DISSERTATION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION SKILLS IN ASPIRING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC RELATION SKILLS
IN ASPIRING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

Numerous studies warn community colleges about a growing shortage of available presidents in the coming decade (Duree, 2007). The American Council on Education pointed to this problem in a 2012 American College President Study that found 51 percent of presidents in 2011 were 61 to 70 years old, up from 37 percent only five years prior. Eddy (2012) noted this high number of older presidents and said their pending retirements should serve notice to community colleges that they need to work harder to develop new campus leaders.

Within my qualitative study, I looked at the preparation of leaders through the experiences of current community college vice presidents who someday want to be a president. Taking a phenomenological approach, I interviewed 11 vice presidents working in several states west of the Mississippi River. I wanted to know more about what the vice presidents were doing to prepare themselves for a presidency, especially related to the community college president's public relations role. The literature indicated today's community college presidents are expected to have a larger role in the community and form strong partnerships with business leaders, donors, media outlets, and legislators (Cook, 2012). I was interested to see if they felt they were ready for that role, as well as what leadership development tools helped them grow as administrators and future presidents. Surprisingly, we spent a large portion of our interviews discussing impediments to their development and the challenges they faced as they advanced in their respective careers. From my findings, I learned that the vice presidents are struggling with their development efforts because of time limitations and

a chaotic environment within many campuses. In addition to a lack of time and financial resources, many of the vice presidents indicated that much of their development efforts have been done on their own. Some of the vice presidents said they were comfortable with the public relations role and have experienced some training in that arena, either in actual practice, observation or coursework. Others indicated less comfort with the public relations expectations or a feeling that this role is overrated or overvalued. The most effective developmental tools for public relations appeared to be current presidents. Impediments in leadership growth also fell on some presidents who were not willing to allow their vice presidents a chance to experience public relations roles.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Hollywood offers us numerous examples of leaders who go it alone and triumph over huge obstacles because of grit and fortitude. I would love to think I have the moxie of those celluloid cowboy heroes, but in truth, many people deserve some applause for my doctoral degree.

I begin with my committee chair, Dr. Linda Kuk, who has shown great patience and kindness to me during my journey as a researcher. Academic research was a new, and at times, confusing undertaking for me. This was demonstrated in some of the early drafts that I sent Linda. She was always insightful in her comments, and showed her skills as an educator in helping me to understand how to write a dissertation. She was also responsive to my moments of panic when I thought I had had enough and needed to accept my ABDness. I also thank my methodologist, Dr. Tim Davies, for his work with me and his efforts to lead the CCL program at Colorado State University. I didn't get to study with Tim until later in my coursework, and my only regret is that I didn't take more of his classes and pick his brain on various community college issues. He is a wise and generous man. Thank you also to my two other committee members, Dr. Sharon Anderson and Dr. Kirk Hallahan, for your helpful thoughts along with way.

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stopped by my office during stressful times to encourage me. This includes Julia, Bob, Cammy, Thom, Chelse, Dave, Mike, and Cara. Writing a dissertation is much too often a lonely experience, and I am fortunate to have so many good friends.

Thank you to the 11 vice presidents who took part in my study and gave me their time and honesty during our several hours together. I found many of these leaders to be inspiring and wish we had a few of them at my own college.

I mentioned my family in my dedication, but I wanted my loved ones to know how much I appreciate them. This includes my wife and daughters. I also acknowledge my brother, Stephen, who has a great sense of humor and a way of cutting through the ridiculous pomposity of the academic world. My brother has never allowed me to take myself too seriously, and for that, I thank him. And I offer blessings to my parents, especially my mother, Nancy, who is alive and still thinks her children are perfect and the smartest people in the world. That is a feeling every child should have.

Finally, I thank God for all he has given me, including a deep reservoir of optimism and glad tidings. I spent many hours in prayer during these last five years, especially trying to make sense of why I am doing this. God offered answers in many ways and did not allow me to ever quit.

DEDICATION

Everything good and wonderful in my life begins with my wife, Camille. Our 29 years together in marriage is my life's proudest accomplishment, and much of the credit for the happiness of our union has to go to her. She is a loving and supportive partner, and a caring mother to our two daughters, Bethany and Cathleen. She is also the primary reason I have been able to complete this dissertation study. Several times along the way, I thought of quitting, and it was Camille that nudged me forward. She truly is my better half.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The Research Setting

In the coming decade, community colleges must prepare for a likely void in leadership as the number of retiring presidents increases (American Council on Education, 2012). Even with the recent downturn in the economy and the decline in retirement accounts, the demographic evidence indicates numerous job openings in the coming 10 years. In *The American College President*, the American Council on Education (2012) noted that these community college leaders are increasingly older and looking to leave their posts. Of the 400-plus community college presidents who took the survey, the average age of the respondent was 59 years, with a majority stating they had served as president for an average of eight and one-half years. Approximately three-quarters of this non-diverse group said they expected to retire in the next 10 years (American Council on Education, 2012). More telling, 90% of current community college presidents expect to step down within the next 15 years.

Not only is this loss of intellectual capital affecting the president's office, but community colleges also have a significant number of senior administrators that normally would step into these vacancies who are aging and retiring. To illustrate, Duree (2008) reported that the average age for chief instructional officers (CIOs) at community colleges is only slightly lower than community college presidents and that CIOs will likely retire at the same ratio as their bosses. Riggs (2009) said this is a troubling statistic since many community college presidents are promoted from the institution's academic side.

Another study compiled by The American Council on Education (2008) reported that community colleges are employing fewer full-time instructors than in previous years. In addition, the average age of these new hires is much older than past

instructors. Riggs (2009) said these new faculty members will less time during their teaching career to move through traditional leadership ranks and could be less prepared for leadership.

One advantage in this upcoming shift in hierarchy is that community colleges will likely welcome a more diverse population of leaders than those from previous decades; this new generation of leaders might better reflect the face of community colleges that have traditionally served a high percentage of minority and female students. Weisman and Vaughan (2002) reported that the number of female presidents jumped from 11% in 1992 to 28% in 2002. Later reports from the American Association of Community Colleges (2012) found this number was at 33% in 2011. The same bump, however, has not occurred with minority presidents, according to Weisman and Vaughan (2002), with the proportion remaining flat at 14% from 1992 to 2002. This number dropped slightly by 2011 when only 12.9% of community college presidents were minority (American Council on Education, 2012). Still, these trends beg a critical question: from where will this new age of leadership come? These new presidents will need a greater level of ability to manage the growing complexities of running a community college. In addition, these new leaders must prepare for a variety of roles and expectations, especially from a growing list of external audiences. Finally, to ensure their success, these new leaders must understand the unique history and culture of community colleges (Riggs, 2009).

Conceived early in the Twentieth Century, the first community colleges often served as an extension of secondary education (Tillery & Deegan, 2001). By the early 1980s, community colleges boasted enrollments of more than 10 million students a year, in large part because of the community college's belief in open access and admissions, affordability for all, personal attention to students, a concentration on teaching and

student learning, and a close relationship with the community. Today, more than half of Americans taking college classes do so in one of the country's 1,132 two-year colleges, nearly 986 of which are public institutions (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013). In addition to this history, a future college president must also understand the many agendas that tug at community colleges, including the need for transfer education, workforce development, remedial education, continuing non-credit courses, industry training, and dual enrollments. Eddy & VanDerLinden (2006) noted that one of the most significant challenges that community colleges face today is the development of new presidents who are committed to the mission and values of the community college but willing to work in an environment where they must be creative, innovative collaborative, entrepreneurial, and flexible.

A Growing Public Relations Role

To prepare for this potential void in leadership, Vaughan and Weisman (2003) encouraged current community college presidents 12 years ago to work with their trustees to develop useful campus-based presidential leadership development programs. The authors argued that the responsibility for developing future leaders must be shared equally by the president and the governing board. Throughout the educational process, colleges would give participants "hands-on" experience in developing a budget, giving a speech, or observing the college's admissions protocols from beginning to end (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). Just as important, these potential leaders must have a better understanding about how a board of trustees functions and makes decisions.

This holds true today. Pinchback (2011) noted in his study that the role of the community college president has become much more external in emphasis as state funding over the last 20 years has decreased. Pinchback (2011) found that community

college presidents are devoting more of their time than in the past to public relations functions, especially fundraising, to offset these budget shortfalls. Glass and Jackson (1998) said future community college presidents must pay greater attention to the development of their public relations skills, a commodity that is often missing in many presidential candidates. Such public relations skills include fundraising, media relations, internal communications, networking, lobbying or advocacy, crisis management, and trustee relations (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault, & Agee, 2004). This marks a change from the traditional role of presidents 25 years ago when much of their time was spent on the campus, working on the budget and developing social relationships with faculty members. Today, the president's job requires an outward view that links him/her directly to the community (Summers, 2006). Cook (2012) affirmed this point when noting that the three primary duties of a community college president center on community relations, fundraising, and budgets. Only one of these items, taken from the American College President 2012 study, is a non-public relations function. While this was certainly part of the president's role in 1970, changes in the world and in the United States have dramatically shifted this person's job responsibilities and world view. In order to meet the demands of these changes, presidents must now work with a variety of constituents.

These changes raise a difficult issue: while more and more presidents are asked to have strong people and communication skills, the concepts surrounding any public relations development efforts remain unclear. Perhaps this occurs because public relations professionals themselves have a difficult time defining their own jobs. Treadwell and Treadwell (2005) explained that one reason for unclear definitions is that the practice of public relations varies from one organization to the next. The authors stated, "There have been many attempts to define public relations, and there appears

little chance of achieving a universally accepted definition" (p. 27). In addition, Guth and Marsh (2006) argued that, because of the negative connotations of the phrase "public relations," many public relations professionals have created new terms for their jobs such as "public affairs," "community outreach," or "corporate communications" (p. 6). In one of the first attempts to create a definition of the term, Harlow (1976) noted that 472 definitions existed in 1976, including his own 87-word definition. While Grunig and Hunt (1984) later honed the definition down to 10 words with the following definition: "the management of communication between an organization and its publics" (p. 12), clear definitions appear problematic. Ironically, this lack of clarity and negative perception about public relations could lead to less emphasis on developing such skills in future leaders. Guth and Marsh (2006) wrote:

> The struggle to define the profession of public relations continues well into the second century. While many may see this as an intellectual exercise, others say the failure to reach a consensus on what, exactly, public relations is may undermine its future. (p. 6)

Because a definition is paramount to completing this study, the research will use the definition offered by Guth and Marsh (2006): "the management of relationships that are vital to your organization or company" (p. 7). As a practical matter, the main relationship-building roles of a community college president focus on communicating the vision of the college internally (faculty and staff) and externally (in the community and throughout the state). More specifically, presidents work with community leaders such as business owners, city officials, and other educational entities to advance the goals of the college while simultaneously leading the college's fundraising efforts by developing relationships with important donors and grantors (Eckel, 2002). Other core public relations functions include speaking to the media to communicate the college's key messages; educating local and state legislators about funding issues and pieces of

legislation that would advance or impede the college; and developing a strong and united partnership with the college's board of trustees (Wilson, 2000). Caywood (1997) affirmed this when he described one of the roles of a company CEO as the chief communication officer. In running a large organization, the CEO is the person who handles many of conversations with key publics including shareholders, consumers, analysts, and employees (Caywood, 1997). For a community college president, Bradford (2011) defined these constituents as faculty and students on the campus, and donors, legislators, alumni, board members, and business leaders in the community.

Today's Environment for Community College Presidents

The need for today's community college presidents to utilize better public relations skills has developed in large part because the college setting is much more complex than it was 40 years ago (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). This section will look at three current challenges that community college presidents must overcome. All three challenges — financial shortages, competing mission statements, and pushes for accountability — require community college presidents to use public relations skills as they communicate with different internal and external audiences while building relationships with key stakeholders. To illustrate, the percentage of the Hispanic population across America continues to grow, leading to a higher number of students with specific needs tied to their ethnicity (Keim, McDermott & Gerard, 2010). This requires both a shift in the classroom and in a college's student service programs. In addition to meeting the cultural and language needs of the Hispanic population, community colleges are also expected to serve other populations such as high school drop outs who then enroll at a community college to earn a general education diploma (GED) and enroll in classes. Many of these students walk onto the campus with deficiencies in their reading, writing, and math skills. Returning military veterans who

have served in Iraq and Afghanistan are also enrolling in community college classes with various emotional and physical needs (Persky & Oliver, 2011). These are all new groups of students with whom the president must communicate on the campus and in the community.

Financial Shortages

Financial constraints will add to the complexities facing community college presidents. In the coming years, community college presidents must have an acute understanding of fiscal issues as federal, state, and local resources reduce funding (Phelan, 2005). In a 2010 survey of the National Council of State Directors of Community Colleges, Katsinas and Friedel reported that most states have huge concerns about the recent recession and its affect in producing a decline in state revenues across the United States. Future prospects are not better as most of these states experience a sluggish recovery in their economy (Katsinas & Friedel, 2010). A 2012 reported in the American Association of State Colleges and Universities report listed the "reductions in legislatively-allocated taxpayer appropriations for colleges and universities (p. 2)" as the leading state policy issue in higher education. This was the fourth consecutive year that the decrease in tax dollars was at the top of the list.

These financial reductions may be indicators of future funding levels; it is doubtful that these previous federal, state, and local spending on community colleges will ever return. Presidents must know how to locate new revenue streams from grants, private donors, and federal initiatives, while also developing creative ways to contain costs (Pinchback, 2011). One such method is the return of performance-based funding systems, which were implemented in the 1980s but then waned when the desired outcomes weren't met. Today, interest is growing again in numerous states to consider new incentives to community college systems for improving their student completion

numbers. Altstadt, Fingerhut, and Kazis (2012) looked at efforts in Ohio to implement a new performance-based funding model that shifts its efforts from class enrollment to class completion. Reindl and Brower (2001) noted the paradox of increased public demand for higher education over the previous decade versus the decline of public funds for these institutions. Such changes have forced community colleges to look for private funding increases through fundraising, business entities, and increases in tuition and student fees. Pinchback (2011) reported that this decrease in public support has altered the roles of community college presidents and made them more responsible for resource development and entrepreneurial revenues. This has required these leaders to build stronger relationships with donors, business leaders, legislators, and trustee members.

