of business itself, it's kind of unique because the turnover is so minimal. People get here, they stay here. I know that's not all together that unique in education. But it does good things both ways. It creates a history; it creates a culture; it lessens the amount of training and all those kind of things that are involved. But ...for people coming in that are brought in to be what you'd call change agents basically, it does present some difficulties. So yes, I think it's still there. I think there are still pockets of it [the old culture] (Administrator Waters).

Even those who expressed doubt as to the full implementation of TQM reflected upon how far the institution has come through the change process. Several commented that while the administration has not always been as responsive as it could have been, real progress has been made. TQM has established the organizational groundwork to move forward, and evidence is seen of its effects.

I just see this as a great place to work and it always has been. I like the move towards total quality. I think we've been slow in a lot of issues. But I do think that we come from a very autocratic system where the President was very tight fisted and the Dean was very, 'This is what we're going to do.' And slowly but surely, I think we're seeing that process loosen up. And we're actually seeing it more now maybe in the last few years than we've seen it for a number of years. So, we have to lay that foundation and build that process up. And part of it is the President has to let up on some of his control and pass some of that down the line. And that takes time (Faculty Member Edwards).

It would be naïve to think that such a massive change in the decision making of the College would be accepted and embraced by all. In many ways, administrators had the most to lose as a result of changes which diminished administrator's control over decision making. While remnants of the old culture were definitely present during my research, it appeared to me that the influence of this older way of thinking was diminishing. A critical mass is gaining momentum behind the concepts of truly shared decision making.

Strategies Used to Implement Change

With TQM as both a framework for change and an impetus for continuous improvement, the administration set out to move the institution forward, encouraging involvement from employees. As I visited with participants about the ways in which change transpired, it became clear that the administration, particularly the president, began consciously altering the ways that business was conducted at the College. Comments from participants clustered into several different themes or "strategies" that resulted in organizational change. Not only would these strategies affect decision-making and governance at the College, they also had a lasting impact on the organization's culture, as demonstrated later in Chapter 4.

Opening Communication

Communication was a key ingredient facilitating organizational change. Standard communication channels included newsletters, in-services programs, and meetings. However, communication needed to be encouraged across the organization, particularly from the administration. Campus-wide recognitions were one way employees saw the administration encouraging communication. By recognizing and valuing the successes achieved across the campus, more people learned what was happening in other departments, and intra-departmental communication was enhanced.

We do campus celebrations and we just get together sometimes and shut down [the College] and recognize people, recognize successes and things. I think communication is a huge issue. You know, we have lots of ways of doing that, e-mail, meetings, in-services, newsletters. I think those things make a big difference, but I think the biggest thing is to have open encouraged communication (Administrator Hansen).

Taking the time to communicate the purpose of the changes that were being implemented through TQM was also important. Information had been shared from small groups to the entire campus. All employees benefited from hearing the same information consistently repeated between departments or presented at one time in a large-group setting.

If I recall in the beginning of that switch in management philosophies, we had each area of the College, which would of course encompass every employee, meet periodically and talk about, 'What are we doing now?,' 'What have we done in the past?,' 'How can we do it better?' And, that's over-simplifying the process, but, that's it in a nutshell. ...And those small, close knit meetings then would turn into meetings with the entire college and all the employees. I think it was important that we communicate the same message to everyone. So, we would have in-services, for instance, that would involve everyone (Staff Member Jones).

Through any such change effort, an opportunity existed to shape the culture by being consistent in the message that is communicated. By repeating the same message several times, the administration began to instill the notion of continuous quality improvement.

...the communication that comes from administration to the institution when we're all together in in-services or in e-mail. You truly are being trained or influenced to think in the way of 'What we can continually do to serve our students; what can we continually do to serve our stake-holders better?' So, I think that those are definitely things that are being threaded across the institution (Staff Member Thompson).

Rapid student enrollment growth made communication even more necessary than it might have been had the College stayed small. Encouraging campus involvement, particularly through quality teams, increased the information flow and the communication level. Concerns over not having enough communication continue to be an issue, however.

I think with rapid growth it's keeping your people informed as to what's happening, ...getting them involved. ...as we went to the team-based or quality thing that's probably one of the things we were really trying to do is keep them involved and keep them informed as to what was happening. It's always communication. Probably, if you've talked around here, well not enough communication. And I think we've had a lot of communication. But, there never seems to be enough of it. And that's probably the biggest challenge is trying to communicate and bring people along as to where we were going and why (Administrator White).

Midwest Community College implemented special meetings solely to improve communication and to provide a means to demonstrate that the change efforts were producing results. The College began conducting regular Business Announcements and Miscommunication (BAM) meetings to provide an open forum for employees to ask questions and make recommendations to the administration. BAM meetings continue to be held at the College.

When we first started having BAM meetings, there were long lists of suggestions of things that we could do to improve the campus both physically and in jobs. And almost all of those things were implemented. And people feel like they can bring those things. And we still have regular BAM meetings. ... It's BAM-- stands for Business Announcements and Miscommunication. It's just kind of fun little get-togethers with the President [and] groups of employees. And they can ask questions. He'll update them on what's going on and they can ask questions or have suggestions for improvement and that type of thing (Administrator Hansen).

Many employees understand that even with a proactive approach to communication, communication will continue to be a concern.

I think the biggest challenge of all this is the communication piece. ...no matter how much you believe in the continuous quality improvement and the shared governance idea, it's the communication piece of putting that down through all of the levels that it needs to go to, where everybody is actually in that together. And then, you have to deal with those that are the saboteurs that don't want to be there...I think [communication has] always been the problem. And I think it's interesting because I see that as a problem that's been here at Midwest since the early '90's. And, here 12 years later, 13 years later, I see it right now as the same exact problem. And I find that kind of interesting with all the technology that we have and all the ways that we have to communicate that that seems to continue to be a historical problem and one we face today. (Administrator Waters).

In spite of new communication methods, there never seems to be enough communication. While communication can always be improved, such issues are inherent in any large organization.

Soliciting Input

Administrators have changed the way they gather information and accept faculty and staff input. They have become more approachable and encourage employees' ideas. Faculty and staff appreciate that the administration is available to listen to their needs.

I remember when I started ...to walk into an administrator's office, to even have an idea, it was almost like 'You should have an appointment,' or 'What are you doing here?,' or 'You should go through your supervisor to speak to me about these issues.' Now it's like, 'Come on in. Have a seat. Let's hear what you have to say.' So that's one way I would say that there's definitely more of a comfort level, an approachable administration. Yes, there's still the administration. It's not totally seamless. ...you're going to have to have leaders within an organization. But it's not like you're having to jump hoops to get to an administrator to discuss your issues (Staff Member Thompson).

Administrators expressed a desire to have all employees bring issues forward. The intent has been to create an environment where people feel comfortable discussing their concerns. "If anybody has an idea that something that's hurting this institution or something that we need to do to make it better, I really feel that people have a comfort level to tell me what that is. And that is so important in an organization" (President Winters).

The College has formalized feedback processes to increase campus input. A new survey gauges job duty satisfaction, the work environment, and supervisor relationships. Over time, the College has seen improvement in the survey results.

Years ago there would be a lot of people that wouldn't be asked their opinions. And now we ask people's opinions about everything all the time. Another thing that we do is our annual in-house survey. It's pretty broad. It asks about how you feel about your job, how you're treated by other people, how you're treated by your supervisors. It asks 25 questions and there are comment sections, too. 'Do you have the tools to improve your job?', etc. And people really answer those things. They get interested in that survey. It has thankfully improved--the scoring has improved on how Midwest's doing" (Administrator Hansen).

Administrators expressed pride in the improvements that have been made in employee input and involvement. The strategies that have been implemented seem to be working. "One of the biggest changes is that we've tried to put people and mechanisms and committees in place where people can find ways of getting their ideas out and being able to implement those ideas" (Administrator Waters). A more receptive approach from

administrators regarding feedback from employees appears to have been successful. “We are very much listened to, and we have input; we help drive a lot of the stuff. I would say it’s come a long, long way. And it’s very, very positive” (Faculty Member Olson).

Another key ingredient to improving participation in the operations of the College involves the willingness to accept criticism of processes and systems—a foundation of continuous quality improvement. The College has allowed its employees to question the TQM process and vent frustration. Being able to voice concerns has helped improve the implementation of quality. Keeping the approach to TQM practical, rather than technical or theoretical, has helped as well.

I think that we have an administration and president in particular that doesn’t want to get bogged down in all the terminology and the academic pursuit of it. He wants to do it with regards to how it’s really going to help the institution. I think that’s important. For the most part, people are free to express their opinions about it. That whole cynicism that develops--it’s out in the open, and you can speak about it and you can talk about it; it’s not like you’re trying to undermine the whole process. It’s actually improving the process (Administrator Meyers).

Many faculty and staff appreciate their ability to contribute to decision-making at the College and now freely express their opinions on matters that mean something to them. Input is facilitated through cross-functional teams and is valued. Faculty and staff from all levels of the organization are more apt to contribute to the discussions.

The whole environment gives everybody the opportunity to be a leader, regardless of what position they’re in or department they’re in. You get together on a cross-functional team and everybody’s input is important. I’ve seen that numerous times. It doesn’t matter where you work. As long as it’s benefiting the common good, your input’s worthwhile. People have gotten to the point where they’re not afraid to say their opinion. ...the rest of the group may not agree with it, but at least it’s put out on the table. A lot of times in the past I think people would have been afraid to do that. Now it’s like, ‘Here’s my opinion for what it’s worth.’ They put it out on the table. And somebody may take a piece of that and run with it or add to it or change it a little bit. But everybody’s input is important (Staff Member Allen).

The ability to openly express opinions, concerns, and frustrations is strengthening the improvement process. When faculty and staff can make suggestions that receive attention, employees begin to trust that administrators are taking their input seriously. As such, they are more likely to participate in the decision-making process.

Being Visible Across the Campus

Having faculty and staff see administrators as visible and interested in the lives and work of the employees was deemed to be important. “[From the beginning with President Winters,] upper level management--the president, the dean--was all very much involved in day-to-day life of the College. They were very active and very visible, which was maybe a surprise to me. I maybe wasn't expecting that sort of interaction with them” (Faculty Member Edwards). Faculty feel valued when administrators take the time to show and interest in the employees and become involved in activities. The administrators’ presence at activities and events provides validation of the work faculty and staff are doing.

Respect for teachers for who they are first of all. That they know them and something about their lives and are involved in the activities; that they’re affirming that what they do is important. There’s a real attendance at different things that people are doing, anywhere from down in industrial tech to the concerts or the plays or to an academic challenge meet...or a debate tournament where they’re spending time judging. It’s just such a huge affirmation that they care about not only you but what you do (Faculty Member Olson).

Administrators, particularly the president, send a strong message across the campus by being visible. By visiting offices and walking the campus, administrators get to know employees as people, rather than just workers. “I also know that he was out and about a lot. He was around. He knew a lot of the people on campus and he knew what was going on. He knew about people's lives and their children and those kinds of things” (Staff

Member Davidson). Taking the time to support departmental activities and learning about what employees value models and reinforces the cultural changes relating to open communication. Administrative visibility is one example of the symbolic ways in which organizational culture is manifested. Employees do appreciate the efforts made by administrators in reaching out to the employees. This visibility signals that administrators care about those that work with and for them.

Empowering Employees

Allowing employees to take ownership in the College contributes to a sense of meaning and purpose. Faculty and staff begin to have ownership in projects when they are allowed to pursue them. If administrators dictate how work should be accomplished, that ownership never gets transferred to employees. By giving others latitude into the design of a project, administrators make the work more meaningful for those who will implement the project.

Most of the leaders give you support. They're not going to say, 'Here's what you have to do and here's how you have to do it.' They're going to say, 'You came up with the idea. You run with it. Check in when you need help. I'll be more than happy to help you.' They're not dictators. ...they understand that everybody's input is worthwhile. There are going to be times when you have to say, 'This is the way it is.' But a lot of times they're going to say, 'Here it is. Run with it. Come back and let me know.' They always want to check off on it before it's implemented, but they let all levels do the work rather than you know dictating how it's going to be done (Staff Member Allen).

Administrators at Midwest see (and have seen) the direct benefits of empowerment that come through employee involvement. Getting people involved in the College has strengthened the institution by increasing awareness of both College processes and external trends. In becoming more involved with the College's operations, front-line employees have learned that they can indeed make positive changes in the organization.