Competing Mission Statements

Following the release of the Truman Commission Report in 1948, community colleges began to form across America with a focus on providing greater access to higher education for all American citizens. Townsend and Bragg (2006) wrote that this was especially true for minorities and low-income Americans who viewed community colleges as their path to four-year colleges and a bachelor's degree. This original mission has expanded over time to include vocational training and workforce development, a change that has required community college presidents to find a balance between these conflicting philosophies. Karabel (1986) tracked this decline of the community college transfer mission and the expansion of job-training and vocational programs as part of data collected between 1972 and 1984.

Local business and their desire for a ready-made work force have increased the pressure to shift the focus of the community college mission. Such groups have few concerns related to general education and academic programs. The attention paid to job

creation is not always appreciated. Community college presidents are often criticized by their own faculty for expanding the vocational role and creating partnerships with local businesses and industry. Hanson (2009), one such critic, said community colleges for the last three decades have moved away from their academic programs while losing track of their original mission:

> When two-year colleges shifted their focus away from preparing students for continued studies and the baccalaureate, our education network became strictly hierarchical. Top-ranked schools continue to serve the sons and daughters of the privileged. Those students continue to receive educations in subjects such as music, history, and physics — the finest and highest achievements of humanity. At the same time, lower-middle class students attend two-year schools where they learn a set of skills of temporary use to businesses. (p. 2)

Roksa (2006) noted that the increase in vocational programs hampers students who wish to transfer and earn a bachelor's degree. This study corroborated earlier findings by Dougherty (1992) that community colleges emphasizing their vocational programs have a much lower transfer rate for students seeking a bachelor's degree, impeding the rates of baccalaureate attainment. Conversely, advocates of technical programs noted that the inclusion of rigorous general education requirements decrease the number of degrees earned.

More recent studies have indicated that community colleges are struggling to meet their transfer mission. Doyle (2009) discovered that students who enroll at a community college with the goal of earning a bachelor's degree have a 32% tougher time of attaining this goal than students who enrolled in a four-year school. Roska (2007) reported similar results two years prior. These findings matched a 2001 Department of Education report noting that nearly 30% of community college students want to obtain a bachelor's degree though only about half actually do.

A U.S. Department of Education report (2009) placed greater emphasis on community college campuses to help rebuild America's economy in the coming decade, exacerbating the debates taking place within community colleges. In referring to the Department of Education goals, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan (2009) discussed the changing expectations with community colleges:

> Now, you have a new mission—a mission to prepare students to compete successfully in the 21st century knowledge economy and participate in civic society. You are educating the workforce of the future—the radiologic technicians; the registered nurses; the installation experts on solar and wind power; the IT and cyber-security technicians; the displaced workers in need of retraining and new careers; and scientists and other professionals. (p. 9)

This all impacts the community college president who must work with the faculty within and the business community outside the campus to find balance between diverse mission statements. To meet these challenges, a president will need both strong communication and relationship-building skills as he/she advocates for the mission of the community college.

A Push for Accountability

Politicians, community leaders, and educators have increased calls for community colleges to provide information about their performance and effectiveness (Offerman & Smith, 2011). Internally, colleges continue to look for ways to assess the effectiveness of their different programs and services. Such measurements not only helped to communicate the college's effectiveness to the community, but also assisted administrators on where best to allot their limited dollars. This emphasis on outcomes only increased once state and federal officials began looking for ways to measure the effectiveness of higher education providers, largely to discern if the dollars allotted were being properly spent. In asking for evidence on their completion numbers, these constituents are also putting pressure on community college presidents to put less focus

on access and enrollment and place more energy on outcomes and student success (Bailey & Morest, 2006). Data-based initiatives such as Achieving the Dream or the American Association of Community College's Completion Challenge illustrate this movement (Allen & Kazis, 2007). Harbour and Day (2009) noted that this assumption that community colleges should behave like businesses have created ethical dilemmas for these community college leaders. For example, how will a community college maintain its mission to provide access when it is being measured on the number of students who graduate and transfer to four-year universities (Harbour & Day, 2009)? Might the college be more careful in the types of students it recruits rather than opening its doors to all students?

The issue has captured the attention of President Barack Obama's administration, which is asking community colleges to better measure what they do and how they assist job creation. Even granting organizations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation expect clear measurements of a community college's efforts if they want funding. Ewell (2009) argued for the Obama White House that community colleges must develop mechanisms to better measure a more diverse population while better understanding the data they are capturing.

With an increased focus on measuring results, community college leaders often feel the pressure to produce tangible data for its financial contributors. However, these measurements often produce data based on incomplete collection criteria. For example, the federal government's calculations of graduation rates look only at first-time, full-time undergraduates, leaving out transfer students from community colleges. The part-time student is also not measured. A second concern is that traditional measures of educational quality do not reflect the value of a community college. Astin (1983) noted that many measures for a college — student preparedness, number of PhDs on the

faculty, and outside funds obtained for research — track things that a college possesses rather than what it does. This has led many community colleges to look for value-added measurement systems.

Community college presidents must collect all of the required data using a limited number of available staff members, while also making sure that the data collected properly measure the challenges faced by community colleges. Unfortunately, critics often use this data against the institution:

> Since their inception, community colleges have been berated by policy makers, scholars, and others for focusing too much on practical skills rather than on rigorous academic preparation; for watering down their academic curriculum; for allowing themselves to be subject to the whims of business and industry; for failing to transfer more than one quarter of entering students who state and intention to transfer; for perpetuating gaps between the haves and the have-nots; and for many other offenses. (Levin, Cox, Cerven, & Haberler, 2010, p. 32)

To counter these charges, presidents must be able to take their case to community college supporters and critics, both on the campus and in the community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the proposed qualitative phenomenological study was to determine what community college vice presidents who wish to be a president someday are doing to development themselves for their future role, with an emphasis on building public relations experiences and understanding.

Research Questions

This study provided insights into the development of a community college president's public relations skills, looking at processes that are working and those that are ineffective. In addition, this study added to growing collection of research studies conducted on community college leadership. The key questions that guided this research study include:

1) How are current community college administrators who hope to become community college presidents preparing for the public relations role that comes with the job?

2) What are the experiences or perceptions of aspiring community college administrators related to leadership development and their future public relations duties?

3) What elements contribute to or inhibit their abilities to gain public relations skills and develop as leaders?

Assumptions

This study is supported by the following assumptions:

- Leadership is set of skills that can be quantified, a way of thinking that can be taught and understood (Messmer, 1999).
- Successful leaders rely on a mix of skills, attitudes, behaviors, traits, environmental settings, and organizational conditions (Sarros & Woodman, 1993).
- Strong leaders understand people and what motivates them. They also understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and how both influence their relationships with people, their decisions and actions, and their ability to lead (Brocato, 2003).
- Leadership is viewed as both a science and an art, meaning people define this term in a personal way (Nahavandi, 2006).
- Community college presidents need strong public relations skills to be successful in their careers (AACC, 2003).

• Meaning is gained through a person's interactions with others and his/her environment. Over time, the person reflects on these interactions and establishes meaning (Blumer, 1969).

• Any truths discovered in spoken or written language are only revealed by understanding the historical, cultural and social contexts found in other people's lives (Gadamer, 2000).

Delimitations of the Study

Numerous boundaries have been set up within this study. Some of the main delimitations include:

• I only sought out vice presidents at community colleges. I did not approach directors, deans, or other leaders on the campuses who might have been interested in becoming a president. I made this decision assuming that vice presidents would be closer to earning a community college presidency and would be more likely to preparing themselves for this role. I also assumed that vice presidents work more closely with presidents and might have a better idea of their role.

• Only vice presidents with at least five years of experience in the role were sought out because it was assumed that they would have more to talk about related to their development. It was assumed that vice presidents with fewer years of experience would have less to say about their efforts to become a community college president because they would still be gaining familiarity with their role and their relationship with the president. It was also assumed that a vice president who had only worked in his/her current role for one year would still have a great deal to learn about hiw/her new role.

- Vice presidents from only six states were selected for the study. This decision was made in part because of convenience, either related to driving distance or likelihood that I would be traveling to that state in the future. The community colleges within these six states were very different and range in terms of size, location, and student demographics.

Limitations of the Study

Wiersma (2000) noted that a common limitation tied to qualitative studies centers on validity and reliability. He said that, "because qualitative research occurs in the natural setting, it is extremely difficult to replicate studies" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 211).

Within my study, I interviewed leaders who had all attained high-level positions at community colleges in the Western United States. Because all 11 could be viewed as successful leaders, it should be understood that there may be some pieces of their jobs that are similar to one another and other aspects of their work that are different than other community college leaders who may not have earned a vice presidency.

In addition, because these leaders resided in the same geographic region, there might be some characteristics present that would not be found in leaders from different regions. Likewise, because only vice presidents from community colleges took part in this study, their responses do not represent the thoughts of leaders throughout higher education or other community colleges.

Finally, this study investigated the self-reported development efforts of community college leaders who aspire to be a president. My findings are based on the responses of these vice presidents to various interview questions and the perceptions of their leadership experiences. I did not affirm these findings by accessing the leadership perceptions of people who work closely with these vice presidents. I also did not observe these vice presidents in leadership roles to verify some of their statements.

Significance of the Study

This study will provide insights into the development of community college presidents, looking at processes that are working and those in need of development. In addition, this study will add to a growing collection of research studies conducted on community college campuses. As mentioned earlier, the coming shortage of presidents (Vaughan & Weisman, 2006) and the growing complexity of the community college environment create a greater need to select and train new leaders. As funding sources dwindle despite the increasing needs of the community college student, new presidents must hone specific communication and public relations skills to become adept at working with a variety of publics who want different things from the community college. This research study will explore these issues and provide recommendations about developing these vital skills.

Researcher's Perspective

Before taking on a teaching position at Casper College, I worked for more than 20 years in several media roles. The first seven years were spent as a newspaper reporter, newspaper editor, and magazine editor across the Rocky Mountain region. During the next 12 years, I worked in a public relations role, eventually as the Marketing and Public Relations Manager for Wyoming Medical Center in Casper and later as the Executive Director of the Wyoming Medical Center Foundation in Casper. As a college instructor during the last nine years, I have taught classes on public relations, media relations and fundraising for Casper College and two different public relations classes for the University of Wyoming at Casper College.

While employed at Wyoming Medical Center, I worked closely with five different presidents and one administrator who would eventually become a hospital president. Three of the presidents who entered the job had past CEO experience; these

three required little public relations guidance on my part, other than advice on working with the local media and information about local opinion leaders and community issues. I spent more time with the first-time presidents who had knowledge about the operations of a hospital, but little experience working in the public relations realm. These first-time presidents often told me how surprised they were by how much time they spent working on communication and relationship issues, both internally and in the community. There seemed to be a direct relationship between a president's ability to develop strong relationships with key publics and his/her success in achieving the goals of the hospital. For example, the two presidents who had to resign abruptly and leave their jobs did so because of major disruptions with two vital groups: the first leaving because of a vote of no confidence by the medical staff, and the second resigning because of communication breakdowns with the board of directors.

Moving to the community college environment, I quickly discovered that the operations of a community college and a hospital are very similar. Both entities tend to be an integral part of the community. Both hospitals and community colleges also have similar internal groups. For instance, one could make an argument that managing your medical staff at a hospital takes on many of the same headaches as managing your roster of faculty members.

Upon entering Colorado State University's community college leadership PhD program, I began to wonder if community college presidents were as poorly prepared for their leadership roles as those I had witnessed in healthcare. Based on my experience thus far, community colleges leaders are not prepared for their future public relations roles. In completing a brief 2009 study for a PhD class, I discovered through interviews at my own college that administrators who want to become a president are rarely given a chance to shadow the president or take on the president's many external

duties. This conflicts with author Gibbard-Cook (2006), who noted that community college presidents believe they are responsible for mentoring the next generation of leaders at their institution. At my college, I did not see much evidence of mentoring taking place. Instead, the primary role of media spokesperson, lobbyist, fundraiser, and community leader resides solely with the president.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review leadership development issues related to community college presidents. The literature offers much discussion about the development of community college presidents, however, preparation for specific duties or skills was not discussed extensively. This lack of specifics was especially true in developing public relations abilities in future community college presidents. Instead, the literature generally looks at the skills or attributes community college presidents might need, often asking current presidents what they wish they had known before becoming a president. In addition, the literature reviews the leadership journey to the presidency for defined groups including women, African-Americans, and even one that interviewed former English instructors. The resulting literature review is broken into three parts: the making of leaders, leadership preparation methods, and leadership theories.

The Making of Leaders

Many of the studies related to community college presidents discussed the skills needed to be a president and what systems and institutions must do to prepare for the current shortage of qualified candidates (Hassan, 2008; McDonald, 2012). Some of the studies looked at successful presidents to see how they prepared themselves or how they have been able to hold on to their jobs (Martin & Ebbers, 1997; Pfeiffer, 2009). Studies following the leadership journeys of specific sets of people further informed this section (Krull 2011; Bello-de Castro, 2010). In addition, I have included a review of the studies aimed at developing the public relations role of the community college president (Ballinger, 2012; Miller, 2013). They all tie to the making of leaders at American community colleges. For example, McDonald (2012) worked with California community college presidents to investigate the factors tied to sustaining their careers.

Using a mixed-methods study, McDonald (2012) surveyed and interviewed 48 California presidents about the leadership skills needed to facilitate longevity in their careers. Several of these findings tied directly to public relations skills. For example, McDonald (2012) reported in his first finding the length of a community college president's tenure is enhanced by her/his ability to communicate with others. This might include a lunch with an important donor or an important speech before a large audience in the community. A second finding was presidents must demonstrate charisma and expertise about the college, especially when implementing changes on the campus or managing personnel conflicts (McDonald, 2012). The other themes related to a president's longeveity and success was an ability to remain patient in working with key constituents and having diverse and challenging past leadership roles and experiences.

Pfeiffer (2009) used case stories in her qualitative study to look at the relationship between the life and career experiences of effective community college presidents. This included a review of the leadership development efforts in these effective leaders. Pfeiffer noted a community college president's career path often mixed luck with opportunity and personality. Four primary themes came from the study's interviews, including discussions of a president's passion for learning, authenticity, mentoring, and social justice.

Noting community colleges will soon face a void in their leadership, Hassan (2008) asked practicing presidents and trustee board chairpersons in New York and Florida to review the six most important competencies formulated by American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2005) for effective community college leadership. The six AACC competencies included professionalism and organizational strategy and resource management, while three tied to public relations or external

skills: communication, collaboration, and community college advocacy. In addition, Hassan (2008) asked the community college presidents within his quantitative study to indicate what experiences and practices were most useful in the development of these six leadership skills. Hassan (2008) reported two important findings within this study. The first important result found agreement among the Florida and New York community college presidents and trustee board chairs that each of the competencies had a strong tie to the success of the president. All six of AACC's competencies were regarded as "very" or "extremely" important for accomplished community college leaders. Second, Hassan (2008) reported the development of these competencies can occur in numerous ways. He reported the presidents had different leadership development experiences in attaining the AACC competencies, finding some development practices appeared to be more relevant to creating certain competencies than others.

McFarlin and Ebbers (1997) looked at the preparation factors that identified outstanding community college presidents in a quantitative study conducted with leaders working in the Upper Midwest of the United States. Of the 147 surveys sent out, 125 were returned. McFarlin and Ebbers (1997) then narrowed that group to 17 respondents that the two researchers rated as leading presidents. McFarlin and Ebbers (1997) noted these leaders had a higher rate of earning a terminal degree with a major emphasis on community college leadership. These outstanding presidents had been more likely to publish and present scholarly work as part of their preparation efforts. They also made greater use of mentors and peer networks. In addition, McFarnlin and Ebbers (1997) noted these leaders had traveled a non-traditional journey in earning a presidency.

The American Council on Education's American College (ACEAC, 2011) interviewed 1,600 first-time presidents from four major sub-sectors: public baccalaureate and master's level institutions, private doctoral universities, public doctoral universities, and public two-year colleges. Within the study, the researchers analyzed the career pathways of the presidents while collecting demographic characteristics such as gender, race/ethnicity, and age. Related to my study, the researchers asked the first-time American college and university presidents about their sense of readiness for their many presidential responsibilities. For the presidents from public two-year colleges, the leaders indicated much of their time was spent on public relations efforts. For example, four of their top six responses could be classified under a public relations or relationship building heading: community relations, fundraising, government relations, and governing board relations (ACEAC, 2011). The other two were budget/financial management and personnel issues. More telling, these same presidents reported the area they felt the most underprepared to tackle was fundraising. Other top responses were capital improvement projects, campus internalization, entrepreneurial ventures, technology planning, and government relations. These same two-year public college presidents reported legislators and policy makers were the constituency group that proved to be the most challenging. Faculty was listed in second followed by the system office or state coordinating board. A key recommendation from the study declared colleges and the Council of Independent Colleges need to put more emphasis on developing future leaders to take on presidencies. The researchers also urged that more time be placed on the topics of fundraising and board relations to ensure the success of future presidents (ACEAC, 2011).

Conover (2009) conducted a similar study in reviewing the AACC's 2005 leadership competencies, though this time, the sample audience selected was what Conover described as mid-level leaders. Within her quantitative study, she asked branch campus administrators at multi-campus community college systems to rank the AACC competencies in order of importance and then offer an assessment of their efforts to attain competence. Conover (2009) found the competencies were relevant to the leaders and most respondents had reached an effective level of competence. These competencies included four different communication skills as well as financial management understanding. Conover (2009) recommended community colleges should spend more time recruiting potential leaders for formal leadership development training while helping them early in their careers to attain doctoral degrees. Conover (2009) also encouraged community colleges to give these identified leaders various leadership opportunities and work experiences to build their resumes and levels of understanding.

Using a similar sample of people, Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) found mid-level managers at community colleges had little desire to move up into future leadership openings. Following an interview with nine mid-level academic leaders at one rural community college, the researchers noted community colleges were doing a poor job of developing in-house leaders, and only one of the nine respondants wanted to seek a promotion into a more advanced leadership position. Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) used the term "accidental leader" to describe many of the participants who were compelled to take on advanced roles. These "accidental leaders" often entered these positions due to the institution having no one else available. Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) wrote in their phenomenological study that this was critical information because many community college presidents were once mid-level administrators at an

institution. They noted community colleges must make these leadership roles more attractive to young administrators if they hope to stem an expected shortage in future vice presidents and presidents.

The Making of Specific Leadership Groups

In reviewing the literature, several researchers looked at the making of leaders within specific populations including those related to gender and ethnicity. They noted white males continue to represent the most commmon face of the community college president, and college boards and systems must find ways to develop a more diverse group of leaders (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010; Bello-de Castro, 2010).

Within the studies, the most common specific population studied appeared to be female presidents or leaders. For instance, Krull (2011) completed a phenomenological study that examined the lived experiences of 14 women community college presidents living in the Midwest. Krull (2011) noted the importance of mentors or colleagues in helping shape the development of these leaders as they traveled down often unintentional presidential pathways . These presidents created stability on their campuses by building strong relationships with the board of trustees and the internal campus community. The women presidents talked about the challenges they faced in their careers and how their ability to move forward depended largely on their leadership styles and skills (Krull, 2011).

Stout-Stewart (2004) also researched female community college presidents, this time using a quantitative survey of 126 female chief executive officers in America. Stout-Stewart (2004) was interested in determining if a significant correlation existed between female leadership patterns and behaviors and factors such as level of education, years of experience, race/ethnicity, college size, and the race/ethnicity of the student population. She identified five leadership practices — Enabling, Modeling,

Encouraging, Challenging, and Inspiring — and found no differences in the five practices, regardless of whether the community college was located in a rural, suburban , urban, or inner citysetting. Stout-Stewart (2004) noted, however, leadership patterns differed depending on the leaders' educational level, years of experience, race/ethnicity, and the percentage of full-time students enrolled at the college.

In looking at the career experiences of five successful female community college presidents, Bello-de Castro (2010) offered guidelines toward creating professional development programs for women with the same leadership goals. Within her qualitative study, Bello-de Castro (2010) looked into the experiences and leadership perspectives of women who rose to the presidency of two-year institutions. She hoped to better understand the attributes of a successful professional development program. Some of the recommendations from the study included enrollment in state and national leadership development programs, greater use of mentors, provding leadership experiences in a variety of college roles and situations, and the earning of a terminal degree. In terms of competencies, the five women noted community colleges were complex institutions, and future leaders will need to be visionaries with the ability to lead change and transform their campuses (Bello-de Castro, 2010). Political expertise, fundraising skills, and budget acumen were also mentioned as essential skills. Finally, the female presidents all said they had faced various forms of gender bias in their careers. Because of this, obtaining a presidency was much more challenging for a woman (Bello-de Castro, 2010).

In looking at the shared leadership experiences of six women community college presidents, Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) noted only one-quarter of the current presidents were female. In addition, the three researchers said the pace of progress for women presidents had been slow. Noting previous research had targeted male-

dominated leadership abilities, Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) claimed by focusing on the career paths of these six women, their qualitative study would provide important information for current female leaders who were seeking a future presidency. Using a case study model, the researchers spoke to two presidents from rural communities and four from urban areas. Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) found there was no clear career path for these women other than they all came from the academic side. One identified theme was that the women were drawn to a presidency because of the challenges it would present to them as leaders. The women presidents also identified mentors as an integral tool in their development and cited several cases of unfair treatment based on their gender. The women said the most important skill a president must have was people skills, including the ability to communicate to a wide range of people. Business skills, entrepreneurial skills, and being able to see the bigger picture were also cited (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010).

Carter (2009) looked women presidents currently presiding over public community colleges and four-year public institutions in the select states of Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky. The qualitative research study featured interviews of 13 women college presidents discussing their individual paths to the presidency. Carter (2009) sought out both the personal and professional factors that contributed to each woman's attainment of the presidency. Carter (2009) found the predominant career route to becoming a community college or university president remained the traditional academic experience. Successful presidents also earned a doctorate and took part in professional development opportunites including the ACE Fellows Program. In terms of traits, Carter (2009) noted the women were people-oriented and showed respect for others. Common themes included hard work, persistence, and determination.

Latimore (2009) used interviews to look at how eight African-American women prepared themselves for presidencies at community colleges. Within the qualitative study, Latimore (2009) reported the women used extensive preparation to gain a presidency, including taking on special projects for their colleges, working with mentors, and participating in leadership training programs. The research also indicated black female community college presidents were successful in their careers because they had built a strong professional image that communicated confidence. Finally, Latimore (2009) reported the careers of black female community college presidents were shaped by their ability to comprehend and overcome the racism and sexism they faced in their careers.

Humphrey (2012) completed a similar study in exploring the experiences of African-American community college presidents who began their careers working in the student services field. Within her phenomenological qualitative study, she interviewed 10 presidents and found more than half felt pursuing a presidency from the student affairs aspect of the community college was challenging. They indicated they had worked hard to establish their credibility as a leader, especially with the faculty on the campus. Humphrey (2012) also noted these female leaders had strong support systems that included their family, their community, their church, their husbands, and a variety of mentors.

Jones Jacobs (2012) considered gender when looking at the leadership styles of Midwest community college presidents, noting his study might help boards and trustees in hiring presidents that better fit their institution's goals and culture. This will result in presidents who sustain their careers. Within his quantitative study, Jones Jacobs (2012) analyzed the leadership styles of 82 community college presidents and chancellors in Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, and Wisconsin. From his survey, Jones

Jacobs found the Midwest presidents favored a transformational leadership style, while listing passive avoidant styles as the least preferred. Statistical significance was not found when comparing the three leadership styles to the size of the student body or the college's demographics. Jones Jacobs (2012), however, did note the more years a president had been employed in higher education, the more likely he/she employed transformational leadership styles. As for gender, the findings indicated female community college presidents scored higher for the use of passive avoidant leadership styles.

Frankland (2010) interviewed six community college presidents who majored in English as undergraduates to see how that major affected their professional journeys. Within her qualitative study, Frankland (2010) found these presidents believed their background as English majors allowed them to understand the mission of their institutions and have empathy for the needs of their students and their colleagues. They also said their understanding of people, something they developed through the study of literature, prompted how they made decisions as community college presidents. Frankland (2010) also looked at some of the leadership traits found in these leaders, including their abilities to inspire trust in others.

The Development of Public Relations Skills in Leaders

Much of the literature for this section looked at how the community college president has evolved into a person who spends a majority of his/her time on external duties. Cohen and Brower (2003) wrote the first community college presidents began their careers in the secondary school system, often as full-time teachers. In many cases, they transitioned into part-time administrative roles before becoming presidents. Monroe (1972) noted many of these early presidents had centralized power and oversaw the colleges as autocrats. With changing funding sources, the growth of

governing boards, and the increased power of faculty members, however, the role of college president slowly evolved. As the number of publics served both within the college and in the community expanded, many of these changes have necessitated greater public relations skills for college presidents. For example, Raisman (1996) noted today's president now has five missions to oversee: transfer, general education, workforce development, remedial education, and community services. This list is much different than the community college missions of 30 or 40 years ago.

The expectations placed on community college presidents today is demonstrated in part by a 2001 AACC survey of college presidents that asked them to list the most important skills needed in future leaders (Shults, 2001). In addition to adaptability and an understanding of finances, the results of the survey predicated presidential success on strong public relations skills, including an understanding of how to forge lasting partnerships, how to develop and communicate a clear vision, and how to create strong relationships with key publics inside and outside the institution. The presidents featured in the survey added these leaders must come to the job with dexterity in two other public relations realms: political savvy and strong communication skills (Shults, 2001). Likewise, other studies in the literature indicated presidents must be able to communicate with a wide array of people. What the literature did not offer, however, are many examples of how these presidents are supposed to develop these public relations skills. What little research I found tied predominantly to the fundraising role.

One study that did address public relations issues was conducted by Pinchback (2011), who looked at the backgrounds of community college presidents to see how many brought with them a background in development, public relations, or advancement. In his quantitative study, Pinchback (2011) noted community college presidents normally came to the job with backgrounds in academics or student services,

even though fundraising skills have become more important to the president and her/his efforts to garner more monies for the institution. The researcher also looked at the amount of time presidents spent to improve their development and public relations skills. Pinchback (2011) offered a view of the average community college president in his results including this person's fundraising background and his/her levels of success and support. The study found presidents continued to begin their careers in the academic arena and came to the job with limited experience in fundraising. Pinchback (2011) said hiring committees failed to consider fundraising abilities in their selection criteria, and boards of trustees did not consider fundraising success in the president's annual evaluation. Finally, Pinchback (2011) noted presidents received little support from the board of trustees in the president's fundraising efforts.

Besikof (2010) looked at the best practices of community college presidents in the role of fundraising. He noted in his study that though community colleges offered educational opportunities for half of America's undergraduate students, they only account for 2% of the fundraising monies collected. For the study, Besikof (2010) used the Council for Aid to Education's Voluntary Support for Education Survey to select four Midwest community colleges. Within his case studies, he interviewed a minimum of 10 people at each community college. Besikof (2010) used an elite interview format developed by Kezar (2006) to foster more anectodal answers and deeper feedback. He looked at how these presidents prepared themselves for this role, and what they were doing currently to improve their skills. In his interviews with the four presidents, Besikof (2010) discovered the amount of time spent on fundraising ranged from 15 to 20% of their day. The presidents viewed fundraising differently in terms of importance: one president placing it in the lower half of his duties. Others viewed fundraising as more vital to their jobs, and were more active in terms of working with their

development office and foundation board. The four presidents also noted they could have been better prepared for the fundraising role; the presidents from the two urban colleges stated they had no training or experience in fundraising before becoming president (Besikof, 2010). Three of the four presidents interviewed also tied fundraising efforts to political involvement and engagement.

Wallin (2002) surveyed community and technical college presidents in North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia to identify what skills were viewed as essential for effective leadership. In addition to finding similar concerns and needs expressed by technical and community college presidents, Wallin (2002) noted in the quantitative study relationship building and communication skills were viewed as critical to these presidents. For example, the presidents said developing positive relationship with local political leaders and developing positive relationship with state political leaders were two of the three top identified necessary skills. The third, Wallin (2002) wrote, was budget management.