Once those expectations have been established, employees begin to look for improvements they can implement, and the institution (and hopefully students) benefit.

More people are involved [because of TQM], much more so than they would be about the issues that are going on. And more people are looking at issues at the institution than if we didn't have it [TQM.] I think they feel more empowerment by it. They feel like they have more input into the organization. They really believe that if there's something that they want to see done, it will be done if it's in the best interest of the institution. I think it makes us a more vigilant, aware organization of what's happening in education and more aware of what's happening in our own institution (President Winters).

Many employees at Midwest understand that opportunities now exist to become involved in decision making. Faculty and staff have the ability to become as involved in the decision making as they choose. Several options are available for involvement: department meetings, BAM meetings, in-services, staff development activities; the College encourages its employees to use these avenues. To some extent, though, it falls to the employees to take advantage of the processes that have been put into place.

You get the feeling here, if you want to take it, you have a voice. Most people feel encouraged to take it. If they aren't encouraged to take it within themselves, it's my sense that that's more about their own self-esteem than it is about the cultural encouragement of the institution because the institution encourages us to take ownership. If we don't it's our fault (Staff Member Parker).

The president and his leadership team have been able to instill a sense of positive participation and empowerment among many employees, stemming from an appreciation from the work that is being done at the College. Encouragement and support have become regular responses from more administrators. The administration recognizes that this reinforcement must be continued and that administrators lead by example. The culture now reinforces collegial cooperation. The messages being sent to employees have become more congruent with the values of open communication and continuous improvement. Employees have begun to see that administrators have followed through

with many of their intentions and promises to be more accepting of input and shared decision making.

It comes back to values and what are we saying is important. The culture involves the people, the approachableness, the communication. You have to walk the talk. CQI is more than just a concept. It's actually treating others as you would like to be treated. It's looking to become better. The culture lends itself to that. I can't think of an in-service where ...the president is speaking or another administrator may be speaking where they don't praise and thank everyone for what they do. It's an appreciation. That's a big part of the culture--just to know that you're here for a reason and it's kind of like being a family (Staff Member Thompson).

When necessary, Midwest has implemented formalized mechanisms to encourage participation. The College created a recognition program to honor employee involvement. "People were encouraged that if there was ideas to come forward, if there were even initiatives that would be rewarded and recognized. There were plaques given for teams that formed and started initiatives" (Staff Member Thompson).

Administrators seemed to be well aware of the overt influence and responsibility that College leaders have in instilling this level of empowerment. The values held and shared by leaders need to be communicated openly and directly; it is not enough to give lip service to these concepts. Actions do speak louder than words, and administrators need to demonstrate that they do indeed value employee involvement. The ways in which administrators respond to employee feedback often dictates whether employees will continue to provide such input.

I think you certainly have to have a servant mentality. You have to be caring, understanding, listening, reaching out, non-defensive, inclusive, empathetic. You just pretty much have to be willing to say, 'I want you all involved in the management of the institution. I value what you think and I value what you say and I want you to participate in what we're doing here.' ... You have to treat what they say as important and listen to what they say and be willing to give up...power, or authority; you have to be willing to give some of that up. And encourage leadership from within the institution. And I think we've pretty much been able to do that for the most part. (President Winters).

The net result of the efforts to empower employees has been well received by many. The vast number of employees I interviewed spoke positively about the work environment that has been created at Midwest. The freedom to venture out and take on new projects has resonated across the campus.

It's a great place to work. Anybody will tell you that. It's, 'Go out and try it, do it, we'll support you. If it doesn't work we'll go someplace else. We'll try something else.' You're free to try things. You're encouraged when you do well. ...there's no other community college I would rather work at. None (Faculty Member Olson).

The importance of support and encouragement from administrators can not be overstated. Employees were not only bolstered in short term by positive administrative reaction; the effects of repeated and regularly confirmation and validation from the administration has permeated the organizational culture at Midwest for years.

Supporting Growth and Innovation

Many faculty and staff feel supported by the administration and believe that the College has appropriately invested in employees' personal and professional development. From conferences to reimbursement for coursework, the College has supported employees' development of new skills and knowledge. Employees appreciate the chance to participate in professional development activities and new learning within their teaching discipline. Their participation is encouraged; it is not something they have to defend.

There's always the opportunity to learn. If we want to go to a conference or if we want to take classes, we can get reimbursed for taking college level classes. If there's money in the budget then we get to go to conferences and learn from other people. There are as many opportunities as we're willing to look for. I feel that we can do just about anything we want to do as long as it's reasonable. If we can show a need for it, then they're going to support it (Staff Member Allen).

Administrators noted a direct link between supporting employees and advancing change at the College. Faculty and staff involvement in professional development has exposed employees to new learning models. The more these individuals come in contact with diverse ideas, the more comfortable they are in adopting change strategies. The College has found it relatively easy and quite productive to encourage those individuals who want to embrace change. “For the most part, [the College is] very supportive of the individuals and the mission and of people that have a vision to move someplace else and move forward and grow” (Administrator Payne).

The administration made a conscious effort to expose faculty and staff to various ways of thinking. For several years now, the College has been sending literally busloads of employees to Austin, Texas, to the National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Annual Conference. A close association with this organization has provided exposure to best teaching practices across the nation. The contacts and experiences gained through attendance and networking at this conference have generated new and continued interest in quality improvement among faculty and staff.

They started taking busloads of people to NISOD. When you’re exposed to that kind of new idea generation down there, ...it creates a lot of new thought on the part of the faculty and staff (Faculty Member Cook).

Opportunities for new learning were developed within the organization as well; a staff development system has been put into place, and employees are encouraged to further their formal education and seek that next degree. The College has been addressing internal training needs through its staff development program. In addition, opportunities are provided to visit other colleges and universities to explore best practices in teaching and learning.

We have a staff development system that is just phenomenal. There are offerings monthly. There's at least a dozen classes you could take a month if you're interested. Short little things--how to do this, how to do that. We're encouraged to find out what's going on in other institutions around the country and offered the opportunity to go and learn those things. We have the opportunity to move up in our positions and to do other positions within the College or to go on and get a Master's or a Ph.D. The opportunities are endless here (Administrator Hansen).

Faculty have been offered other incentives to encourage professional development and excellence in the classroom. The creation of an endowed chair presented yet another opportunity for recognition and prestige.

We have an endowed chair award, an endowed chair for teaching excellence. It's a cash award that's funded by the local banks...It's for a faculty person. It's awarded every two years, and I believe its two thousand dollars each year. My understanding is they get to keep half and the other half is supposed to go towards professional development (Staff Member Smith).

The benefits that come from these activities have been appreciated. Faculty realize that these opportunities are not necessarily available or encouraged at other colleges. Many recognize that they have a responsibility to engage in these activities; if no one participates, the opportunities may not continue.

I think that is very significant that the College would invest in us for us to do that [professional development.] There's also the NISOD conference in Austin that any instructor, full time instructor, has the opportunity to go to, or staff, and it's encouraged. So, conferences, staff development and faculty development that's constantly on our computer--this opportunity is available, just take advantage of it (Faculty Member Olson).

Employees also reported that they find the support they need to accept new challenges. The College has followed a pattern of frequently promoting from within the organization. The College helps ensure that employees new to their current position are successful. Particular emphasis is placed on mentoring employees as they take on different roles and new projects.

I have had a lot of opportunity for staff development and for learning. This year I came into a position that I have never done before, and I had no experience. I feel like I have had a lot of opportunity to learn, to go to conferences. I've also had a lot of support from people trying to help me figure out what goes on. I think that those are definitely some of the opportunities. You also have a lot of leadership opportunities. Pretty much if you're willing to take on a project and you get it approved then they let you do it. There's a lot of opportunity to try new things and to work on leadership skills (Staff Member Davidson).

Administrators spoke about the need for employees to experience self-direction in order for them to develop their own leadership skills. For employees to grow as leaders, they need opportunities to practice leadership. The freedom to take ownership in projects has enhanced these skills.

People felt that they could do these kinds of things; that they could take off. I think that's one of the reasons we got the growth. That kind of comes from this self-direction, self-management, team [approach] where there's this conversation taking place and people feel free to go out and look at something. And if there's an excellent project we find a way to finance it (Administrator White).

At times, though, allowing employees autonomy in taking initiative requires patience and consideration from administrators. Employees need to know that failure is a part of the learning process, and that they will still be supported when an activity or project does not go as planned. "You can make mistakes here. Now, I don't know how many you can make. But you're allowed to make a mistake. And that's a part of this whole thing; as you give people more self-direction, they have to be allowed to make some mistakes" (Administrator White).

I think one of the leadership characteristics I see is that willingness of our administration to kind of back off and let people do their jobs. ...they really focus on job descriptions and creating the outline or the framework for what you do, but I have seen a lot of willingness to let people meet the outcomes and the objectives within their jobs in any way that they see is appropriate. Obviously there is leadership here. You do understand the hierarchy, but in general I do feel like we have a lot of freedom to come at the goals in the way that we feel is the best way to do it (Staff Member Davidson).

The College appears to have created an environment that is conducive to leadership development within the organization by supporting growth and innovation. The institution has invested in the professional development of its employees and has helped ensure they have the skills to take on new challenges. The employee empowerment discussed previously has essentially paved the way for leaders to emerge from within the ranks of the College. For the College to develop leadership from within the organization, it had to embrace the strategies it was promoting: employee involvement and shared decision making. By actively implementing these ideals, the College is reaping the benefits of having an engaged, involved faculty and staff.

Developing Grass Roots Management

The College has worked to stimulate change strategies through the organization. Ideas can be passed up the organizational hierarchy with relative ease. More importantly, the suggestions are given due consideration. Input and feedback from employees are more likely to continue when they believe that their thoughts and proposals are taken seriously.

There's a good majority of the people that work here that feel like that things can circulate and can percolate from below. I think that's probably one of biggest things that's happened... for the most part I would say that probably people feel like that they can percolate ideas up and they'll be welcomed or listened to or they can try them out (Administrator Waters).

Encouraging change from within has altered the perception of the organizational structure. Comments from faculty and staff indicated that the organization has become more "flat" in terms of decision making compared to what it had been before TQM was implemented. Decisions are more often made in consultation with front-line employees and in interdisciplinary teams.

I think we're not as hierarchical as a non-CQI culture might be. I think there are very few decisions that are made as a result of the place of authority a person has. I think most decisions and policies and processes are started in some kind of interdisciplinary team from across the institution (Staff Member Smith).

Employees see improvements in the way decisions are made, leading to an increase in participation and involvement in decision making. "I can see some real progress toward a bottom up organizational structure. I can really see employees buying into ideas. More and more of them are on different teams" (Staff Member Jones).

Relative to other institutions, the College seems to have found some success in developing ownership in the governance of the College. Opinions are treated with respect and recommendations can be made from all levels of the organization.

After coming from a university, I thought everything [here] was good. I felt like everyone's opinion was valued, and that change came from the grass roots. And I really appreciated that. And to me things seemed good. There were areas of, discontent, I guess, or cynicism. But I thought for the size of the institution, they [discontent and cynicism] were pretty minimal (Staff Member Smith).

The changes that have been implemented have not resulted in utopia. Dissenting viewpoints were reported among the faculty and staff I interviewed. The following quotation is representative of those employees who do not believe that TQM has been integrated into the organization: "I don't agree that we are really truly TQM. We do *some* things. ... *Some* of the things that we've asked for have been implemented and have gone up through the hierarchy" (Staff Member Foster). Many at Midwest readily state that these changes are far from being complete. However, most participants with whom I visited reported that the opportunities to engage in decision making are much more prevalent than they had been in the past.

Delegating Authority and Building a Leadership Team

The ability to delegate authority was seen as a strength of the president and viewed as a necessity to foster change within the organization. The College became too big for one person to handle. For the College to prosper, more people needed to be entrusted with oversight of respective areas of the College. The president's willingness to permit others within the organization to direct the daily operations of the college was tested.

A little handful of people were running the school before Dr. Winters. It's kind of like a one-man show. The old president was the Emperor and a few people underneath him. But, with the growth and expansion that Dr. Winters brought to us, we saw a lot more administrative people and a filtering out of job descriptions and those kinds of things because it became too big for one man to have his thumb on and control. He's doing the process of delegating authority to competent people and letting them go to work. That was a big change that I saw (Staff Member Henderson).

Several employees commented about the ways in which the president lets his leadership team perform their respective duties. He allows his administrative team to supervise their respective divisions without micro-managing their activities. Administrators also feel the need to be empowered as well in order to work effectively.

To a large extent from a big picture perspective Dr. Winters knows what he wants to do. But from a day-to-day standpoint he lets people, particularly the deans and vice presidents, manage their areas without a lot of intervention. You definitely get a feeling that you are in charge, at least of your area (Administrator Meyers).

Delegation, as a skill, was developed by the president over time, and may not have come easily to him. Initially, he was considerably more involved in the routine operation of the College. With his knowledge of TQM and the strategies of employee involvement that TQM espouses, Dr. Winters had to give up some control in order to lead by example.

“[Over time] I think he created a lot more autonomy among other administrators. He was

by no means not a hands-off president, but he certainly loosened the reins a little bit as to his role in the whole leadership” (Staff Member Jones).

The benefits created from delegating some authority included the opportunity to build a stronger leadership team. First, though, some changes were made to the team itself. He expanded the membership of the Administrative Council. Previously, the Administrative Council was comprised of the deans and the president. Dr. Winters expanded the group to include several directors as well. Through group meetings and leadership retreats, he attempted to bring his administrative team together. The effort has resulted in a group that works well together. The cohesiveness that has formed within the Administrative Council has been credited with helping to filter changes throughout the organization.

[Dr. Winters] added more people to the Administrative Council when he came in that period of time. ...before he came, it was just the President and maybe two Deans. That was the Administrative Council, maybe four depending on what, who was there right at that time. Now, he’s pulled a lot more people into that Administrative Council. So that structure’s there. He’s really tried to build a team-based management thing and with the retreats and some of those things kind of hold people together. And as I said, there are differences, big differences (Administrator White).

The president recalled some of the early difficulties related to building that team. Forming a true team would mean that several would stay in their current positions, some would be promoted, and others would leave the College. One important lesson that Dr. Winters conveyed is the necessity of putting together a team that could move the institution forward and respond to the vision that had been outlined. The president attempted to be compassionate as he made changes within his administrative team.

One challenge was to get a team in place that would allow us to grow and prosper and to look at new ways of doing things and new programming and to be leaders. And so, I did. I added to the administrative team and brought new people in, and was able to phase out some of them very mutually beneficially. It wasn't a thing of where I just fired people. I was able to ease some people out and move some people around and get where we needed to be (President Winters).

These changes resulted in a more cohesive Administrative Council. Members of the Council stated that they regularly address problems directly individually and as a group and don't let disagreements linger. An attitude of "immediate accountability" has been created within the Council; this approach has been carried across the campus.

I think right now we have the best administrative team we've ever had. I can go to any of the other people and share my concerns and they can do the same. ...you don't have a situation where you're trying to undercut somebody or trying to stab them in the back. If you've got a problem you just go face-to-face meeting, 'I've got this problem,' work out a resolution. So I think that helps build the team. ...I think if you've got administrators that are working together it all filters down from there (Administrator Meyers).

Faculty, staff, and administrators spoke often about the importance of the president setting the direction and the administrative team supporting that vision. Dr. Winters was credited for his ability to chart a course for the institution and empowering others to successfully implement the plan. While it is productive to have all within the College working toward the same goals, the administrative team's alignment with the president's vision is foremost. Concordance with the direction of the College not only allows administrators to directly contribute to successful projects; it also allows them to engage others in the vision.

Dr. Winters has extreme vision. The man is extremely visionary and he's really led that path, led that charge. And I think that that's been extremely important. The other thing is that he has surrounded himself with really good people. And we have a very, very strong administrative team presently. We really have a great administrative team that all share that same vision and share where we want to go and can work with our people to get it that way (Administrator Waters).

Caution was taken, though, in balancing the pursuit of the vision of the College and the resources available to support that vision. The vision would not have been if the College did not have the financial stability to support it. As discussed in the prelude, employees at Midwest proudly reported that fiscal stability and fiscal restraint were strengths of the institution. The College has been able to actively pursue opportunities for growth and expansion with jeopardizing its financial assets.

I feel like we're progressive, aggressive, yet fiscally prudent. [Dr. Winters] is a president who is the first person to go after something. Very aggressive, very visionary. He really is. He thinks down the road. But, he never has allowed us to get into cash flow problems, any situation where financially is a huge risk. It's a pretty good combination to have (Staff Member Jones).

These changes have not come about, however, without the conscious intention and forethought to lead the College down a new path. The leadership necessary to unlock the potential growth and development of the College was quite different from what previously existed. These changes both signaled and resulted from alterations in the president's leadership style. Dr. Winters was able to go beyond the traditional and conservative approach that had presided with Dr. Fredricks. He learned to adapt his own leadership to create the conditions that allowed these changes to occur.

By-Products of Change

The reader should be curious as to the results that have come from the aforementioned change strategies: opening communication, soliciting input, being visible across the campus, empowering employees, supporting growth and innovation, developing grass roots management, delegating authority and building a leadership team. Recognizing the products of the strategies that were implemented allows one to apply this learning to future situations. Without knowing the effects of the transformation, the

reader may have difficulty assessing the success of the approach that was taken. Change has occurred at Midwest County Community College. The net effects of the continuous improvement strategies have translated into a more engaging work environment and a sense of purpose among faculty, staff, and administration. In addition, the College has become a focal point of the community.

An Engaging Work Environment

The change strategies implemented at Midwest County Community College have produced several positive outcomes. One commonly reported result involves the creation of an open, caring work environment. Cooperation and collegial relationships are prevalent. Many employees enjoy working at the College and appreciate the relationships they have formed with their colleagues.

For me it's a party every day. I truly enjoy working here. ...as an employee, the people are harmonious and congenial and cooperative and [it] appears to me that the attitude generally of this campus is to be pleasant, happy, willing to help the students, cooperate with fellow workers, and just do what you have to do to make the situation work. It's a very harmonious, jovial, happy place (Staff Member Henderson).

However, this type of atmosphere was not always present in the years prior to TQM. An overriding difference appears to be the perceptions of faculty and staff regarding the respect each group had for the other (faculty versus staff) and the administration's respect for them as employees. Faculty in particular held some resentment for administrators for not showing appreciation for faculty's efforts with students.

The staff didn't think that faculty or administration cared about them or thought that they were needed. They thought they were above them. And that was just kind of a feeling I got from staff. Faculty, I think they probably didn't think that administration appreciated them as much as they should (Staff Member Johnson).

Apparently, prior to TQM, the different classifications of employees (faculty, staff, administrators) worked much more independently of each other in separate, distinct roles. Not only did faculty and staff work in relative isolation, but the two groups (as a whole) did not know the responsibilities of the other group. Faculty and staff had difficulty appreciating the work other employees performed when they didn't know what that job entailed. Cross-functional teams began to break down some of the obstacles. TQM strategies forced faculty and staff to begin to work together. The employees became more familiar with the roles of others across campus. Working relationships among faculty and staff became stronger as a result.

Prior to [the mid 1990s] ...the faculty had a defined role. They were in the classroom. They had their office hours, then they went home. ...Mid-to-late '90's we had created what were called cross-functional teams made up of faculty, staff and administration to address certain concerns on campus. The working relationship really between and among those groups was just beginning to kind of gel. And part of the problem prior to that, I don't think faculty really understood what some of the staff members did, what their jobs were, what their function was at the College, and visa versa. I think that management philosophy, that's one of the things that it helped break down, those barriers too. Obviously, if you get to know someone and get to know their job and their responsibility within a team or within an organization it just gives you a little bit more appreciation for them. ...Working relationship was becoming a lot more solid by the late '90's (Staff Member Jones).

When asked what has caused the change in attitude, employees again gave credit to administrators' efforts to bring the campus together. Showing more interest in faculty activities and becoming more involved with those activities has demonstrated administrators' respect for the work faculty do. Faculty have reciprocated in kind with a greater appreciation for administrators. Implementing TQM across the campus, rather than in one functional area of the College, was deemed beneficial to working relationships.

I think we've all worked harder to open communications and to try and work with each other. ...I think administrators are trying to be more involved with different things and to try and work with staff and faculty. And, I think, faculty is also doing that. And, I think, the groups that we've put together through the Quality [TQM] I think has helped that because we try and do things across the campus and not just in one area (Staff Member Johnson).

The present work environment has fostered close working relationships. There is still the tendency for employees to cluster according the like responsibilities, but many of the friendships that have been forged at the College cross department lines. An organization is only as good as the people it employs. The employees at Midwest credited each other with making the College a very good place to work.

We're a pretty close group. We still have that family feel even though we've grown. It's kind of segmented. There's this group and this group and this group now. But there are a lot of friendships here at the College, and, especially among staff. And that I think is what amazes me. ...I'd say this is the best place I have ever worked. And I've worked at a lot of places. But, as far as people getting along and trying to make things better, I think this is, this is excellent. I think they really do try (Staff Member Johnson).

Several employees referenced a sense of being supported by colleagues. Many realize that the positive environment that has been created did not happen by chance. They continue to bolster each other in order to keep the College vibrant and collegial. Encouragement is received and given from all levels of the organization. This reinforcement strengthens employees' commitment to the College's vision. Employees are pleased with the progress the institution has made in recent years.

I would have to say that the majority of the people here know they're being supported, appreciate what they have and that hasn't changed over the ten years that I've been here. People know they've got it well, that they're living in a good situation and they appreciate that. They know that support comes all the way from the top down. And while they may complain about this or that, overall they're very satisfied with what we're doing, who we are, and where we're going (Administrator Payne).

I felt a genuine sense of caring for and about each other. Employees readily help each other. "It's an enjoyable place to work. I enjoy my job. And the people that are here are good to work with. If you need something you ask and they'll do everything they can to help out. It's a real family-type atmosphere" (Staff Member Allen). Several employees referenced a feeling of teamwork and team building at the College. The mutual respect and interdependence that has been fostered was evidenced in the following quotation: "I would say rather than a family atmosphere it's become more of a team atmosphere. ...we are concerned when something happens to one of our teammates, whether it's here at the College or in their private lives" (Staff Member Jones). These sentiments permeated from all levels of the organization, including the president. I was both surprised and impressed that President Winters spoke of the support he receives as well as the support he provides.

Working at Midwest? It's challenging and it's enjoyable. I feel a part of a team and a family here. I feel supported here. It's a very cooperative, hard working, challenging environment. Because, for the most part, everybody strives to be the best in what they do, and I think they feel supported in that for the most part (President Winters).

I couldn't help but discern the strong sense of respect that has been cultivated among individuals across the campus. "Our environment here is as good as it gets as far as caring about each other and learning from each other and valuing each other" (Staff Member Smith).

The present work environment has facilitated good working relationships and has reduced turnover. A relatively harmonious workplace has kept employees at the College. Conflict has been minimized, and employees are allowed to pursue projects that suit their strengths. Loyalty for the College and increased employee engagement are positive outcomes correlating with the work environment that has been created.

Basically the work place is non-conflictive. We always have those [few.] The benefits have been good. People are encouraged to do all they can do or do what they can do best. The work environment here is good, and we have a very, very low turnover both in the professional staff and in classified staff. People are treated well and basically they treat the institution pretty well (Administrator White).

Creating a positive work environment has led to reciprocity from employees in regards to loyalty to the College. “The people I deal with here are very positive about the institution and very dedicated to improving the institution. In some ways, more than at other places I've been. I really think that there is a lot of loyalty to this institution” (Staff Member Davidson).

A Sense of Purpose

The employees with whom I spoke have a strong understanding of the mission and vision of the College. They are well aware of the scope and functions of an open-door community college. The College's acceptance of all students has diffused any pretense potentially found at a university. Faculty and staff take pride in the fact that they work hard to serve a wide range of students with varying abilities. Small class sizes and individual attention from instructors help facilitate student learning.

One of the things too is that there is a pride here, that we know who we are, that we are a community college. I have yet to hear anybody think or not correct somebody that said that, 'Oh, you're a junior college.' ... We know exactly who we are and who we train and ...that we're not in the ivory tower. We accept everybody, bring them in, take them from where they are. The standards are high so some make it and some don't. But, because our numbers are low and our teachers have a community college philosophy that we're going to take you where you are and we're going to die trying to get you to be successful. And that's a difference in philosophy than it is from a university (Faculty Member Olson).