Miller (2013) used a multiple case study to examine the perceptions of four Michigan community college presidents about their role as fundraisers. Within qualitative interviews, Miller (2013) asked questions focused on each president's overall leadership role in fundraising as well as his/her role in the development efforts. This included perceptions of the president's relationship with the chief development officer, the foundation office, and the donors. In his findings, Miller (2013) noted fundraising was now viewed as a vital source of revenue. This focus on fundraising has changed the role of the community college president, who today needed to understanding strategic planning and how to create a vision for all fundraising efforts (Miller, 2013). These presidents told Miller (2013) effective fundraising required community college presidents to invest their time and resources to the effort. Successful presidents also

brought with them strong people and communication skills so they could properly tell the story of their respective community college (Miller, 2013). The role of the chief development officer was also important, and should be someone who best complemented the abilities of the president (Miller, 2013).

Ballinger (2012) looked for a relationship between a community college president's background and his/her behaviors as a fundraiser. Ballinger (2012) considered eight variables for her survey of 104 respondent presidents within the North Central Association's Higher Learning Commission. Some of the variables included time spent each week on fundraising, the number of donor appointments during a given year, and the percent of time spent on fundraising during the year. In terms of fundraising behavior and background, Ballinger (2012) found three independent variables in the study did relate to a president's actions. Presidents who spent more time with their fundraising activities included those leaders who had a background in institutional advancement or foundation work before their presidency. In addition, presidents who had held previous presidencies were more active than first-time presidents. Finally, Ballinger (2012) found presidents who had received professional development and training in fundraising were more active with donors and development work. Ballinger (2012) recommended leaders who wish to become a community college president should spend more time developing their fundraising skills, noting this competency was viewed today as more important than in the past.

In a similar study, Brunen (2012) explored how having prior fundraising experiences affected the performance of community college presidents. The qualitative study used purposive sampling methods to interview three community college presidents working at single-campus colleges. Within the case study, Brunen (2012) found that these presidents with previous fundraising experiences fit well in their job, especially as that

the external component has grown. The presidents interviewed noted that the ability to build strong relationships in the community was critical to the role of a president, as was personal communication skills. The presidents advised future leaders to find ways to develop those skills in their current careers (Brunen, 2012).

Leadership Preparation

To combat a growing leadership shortage, community college presidents and chancellors must immediately engage in the training and development of future faculty and administrative leaders (Boggs, 2003). This not only included the development of future presidents, but also a new class of deans, directors, and vice presidents. Strom, Sanchez & Downey-Schilling (2011) noted community colleges had yet to fill the need for future leaders and needed to increase the level of commitment, funding, and board involvement to meet the coming need for dedicated and skilled leaders. Part of the issue related to a loss of outside development programs such as community college leadership programs at national universities. Duree, Ebbers, Santos-Laanan, Curtis, and Ferlazzo (2008) reported the number of graduates in these programs fell by 78% from 1983 to 1997. Creating more pressure on community colleges was the current mixture of upcoming senior leadership retirements (Duree et al., 2008), shorter tenures for community college presidents over the last 25 years (Stanley & Betts, 2004), and fewer qualified community college leaders waiting in the wings (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). The challenge for presidents was locating funds for leadership development amid current and upcoming budget cuts throughout the nation. Presidents needed be more creative in locating low-cost options to train and mentor leaders. Ideally, this training would occur through simulations, internships, observations, and mentorships. Brown, Martinez, and Daniel (2002) emphasized that in-house leadership training programs were effective because they factored in the culture and innate traits of the college along

with the people who were being led. Cooper and Pagotto (2003) urged community colleges to use technology in their training programs, especially to assist rural institutions that may not have the finances or the in-house experts to provide the training. Technology could also be used to link these colleges together. Finally, Boggs (2003) argued community colleges must not get bogged down with the worry of training leaders who will then leave to take on a new role at another college.

The need for effective presidential development programs was all the more notable because 57% of college presidents (Payton, 1997) came from the office of academic affairs and/or the teaching community, even though few of these leaders had any experience or training in fundraising or networking. Cooper and Pagotto (2003) reported on faculty members who entered leadership roles with terror and dread because they felt they lacked the expertise and training to succeed. Because they entered this realm without training, many of these faculty leaders either returned to the classroom or struggled in their new assignments. Faculty members were also at a disadvantage because they struggled with the concept of leadership. For example, a survey of faculty who enrolled in leadership training workshops indicated the concept of becoming a leader meant learning about budgeting processes, using Roberts Rules of Order, and understanding institutional lingo and terminology (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003). In discussions with faculty leaders, Cooper and Pagotto (2003) wrote many faculty members were hesitant to take on leadership and administrative roles because of the concern of balancing their teaching responsibilities with administrative duties. Another challenge was faculty members did not always understand the large bureaucratic matters related to the college. Finally, Cooper and Pagotto (2003) found faculty leaders were worried about losing credibility with their colleagues when they stepped into administrative roles.

Duvall (2003) similarly noted many academic administrators were promoted into senior level leadership roles without the proper training and experience to help them deal with the rigors of the position. Based on their observations, these faculty saw leadership in concrete terms, not in the soft skills required to influence the thoughts, behaviors, and/or feelings of others (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003). Conversely, support staff members in the same classes offered a much broader and more accurate definition of leadership development (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003). Koelkebeck (1994) researched this same issue using a study of ten California community colleges that had demonstrated various degrees of success in fundraising. In interviewing the presidents, the author found the least successful fundraisers brought with them backgrounds as former teachers and academic administrators. During the interviews, Koelkebeck (1994) noted these presidents were also less able to articulate the vision and future of their colleges. They understood the internal operations of their schools, but were less comfortable in explaining what made their college unique.

Vaughan and Weisman (2006) offered similar findings, noting prior to their first leadership post, 46.9% of community college presidents were chief academic officers or had served as a vice president with academic overview. The presidents reported they spent half their time (53%) handling internal matters, with 34% of their time on external relations matters: fundraising, advocating with legislators, or networking in the community. The remaining time was spent on professional development or other activities. The survey also found a slight increase in the time presidents spent on external matters, with fewer hours spent on the campus (Vaughan & Weisman, 2006).

This leaves community colleges with a huge challenge as they work to develop new leaders for the next decade. Within this section, I have looked at various studies related to leadership development studies including efforts to figure out what skills and

abilities a president needs to be successful. I have also reviewed the research related to different types of training tools including obtaining a doctorate, internal and external training programs, mentoring, and on-the-job experiences.

In one study, McNair and Phelan (2012) interviewed five community college presidents and one chancellor to talk about the leadership competencies outlined by the AACC. The two researchers wanted to see how these competencies were acquired and developed by each of the leaders. In addition, McNair and Phelan (2012) looked for how the leaders blended these competencies into their work practices and what skills might be missing within the AACC's guidelines. Within this qualitative study, the presidents agreed AACC competencies gave new presidents the tools they needed to be successful. The presidents also offered three ways for aspiring presidents to develop those competencies: mentor programs, professional development courses, and on-the-job experiencies (McNair & Phelan, 2012). The presidents urged current community college presidents to review the AACC competencies and look for ways to develop them in identified leaders on their campuses. As for possible competencies missing from the study, the presidents offered three: entrepreneurial thinking pertaining to the future, commitment to diversity and equity, and understanding a systems' perspective (McNair & Phelan, 2012).

Within this section, I look at research tied to the development of community college presidents such as terminal degrees, external leadership development training, internal leadership development programs, mentoring, and learning from experience.

Terminal Degrees

Weisman and Vaughan (2006) noted the doctoral degree has historically been considered the most vital step in preparing a potential community college president. Townsend (1995) described the degree as a "passport to senior-level administrative

positions" (p. 1). Vaughan, Mellander, and Blois (1997) stressed the importance of this degree by noting the up-tick in the number of presidents with a doctoral degree. In 1991, the researchers reported 84.5% of community college presidents had a doctoral degree compared to 76.8% only five years earlier. Most of these degrees were in the discipline of education. The literature review backed this up.

In a review of the AACC's 2005 leadership competencies, Conover (2009) found in her study obtaining a doctorate early in a leader's career was significant in how the community college leader saw him/herself as an administrator. These leaders saw themselves as more competent in their jobs, which helped them in their day-to-day leadership development efforts. Conover (2009) conducted a quantitative study featuring surveys of mid-level leaders at community colleges.

In her phenomenological qualitative study of 10 female African-American community college presidents, Humphrey (2012) reported the right credentials were seen as vital in earning a presidency. For example, all 10 women had doctoral degrees, with a majority earning in the field of education. The degree helped the women earn credibility within their own colleges and in their relationships with faculty members. Bello-de Castro (2010) found similar results in her look at the career experiences of five successful female community college presidents. All five said a doctoral degree was important in earning a presidency, not only because the degree was expected, but also because the coursework formed and shaped them as leaders (Bello-de Castro, 2010).

Eddy and Rao (2009) noted a doctorate has become a more vital credential for people who want to serve as community college leaders. In surveying 149 higher education administration program coordinators, Eddy and Rao (2009) sought to compare and contrast the Ed.D., which most often targets skill-oriented coursework, to Ph.D. programs, which often emphasize more attention on research. The researchers

received a 44% response rate and were able to develop a portrait of the program structure, including how the curriculum aided in creating leaders and developing key competencies. Eddy and Rao (2009) reported only nominal differences existed between an Ed.D. and a Ph.D. The reseachers noted Ed.D. programs offered fewer curricular options compared to the Ph.D., also finding Ed.D. programs did not offer a leadership course and little leadership theory to courses such as administative and organizational theory (Eddy & Rao, 2009). The program coordinators also presented numerous courses Ed.D. programs could be offering but were not.

External Leadership Training

Outside of the community college setting, aspiring presidents can receive various training opportunities through workshops and seminars offered by the League for Innovation in the Community College, the AACC, the National Chair Academy, and the Institute of Community College Development (Hassan, 2008). One of the first efforts at external training opportunities came in 1959 when the W.K. Kellogg Foundation provided funds to help start community college leadership development programs at 10 universities across the United States. Only a few of those programs exist today (Jeandron, 2006).

One of the leading university community college leadership programs can be found at the University of Texas in Austin. The program began in the 1950s and has presented more degrees to minority students than any other program (Bagnato, 2004). Other popular programs can be found at the University of Florida, Michigan State, Colorado State University, University of Illinois, and North Carolina State University (O'Banion, 2007). Such programs existed in part because community colleges were not meeting the need to develop their own leaders (Romero, 2004). The Community College Leadership Development Initiative from the Western region of the United States looked

into this issue in 1999 and recommended more specialized training programs are needed for community college leaders (Romero, 2004). In their report, the development initiative authors wrote community colleges were providing inadequate support for administrators and faculty members interested in leadership development. The faculty members and administrators reported existing programs at their community colleges were under-funded and poorly put together (Wolf & Carroll, 2002). Organizations such as the AACC also offer leadership seminars, and some relate to developing public relations skills such as fundraising and media relations.

Most of the research found in the literature looked at efforts to develop leaders within the community college system. Only a few studies related to external training options. In one case, Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) looked at the shared leadership experiences of six women community college presidents. One of the themes within the qualitative study focused on how beneficial outside professional development programs offered by the National Instititute for Leadership Development, the American Council on Education National Identification Program, and the AACC were to five of the six presidents in the study. Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) reported the women used words like "huge" and "profound" to describe the importance of these professional development options.

Internal Development Programs

One of the most effective ways to develop new leaders was to provide programs within the campus to grow future faculty and administrative leaders (Boggs, 2003). Not only should the community college president ideally lead this effort, but the school's board of directors should also provide support. Fennell and Miller (2007) noted colleges and governing boards can also develop training seminars and institutes to help talented administrators and faculty members who might have presidential aspirations. The

Council of Independent Colleges' Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission was one such seminar program offering future presidents an understanding of what is required to be a president. Those who attended were first nominated by their college president, which provided an added incentive for presidents to develop both a personal relationship with those whom they nominated and a desire to help them succeed (Fennell & Miller, 2007).

Duree (2007) discovered, however, these opportunities were rare. In a survey of 415 community college presidents, Duree (2007) found 85% of the respondents did not take part in a "Grow Your Own" leadership development program before earning their first presidency, even though a 2001 AACC survey found many community colleges and systems have implemented grow-your-own programs. For example, Hull (2005) wrote 86% of community colleges had developed some type of program on their campuses.

Benard (2012) conducted a qualitative case study looking at a community college's efforts to develop their own leaders. Within this specific "Grow Your Own" succession program, Benard (2012) interviewed the participants to see if the program had altered their career advancement behaviors, and if these leaders had advanced to more responsibility at their community college or other institutions. These leaders found the program helpful in their development because it introduced some of the participants to their district community and connected them with leaders within the district (Benard, 2012). By taking part in the program, they were able to introduce themselves to the district as future leaders. Benard (2012) noted the "Grow Your Own" program was closely tied to teaching these leaders about the district, its organizational structure, its culture, and its method of operation. This was helpful, Benard (2012) wrote, however, it did not provide them with a true leadership development

opportunity. For example, the participants never learned how to be an effective leader within the district's culture of shared governance and collective bargaining (Benard, 2012).

Focht (2012) conducted a qualitative study to see how graduates of three campus-based leadership development programs assessed the effectiveness of the coursework. In his interviews with the graduates, Focht (2012) asked graduates which components of the program's teachings were most useful in helping them improve their leadership skills and understanding. The study also looked at which competencies were most important in developing community college leaders, and whether the definition of leadership had changed after completion. Focht (2012) found the participants in the leadership program became more aware of themselves as leaders and gained a stronger awareness of leadership issues in general. Conversely, these participants also said the training had helped them become "significantly better leaders" thanks to the coursework (Focht, 2012). In his recommendations, Focht (2012) noted the leadership programs spent too much time on leadership theory and accompanying literature. Unfortunately, he said this narrow focus had not stimulated actual learning. Instead, Focht (2012) said the participants would gain greater understanding through "successful leaders sharing the flight to the top, role-playing, or simply through collegial interaction" (p. 159).