Those I interviewed recognize that the College also exists to serve the community. They strive to be responsive to all segments of the population. Outreach to the community has improved dramatically over the years. By increasing the College's exposure across its

service area, many participants stated that Midwest has become more widely recognized as a responsive institution regarding community development.

We're a community college trying to provide for the diversities of the population. Always changing, offering new programs, reaching out to new segments of the population for various reasons: job training, transfer programs, technology related programs. Basically trying to provide again for the diverse population that we serve. When I say diverse I mean in terms of needs...The area we're in is not very diverse in terms of a racial area, but it's very diverse in terms of the needs (Faculty Member Robinson).

Employees clearly articulate the focus of the College. Quality improvement is emphasized. Meeting the needs of the community is a priority. Maintaining a reputation for quality is important. Hiring good employees who are student-focused translates into quality improvement. These goals result in quality programs and high levels of student achievement.

Midwest's culture would be that it has always been to improve their programs, to create new programs as needed, to be what the community needs it to be. To be very well regarded. To have real quality in their teachers, their employees. And to produce excellent students, which I think we do (Staff Member Barber).

One consistent and constant refrain I heard revolved around students and student learning as priorities for the College. I was impressed by how often and how passionately I heard employees speak of the importance of students. What follows are multiple comments from a diverse set of employees. Representative quotations can not clearly communicate the strength of the response I heard from these employees; therefore, with a little literary license, I have included several quotations focusing on students being a priority at Midwest County Community College.

Students first. That has always been clearly articulated and clearly modeled. That students are first (Staff Member Porter).

Of course students are always the first priority on any decision that's made. How, does what we're going to do help students learn? What can we do to give them a good quality of life here, more of a campus atmosphere type of situation (Administrator Hansen).

Midwest as a whole is a community college that is extremely forward thinking, very proactive and not all that reactive, or we try to be, open access for all students...very student-services based, very customer-service based, very student oriented. Decisions are made based on what's the best thing for the students at which ever campus we might be making the decision. With the over all institution in mind (Administrator Waters).

Here's the philosophy. I just thought if we do what's best for students first it seems to be the guide wire that determines the answers to a lot of questions (Faculty Member Olson).

Students. I know that's a pat answer. But, you go to any meeting, you go to any inservice or anything you'll go to and that's always what's said. The students are first. And you hear it even when you're not really expecting to hear it. (Staff Member Johnson).

The priority is to have a good learning experience and teaching experience for the student. The students are first. Everything else revolves around the students. I've always maintained that you make your decisions by what's best for the student first regardless of what area you work in whether it's the grounds crew or whether it's in the classroom. You make your decision what's best for the student first, what's best for the institution second and what's best for the individual, the employees, third. If you make your decisions based on that you'll usually make the right decision. And so I think we've put the student and student learning up first (Administrator White).

Student success is going to be a very high priority. And I think to some degree student satisfaction, although that's kind of a hard thing to define. But you want them to be happy with their experience as well, not just successful but happy in being successful (Administrator Payne).

We've got a good group of folks. They're really going to work hard and do the best they can. And they know they're here for the students (Administrator Payne).

Student satisfaction is a big priority. We do try to put students first (Staff Member Thompson).

Students are the number one priority. We have to do that within reason. But, when we're in a meeting or whatever discussing whatever project we're working on the bottom line is "how is this going to impact students?" And I think everybody sees it that way, what is going to be best for the students (Staff Member Allen).

Number one is the students, then the College, and then us. You know, and as long as we keep that as our guide wire that decisions are easier to make (Faculty Member Olson).

I think students have always been the top priority here, and I think they continue to be. And then I'm thinking, in comparison, if I look at today compared to mid-to-late '90's, has it grown? And I guess I would say yea it has, that we're even more student centered now and learning centered than we have been in the past. But, as far as in the '90's I would say the students still were the priority (Staff Member Smith).

The priority of the College has always been to help the students succeed (Staff Member Smith).

I think we're all shooting for the same goal, helping students. What can we do to benefit the students? And I think most people see that (Staff Member Allen).

Most employees with whom I visited share that goal of helping students. Students and student learning were at the center of many employees' interviews. The focus of serving students, coupled with serving with serving the community, has guided the College through this continuous improvement process. Concern for students has helped faculty and staff keep these organizational changes in perspective. Many employees have been willing to engage in TQM with the understanding that it would make the institution for students. This belief has created a self-fulfilling prophecy that has indeed come true.

Several employees reported that Midwest County Community College is more responsive to students and student learning following the implementation of TQM.

Enrollment Growth

The College has seen phenomenal enrollment growth over the last several years. The College has grown from 903.9 full-time equivalent students in Fall 1987 to 3192.7 full-time equivalent students in Fall 2005 with only two enrollment declines during that time (The President's Report.) New growth brought new buildings to the campus, and meant that more people needed to be hired. It also meant new opportunities for existing

faculty and staff to make some additional money through overload work. Enrollment through the College's outreach centers accounts for a significant percentage of this enrollment growth.

With growth and expansion there was all kinds of things happening. We were building dorms that we had never had on campus. We were building new classrooms, a new fine arts center, those kinds of physical things you were seeing happen all over campus. As that happened there was a large explosion of growth. During that period of time we were growing at like a 20-25% clip per year, which is phenomenal growth. And having been involved in that kind of environment presented all kinds of opportunities. 'We need people to teach these classes. We need people to go to outreach centers. We need people to drive to [the city] to [the other campus.]' There were all kinds of opportunities for the ambitious person that wanted to add a little money to his contract in terms of giving a contribution, work, and obviously getting some monetary, financial benefit in return (Staff Member Henderson.)

The growth of the physical campus begot more growth. More classroom space was created; programs were moved to new locations, and other programs occupied the spaces they left. In turn, programs were able to expand once larger spaces were available to house them. The need for more space will continue to be an issue as programs expand to meet the spaces they have been allocated.

We have a new classroom building that's due to start here in late May and the completion date is May of '05. So that will be an opportunity to do a little bit more in the classroom. It's going to increase our classroom space. We're going to move a couple of other programs over to the vacated space. So, um, I think it will give those programs an opportunity for growth (Staff Member Jones).

The College has experienced its share of "growing pains" as a result of enrollment growth. An increasing number of students has resulted in more students per class and an additional burden on existing student services. The growth the College has experienced brings considerable benefits, including financial resources. However, increased enrollment taxes the College's infrastructure and operations.

Just like with any kind of growth, it's very, can be very painful. We've had crowded classrooms, lack of classroom space, some stress on staff members that were needing to respond quickly, bursting at the seams--growth and how to best take care of that (Staff Member Parker).

A large percentage of the College's growth has come from its outreach centers, away from the main campus. The College operates two freestanding outreach centers in addition to its original campus. State funding created an incentive for the College to open a new facility in a major metropolitan area, increasing its enrollment that much more.

Increasing student enrollment translated into more money from the state.

In the mid-to-late '90's, we did have a [state] funding formula that was really enrollment driven and which fit us pretty well because that's the time when we opened the [metropolitan] campus. That place really grew exponentially. The more new students we got, the more FTE's, the more money we got (Staff Member Jones).

Operating on multiple campuses has resulted in a distinct set of problems. The quality of instruction provided on different campuses has been a concern.

Communication issues have become even more exacerbated when dealing with faculty and staff in several locations. The College has had to work to ensure that the services and instruction provided at its outreach centers have been consistent with the main campus.

Communication both within and across the campuses has been emphasized in order to achieve the desired quality in the outreach centers.

The primary challenge as I recollect it was the growth that we were experiencing and maintaining the quality of instruction and the quality of service as we were growing so rapidly and at so many different sites. Also the internal communication to ensure that the quality was perceived as being consistent too (Staff Member Smith).

The development of comparable student services in the outreach areas has proven to be a challenge. An increasing number of adjunct (part-time) faculty have been hired to teach the additional sections of courses needed to serve these students. The consistency of

student outcomes among the campuses as well as among full-time and adjunct faculty needed to be addressed.

We're seeing growth at both our [main] campus and our [metropolitan] campus. And one of the things that growth has brought is certainly the additional use and high percentage use of adjunct faculty to teach classes. So that has also really made us aware again of consistency of outcomes and how important outcomes assessment and measures are so that we can make sure that students are receiving what they need at all locations (Administrator Waters).

While serving more students created some challenges, the College benefited by looking beyond its main campus to focus on outreach needs. Faculty and staff were forced to pay attention to the needs of the outreach sites to maintain the quality that they had worked to create.

The other thing that I think the growth has done for us is that it's challenged many of our people to think more globally, think more across campuses instead of just concentrating maybe just on the campus that they work in (Administrator Waters).

Serving students in outreach positively altered the perspective of those on campus. The diversity of the students across the different campuses has caused faculty and staff to examine a much different student population than they traditionally served to meet the needs of a much greater variety of students. Working with students at different locations has made faculty and staff more attentive to the increasing range of students' motivations and abilities

We've been affected by growth by providing more opportunities. We're able to outstretch to a larger service area by expanding like the [metropolitan] Center, and [an outreach] Campus. ...that part has really been expanded and continues to grow. ...it really has broadened our perspectives. Instead of looking that Midwest is simply this few square blocks here in the downtown of Central City, we have more of a global look and a larger region that we know we're serving that is really diverse in the type of students we're serving at our different locations. We've really raised awareness on diverse populations and [are] trying to step out to truly meet needs that are different (Staff Member Thompson).

Those working at the College are not naïve as to the problems that can come with growth. They recognize that growing too fast can exacerbate many inherent challenges that come with increasing enrollment. Employees realize that sustained growth is often preferable to spikes in enrollment. While the College benefits financially from increasing enrollment, too much growth was not desirable.

Excessive growth is not necessarily good. You need to grow within your ability to respond. Since the funding doesn't increase exponentially like it used to with growth and enrollment, maybe you don't want to grow quite so fast. We're doing what we can to manage growth. We want to continue to grow, but not 18-20% a year (Administrator Payne).

Many participants understand that the growth must be managed and manageable. With a long-term growth pattern such as Midwest has experienced, the College was able to prepare for the increasing demands placed on its services and facilities. Growth over time allowed the institution to accommodate more students more effectively and efficiently. Employees also expressed caution, though, as to how long such growth would continue. The College has not seen an enrollment downturn in the last several years, but interviewees acknowledged that they were quite aware of such a possibility. Cautious optimism keeps the College vigilant in case of an enrollment decline.

Probably the biggest challenges, going back to the early '90's was actually dealing with our growth. 'How we were going to manage it and how we were going to do it and not over staff but work the staff that we had?' When you're in a period of rapid growth you don't know how long that's going to last so you always don't anticipate and build an institution like that's going to be your forever. Fortunately, we haven't lost any of it. But what goes up fast can come down fast. And with the state always a little bit on the bubble on finance and reorganization, it's kept us being really alert to being stable and being able to withstand any downturn, being prepared if we were to have a downturn. ...it's really easy to [think that] this growth is going to go on forever. I don't think any of us really anticipated that it might always just last forever (Administrator White).

Many employees commented on how fortunate the College is relative to other colleges in the region. The physical improvements to the main campus, including new buildings, have facilitated the recruiting of both students and faculty. It is easier to entice others to come to the College when those being recruited can see the building projects and other improvements being to the campus. The enrollment growth has become regenerative.

It's very well known that several community colleges in the state are struggling. And, we always felt like the favorite kid, I guess. ...we just continue to get new dorms and this beautiful new building that we're in for the arts and sciences and another building is going in across the street, another instructional building. We need more classrooms. And, even after this new building, it's just growing so much, and because of that we're able to attract just a very high quality student in terms of performance students in my area, music and theater and art....It's also attracted some nationally ranked teachers here. It's just a good thing all around. The growth builds growth builds growth (Faculty Member Olson).

Partnerships in the greater metropolitan area will most likely continue the enrollment growth. The most recent partnership revolves around technical training for the aviation industry. Business and industry training has expanded from where it was in the early 1990s. Outreach enrollments, especially at the metropolitan campus, have remained strong and have led to uninterrupted growth. Opportunities are present through these partnerships for continued enrollment growth.

We have started a new aviation tech school in [the city.] That's a huge opportunity for us. That gives us a different look at business and industry training that we haven't had in the past. There's an opportunity. Our [metropolitan center] continues to remain a huge opportunity for growth for us. The building of partnerships is a huge opportunity. And we're going to continue to develop those and add to those and enhance those. ...we're in an exciting time (Administrator Waters).

The effects of growth have not always been positive. Employees noted that fewer opportunities exist presently to interact with each other. Enrollment increases have led to

an increase in faculty and staff. Some of the social activities that earlier revolved around a smaller number of employees have been lost. As the College grew, some of these social functions were discontinued. Some employees longingly miss “the old days” in regard to these social events.

We used to have get-togethers or we'd have pot luck lunches. And we used to do things like that when they were smaller. ...it was important to some of them, that family feel, that closeness. As we've grown that's been a little bit harder to do, and harder for them to accept (Staff Member Johnson).

More people on campus diminished the intimate feel at the College. The fact is that the College is no longer a small institution. As the College has grown, it is more difficult to know everyone and interact as a close-knit group. Not everyone knows each other like they did before the growth of the College.

It's changed the culture a little bit. We are no longer the personal college to the degree that we used to be. Everybody doesn't know everybody and their family, and their kids, and their aunts and their uncles, employees to employees and employees to students, like they did 15 years ago. It has affected that. We've tried to retain as much of that small-school feel as we could. But, the fact of the matter is that there's just an awful lot of folks now that you don't know the way you used to know them (Administrator Payne).

Growth of the College has changed the way decisions are made. The increasing size and complexity of the College has made it more difficult for the president to know the detailed workings of the College. Decision-making authority needed to be decentralized in order to effectively manage the growing organizations. Much of the control that previous resided with the president had to be shared with the rest of the College.

Part of the change is due to the size and growth of the College. ...back in the late '80's, it was probably possible for one person, be it the president or vice president to be in more control because we weren't as spread out. We were a single campus, basically a single building where most of the classes were held and most of the offices were there. It's a lot easier at that point to be one person in control. The growth of the institution as a whole, in terms of student population, employees and programs makes it very difficult to make unilateral decisions (Faculty Member Robinson).

Enrollment growth is a distinct outcome of the change process that was implemented at Midwest. Increases in student enrollment can be directly linked to the strategies of open communication and empowerment. As the organization allowed more operational latitude with faculty and staff, they become empowered to grow and develop their programs. The decentralization of decision making authority was both a result of the enrollment growth and an impetus for more growth.

College a Focal Point in Community

The College's internal operations have evolved as a result of the change strategies. So, too, has its relationship with the community. The College has a higher profile in the community than it did in the late 1980s and early 1990s. A more noticeable presence has directly related to increased community support. "In the early '90's the community did not know as much about the College as they do now. And I don't think that there was the appreciation of the College that I see now" (Board Member Stevens).

The momentum and energy level at the College was felt throughout the community.

All at once Midwest County, a little old sleepy place over there on the west side of Central City became the thing. We are now one of the largest employers in the county. We are the focal point of the community. Not only did we see things happen on campus, it permeated throughout the city and the county (Staff Member Henderson).

The growth has affected the College's standing in the community, particularly due to the new fine arts center. The community has become more involved in College

activities as a result of physical expansion of the campus. The construction activities on the campus caused the community to pay more attention to what was happening at the College. The new buildings have signaled new energy and a new interest in the College on the part of the community.

I want to talk to you about what the building meant to the community. It is truly a case of 'build it and they will come' scenario.... You have a presence, people are proud of it. People say 'Oh, look at what the College is doing,' because they can see a visible change. It was the beginning of a lot of good, solid expansion here on the campus, which included dormitories, cafeteria, improvements in general to the physical plant. It was such a significant, there was a blank lot here for twenty years than all of a sudden here this was. It was a huge significance. That gave us opportunity to be more high profile (Staff Member Parker).

The community has helped finance the growth of the College. Local fundraising for the fine arts center was impressive, raising more than one million dollars. The College's fundraising success speaks well of its secure position within the community. The level of support the College receives from the community was reported to be quite high.

There was a lot of local enthusiasm, and over a million dollars was raised for [the new fine arts building] with local support. And that is a significant amount from a small rural area. That was a very prevalent climate. A lot of hope put into the development of the building and the ongoing role of the College and the community (Staff Member Parker).

The changes at the College have been well received by the community. The community takes pride in the College and its accomplishments. Hometown pride in the College is exhibited not only by those who have a direct connection to the College, but also by local businesses and the community at large.

It's something [the College] that the community is very proud of. I'm just amazed at the support from the community for the College, people that don't have students going here. It's just a part of the community. It really is very well supported by businesses and community people who attend the programs. It's very respected (Staff Member Barber).

The regard for the College's role in economic development has improved as well. Many within the community definitely see the College as an asset. "I can't tell you how many times through those years that people would say the best thing that we have going for us is the College. That feeling was there all through the '90's and continues to this day" (Board Member Stevens).

Leadership's Influence on Organizational Culture

Following such a significant level of organizational change with CQI, employees at the College identified leadership as a key factor in moving the institution forward. The training that accompanied the CQI model was seen as a positive as well. The organizational mindset was changed: input and involvement were encouraged, and employees' ideas were taken seriously.

I would say leadership from the president and the administration. Training...part of that culture change, making it more accepted to have ideas, being participants on teams, encouraging people to share their ideas, to know that those ideas would be looked at and shared. It's not 100% perfect and it probably never will be or never was. ...the naysayer that are always going to be there...But that's not my personal philosophy, and so I've always tried to encourage...to try to bring them along. Probably there's been some coaching too. I think probably just the way business was being conducted it was a lot more open to quality improvement and to new ideas (Staff Member Thompson).

The ways in which administrators approach their duties and interact with employees was identified as an influence on the culture as well. The administration was given credit (and the responsibility) for affecting the campus climate as well as the culture. The positive work environment as well as a future focus was attributed to the administration.

We like to have fun. ...and that's probably not appropriate to say. We like to have fun. ...that's one of the things that just really got me going in coming here, and helped drive me, is everyone was up. ...we all go through our ups and downs, but the mood of the campus tends to be up, joking. ...looking ahead not back. That just seems to be what flows through our system. Now, that goes up and down and it depends a lot on administration (Faculty Member Edwards).

The influence of leadership is also readily apparent to the member of the Board of Trustees whom I visited. President Winters was commended for his human relations skills as well as his ability to facilitate employees' input. The way in which President Winters approaches shared decision making with faculty and staff was considered to be an asset. In addition, the president's length of service at Midwest was seen as a positive influence on the organizational culture.

[Winter's] attitude has had a very significant impact on the culture of the College. ...he's been here all through the sixteen years. ...Fredricks was an excellent president, but he was an autocratic person and [Winters] is a people person. ... Fredricks...issued the orders and I think Winters takes input and then brings it back (Board Member Stevens).

The president was credited for much of the impact in the culture change. Dr. Winters' vision and his forward thinking were noted often as impressive strengths that have positively impacted the College. President Winters has been able to continually encourage innovation and to push the institution in new directions. These skills are valued and appreciated.

You would have to start that [culture change] with Dr. Winters. ...[he] is an exceptional individual that comes along occasionally and people have the opportunity to be part of his thinking. He's very visionary, and he's very much in tune with the things that are happening. And the moves that he has made for our college, adding programs, dropping programs, doing visionary things that are out in front of us. He's always working out in front of us. That is, to me, the key (Staff Member Henderson).

The Vice-President of Academic and Student Affairs was praised as well for her contributions to the organizational acceptance of CQI. A change model such as CQI doesn't become adopted without some resistance. Faculty and staff needed to be allowed assimilate the new ideas over time with ongoing support from the administration.

Employees applauded the vice president for keeping upbeat and energetic in regard to quality strategies.

Probably part of it [change in culture] is an acceptance of the concept, of the idea [CQI]. That has to have time to evolve and people take on those values. I would attribute some of it in our administration. I think in particular there's been some great leadership that has changed that has just operates in such a positive way, and it's more on the Vice-President level (Staff Member Thompson).

Many employees at Midwest consider leadership to be a necessary and essential aspect of the College's success—in the past and in the future. Ongoing leadership is critical for the continued growth of the College. “[the College] is going to continue to grow and be one of the top colleges in the state because they are going to have good leadership. And I think that's very important” (Staff Member Johnson).

Continuous Quality Improvement and the Organizational Culture

The College's Acceptance of CQI

Several of the individuals I interviewed felt that a general acceptance of CQI was present among employees. Although it took some time, the CQI model has received the endorsement of many employees. Numerous individuals comments on how good the working conditions are at Midwest; many attributed this environment to the changes brought about through CQI.

Just recognizing the value of it [CQI] and the necessity of it. There are a few people who relish it. I'd say most people tolerate it in terms of the process. Now, I think the concept and the philosophy is pretty widely embraced. I think some people here are more aware of what they've got than others...what a good thing we have here (Staff Member Smith).

Some believe that CQI has been helped employees better understand their role within the College by opening communication on campus. A greater respect for the decision-making

process has been created. More people are focused on global issues rather than their individual concerns. It has become okay to ask questions.

There is an appreciation within the institution as far as the culture, there's an appreciation for the decisions that are made by administration. ...it's not 'that's them and this is us' anymore. It seems like they are working for the whole. I think that maybe the whole culture has changed in that people understand more of their role and how they fit into. And that's been a big piece...We're still not 100%. There are always going to be communication issues. But I think people for the most part understand where they fit into the organization and their purpose. And again that's coming from the culture of communicating from not only the top down but the bottom up as well. So I think there's just more of an openness of sharing ideas and asking if you don't understand (Staff Member Thompson).

Staff members identified employees' comfort level with change as a determining factor in the success of the CQI movement. The College's satisfaction with CQI evolved over several years. Resistance to the concept has waned as the College continued to move forward with the TQM/CQI initiative. The vocabulary and improvement processes are finally embedded into the culture.

Faculty and staff members who don't have a problem with change, can embrace change, and are flexible, have had no difficulty assimilating the tools, the concept, the ideas behind TQM. [There were] those that are resistant to change that became a kind of flavor of a month thing as new initiatives were piloted, tried, abandoned. But I think, ultimately, because of the continuous trend and movement towards TQM, enough of the vocabulary made its way into the culture that everybody is relatively comfortable with it now (Staff Member Porter).

Faculty emphasized that the journey toward improvement is ongoing, and the vigilance required for improvement must be continuous. Employees have helped make the CQI process work, and must keep attending to the strategies to continue improvement. Many understand that the positive environment will not be preserved without constant attention and maintenance.

We have so many good teachers who have been nationally recognized as master teachers....I think those people have helped make Total Quality Management. They understand the need for it, and are committed to doing that. It's not an arrival process; it's a 'keep doing it'. 'Now that we've done this, how can we improve even more?' (Faculty Member Olson).

Midwest's persistence with CQI appears to be factor in the organizational change that has occurred at the College. Some employees initially expected the continuous improvement movement to be a passing fancy. However, once they could see that the College remained committed to the concept over several years, acceptance of CQI increased across the campus. In this regard, continuous improvement strategies pulled the College together to meet shared goals.

CQI Evolved Through Teams

The implementation of CQI has led to a greater propensity to solve problems through teams. "I think most decisions and policies and processes are started in some kind of interdisciplinary team from across the institution that looks at something" (Staff Member Smith). While the concept of "quality teams" is no longer in place, the idea lives on. The vernacular has changed but the concept remains. Employees continue to form working groups to address problems that arise.

Back when I first started we had teams for quality initiatives. ...it's fizzled in a way, but it's also become kind of part of the culture because we do have teams. We don't call them quality initiatives but where we recognize an area that needs work, people will come together and work on that (Staff Member Smith).

Some recognize, though, that a team-based approach to decision-making can have its drawbacks. Duplication can arise, and a lack of communication can hinder progress. Knowing what other teams are doing is imperative to ensure that two teams are not attempting to solve the same problem. Open communication across the campus can help prevent repetition among teams.

With the team-based style that we have, sometimes decision making is difficult because you're constantly trying to make decisions within teams. And sometimes you have two teams working on the same project, and they don't really know [it.] That would be a communication issue (Staff Member Davidson).

Employees talked about the ways in which teams slow down the decision-making process. Scheduling times for meetings can be difficult, and reaching consensus can take time. "If you're actually trying to get something done quickly, teams are not really good because they slow us down. You can't get them together, scheduling problems, and nobody will agree" (Staff Member Johnson).