Robison, Sugar, and Miller (2010) used a quantitative evaluation of North Carolina's individual community college leadership institutes to see if these training centers were viewed as practical and useful to the institutes' participants. Following a survey of 49 leadership programs, Robison, Sugar, and Miller (2010) selected one of the participating colleges to focus on its specific leadership development efforts. Though the participants viewed these programs as helpful in developing them as leaders,

Robison, Sugar, and Miller (2010) said leadership training centers needed to find topics relating directly to the community college employees to improve participation and learning.

Bornheimer (2010) looked at the effectiveness of leadership programs to alleviate the current leadership shortage at community colleges. Using a mixed method descriptive case study, Bornheimer (2010) took advantage of a sample of 50 community college leadership development program coordinators and asked them about the effectiveness of leadership development programs in creating new leaders. Within the quantitative portion of her research, Bornheimer (2010) found a large majority (82.1%) of the coordinators rated these programs as effective. This level of confidence was less true with the open-ended questions used in the qualitative portion, in which 64.3% of the participants said these programs helped to alleviate the shortage in leaders. The study focused less on what specific skills should be developed, though Bornheimer (2010) did say the results indicated the use of leadership development programs should be expanded.

Mentoring

Another effective way to develop future leaders was through the use of mentorships. In this arena, colleges and universities should develop formal programs that redefine the meaning of mentor. For example, Kristick (2009) argued in typical businesses, mentoring has been seen as the role of presidents and vice presidents who identify potential leaders and work closely with them to help them reach their potential. Unfortunately, many of these leaders are aspiring middle managers, which was a limiting practice that did not allow all employees to grow, Kristick (2009) wrote. Rather, organizations and companies should allow anyone in a leadership role to serve as a mentor. In companies, this would include line managers; in colleges and

universities, this would include academic chairs and department managers. Kristick (2009) noted the difficult part was encouraging these managers to take on this role; something many front-line leaders have avoided in the past for fear of developing talented and promising faculty and staff members who would take on promotions and leave their department or academic unit. Despite these fears, mentoring demonstrated great promise as a path to the career and professional growth of individuals, especially in areas related to softer people skills (Roberts, 2000).

For instance, Krause (2009) focused on the role of mentors on the career development of female leaders at community colleges. For her study, she met with presidents and chief academic officers to see which formal and informal leadership training programs were most useful in their career advancement. The 10 women who were interviewed indicated mentors were very helpful in their attainment of senior leadership jobs. Finally, the women said leaders should make an effort to cultivate strong networks within the community college system while also taking advantage of all leadership development training programs (Krause, 2009).

In her phenomenological qualitative study of 10 female African-American community college presidents, Humphrey (2012) found developing a relationship with mentors was critical in their development and in earning a presidency. The women, who had both male and female mentors crossing a variety of color lines, served as guides to their mentees and helped them mature as leaders. Humphrey (2012) also noted these women had taken the time to develop networks within their insitutions and outside of their communities. The female presidents urged other professionals from a student affairs beginning thinking of a presidency to network with faculty members and be active with campus committees.

Rabey (2011) looked specifically at the role of mentoring in current community college presidents, asking if they felt their mentors better prepared for their presidency. Using the AACC's Competencies for Community Colleges, Rabey (2011) surveyed 415 presidents about their first presidency. Rabey (2011) reported few statistically significant results in his quantitative study, though he did note that most female community college presidents said they had used mentors prior to their first presidency. Overall, 205 respondents said they had used mentors, 209 said no. The study also found that mentors tended to greatly improve the chances of a woman earning a community college presidency (Rabey, 2011).

In her qualitative look at five successful female community college presidents, Bello-de Castro (2010) reported the use of many mentors throughout a person's career was an important part of a leader's professional development program. She also noted the five leaders advised future presidents to look outside of their own community colleges and to network with others who would offer a broader view of the world. The five presidents urged the selection of mentors with expertise in specific areas useful to a community college leader (Bello-de Castro, 2010).

Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) wrote about the important role of mentoring in reviewing the shared leadership experiences of six women community college presidents. Within their qualitative study, the researchers found five of the six women indicated the support of mentors was beneficial in their development. These mentors urged these women to get their doctorates. They also modeled leadership abilities and provided important moral support during challenging times (Campbell, Mueller, & Souza, 2010).

Garza Mitchell and Eddy (2008) noted in their qualitative study only one of the nine mid-level faculty managers they interviewed at a rural community college had any ambition to advance his/her career into a greater leadership role. A large reason for this was the community college did not offer a formal mentoring program to develop its leaders. The leaders did have role models and mentors; however, they had to seek them out themselves. These leaders also said their school did not have a mentor program for its new faculty. They noted they would not be around much longer at the college; these leaders said the college needed to develop new future leaders (Garza Mitchell & Eddy, 2008) from the faculty ranks.

In a 2001 AACC survey, 57% of the community college presidents who responded said mentorships were either valuable or very valuable in helping them earn their current position (Shults, 2001). In the same survey, 62% of the respondents said mentors had helped them succeed with the daily demands of being a college president. Anderson (1997) noted mentorships that partner current presidents with aspiring leaders can be fruitful, assuming an effort was made to form a strong match. Using a survey of 58 female community college presidents, Vaughan (1989) stressed the importance of role models and mentors in preparing community college presidents for their roles. Similar to this, he also discussed the use of peer networks as another leadership preparation tool.

Mentoring also helps newly appointed presidents in acclimating to their unfamiliar environment. New community college presidents often reported being unprepared for how isolated they felt in the college and community. Lacking peers at the community college, the presidents said they feel "lonely at the top" (Vaughan & Weisman, 2006). In public arenas, they were recognized but often not approached, making the formation of friendship with anyone but other community leaders more

difficult. Mentors, especially from other community colleges, helped ease this feeling of loneliness. Unfortunately, many presidents assumed because they had risen to the top position within their career, they had outgrown the need for mentors. Zachary and Fischler (2009) argued, however, the benefits of a mentor relationship remained strong regardless of where someone may be on his/her individual career path. For example, in learning how to work effectively as a lobbyist, Phelan (2005) reported college presidents should seek the advice of former legislators and lobbyists. Mentors were also very helpful in learning how to approach a donor for a contribution or interview with a newspaper reporter.

Mentors also recognized leadership traits in others. In the case of faculty, Cooper and Pagotto (2003) wrote faculty members often entered leadership roles because someone noticed their abilities and recruited them to take on new responsibilities. A survey of two sets of faculty leaders who attended leadership workshops found more than half of the faculty participated because a leadership mentor encouraged them to take on the new role (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003). Others said they attended because they wanted to take on new challenges and sought out the training themselves. Unfortunately, because many faculty did not seek out these opportunities, they often entered their new roles unprepared and without confidence. This significantly decreased their chances of success.

Learning from Experience

McCall, Lombardo & Morrison (1998) touted the use of learning from job experience as a great tool for leadership development, noting it offered better benefits than formal training programs. Such experience could take the form of special assignments, followed by coaching and mentoring to allow the person to reflect on his/her experiences and learn new skills. Manz and Sims (1981) wrote quality bosses

who modeled appropriate and effective leadership behaviors also helped. Numerous studies found experience on the job was very important in developing educational leaders.

King (2010) compared the backgrounds of a group of community college presidents to see if prior experience had an impact on the institution's graduation rates and revenue cycles. The quantitative study used each institution's data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System to determine if a president's prior experiences offered any link to the performance of the community college. King (2010) found some evidence of a positive relationship between the president's previous professional experience outside of the community college and what occurred with the institution's revenue trends. Such results might steer community colleges to align the mission statement and goals of the institution with the previous experiences of presidential candidates to increase the chances of success (King, 2010).

Using a different venue, Barton and Cox (2012) studied how field experiences can help prepare people who are interested in someday becoming a school principal. Their quantitative instrument used 54 items developed as part of the California Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. Barton and Cox (2012) asked these school principal candidates to take a pre- and post-self assessment. The 54 females and 28 male educators involved in the study felt taking part in fieldwork and administrative activties had helped them gain valuable levels of leadership experience. Barton and Cox (2012) noted the principal candidates indicated a growth in their ability to influence others, act with fairness and integrity, ensure an effective learning environment, and better collaborate with teachers and community members to meet diverse needs.

Thompson, Cooper, and Ebbers (2012) studied the experiences of two interim community college presidents after the abrupt departure of the current president. The quantitative study looked at the leadership efforts of the interim presidents and how the faculty and staff members perceived these two leaders. The study selected two different types of colleges, one in an urban setting and one within a rural community college district. The results hinted interim presidents have a difficult time earning a permanent position because much of their work centers on rebuilding morale across the campus and re-establishing a functional relationship with the board of trustees. While both of these tasks require strong public relations skills, the experience placed the interim president in a difficult situation and may have made it more difficult for these interim leaders to gain their own presidency (Thompson, Cooper, & Ebbers, 2012). One of the other study findings indicated the two interims spent much of their time considering strategic plans that would allow the community college to gain a proper direction. In addition, the interims faced some difficult financial and budgetary issues during their tenures.

Research has looked at what kinds of experiences were most effective, including studies by the Center for Creative Leadership that investigated the correlation between certain types of learning experiences and the development of leaders. One study looking at the development of officers in the United States Army found the best learning experiences occurred when the assignments were challenging and varied (Mumford et al., 2000). Quality feedback also helped cultivate growth in these new leaders.

Yukl (2010) categorized challenging assignments as those that required solving an unusual problem. He noted future leaders learned when they were asked to take risks and face obstacles during these assignments. The Center for Creative Leadership (CCL) offered some assignment scenarios that work best, such as:

- The leader must influence people without relying on authority,
- The leader must face external pressures during the assignment,
- The leader must influence a change within the organization, and
- The leader works alone without the oversight or support of his/her superiors.

The researchers at the CCL found failure and adversity played a role in development, noting managers who failed early in their careers were more likely to gain leadership skills than those who only encountered early successes. To benefit from these failures, however, a person must take some responsibility for the problem and understand his/her personal limitations (McCall & Lombardo, 1983).

Leadership Theories

Throughout history, philosophers and researchers have looked for ways to describe and categorize leadership. Across many disciplines, a good leader was seen as one who was able to maintain order in society. Throughout history, Rost (1991) noted that good leadership was tied closely to having a steady hand and upholding the power of the status quo.

In identifying the traits, skills, and behaviors of leaders, social scientists centered their efforts on the single individual and her/his personal qualities. For example, Weber (1947) defined a leader as someone who had influence over others. He/she was blessed with charisma and had other personal characteristics critical for personal success. For leaders to be successful, they must instill trust and respect in their followers (Weber, 1947). The emphasis for leaders was completing projects and daily tasks rather than

fostering interpersonal relationships. Until late in the twentieth century, leaders were given absolute power and taught to avoid democratic practices (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003). Slowly, emphasis shifted from the individual to the team. At this juncture, Rost (1991) defined leadership as "an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p.124).

Such a shift in the definition of leadership obviously altered the theories related to leadership development. Dugan (2006) noted leadership development theories have now been placed in two distinct categories: industrial and post-industrial. The industrial leadership theories focused on "the individual as a leader, promoting command and control models, power and authority, rational and analytical thinking, and strong managerial influences" (Dugan, 2006, p. 217). Leadership development models focused on building the best individual leader, emphasizing how to increase an organization's production and efficiency (Komives et al, 2005). This focus shaped the body of leadership research generated during this time period. Significant emphasis was placed on determining task versus interpersonal orientations and/or autocratic versus democratic leadership styles (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003).

The post-industrial models "sharply contrast with its industrial counterpart and is grounded in human relations and characterized by shared goals" (Dugan, 2006, p. 217). Post-industrial models had a perspective that was process oriented, transformative, value- centered, non-coercive, and collaborative (Dugan, 2006). For instance, research on industrial models looked for universal leadership characteristics and often studied power and hierarchy (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). Today's leadership models believe leaders are context bound and interested in mutual power and influence. Rather than predicting a leader's behavior and outcomes, post-

industrial models have promoted learning, empowerment, and change (Rost, 1991). Komives et al, (2005) noted the post-industrial models of leadership were values-centered, encouraging "collaboration, ethical action, moral purposes, and leaders who transform followers into leaders themselves" (p. 1). Thus, leadership was not the work of a single person, but rather a collaborative effort among group members. Therefore, the essence of leadership development was not on growing the leader, but instead growing the relationship.

Leadership Development Research

While the study of leadership and management, disciplines have been a popular subject for researchers. Bernal (2009), though, noted little has been written about leadership development. What research has been done has looked at short-term development interventions that have lasted less than one day (Avolio & Chan, 2008). This lack of research led Day and O'Connor (2003) to argue in *The Future of Leadership Development* for the creation of a science of leadership development, promoting theories that offered sound practices for the effective development of future leaders as opposed to further research into defining what best defines leadership.

In considering leadership, researchers continue to consider whether or not leaders are born with natural traits or created through experience and training. One practical answer might come in the dollars spent in the United States on leadership development programs and management/executive training classes. Annual estimates range from $50 billion on corporate training and development (Fulmer, 1997) to more recent approximations of $45 billion (Lamoureux, 2007). Perhaps more telling, Drew and Wah (1999) surveyed more than 5,000 organizations and noted 58% of the organizations contacted reported offering leadership development training. A much larger percentage reported such programs were under development. This trend was also true for

America's colleges and universities, which have invested large amounts of dollars to implement programs to improve leadership skills and grow the world's future leaders and leadership scholars (Gomez, 2007). This emphasis on leadership education tied closely to the history of America's colleges, which were founded largely to train a generation of young people who could then lead the new nation (Dugan, 2006). Posner (2004) said this mission was so ingrained in the college system that leadership development was now integrated into the mission of many educational programs. This has not been an easy assignment as the growing complexities of today's world have led to louder calls to teach better paradigms of leadership (Roberts, 1997). Despite efforts to expand programs for students wishing to improve their leadership skills, critics have said empirical data proving the effectiveness of such training is lacking (Eddy, 2012).

The growth of interest in and development of these programs in academic circles led to growing interest in the development of the science of leadership development (Day & Zaccaro, 2004) and efforts to create more evidence-based approaches to this science (Rousseau, Manning, & Denyer, 2008). This included measuring the effectiveness of leadership development programs and tracing what influenced leaders to grow and prosper. For example, Spendlove (2007) discovered many universities offered no systematic approach for either identifying or developing leadership skills. By interviewing numerous university leaders, he noted most university leaders believed past experience in university settings increased the effectiveness of leaders in higher education. In looking for the competencies needed for effective leadership in higher education, Spendlove (2007) found, for example, people skills, such as the ability to communicate and negotiate with others, were vital to university leaders. In using those communication skills, another challenge universities and colleges face was their unique environment and culture. Posner (2004) stated the collegiate environment was

significantly different from the environment of managers and corporations. The leaders Posner (2004) interviewed indicated experience working in a college or university setting was critical to helping them maneuver through this unique culture.

Naturally, this led to greater efforts to determine the value of leadership development and what practices worked best in different environments. Day and Halpin (2001) reviewed five large businesses known for their leadership development practices, including formal development programs, 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, job assignments, mentoring, networks, reflection, action learning, and outdoor challenges. U.S. Army leadership development programs then incorporated these results, discussing potential implications and future uses of these practices for soldiers and officers.

Research has primarily looked at how leadership abilities are developed and improved upon, with attention placed on which attributes might be most critical to their enhancement. Recent research efforts have looked at social identity theory, authentic leadership, relational issues, behavioral leadership, and confidence.

Social Identity

Social identity theory argued individuals develop themselves by creating an identity that allowed self-understanding in the context of a team and an ability to find harmony within different environments (Ruderman & Munusamy, 2007). More simply, the theory saw leadership as a process influenced by groups and the community in which the person resides. Understanding this concept, researchers argued, could be a powerful tool for leader development. Lord and Hall (2005) used their research to lobby the development of a leader required the alignment of a leader's personal, social, and professional identities. To fully develop, leaders must be aware of themselves, including how they react to others and how others react to them. This understanding

allowed the leader to properly adapt to changing settings. Lord and Hall (2005) looked at how leaders amassed domain-specific expertise in their development. The two argued leaders processed information differently as they moved from developing micro-level skills to organizational competencies. Individuals moved from novice to leadership and eventually to expert levels assuming an extended passage of time and the leader's complex understanding of self. Lord and Hall (2005) noted leaders must travel through a maturation process wherein they merged their sense of self and social knowledge with their identity as a leader. Over time, the leader had the experience to adeptly respond to increasingly challenging situations.

Komives et al (2005) used social identity to consider how college student leaders were developed. Within their grounded theory approach, they sampled a small and diverse set of students during different semesters within their college studies. They discovered these students moved from an egocentric view of leadership to one in which leadership was based on collaboration and enhancing relationships. The research appeared to confirm the importance of colleges and universities in developing future leaders (Komives et al, 2005).

Authentic Leadership

The recent leadership construct known as authentic leadership arose at the start of the 21st century partly in response to what the creators saw as ethical collapses in leadership across the country (George, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Avolio et al, 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). They cited the lack of leadership shown during major business meltdowns such as Worldcom, Enron, and Arthur Andersen, calling for a new type of real and positive leadership. George (2003) defined authentic leadership as "being yourself; being the person you were created to be" rather than "developing the image or persona of a leader"(p. 11). From a researchers' perspective, Luthans and

Avolio (2003) offered this definition: "A process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational context, which results in both greater self awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self development" (p. 243). With growing interest in this new leadership approach came some research to see how this style can be developed.

Day (2011) noted this approach, like other theory-based ideas, offered researchers few empirical measurements of authentic leadership development or its components such as self-awareness, self-regulation and development, relational transparency, positive psychological capital, and positive moral perspective. Rather, most of the research had occurred around the theoretical perspectives of the researcher (Day, 2011). For instance, Eigel and Kuhnert (2005) applied the constructive development theory to leadership and created a framework called Leadership Development Levels (LDL). These levels tied to different steps of personal maturity that shape a leader's moral and mental capacities. Eigel and Kuhert (2005) argued authentic leadership was found in the highest LDLs, adding the LDL was the development model for creating authentic leadership. Critics, however, noted higher LDL did not capture some key components of authentic leadership as outlined by other authors.

Luthans and Avolio (2003) looked at the factors and processes needed to create authentic leadership development and ultimately long-term sustainable performance. Within this framework the researchers identified several positive psychological capacities that would serve as personal resources for an authentic leader. This included resources such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resiliency. Working within organizations that promoted authentic leadership, these people increased their levels of self-awareness and understanding, leading to further positive self development.

Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans (2004) surmised these positive psychological capacities were open to development and change, which would further enhance the development of individuals, teams, organizations, and communities.

Over time, Gardner et al, (2005) noted the relationship between both leaders and followers became more authentic as both parties developed more fully. For example, both group's sense of self developed more fully once followers internalized the values and beliefs supported by the leaders. Followers gained greater understanding of their respective leaders once they had a better understanding of whom they were as followers (Gardner et al, 2005). This helped in the development of both leaders and followers.

In another study, Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) looked at the role of teamwork in creating leaders. They argued rather than viewing leadership as the role of one person, today's complex work settings required leadership as a set of functions performed by the members of a team. Effective leaders understood their ambiguous role and were blessed with the humility and self-confidence to follow the subordinates with the best ideas (Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004). Teamwork became the catalyst for team learning and the reshaping of the leader's functions.

Relational Leadership

Many theories of leadership, including authentic leadership, considered the important relationship between supervisors and subordinates (Manzoni & Barsoux, 2002). One such example was the leader-member exchange (LMX) theory, which has been the focus of numerous empirical studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The basis of LMX theory was the assumption that leaders differed in the types of relationships they developed with their followers. This theory, in turn, led Uhl-Bien (2003) to argue for the advance of research in relational leadership, which she based on two perspectives. First,

Uhl-Bien (2003) offered an entity perspective that "focuses on identifying attributes of individuals as they engage in interpersonal relationships" (p. 147). Second, she offered a relational perspective that "views leadership as a process of social construction through which certain understandings of leadership come about and are given privileged ontology" (p. 147). Uhl-Bien (2003) argued leadership development should focus more time on the relationship-building skills of leaders, including the use of feedback to allow leaders to adapt and grow. Research, she noted, should look at how such leadership relationships were produced.

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) noted five key components within relational leadership that need to be developed. Throughout this philosophy, a leader must have a sense of purpose and an inclusive approach that allowed a voice to all points of view. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) also said leaders and their followers must be empowered and taught to act in an ethical manner. Finally, relational leadership was process-oriented, meaning it understood how the group did what it did. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) did not push for strict guidelines in how to develop relational leaders, though they did offer methods for these five components. For example, within the self-empowerment component, the three researchers pointed to Murrell (1985) and the six ways someone became empowered:

1) Education
2) Leadership
3) Structure
4) Provisions and resources
5) Mentoring
6) Actualizing

Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) also argued relational leadership developed best through leadership by example. The three authors noted leading by example greatly influenced the values and ethics of a business or organization. Terry (1993) stressed leaders without authenticity harmed those same values and ethics. Tjosvold and Tjosvold (1991) urged the development of relational leadership concepts using research showing group members preferred working with leaders and directors who built collaborative partnerships with them. Followers were less likely to value more traditional styles of leadership that focused on competition and individual efforts. Kohn (1992) noted the ideas of success and trying to beat another group or person were two completely different things. Komives, Lucas, and McMahon (2007) furthered this idea by noting:

> Even a group member who enjoys competition in athletics is not likely to enjoy working in a setting such as a sports team, committee, study group, or job site in which others are competitive and try to beat each other or use competitive practices like withholding information or degrading others' contributions. (p. 105)

Teams worked best in an environment of cooperation and support, rather than a culture of coercion, fear, and anxiety.

Behavioral Change Models

One assumption within leadership development theories is interventions can lead to positive behavior changes in leaders. Current literature, however, offered little evidence for how these interventions will lead to changes with long-term impacts for the person or the organization. Still, several behavioral change models have been created and tested for developing future leaders.

One such model is the trans-theoretical model, which has its roots in health studies related to helping people overcome addictions to smoking, alcohol, and food. Prochaska and Norcross (2006) noted the model, which has evolved over the last 20

years for use in personal growth and leadership development, began as a linear model of change but is today more fluid in its movements. The model featured six stages: precontemplation, when the person did not realize a problem exists; contemplation; preparation; action; maintenance; and termination. Far from perfect, the model often required trial and error by the participants, whether they were attempting to give up cigarettes or improve their communication skills (Prochaska & Norcross, 2006). For example, the researchers reported smokers might have to use this model three or four times before successfully giving up tobacco. Recent research looked at what other issues and problems could be used with the trans-theoretical model.

A second model, the five-phase model for leadership development, matched interventions with the individual's need or desire, using many of the concepts highlighted in the transtheoretical model (Yukl, 2010). The model offered five stages of behavioral change, urging practitioners to note the stage describing the individual or organization: intention, preparation, implementation, maintenance, and termination. The model was designed to provide the individual with ongoing support in order to minimize the possibility of regression into previous behaviors (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002). The developers of this model argued that the behavior change was more sustainable than other leadership development models (Zeus & Skiffington, 2002).

Confidence

Recent leadership development studies have looked at the importance of increasing a person's self-confidence and belief he/she can be successful in facing different challenging situations. The research indicated the greater a person's self-confidence, the better he/she will perform as a leader (Odom, Boyd, & Williams, 2012). A common term used with this research was self-efficacy, which was almost treated as a synonym to confidence. For instance, Bandura (1995) defined self-efficacy as the belief

"in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations" (p. 2). This idea of self-efficacy was central to Bandura's social cognitive theory, which stressed the importance of observational learning, social experiences, and reciprocal determinism in the development of an individual's personality. The theory espoused a person's attitudes and behaviors were the result of one's perceptions and responses to different situations and challenges. Bandura (1997) further noted a person's sense of his/her capabilities determined how driven he/she was to accomplish personal goals. This related both to the time spent on the challenge and the amount of persistence demonstrated. The perceptions of self can either be positive ones, which encouraged people to act on these goals, or negatives ones, which inhibited their actions. In his early research, Bandura (1986) identified four sources of self-efficacy: mastery experiences; social cognition; social persuasion provided as feedback from others related to a certain capability; and self-monitoring.

The issue of self-efficacy has translated into several research studies related to leadership development including one study by Chemers, Watson, and May (2000) that looked at the relationship between a leader's level of self-efficacy and the performance and attitudes of the followers. The study found leaders with high levels of positive self-efficacy increased the levels of commitment and follow-through exhibited by the followers. Related to these findings, Luthans and Peterson (2002) discovered a correlation between leader self-efficacy and employee engagement in the workplace. Leaders with greater amounts of self-efficacy were also better able to implement changes in their organization. Within the education settings, Osterman and Sullivan (1996) studied school principals and the role of efficacy levels in their performance as leaders. The duo found school leaders identified as efficacious tended to persist more on meeting their goals and approached the workplace in a more practical manner,

adapting their leadership strategies when they faced resistance or problems. These school principals were less likely to believe they failed because of skill deficits, but rather believed they did not try hard enough or find a suitable strategy.

Leader Development

The literature spent some time looking at a recent distinction created between leadership development versus leader development. McCauley, Moxley, and Van Velsor (1998) defined leadership development as the "expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes" (p. 4). The definition emphasized the individual. For example, within *The Sage Handbook of Leadership*, Day (2009) stated only two chapters in the book were directed at leadership development while 13 others centered on topics surrounding leader development. Day (2000) noted a distinction should be made between the development of individual leaders as opposed to "the development of social structures and process" (p. 38). Day (2000) stated the difference between the two terms was very real and was not just simple wordplay:

> At the core of the difference is an orientation toward developing human capital (leader development) as compared with social capital (leadership development). Orientation toward human capital emphasizes the development of individual capabilities such as those related to self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-motivation that serve as the foundation of intrapersonal competence. Orientation toward social capital emphasizes the development of reciprocal obligations and commitments built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect; it rests on a foundation of interpersonal competence, but ultimately, it requires enactment. Leadership is developed through the enactment of leadership. (p. 605)

Taken further, leader development typically focused on the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the individual, which are tied to a leadership position or a formal leadership role.

Day (2000) said the goal of leader development was to allow the individual "to build the intrapersonal competence needed to form an accurate model of oneself, to

engage in healthy attitude and identity development, and to use that self-model to perform effectively in any number of organizational roles" (p. 585). The emphasis for businesses was to grow their human capital. Conversely, Day (2000) noted leadership development was about creating social capital, which was formed through relationships among individuals that strengthened cooperation. Day (2000) added social capital was based on "relationships, which are created through interpersonal exchange" (p. 586).

Day (2000) wrote early leadership development efforts mainly focused largely on enhancing skills and abilities. He noted this approach was limited because leadership was more than a skill. Rather, it was tied to a strong understanding of the relationship between the leader's social environment and his/her organizational one. Due to this relationship, recent studies have shown researchers the difficulty of studying leaders without also understanding their followers and their organizational environment. Salas, Stagl, and Burke (2004) reported many industries have turned to team-based organizational strategies in response to growing complexities within a global economy. This emphasis has not always worked, they wrote, because teamwork was much more than placing people together in a group. Because of this, today's leaders must have a greater understanding of the factors tied to team effectiveness so that competencies (i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes) can be developed.

Identifying Leaders

For obvious reasons, organizations, businesses, and teams spend a great deal of time picking leaders who have good chances of being effective. Leadership was considered critical in the overall success of any organization or community (Jones & Olken, 2005). As far back as Plato, the importance of leadership has been extolled. For example, in *The Republic*, Plato (trans. 2009) noted people had specific vocations in which they would more likely succeed, including those who took on leadership roles.

He wrote, “we are not all alike,” (p. 50) because nature has given us different skills and abilities tied to specific tasks. This concept was the first declaration of the job-fit theory, as well as one of the first discussions of the idea of identifying specific traits suited to selecting the best leaders. This section will look at research using traits and abilities to identify leaders and how organizations and businesses have gone about picking leaders.