Even with its limitations, though, many see interdisciplinary teams as a positive technique to solve problems. The valuable input received from a cross-section of the College can offset the time and energy required to make a group decision or recommendation. Teams don't work in all situations, but the team concept has shown to be effective at Midwest. As a result, many have shown interest in working on team-based projects.

Everybody's willing to jump on a team. Sometimes I have a feeling that we overwork stuff. Rather than just making a decision to do something, 'Let's get a team together and figure out how to do this'. Sometimes that's not always the best way to go about doing it. But most people realize that if you get input from several people, you're going to come up with a better product (Staff Member Allen).

Team-based decision-making has become prevalent at Midwest. While there may be times that bringing a team together postpones a decision and discourages action, the College has generally seen positive outcomes from making decisions within a team-based environment. This arrangement would probably not be effective in all organizational cultures, but it has worked for Midwest.

The Culture is Conducive to CQI

In many ways, the College's culture has been receptive to continuous quality improvement. The small, close-knit atmosphere present before CQI was implemented likely contributed to the success of the improvement strategies implemented through CQI. Many employees have taken ownership of the continuous improvement strategies. Without a supportive culture in place, the implementation of CQI would have been difficult.

If there wasn't a good culture, a good family feel, you would not get people to do this. You wouldn't be able to bring them on board, and everybody really pretty much is on board as far as I can tell. Our culture has made it possible to continue doing CQI (Administrator Hansen).

Respect for fellow employees and a sense of belonging have benefited the CQI implementation. For such a change strategy to work, employees needed a positive regard for each other and a supportive environment in which to operate. High expectations for individuals and the College as a whole aided the implementation process. Valuing others and the willingness to place expectations on each other have made CQI possible.

There is a real sense of family at Midwest. ...there seems to be an underlying value to treat people as people, not just as a worker, but also to set high expectations for the employee to perform at their best level. Continuous improvement is definitely a value I feel that is at Midwest (Staff Member Thompson).

CQI appears to have had a reciprocating effect on the organizational culture as well. CQI has brought the campus together, working toward common goals and improving communication. CQI has improved the team building at the College.

It's made us closer. We're all pulling together for the same good. ... I think the people that are here are wanting to do the best job that they can. And it makes for more teamwork, camaraderie, whatever you want to call it (Staff Member Allen).

Employees frequently discussed the link between culture and CQI. The existing culture present at the College before and during the transition to continuous improvement likely created the conditions necessary for CQI to work. CQI, in turn, has strengthened many aspects of the College's culture. That reciprocation developed over time.

I think they're interrelated [CQI and culture,] and they grow together. ...They kind of spin off of each other. You can't have one without the other...they kind of grow together. ... You can't cram it down people's throats. You've got to get a group and let it grow and work through...You can't walk into an institution and say, 'Okay, we're a CQI institution today.' You've got to develop the culture and the CQI as it develops together (Administrator White).

CQI has influenced and impacted the culture of the College; the culture has adapted to facilitate CQI. "The whole organization kind of is starting to respond. We were trying to do a new concept maybe in the same old pattern with the same organizational structure. And now the organizational structure has changed to help the concept and, and just our vision expand" (Staff Member Thompson).

Embedding CQI in the Culture

Employees recognize and acknowledge that CQI was implemented to invoke change at the College. "I just think he [President Winters] saw it as a means to move the institution forward, and he's just an extremely visionary man. I always think he's ahead of his time. And in this particular thing he really was" (Administrator Waters). This framework stimulated the involvement from the faculty and staff that the president intended. "Dr. Winters was really looking for a way to get the organization more involved in the decision making. And this was a natural fit" (Administrator Payne). CQI also facilitated growth and development of the College. "It just is a great operating philosophy in order to continue to grow. And I think that's what Dr. Winters probably

saw was that it was a tremendous opportunity to bring people in and assist in the growth of what the potential could be” (Staff Member Thompson).

Many at the College have come to realize, though, that the change strategies can not be pushed onto the organization too quickly. The organizational culture can not undergo wholesale changes immediately. Leaders have to work within the existing culture to make adaptations and secure ownership of the changes from the employees. Cultures need to be allowed to develop over time.

Every institution or organization should have their own culture that develops. You should not try to copy any body else’s culture. ...you develop your own culture. Then, if you need changes, you change ...gradually. ...You don’t just walk in and turn something around. And that’s what too many people try to do. You have to work through it slowly and let those things take place. And there has to be leadership in doing that, but you have to have buy-in to develop that culture. ...It has to have direction, but you kind of have to let it develop on its own a little bit. You can’t force it. You have to give it the direction, but you can’t force that culture as it develops (Administrator White).

After all these years, CQI has become part of the organizational culture. It is becoming integrated into the fabric of the organization rather being a separate activity designed to move the institution forward. At some point, the concepts behind continuous improvement have to go beyond theory and must be put into action. Midwest appears to be doing just that.

I think we have finally matured to the point that we’re actually doing it rather than trying to do it in some kind of academic exercise. We’ve stressed getting away from all the buzzwords just like CQI and TQM. You can get so hung up in the techniques of how it should be done that you never do it (Administrator Meyers).

For many who have been with the College for some time, CQI has become a general operating philosophy. Long-time employees at the College have seen continuous improvement at go through several evolutions and name changes. While the lingo may

change, the concepts and principles remain the same. The College is focusing on improvement.

...they keep changing the name. It's still the same thing. 'How can we do better for our customers?' Whether they're internal customers or external customers. They just put a different name on it. But the whole idea is, 'How can we do our jobs better?' I think the people that have been around here for a long time, it's ingrained in us. ...we're always looking at ways to improve. Sometimes they want us to report it differently, or look at it a little bit differently. But the whole idea is, 'what can we do to get better?' (Staff Member Allen).

Much of the formality of the CQI movement has diminished. "I think a lot of the principles [of CQI] have become part of the culture, and the labels have kind of disappeared." (Staff Member Smith). Continuous quality improvement at Midwest County Community College has undergone several makeovers, but the general principles have remained.

You can call it what you want. We're still doing it today, only we don't call it TQM. But the same attitude and the same vibrant interest in taking care of your jobs, and doing a good job individually, and if everyone does a good job individually it helps the whole group. And that sort of thing still exists today. The TQM movement of that time is no longer there in title. But it most certainly is here in action (Staff Member Henderson).

One faculty member may have best summed up the reason for CQI's continuing influence on the College's culture: "I think once you implement the idea of quality management, once you implement the idea of participatory management, if you will, that it's really hard to put that back in a bottle" (Faculty Member Cook).

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this case study can be outlined using four headings: (a) the function of the change strategy, (b) the timing of the change, (c) the permitting conditions for organizational change, and (d) the importance of leadership. My analysis of these results indicates the continuous quality improvement strategies at Midwest Community College serve a distinct purpose, and the implementation of these strategies led to a change in the organizational culture of the College. This organizational change was positively affected by the timing of events leading to the change, by conditions that allowed changes to permeate the organization, and by leaders who embraced and advanced the change strategies.

The Function of the Change Strategy

This case study involving Midwest Community College substantiates Weick's (2000) research that long-term change efforts can impact organizational culture substantially. As a result of continuous quality improvement at Midwest, many employees perceive a definite change in decision making processes, in communication strategies and information sharing, in team building, and in the College's responsiveness to the community. Continuous quality improvement provided both an impetus for change and the vehicle through which change was transmitted.

The pressing need for workforce development in the community and surrounding area presented an opportunity for the College to become involved in quality training.

Midwest's credibility in offering this training to business and industry rested largely with its own experience in quality principles and strategies. To fulfill a need in its service area, the College needed to engage itself in this change strategy. What began as a community response initiative soon led to intrinsic benefits for the College itself.

Weick (2000) contended that a change strategy can improve organizational performance assuming that three conditions are met: (a) the strategy gets people to engage in action, (b) the strategy gives people a direction, and (c) the strategy supplies legitimate explanations that are energizing and enables actions to be repeated. The implementation of continuous quality improvement at Midwest Community College meets all these conditions.

CQI, implemented correctly, creates employee involvement and empowerment and initiates problem-solving teamwork (Goetsch & Davis, 2001.) Participants told me repeatedly that such has been the case at Midwest. Employees described an atmosphere where employees' opinions are solicited and valued. "We are very much listened to and we have input, and we help drive a lot of the stuff. I would say it's come a long, long way. And it's very, very positive" (Faculty Member Olson). Quality teams have increased opportunities for faculty and staff to become involved in decision making. Faculty and staff across the campus are more likely to participate in team-based decision making due to the results that come from other quality teams. By taking an active role in decision making, many faculty and staff have learned that they can impact the issues that affect them.

I believe that CQI has provided Midwest with a clear direction and focus. Faculty, staff, and administrators articulated a desire for quality improvement, to serve community

needs and to build the College's reputation for quality programs and services. Students and student learning were discussed often as a College priority and mentioned with conviction; it was obvious to me that the College has aligned its CQI strategies to improve student learning. While concern for students may not have originated with CQI, CQI has provided a means to keep student learning at the forefront of decision making.

The third condition for improved organizational performance according to Weick (2000) requires the change strategy to provide legitimate explanations that are energizing and that enable actions to be repeated. Faculty and staff indicated that the development of quality teams at Midwest and the subsequent increase in shared decision making helped sustain employee involvement during the implementation of CQI. Many of the recommendations that were brought forward by quality teams were approved by the Quality Council and instituted at the College. Several employees noted the outcomes of their involvement, and these visible improvements spurred others to become involved in CQI strategies.

CQI, by design, requires improvement processes to be ongoing and creates a framework for *continuous* improvement. Perhaps most important regarding organizational performance at Midwest, CQI has become embedded within the organizational culture.

'How can we do better for our customers?' Whether they're internal customers or external customers. ...the whole idea is, 'How can we do our jobs better?' I think the people that have been around here for a long time, it's ingrained in us. ...we're always looking at ways to improve. Sometimes they want us to report it differently, or look at it a little bit differently. But the whole idea is, 'What can we do to get better?' (Staff Member Allen).

Employees indicated that Midwest has been involved in CQI long enough and has persisted with the same improvement strategies over time to allow the processes to

become ingrained into their culture. Continuous improvement necessitates that the processes be repeated. Midwest has repeated improvement processes enough times for many employees to be invested in them and actually see results.

Educational Opportunities for Employees

A quality-centered organization is one that provides professional development opportunities for employees while working to improve organizational processes (Banta, 1993.) Several leaders at Midwest have made a concerted effort to support the continuing education of employees. The College has encouraged employees to become involved in the NISOD Conference and has sent buses of faculty and staff to this annual event. The College implemented an employee development program to address its internal training needs and developed a mentoring program for those who have been promoted or accepted new responsibilities. Faculty and staff have opportunities to develop their leadership abilities. “If you’re willing to take on a project, and you get it approved then they let you do it. ...there’s a lot of opportunity to try new things and work on leadership skills” (Staff Member Davidson).

As promoted by Seymour (1992), Midwest has attempted to enhance the quality of its culture by supporting employee professional development. By encouraging new learning throughout the organization, the College has worked to create a culture of learning as depicted by Roberts, Ross, and Kleiner (1994). In learning organizations, people feel they are doing something that matters. The participants I interviewed clearly articulated their strong connection to students and the difference that they make in students’ lives. “Number one is the students, then the College, and then us. As long as we keep that as our guide wire that decisions are easier to make” (Faculty Member Olson).

The passion expressed by faculty and staff as they spoke about their role in educating students and their deep understanding of the philosophy of community colleges was truly impressive.

Putting CQI Into Action

Midwest's experience with continuous quality improvement demonstrates the time, investment, and commitment often required to implement a change in the organizational culture. At the time that this research was conducted, Midwest had been utilizing TQM strategies for more than 15 years. Employees at Midwest noted definite improvements in employee involvement and shared decision making. One key change in the operation of the College involves the increased interaction among the various employee classifications of faculty, staff, and administration.

Lawler, Albers Mohrman, and Ledford (1992) identified a focus on cross-functional involvement as a strength of the TQM process. The cross-functional teams created at Midwest through the development of quality teams and other TQM strategies pulled together different groups of employees and "forced" them to interact to solve a particular problem or address a certain issue. Prior to TQM, faculty, staff, and administrators did not have a high regard for Members of groups other than their own.