Traits of Leaders

Depending on the academic discipline or theory, the term *traits* was defined in different ways. For the purpose of leadership development, traits were individual psychological or biological characteristics that exhibited four properties (Ashton, 2007). First, traits were measurable. Second, they were stable in terms of time and situation. Third, traits varied from person to person. And finally traits could predict the attitudes, decisions, and behaviors of people. Taken further, traits determined the outcomes of many situations (Ashton, 2007). Researchers have viewed this idea as vital in developing leaders and organizations. The logic followed if certain traits could be demonstrated as tied to strong and effective leadership, organizations such as community colleges would spend less time and money selecting and investing in future directors, vice presidents, and presidents. Early research on traits looked at the famous Milgram obedience studies (Milgram, 1963) related to the authority and power of leaders. Milgram studied 40 individuals who were placed in positions of authority. They were then asked to deliver a 400-volt electrical shock to another person. The high number of people who agreed to send electrical currents into the other person surprised many researchers, and led to numerous studies showing people placed in certain situations will behave in ways they consider appropriate to the environment, "The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often it is not so much the kind

of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act" (Milgram, 1974, p. 205). Price and Bouffard (1974) extended this study to show some environments inhibited behaviors, comparing how individuals behaved in a church or an elevator compared to a bar or a public park. More recent research related to transformational leadership showed leaders were more likely to focus on the needs of the team when they assumed others were observing them (Lim & Ployhart, 2004).

Another focus on traits related to the longstanding debate between nature or nurture. Researchers have sought to determine how much of a person's personality and behavior was predetermined by genetics, endocrinology, and neurosciences, compared to the possibilities of improving or altering a person's traits. Like many other researchers, Schwartz (1999) found individual differences were largely defined by a mix of a person's environment and genetic make-up. While Kanazawa (2008) noted the intelligence of a person was strongly tied to geography and where a person lived, Bouchard and McGue (2003) found intelligence had a powerful relationship to an individual's genetics. Bouchard and McGue (2003) also noted personality and intelligence were distinctly tied to hereditary factors.

Traits Tied to Leadership

While many traits have been tied to leadership, few have been found to be valid predictors of success (Digman, 1990). Based on recent testing instruments, Gottfredson (2002) noted six traits that warranted continued research related to leadership identification and development. The most important indicator of work success was general intelligence, which Gottfredson (2002) defined as a person's ability to learn, understand abstract concepts, and process information. In terms of personality, Digman (1990) said the research had shown five traits linked to leadership and work outcomes:

1. Extraversion, which was tied to having a positive nature while being friendly and assertive.
2. Openness, which were traits of curiosity, imagination, and responsiveness to emotions.
3. Agreeableness, defined as trusting others, frankness, compliance, and compassion.
4. Conscientiousness, which was a person's level of self-confidence, dependability, and austerity.
5. Neuroticism, which marked low levels of vulnerability, depression, and anxiety.

Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader (2004) noted three items used in leadership development circles have not been shown to have correlations with leadership success. The first was emotional intelligence, and while emotional intelligence influenced cognitive strengths and personality, recent research showed no ties to leadership effectiveness (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). The second was self-monitoring, which also lacked research sufficient enough to tie it to leadership (Zaccaro, Kemp & Bader, 2004). Finally, tools such as Myers-Briggs Type Indicators have provided contradictory evidence related to personality types of leadership performance.

The importance of understanding leadership traits tied partly to how community colleges might select future leaders. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) noted a person's personality was a good predictor of her/his leadership style. Once leadership style was known, that style could help predict levels of employee satisfaction and team success. Lastly, employee attitudes and the functions of the team predicted the performance level of the community college. Hogan and Kaiser (2005) suggested that personality

traits and leadership styles often shape actions and situations within teams and organizations.

Identifying Potential

Companies and organizations have spent more of their energies on identifying talented employees with the intent of developing them into future leaders (Silzer & Church, 2009). The idea viewed employees as assets, and the enhancement of these assets would add to the bottom line of companies and organizations. This did not mean, however, identifying these future leaders was an easy undertaking. For instance researchers were interested in learning how to best identify talent within an organization and know this talent was being properly developed. Within the literature, Silzer and Church (2009) were identified for the thoroughness of their summary of past studies of high potential employees (Dalal & Nolan, 2009; Henson, 2009; Robinson, Fetters, Riester, & Bracco, 2009). The role of a person's work performance in predicting future success received much attention . Silzer and Church (2010) noted employees labeled as high potential were often given this title because of their proven track record at the company. Within a corporate survey, Silzer and Church (2010) found all of the companies responding to the survey used work performance as one of the identifying factors in selecting high potential employees. Ten percent of companies used work performance as the sole measuring tool. Robinson et al. (2009) noted a person's potential for many years was based on a person's previous work record, though that view has been shown to be unreliable. For instance, Dowell (2010) reported someone who was a strong sales person did not always translate into a strong sales manager. The skills required to sell something were much different than the skills used to lead a group of people. Because of this, many companies have learned from past mistakes and have recently tried to differentiate between a person's past performance and his/her

future potential (Dowell, 2010). Making this process more difficult were the varied definitions of potential or high potential. For example, Karaevli and Hall (2003) in a survey of 13 major organizations including Southwest Airlines and Sun Microsystems discovered each one had a competing definition of potential.

In an attempt to find useful measures of potential, Silzer and Church (2009) conducted an exhaustive literature review, honing in on past and current business models used to identify leadership potential. The researchers conducted two surveys with various American corporations and introduced a new integrated model of potential that featured 11 theories found within their literature review. Within the model, the two researchers used trends from current practices regarding high potentials that can be applied to a variety of settings and talent pools. They also identified three components of potential: 1) foundational dimensions, 2) growth dimensions, and 3) career dimensions. Silzer and Church (2009) defined foundational dimensions as stable competencies found throughout a person's adulthood. These included cognitive ability, personality characteristics, and interpersonal skills. Growth dimensions were those components that facilitated a person's growth and development, such as adaptability and motivation. Finally, career dimensions were components showing early indications of potential within a specific career area including leadership abilities or project management skills (Silzer & Church, 2009).

Critics have noted while the nine-box grid model required leaders to think about the capabilities among employees and place them in different categories, the model treated performance and potential as two independent and distinct variables. In addition, some researchers have argued more study was needed on the identification of derailers, which were undesirable attributes that could derail a person's career (Dalal & Nolan, 2009). These included such traits as arrogance and rigidity. Other critics said

certain signs of potential may be missed because they were hard to spot. They noted issues of context and situation might be at work.

An example of the lack of success in identifying potential can be shown in the efforts of businesses and organizations at succession planning. Garman and Glawe (2004) defined succession planning as, "a structured process involving the identification and preparation of a potential successor to assume a new role" (p. 120). While the need for succession planning was found in the literature (Barnett & Davis, 2008), the data related to its use were lacking, with many of the modern succession planning models aimed at replicating current leadership. In a survey of more than 4,500 leaders from 900 organizations, Bernthal and Wellins (2006) found about one-third of internal leaders chosen as part of a succession plan failed in their new jobs. Similarly, Charan (2005) said about one in three chief executive officers hired from within companies had to resign.

Conclusion

As the role of the community college president continues to expand, so do the roles surrounding public relations. The literature noted that successful leaders are those who can establish strong relationships with other people, especially their followers. These relationships develop in part because of sound communication skills and a willingness to be open and agreeable. The research also shows that community colleges need to spend more time on leadership development efforts, first in identifying future leaders, and then giving them the training exercises and experiences to build the inner confidence that leaders need to be successful.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The purpose of the proposed study was to determine what community college vice presidents who wish to be a president someday were doing to development themselves for their future role, with an emphasis on building public relations experiences and understanding. The core methodology used in this qualitative study was phenomenology. This methodology, which was chosen largely based on the main research questions, guided how the data were collected, analyzed, and reported. The key questions guiding this research study included:

1) How are current community college administrators who hope to become community college presidents preparing for the public relations role that comes with the job?

2) What are the experiences of aspiring community college administrators related to leadership development and their future public relations duties?

3) What elements contribute to or inhibit their abilities to gain public relations skills and develop as leaders?

A qualitative design was selected because it offered numerous advantages including greater understanding of the viewpoints of the study's participants and stronger interpretations of the data's meaning (Creswell, 2007). Other advantages included a better chance to understand dynamic developments during the study as well as more sensitivity to the influences of context and meaning. Creswell (2007) noted that qualitative studies allow researchers to inquire into "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human program" (p. 37). Conversely, a quantitative study provides insights into what future community college presidents are doing to prepare themselves for their future public relations duties along with perceptions of their level of

preparedness; however, such an approach does not offer deeper answers to questions related to the why and how of leadership development and the experiences of the administrators. Related to leadership studies, the literature urged the use of qualitative research for a variety of reasons (Conger, 1998; Bryman et al, 1988; Alvesson, 1996). For instance, qualitative research allows greater for flexibility when the researcher encounters unforeseen ideas during the research process. When contextual factors arise, the use of qualitative methods offers a more sensitive approach. Qualitative research methods are also more useful when studying symbolism dimensions and social meaning (Conger, 1998; Bryman et al, 1988; Alvesson, 1996).

Methodology

The phenomenological research design was selected to provide a voice to aspiring community college presidents as they follow their career paths. This design placed the person in the center of his/her environment. Phenomenologists focus on a person's experiences regarding a phenomenon and how the person interprets them. Van Manen (1990) defined this method as an exploration of "the essence of lived experience." Reality is defined by how that one person experiences life; a single absolute reality does not exist. An important component of some phenomenology studies is "bracketing," which requires the researcher to put aside any assumptions or biases related to those experiences (Ashworth, 1996). Phenomenologists can study one person or several who share a common cultural aspect. In this case, the research looked at the experiences of community college administrators as they honed their public relations skills.

This section describes the many details about the selection of the samples in this study. In addition, the strategies used in determining the participants and how those participants were recruited are outlined. Finally, efforts to increase the levels of trustworthiness in the study are addressed.

Population and Geographic Selection

The sample included 11 community college administrators who aspired to become a community college president in the future. The sampling method used convenience sampling, related to people within the Rocky Mountain region who worked as administrators at public community colleges in the Rocky Mountain region. In selecting the participants, the following criteria was used for each participant: (1) the person must hold a vice president's position with her/his college; (2) the person must have served as a community college administrator for at least five years; (3) the person must indicate an interest in becoming a community college president someday; (4) the person must work in one of six states in the Rocky Mountain region; and (5) must work for a public community college. Attempts were made to include administrators with varied backgrounds including factors of gender, age, and ethnicity. The logic of the five years of experience as a community college administrator assumed a period of time had been available for various career development practices.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, the United States has 1,116 community colleges. Within the six states outlined, the sample size included 80 community colleges: Wyoming (8 colleges), Colorado (15), Idaho (3), Montana (13), Arizona (21), and New Mexico (20). I did not interview any administrators from my own college, which lowered the total sample size to 79 colleges. Each participant was identified through the latest American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) list of administrators.

The selection of the six states was a form of regional sampling that allowed me easier access to the candidates. Though the candidates hailed from the Rocky Mountain region, they did not share similar campus issues nor serve similar student and community populations. I did not intend to limit the size of the campuses or the size of

the communities they served — such as rural communities in an agricultural area. In addition, six states as opposed to one made it less likely that the reader could identify the respondents. For example, to limit the study to only Arizona or Idaho would increase the likelihood that the participants interviewed could be identified by the reader. With more than 70 colleges to choose from, anonymity was increased.

Sample Size

The original sample size of 12 to 25 community college administrators was selected to increase the variability of responses and experiences of the participants. I stopped the interviews at 11 vice presidents based on two research concepts: precedent and saturation. Related to precedent, Steeves (2000) recommended that the sample size in qualitative studies should be driven by the number of participants in past studies. My sample of 11 matched other studies. Late into the interviews for this study, the concept of saturation was considered, a point in time when the collection of additional data did not provide any new information on the subject (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

My final sample offers a rich variety of backgrounds and perspectives. Eight of the 11 vice presidents worked at smaller community colleges in rural settings, though all of those schools are very different. The remaining 3 work in larger schools located in urban centers. The study features 6 women and 5 men, with about one-third actively pursuing positions at the time of the study. About half worked for a community college overseen by a board of trustees; the rest were part of a large college system. About half of the vice presidents began their careers in the college setting; the rest came to community college from the business or non-profit world.

Recruitment of Subjects

By accessing data from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), I put together a list of every community college vice president in the six identified states. The vice presidents received an email, followed up one week later by a written letter that explained to them my research study and asked for their assistance in completing my study. The communication pointed out that vice presidential candidates must have an interest in becoming a community college president in the future. The individual identified also had to fit within the remaining criteria spelled out on page 78. Both the letter and the email identified the selection criteria, the interview process, and their rights throughout the study. I had considered contacting community college presidents first to get their recommendations, however that changed for a variety of reasons related to the lessening of confidentiality as well as potential problems arising from skewed sampling methods. Instead, I decided to go directly to the vice presidents themselves.

This recruitment method used both purposive sampling methods along with convenience methods. The purposive aspect, known as quota sampling, determined how many people with specific characteristics to include as participants. Characteristics included job title, place of residence, and number of years in a profession. The convenience component came from seeking applicants within six states that are a day or two's drive from my home. Once the communication pieces were sent out, I waited for responses. The first ones arrived in my email account soon after the letter was sent. More arrived after I followed up with the email. I thought I might need to expand to a seventh or eighth state if I did not have enough interest or enough candidates that met my sampling criteria. I did not intend to interview the same number of people from each state, though I wanted to include a couple of states states in my study to increase

confidentiality. Issues of gender and ethnicity were not to be considered in my initial selection process, unless I received a large number of responses. In that case, I would try to collect a large number of diverse interviews to increase my sample size (Ritchie, 2003). I began my travels in the fall of 2011 and concluded the interviews in the spring of 2013. Most of the interviews took place on their home campuses, though in a couple of cases, we met at a state conference or meeting. The first day's interview was wider in scope and followed a prescribed list of queries. The second day served as a follow-up related to examples or stories that weren't fully developed.

An artifact study took place before the interviews. This component of the study featured searches for evidence of involvement in the community and other public relations efforts. This data also helped me put together specific questions for each vice president.