The staff didn't think that faculty or administration cared about them or thought that they were needed. They thought they were above them. And that was just kind of a feeling I got from staff. Faculty, I think they probably didn't think that administration appreciated them as much as they should (Staff Member Johnson).

Cross-functional teams helped break down barriers among the groups, and employees from different divisions of the College learned more about each other and the respective duties assigned.

I don't think faculty really understood what some of the staff members did, what their jobs were, what their function was at the College, and visa versa. And, I think that management philosophy [TQM,] that's one of the things that it helped break down, those barriers too. Obviously, if you get to know someone and get to know their job and their responsibility within a team or within an organization it just gives you a little bit more appreciation for them (Staff Member Jones).

The increased interaction and the interdependence perceived among employees that has resulted from TQM offers a lesson for all leaders attempting to implement change within their organizations. The human element can not be ignored when it comes to implementing change. Employees tend to respond better to and interact more positively with people they know. Creating opportunities for employee interaction can help create a culture that promotes respect, understanding, care and support for fellow employees. "It's an enjoyable place to work. I enjoy my job. And the people that are here are good to work with. If you need something you ask and they'll do everything they can to help out. It's a real family-type atmosphere" (Staff Member Allen). Strong collegial relationships translate into a culture where employees are committed to each other and the good of the organization

Several participants in this study indicated that Midwest Community College has been able to put CQI into action and make it work, contrary to the findings from Ryan (1995.) Ryan asserted that institutions adopting TQM strategies often fail to produce substantial changes within the organization. Midwest seems to have avoided the common pitfalls noted in Ryan's research, namely that organizational rewards remain constant, employees continue to fear making mistakes, staff development training does not occur, and that employees do not feel empowered.

The results from this study and the bulk of Chapter 4 speak directly to the culture of empowerment and innovation that has been perceived at Midwest since the adoption of

continuous quality improvement. The College has invested significant time and money making sure that employees have ample opportunity for professional development. A significant outcome of the implementation of TQM has been the employee empowerment and corresponding sense of purpose that has developed among most of the employees with whom I visited. These employees relayed to me that the College's organizational culture encourages employees to initiate new projects and to pilot new ideas.

It's a great place to work. And, I think, anybody will tell you that. It's, 'Go out and try it, do it, we'll support you. If it doesn't work, we'll go someplace else. We'll try something else.' You're free to try things. You're encouraged when you do well (Faculty Member Olson).

Autonomy and self-direction were two concepts that were reiterated by faculty and staff. Employees spoke of the considerable latitude and freedom they have in the way they do their jobs.

I have seen a lot of willingness to let people meet the outcomes and the objectives within their jobs in any way that they see is appropriate. Obviously there is leadership here. And so you do understand the hierarchy, but in general I do feel like we have a lot of freedom to come at the goals in the way that we feel is the best way to do it (Staff Member Davidson).

Perhaps most telling about the culture of empowerment that appears to have developed is the notion that mistakes are permitted. Not all initiatives or projects are going to be successful. Failure is a sign that an attempt was made. Many times, doing *something* is better than doing nothing. "You can make mistakes here. Now, I don't know how many you can make. But you're allowed to make a mistake. ...As you give people more self-direction, they have to be allowed to make some mistakes" (Administrator White).

One area identified by Ryan (1995) where Midwest has struggled involves employee recognition and rewards. During the initial rendition of quality teams, Midwest recognized the best individual and team initiatives with plaques and cash awards. This

recognition was discontinued, however, after a short time. Projects that would have likely been addressed by a new ad-hoc quality team began to be referred to standing committees, and the notion of individual or team recognition was deemed to be contrary to the idea of college-wide quality improvement.

It seems like any recognition like that that we've had on campus has pretty much been considered not consistent with the quality philosophy...that we honor everybody and recognize everyone's contributions. Which I don't think is so wonderful. I think people need recognition, and I like to see people recognized (Staff Member Smith).

While it is understandable that those responsible for the recognition of quality initiatives would want to be more inclusive in the recognition efforts, essentially all formal recognition of quality improvement was curtailed in an attempt to be more politically correct. Singling out accomplishments might very well have seemed contrary to the idea of building upon broader, more global successes. However, by trying to avoid leaving anyone out, no one received any recognition. A positive piece of the organizational culture has been lost.

Actually Changing the Organizational Culture

Brown (1993) and Harari (1993) indicated that between one-fifth and one-third of the TQM programs implemented have actually produced significant results. Based on what I witnessed at Midwest, I would include the College in the positive category. In my opinion, the success that Midwest has seen has more to do with the way in which the culture was managed than the quality strategies that were put into place. Woods (1997, p. 49) stated, "Increasingly, organizations are discovering that quality management is more about cultural change than it is about any specific practices." In the case of Midwest, TQM or CQI was merely the vehicle used to institute cultural changes.

When President Winters came to Midwest, he brought a vision that made organizational change necessary. The structure and philosophy of TQM made the changes possible. Expectations were increased for faculty in order to expand their role beyond teaching. President Winters encouraged innovation from within the organization and supported faculty and staff as they implemented their new ideas. Under President Fredricks, employees seemed to have a more narrow view of what the College could be. TQM provided President Winters with an overriding philosophy to empower employees, increase shared decision-making, and create real change within the institution.

Smart, Kuh, and Tierney (1997) argued that a cultural perspective of an organization views organizational change as a process, not a product. They contended that the way that individuals (employees) interpret the organization to themselves and to others should be a key focus for the organization. If his argument is valid, then Midwest Community College found some success with TQM through the *process* of expanding expectations, viewpoints, and the vision of those who work at the College. Over time, several faculty, staff, and administrators began to interpret the institution differently.

In comparison to today, I think it [the operation of the College] was a lot more structured, a lot more regimented than it is right now. I think there was almost a fear among employees...they weren't as open of sharing new thoughts and ideas. They were to do their job as directed. And there wasn't a lot of room to expand any new ideas.... [With President Winters,] the attitude that existed was thrown out the window. The new attitude of growth, expansion, enrollment became the theme of that period. And, in fact, still is as we speak today. But, it certainly was a transition from one philosophical view to another philosophical view. (Staff Member Thompson).

Some employees began to realize that they worked at an institution that could create a much greater impact on student learning and community service than it had in the past.

The new leadership at the College began changing the mindset of faculty and staff regarding the ways they approached their jobs. Gone (for the most part) are the days where technical education and transfer education were seen as two separate functions. Left behind is the notion that fiscal responsibility translates into not taking risks. The idea of efficiency of operation at the expense of expanding the College's mission has been long since dismissed. Most employees I interviewed now fully comprehend the scope and functions of a comprehensive community college. Over time, employees' perceptions of the College have been altered.

We know exactly who we are and who we train and ...that we're not in the ivory tower. But we accept everybody, bring them in, take them from where they are. The standards are high so some make it and some don't. But, because our numbers are low [class size,] and our teachers have a community college philosophy that we're going to take you where you are and we're going to die trying to get you to be successful. And that's a difference in philosophy than it is from a university (Faculty Member Olson).

Faculty and staff take pride in the fact that Midwest is an open-door community college and serves a diverse population. The ideals of community service and community outreach are at the forefront of the College's agenda.

We're a community college trying to provide for the diversities of the population. Always changing, offering new programs, reaching out to new segments of the population for various reasons: job training, transfer programs, technology related programs. Basically trying to provide again for the diverse population that we serve (Faculty Member Robinson).

The transformation that has occurred in the organizational culture at Midwest reinforces Bate's (1994) conception that a cultural change strategy should signify a paradigm shift in the organization. Midwest has altered its way of thinking in regard to employees' perceptions of each other and the College in general.

Continuous quality improvement strategies were implemented in such a way as to influence the organizational culture. The College was able to put CQI into action using cross-functional teams, increasing the interaction and interdependence among employees. The spirit of empowerment and innovation, along with the reiteration of employee autonomy and self-direction, caused the organization to interpret the operations of the College differently since the implementation of CQI. Employees have changed the way they think about the College; in essence, they have altered their “collective sense-making” regarding Midwest (Sackmann, 1992). CQI, as a change strategy, has had a lasting impact on the organizational culture.

The Timing of the Organizational Change

Midwest Community College is a prime example of the importance of the timing of major organizational change initiatives. Kerr’s (1995) contention that higher education institutions create a resistance and inertia to change was particularly evidenced at Midwest during Dr. Fredrick’s presidency.

No one knew about [the College.] No one knew anything about it. Fredricks did a wonderful job, but he ...didn’t expand the College. He had a chance to do, to go into different areas. He had a chance to go into [a metropolitan area,] as they are now, and he didn’t take that opportunity. ...he built a tremendous base but he was not entrepreneurial (Faculty Member Cook).

President Fredrick’s had done an admirable job of running a tight-knit, fiscally-sound community college. However, evidently he did not help the College grow or expand its mission. The inertia that had been created during Dr. Fredrick’s tenure was perhaps most pronounced with the former president’s health problems. “Beginning in the early '80's, his health and personal problems had deteriorated his leadership somewhat, so his last

few years here I don't think were nearly as boisterous as his previous ones" (Staff Member Parker).

I believe that the structured and regimented operation directed by Dr. Fredricks helped pave the way for success for President Winters and continuous quality improvement. With a history of being tightly managed and a waning effectiveness from a once strong, powerful leader, employees at the College were ready for a change, whether or not they recognized it at the time. The new ideas and approach brought forward by Dr. Winters were refreshing and liberating. Employees had newfound support, encouragement, and freedom to develop new initiatives. With the exciting opportunities that were presented with Dr. Winter's arrival, employees couldn't help but embrace many of the possibilities that were put in front of them. CQI (and Dr. Winters for that matter) may not have found nearly the success at Midwest had they not come to the College on the heels of Dr. Fredricks.

Dowling (2001) proposed that large, mature organizations often require a major event to precipitate change. Colleges and universities typically have established cultures that make change difficult from within. The arrival of a new president can, and did in this case, offer the major event needed to trigger the change process. Dowling contended that change within organizations generally occurs through one of two avenues: long-term, incremental change from within the organization or a more sudden external change. In the case of Midwest Community College, President Winters made use both strategies. The hiring of a new President allowed for the sudden change that is recommended by Dowling. The implementation of CQI over more than fifteen years would offer the long-term incremental strategy to push change from within the organization.

Dr. Winters realized that he had an opportunity to move the institution forward by making relatively quick adjustments. He took advantage of the timing of his arrival and the relative stagnation that preceded him in Dr. Fredricks' last years.

When I came in [date removed] we were just basically a pretty not very aggressive innovative organization...we had no online computer, we had no recruiters even. We had no idea who was coming to the College or why they were coming. We had no idea how many scholarships were out. We had one part-time recruiter who was in a closet downstairs in the basement.the philosophy was just keep it tight knit, keep it close to the vest and just basically, not do anything out of the ordinary or do anything to develop any new programs or to try to serve any more new student populations. It was just 'keep it right here'--close knit. And so, the enrollment at that time was about 600 FTE I think when I came. And there was just not a whole lot going on (President Winters).

President Winters made significant changes to the student services area soon after his arrival. He increased the size of the recruiting staff, hired a student activities director, added student health services, and added a new computer system. He made it quite clear to the organization that he would not be doing business as it had been done in the past.

For many at Midwest, the changes were refreshing. Dr. Winters brought new ideas and new energy. The organization needed a new direction, and a major external change worked in this situation. "I think that they [Dr. Winters and Dr. Riley, the chief academic officer] really set a pace, when he kind of hit the ground here; that has carried on. And a lot of it is contagious" (Faculty Member Edwards). On the other hand, President Winters understood that long-term change would need to be nurtured over time.

The first few years I came in it was, 'This is what we're going to do, and this is where we're going.' And probably moved too fast initially and had some Board Members suggest that. ...what appeared to me to be the glaring issues with the institution that I just feel like we needed to drive them and get them done. ... And then, through continuous improvement I pretty much said, 'Okay, what do you people think? Now what do we need to do to really be a better institution? How can we improve anything and everything?'

...I was willing to let them tell me even though I thought I may have things pretty well in place and was running pretty well. They needed to tell me what was wrong. And so it became more of an open sharing through CQI. (President Winters).

A different approach was necessary in order to move the institution beyond the initial changes. CQI created the framework for internal change as well as allowed the President to engage in a new leadership approach.

Starting Small

Allen and Kraft (1981) contended that cultural change can originate with small groups. Their research indicated that experimentation with an innovation or change increases the likelihood of successful widespread implementation. For Midwest, the initiation of quality teams provided the opportunity for “pilot projects” and allowed the organization to become more comfortable with shared decision-making and increased employee involvement. “People were encouraged that if there were ideas to come forward...there were even initiatives that would be rewarded and recognized. There were plaques given for teams that formed and started initiatives” (Staff Member Thompson).

Quality teams gave employees the opportunity to address a specific issue or a concern. “The opportunities would be that if there was something that you didn't like the way it was going or the way process was, you had the opportunity to form a team to address those directly” (Faculty Member Robinson). Quality teams essentially allowed the College to “phase in” and practice shared decision-making in cross-functional groups across the organization. This development advanced the adoption of CQI by letting those individuals interested in experimentation become directly involved in putting CQI into action--a strategy consistent with the research of Hedberg (1981). The strategy of quality

teams moved CQI forward by encouraging change agents from across the College to improve College processes.

A Culmination of Forces

Dowling (2001) discussed the forces that tend to drive cultural change: pressure for change, shared goals for change, the organizational capacity to change, and the appropriate rewards for change behavior. The implementation of CQI at Midwest involved all of those forces; the presence of multiple forces likely contributed to the success of the cultural change. The first driving force referenced by Dowling is pressure for change. I would argue that the changing expectation placed on employees, particularly faculty, created pressure for change.

We really worked hard at changing the role of a faculty Member from one of just going into that classroom doing their thing to a multi-faceted role that you're called to be a part of making this institution better in a variety of ways, whether it's recruiting or program development or involvement in committees on campus (President Winters).

While the changing expectations would eventually result in positive outcomes for faculty, pressure to adjust to the new expectations was present nonetheless. If faculty wanted to work well with the new president, they had to alter their attitudes about what it meant to be a faculty member.

The second force for cultural change present at Midwest involved shared goals for change. The shared goals came from the philosophies and tenets of TQM, namely shared decision-making, increased employee involvement, and employee empowerment. In order for continuous quality improvement to be successful at Midwest, the culture had to embrace the philosophies of TQM. The College, or at least a significant percentage of its employees, would need to rally around the newly shared goals offered through TQM.

Most of the leaders give you support. They're not going to say, 'Here's what you have to do, and here's how you have to do it.' They're going to say, 'You came up with the idea. You run with it. Check in when you need help. I'll be more than happy to help you' (Staff Member Allen).

A new approach to leadership emerged—one that gave up some control in favor of sharing goals and decisions with employees. The notion of shared goals has permeated the institution to the point that the values of the College have been positively altered.

I think it comes back to values and what are we saying is important. So the culture involves the people, the approachableness, the communication. You have to walk the talk. CQI is more than just a concept. It's actually treating others as you would like to be treated. It's looking to become better. The culture lends itself to that (Staff Member Thompson).

Shared goals have been a driving force in the organizational change at Midwest. The success of CQI (and the corresponding culture change) has been made possible due to the College's ability to incorporate shared values into its culture.

The third force outlined by Dowling (2001) relates to the organizational capacity to change. I believe that this force is connected to the timing in which the organizational changes were presented at Midwest. The organization was primed for a change. The last years of Dr. Fredrick's presidency created an organizational readiness for something new, exciting, and different.

As far as working conditions goes, '85, '86, '87 were kind of down years here. Our president...was getting close to retirement and just wasn't as energetic as he was when I came in '75. And, so the last couple of years...our former president had health problems. And everything was kind of a status quo. We were here, we worked, we did our job, and we carried on day by day. So, we kind of lost our leadership in that '85 to '87 time period (Staff Member Foster).

A bona fide distress was recalled among those interviewed regarding the lack of progress and direction during that period. Comments from employees who remembered those stagnant years lead me to believe that, as a result of the relative inaction during that time,

the College was waiting for something different. In this case, the readiness for a change prepared employees to respond favorably when the opportunity came.

The fourth and final driving force for cultural change noted by Dowling (2001) involves appropriate rewards for change behavior. The recognition program developed by the Quality Council at Midwest provided desired rewards and allowed the change behavior to be positively reinforced. While I have already discussed the negative perceptions that were created when the recognition program was phased out, its presence and impact increased the likelihood that more quality teams would form and more improvements would be made.

The findings from this case study offer examples and evidence that support Dowling's research relating to the forces driving organizational cultural change. The inertia of President Fredricks' last years as president created a readiness for change at the College; President Winters was able to capitalize on the eagerness for something new and different. President Winters created pressure for change by increasing expectations. TQM offered shared goals for change. Quality teams allowed the cultural change to start with small groups, and improvement initiatives were rewarded long enough for TQM to take hold. While any of these forces might not have impacted the culture in isolation, the combination of the forces together led to significant organizational change.

Conditions for Organizational Change

Collins (1998) and Dowling (2001) both emphasized the necessity of a clear vision for organizational change. The vision of President Winters was noted often by participants at Midwest. Dr. Winters' forward thinking was seen as a definite strength in the organizational change process. TQM provided a roadmap for change in terms of the

new philosophies that it brought to the College, and President Winters followed that map quite well. President Winters has been able to continually encourage innovation and to push the institution in new directions. His success in taking the organization through this cultural change was predicated on his ability to see new possibilities for the College.

I think you would have to start that [culture change] with Dr. Winters. ...[He] is an exceptional individual that comes along occasionally and people have the opportunity to be part of his thinking. He's very visionary, and he's very much in tune with the things that are happening. And the moves that he has made for our College--adding programs, dropping programs, doing visionary things that are out in front of us. He's always working out in front of us. And, so that's, to me, the key (Staff Member Henderson).

TQM presented a means by which Dr. Winters could advocate a cultural change, and he made good use of that opportunity. "I just think he saw it as a means to move the institution forward, and he's just an extremely visionary man. ...I always think he's ahead of his time. And, in this particular thing he really was" (Administrator Waters).

A Sense of Community

Allen and Kraft (1982) noted that the development of a sense of community and openness among organizational Members is often an overlooked factor in the success of a large-scale change effort. Prior to TQM, collegial relationships at the College were evidently strained. Granted, more social activities may have been available before the College experienced its rapid growth, and the employee numbers were smaller; however, faculty and staff (as a whole) apparently had negative perceptions about the regard each group had for the other (faculty versus staff.) In addition to the tension between faculty and staff, faculty in particular harbored some resentment for administrators not demonstrating appreciation for faculty's efforts.

Prior to TQM, the faculty, staff, and administrators did not interact as much with each other in cross-functional roles. Without much interaction in their job responsibilities, the different classifications of employees knew very little about the work each other did. Through quality teams and all-campus trainings and in-services, TQM provided a way to promote positive working relationships within the College. "I think that's what Dr. Winters probably saw was that [TQM] was a tremendous opportunity to bring people in and assist in the growth of what potential could be" (Staff Member Thompson). Now, cooperation and collegial relationships are prevalent where they weren't before. Several employees emphasized how much they enjoy working at the College and appreciate the relationships they have formed with their colleagues. From what I could tell, this spirit of collaboration across the different employee classifications was not predominant before the implementation of TQM.

Ownership in the Culture

Sathe (1985) spoke of the need to concentrate on intrinsic motivations and to minimize reliance on extrinsic motivations in order to change organizational values. While it is true that Midwest initially depended upon a recognition and reward program through its Quality Council, the idea of quality teams became integrated into the internal governance of standing committees at the College, so much so that intrinsic motivations became less important. For TQM to "take root" at Midwest, employees needed to take ownership in improvement efforts. The recognition program was discontinued when quality teams began forming as a regular means of addressing concerns that were brought forward by employees. Quality improvement eventually became part of the operation of the College, and the extrinsic recognition lost some of its value. It could be argued,

though, that a positive influence on the culture was lost when the recognition program went away.

Through quality teams, organizational change came from the employees themselves. Employees came to realize that they, individually and collectively, could make a *real* difference in the governance of the College. Employees at Midwest began to understand that opportunities existed to become involved in decision making.

You get the feeling here, if you want to take it [responsibility,] you have a voice. And most people feel encouraged to take it. And if they aren't encouraged to take it within themselves, it's my sense that that's more about their own self-esteem than it is about the cultural encouragement of the institution. Because the institution encourages us to take ownership. And if we don't it's our fault (Staff Member Parker).

President Winters and those around him have created a clear vision for organizational change. TQM brought employees together to better the organization. Collegial relationships have been strengthened among the faculty, staff, and administration. Employees take ownership in the institution. Many faculty and staff now look for ways to improve the College's operations. President Winters and his administration have been able to effectively encourage the employee participation necessary to precipitate change.

The Importance of Leadership

At the end of Chapter 2, I spoke of the disagreement that exists in the research literature regarding just how much influence the leader of an organization has on cultural change. Bate (1994) and Krantz (1990) argued that leadership is more of a collective activity that emerges from the organizational structure and the systems of the institution. Bate (p. 239) stated, "The idea of a single leader creating culture is nonsense." These

authors propose that the most a leader can do is to shape the direction of the organizational culture.

Based on the results of my research at Midwest, I respectfully disagree with those who contend that one individual leader cannot individually alter the culture of an organization. My research confirms Schein's (1985, p. 2) statement that, "The only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to understand and work with culture." Leaders *create* culture. Leaders can substantially change the culture of an organization. Given that the values and assumptions of organizational culture are deeply embedded with the culture, change takes time. However, real change is possible and real change does occur. The organizational culture at Midwest Community College under President Fredricks was substantially different than the organizational culture that exists with President Winters.

I had the chance to explore the culture of Midwest Community College by researching the transition in the culture that occurred as a result of President Winters leading the College and implementing continuous quality improvement. As I began the research, my intention was to chronicle the process by which CQI became integrated into the culture. While I was able to recreate the path that the College took to incorporate CQI into the organization, I learned something else. I learned the value of leadership in organizational change. I was able to see (and hear) just how great the impact President Winters has had on the College.

Pettigrew (1975) and Tierney (1992) contended that the leader is responsible for the creation and interpretation of the beliefs and values of the organization. Not all leaders will have the same influence over an organization as was observed at Midwest.

Not all leaders will see the same results as those at Midwest. However, the beliefs and values held by employees at Midwest Community College are very different from those held by employees prior to 1987. Leaders and leadership create organizational culture.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

Phase 1 Interview Questions

- 1) What was life like around here in the late 1980s?
- 2) Describe the state and local political, social, and economic climate surrounding Midwest County Community College in the late 1980s.
- 3) What significant challenges were present at Midwest County Community College during the late 1980s?
- 4) What significant opportunities were present at Midwest County Community College during the late 1980s?
- 5) What stories/traditions persist from the 1980s? Regarding the decision to implement continuous quality improvement?
- 6) To what extent is the College tradition-minded?
- 7) Why did the College adopt continuous quality improvement?
- 8) If you were not employed by the College at that time, what have you been told as to the reasons for adopting continuous quality improvement strategies?
- 9) Who can best tell the College's "story?" Who else?
- 10) How do you define organizational culture?
- 11) How would you describe the organizational culture at Midwest County Community College during the late 1980s?
- 12) What evidence or artifacts remain of the organization's culture from the late 1980s?

Appendix II

Phase II Interview Questions

- 1) What was life like at the College in the mid to late '90's?
- 2) What were some of the significant challenges present at the College during the 1990's?
- 3) What significant opportunities were present during the '90's?
- 4) What were the College's priorities during that time period?
- 5) How has the College been affected by growth?
- 6) What strategies did the College use to implement TQM?
- 7) How were these strategies received by the faculty and staff?
- 8) Describe leadership at the College during the 1990's.
- 9) Describe the working relationships among and between faculty, staff and the administration at the College during the 1990's.

Appendix III

Phase III Interview Questions

- 1) What is life like at Midwest?
- 2) What significant challenges are present at Midwest County Community College?
- 3) What significant opportunities are present at Midwest County Community College?
- 4) What are the College's priorities?
 - 4a. Why would you say these are priorities?
- 5) How has CQI evolved at Midwest?
- 6) How has CQI impacted the culture of the College?
- 7) How has Midwest's culture impacted the evolution of CQI?
- 8) What leadership characteristics impact the culture at Midwest?
- 9) Final comments?