Pseudonyms were assigned to each study participant to protect her/his privacy and promote anonymity. In addition, demographic information was not sought during the interviews. I began interviewing a 12th vice president, however, the first interview ended abruptly when the vice president had to take an important phone call. Subsequent attempts to interview her were not successful because of her busy schedule. In discussing the issue with my methodologist, I determined that I had reached the point of saturation with my 11 research subjects, and never concluded the interview with the 12th person. She was notified and agreed with the decision.

Data Gathering

This study used the interview format to look for stories or examples of leadership development, especially those related to public relations and the building of relationships. Using these interviews, this study searched for themes or elements that have aided these administrators in growing as leaders. This study also discovered

themes within the community college setting that have delayed or deterred this growth. A key component of this method used self-reflection by the researcher prior to the study's outset to identify any biases related to the phenomenon (Merriam, 2002).

Data Collection

Phenomenology seeks the lived experiences of the participant, which are often told through the stories and narratives of each research subject. With this in mind, the goal of the research interviews was the collection of these experiences with the intent to create meaning. The interviews took place over two days using a list of prepared questions that helped establish the framework of the conversations, although they did not bind the discussion. The intent was to allow the participant to drive the conversation wherever he/she would like to travel. Steeves (2000) recommended the use of multiple interviews to help build trust and encourage the participant to speak more freely. The first interview took approximately 90 minutes, although if the participant became fatigued or disinterested, the interview ended. The second interview, sometimes occuring the following day, lasted no more than 60 minutes. During the evening in between, I reviewed the first interview and reflected on the stories collected. The second interview allowed for follow-up questions about those stories as well as the collection of new information. Not every interview was completed over two consecutive days; some required a second trip to the campus because of scheduling conflicts. Subsequent clarification related to the interviews took place using the phone or some type of electronic communication.

Interview Questions

The questions centered on the participant's leadership journey as well as how he/she had prepared him/herself for current and future jobs. I conducted the interviews using a set of guiding questions that can be found in the appendices. I did

not ask the questions in the same order each time, and I asked different follow-up questions depending on the responses of the vice president. In all cases, I sought experiences told through examples and stories.

Analysis of the data

In approaching the analysis of my data, I used the phenomenological reduction process espoused by Moustakas (1994), who urged focusing on the entirety of the experience and a search for its overall essence. Within my approach, I began with what Moustakas (1994) called the *epoche*, a technique that asks the researcher to describe all personal experiences related to the study to hopefully increase the researcher's understanding of any biases, assumptions, or underlying feelings about the research topic. I explained my experiences and my biases concerning the research topic in Chapter 1.

Moustakas (1994) then wrote that the analysis process moves to horizontalization, a step in which all transcripts are reviewed for any statements that offer significant information about the participants' experiences. I began this process after the third interview to help identify emerging themes and questions for future interviews. Moustakas (1994) defined this process as "the grounding or condition of the phenomenon that gives it a distinct character" (p. 95).

Once I completed my interviews, I worked hard to treat each statement equally, something that Moustkas (1994) urged, as I reviewed them and combined them into like clusters and eventually themes. Five initial themes emerged from this process including decisions to enter leadership, perceptions of the president's public relations role, self awareness of strengths and weaknesses, leadership development strategies, and personal challenges faced. I reviewed my initial research questions and eventually reduced this list to three core themes.

Finally, I considered the essence of the phenomenon by contemplating "what" the vice presidents experienced in this study and "how" it was studied using structural descriptions (Moustakas, 1994). I used these structural descriptions with my 11 participants and then considered them as a whole. In determining the common themes of each participant, I was able to discover the "essence" of the phenomenon of my study. Creswell (1998) noted that analysis in phenomenological research begins with reduction. From here, the researcher analyzes all distinct statements and themes and searches search for all possible meanings (Creswell, 1998).

> Researchers search for essentials, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness where experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning." (p.52)

Working with this data was eventually an enlightening and fruitful experience. Initially, I struggled in finding meaning in my data, but over time and with the use of logic, systems, feedback from my advisor and a creative soul, I was able to complete the analysis process.

Trustworthiness

Terms like reliability and validity are more commonly tied to quantitative research studies, however the two issues also have a place with qualitative studies. Creswell and Miller (2000) noted that qualitative researchers should use better terms to describe these concepts including *authenticity, credibility*, and *trustworthiness*. Creswell (2009) offered eight strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of any qualitative study. I used the following six strategies in my study:

- I used rich and thick language to describe my findings.
- I employed a member checker to audit the accuracy of my findings.
- I explained any bias that I brought to the study.

- I included negative data in my findings that did not agree with my themes.
- I spent considerable time in the field. For example, I visited all of the campuses where the vice presidents worked, and often conducted my lengthy interviews in their offices.
- I used an external auditor to critique my efforts and my final project.

CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS

In developing my chapter themes, I began with the question of public relations and its tie to the community college president. Based on their experiences the vice presidents I interviewed all agreed that this skill in developing strong relationships with key stakeholders and publics in the community was critical to a community college president's success. The irony was that their views of public relations within their own future presidency varied greatly as some of the vice presidents said they embraced that role and others said they were uncomfortable with the external expectations. This was demonstrated even more within my third theme, which considered their experiences as they worked to develop themselves as a president, especially for that external role. Some of the vice presidents indicated numerous public relations development experiences, while others offered very few examples.

Within my study I interviewed 11 community college vice presidents who indicated an interest in becoming a community college president in the future. The participants worked in several states located in the Rocky Mountain region and have varied backgrounds. Eight vice presidents worked at smaller community colleges in rural settings while the remaining 3 worked in larger schools located in urban centers. The study featured 6 women and 5 men, who were in different stages of their presidential pursuit. Some were actively pursuing positions, and had even interviewed for open presidencies. Others were still waiting for the right time and right position before applying. Some said they had a formal or informal development plan in place; others did not. Some were open to taking positions in a variety of areas; others were waiting for specific jobs to open up. Some worked for a big college system, while others were part of a local college district that served a boards of trustees. Barely half of the participants had worked their entire careers in academia. A couple began their careers

in the business sector either as an accountant, a chemist, an engineer or a healthcare administrator. Three vice presidents came to the community college from roles as high school teachers.

Profile of the Participants

The following is a brief biography of the 11 participants in the study including a brief description of their setting. In defining the setting of a community college the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2006b) used three primary descriptors: urban, suburban, or rural. Community colleges in an urban or suburban setting serve populations of more than 500,000 people based on the 2000 U.S. Census. The foundation also considered institutional size by looking at full-year unduplicated credit headcount. In this case, small institutions have headcounts less than 2,500 students; medium with 2,500 through 7,500 students; and large institutions as greater than 7,500. The Foundation used the IPEDS data for 2008-09 to create these categories. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each study participant.

Angela was a vice president of student services at a rural-serving medium-sized community college. She was interested in becoming a president someday in specific parts of the country, though she had yet to apply for a position.

Robert was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving medium-sized community college. He had already applied for one open presidency and will apply again once he gains more experience at his current community college.

Connie was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving small-sized community college. She had already applied for a presidency, though she was only willing to serve in that role at couple of colleges in her region. She said she was bound by geography because of family and lifestyle issues.

June was a vice president of academic affairs at an suburban-serving multicampus community college. She had also applied for a presidential opening and was a finalist for the position. She said she learned a great deal about herself through the application process, something she will use to her advantage in the future.

Cathy was a vice president of student services at an urban-serving multicampus community college. She expected to apply for a presidency in the next five years and was confident she will serve in the role someday. She worked in a couple of public relations-type jobs before taking on her first job at a community college.

Ken was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving small-sized community college. He had already served as an interim president at another community college and was currently applying for positions in the western United States. He had been a finalist for several positions, but said he had been hurt by his limited public relations skills.

Eric was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving medium-sized community college. He said he was interested in being a president someday, though he only identified a couple of colleges in two states that interested him. He was looking for a college where he would be comfortable and also wanted to make sure he was able to carry his retirement benefits with him.

Dale was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving medium-sized community college. He was a finalist for a presidential opening, and said that he does not plan to apply for another couple of years, in part because the application process was so open and can impact one's current job if one was not hired. He also served as an interim president at his community college.

Monica was a vice president of a foundation at a rural-serving medium-sized community college. She was not actively pursuing a presidency, though would consider taking the position, if the right job was offered.

Barry was a vice president of academic affairs at a rural-serving small-sized community college. He was not actively pursuing a presidency, though would be interested in serving in the role at a couple of colleges in his region. He was bound by geography because of family and lifestyle issues.

Nancy was a vice president of academic affairs at a suburban-serving multicampus community college. She was interested in applying for a presidency, and recently showed interested in an opening. She was not sure how actively she would go after a presidency because she believed it was risky in today's environment. She said her work with local business leaders to implement new academic programs would make her a strong community college president.

Interview Themes

From the interviews three major themes were identified: (1) understanding of the president's external role, (2) self-awareness about strengths and weaknesses including public relations skills, and (3) leadership development strategies for growing public relations skills. I also came across a fourth theme that was unintended in my research but emerged over time during the interviews. The theme tied to the challenges that some of the vice presidents had faced in their development including issues tied to gender bias, board relations, and system politics. I end this section with a look at the essence of the phenomenom related to the development of public relations skills in leaders.

The Vice President's Perception of the President's External Role

A significant portion of the interviews was spent talking about the role of the community college president and the expectations that the president serves as the external arm of the institution. Agreement emerged over time that there is an internal component at a community college, where the vice presidents are most comfortable, and an external component requiring work outside the campus. The vice presidents talked about their own level of comfort in taking on a more visible role in the community and their familiarity with public relations and its practices. During these discussions the vice presidents often talked about their relationship with current and past presidents. They often assessed the president's communication and relationship skills in the process. Several respondents said their experiences in working with different leaders indicated that a successful presidential tenure depended on these communication and public relations skills.

The President's Public Relations Function. Many of the vice presidents said that community colleges have a defined internal world where they work and an important external function, which is the responsibility of the president. Such external responsibilities includes working with key publics in the community including business leaders, donors, legislators, trustee members, and media reporters. This public relations function is so important, some vice presidents said, that presidential hiring committees sometimes consider this external role first in selecting a new president for their community college.

Ken offered an example of this external importance within his own state, noting the recent hiring of three community presidents who did not grow up in a community college setting but rather had a background in politics. As someone who currently worked for one of those presidents, Ken said his experiences had taught him that those

hires have worked only when the college already has a strong team of administrators in place who understood the internal functions of the institution. Still Ken said this trend was frustrating.

Barry noted that he has worked for several different presidents and found that those with strong interpersonal skills were most successful. He recalled one of his first presidents who had a terrible temper and would yell and scream at employees every time something went wrong. Barry received these verbal assaults a couple of times and was amazed that 20 minutes later, the president would call and invite him to coffee. Eventually Barry said the president yelled at the wrong person and was placed on a forced sabbatical. The president retired soon after that.

As she began developing her skills to become a president, June talked to numerous presidents to find out what skills and abilities she needed to master. One of the skills the current presidents stressed was comfort in the external role of the president working with key stakeholders in the community. June was also told she would have to accept that this role was a big part of the president's job. From serving in the community at her previous college she said she was already comfortable with that role. Still June looked for ways to learn more of those external responsibilities when she became a vice president. The good news, she said, is it has been a role she has enjoyed. "I love it. I absolutely love it."

Monica said within the leadership cabinet at her community college she often offered an external perspective to the discussion, something that only her president offered as well. Most of the other perspectives around the table tended to be internal. She also noted that her community college had a strong external focus and had placed community involvement as one of its strategic planning initiatives. She said this was wise and has helped the other leaders within her college develop into future presidents.

Nancy talked about one of her past presidents who understood the purpose of a community college and had a clear vision that if a community college offered strong academic programs and quality instruction, a leader can survive even in a chaotic environment. Still his poor communication and relationship-building skills made it difficult for him to succeed in his role.

> He was on campus. He just wasn't approachable. He didn't have a real open door policy like our current president has the most open door policy of anyone I've ever seen. And it doesn't matter who you are, whether you're a part-time student or the janitor or me, you know you can get in to see her. To the point where it's almost to the extreme where you know she is exhausted. But at the same time her communication skills are excellent.

Nancy added that while she agreed that the external role was critical to the success of a president, she also believed that many leaders within a community college have limited financial understanding and acumen. She recalled an example during her time as dean, when one of her vice presidents of academic affairs was seen as a failure in her role in large part because she did not know how to manage budgets.

> In the vice presidential role, she really struggled and I just kind of stood behind her and started doing a lot of the work that she was doing. Particularly with budgets because as deans we were really frustrated because she looked at the budgets and it was like reading Greek.

Nancy said she had known some presidents who had similar experiences, which made their job challenging during a time when community colleges have been underfunded.

Concerns about the Importance of the Public Relations Role. Though the vice presidents all indicated that a primary component of a community college president's job was tied to numerous public relations duties inside and outside of the college, several of the vice presidents voiced concerns or criticisms of this role. For example some of the vice presidents questioned how they would learn these public relations skills without the help of the president. June admitted that some presidents were

hesitant to allow their vice presidents a presence in the community, though her current president was very comfortable in allowing her to develop these skills. No one criticized presidents for taking on that role and not sharing it with their vice presidents. The vice presidents praised their presidents for allowing them the opportunity, though they did not expect it.

Barry said he was not expecting the president to assign him external duties because that is the president's role. Several vice presidents felt that the president was the external arm, and the vice presidents should remain internal. Barry:

> If we are meeting with legislators, I will introduce myself, though I think the role of a vice president is to back up the president. I have no problem letting someone else take the lead and be the star or the center of attention or whatever.

Barry added that he had seen presidents who have not been engaged with the community, and that it had hampered their effectiveness and shortened their tenure. Angela concurred: "I am not sure if anyone ever gets the full flavor of the presidency until you decide to go to that next level. Nor do I think it is the president's job to make sure you do get it."

More than half of vice presidents offered examples of serving in the external role and said they enjoyed the demands. They sought out those opportunities and said it helped in their development ladder. June, for example, said she always had enjoyed her time at community functions and meetings. Robert and Nancy said they also liked being active in the community.

Throughout her career, Connie made efforts to develop relationships within her community and her state. She said reaching out to others has helped her college and boosted her career. To illustrate Connie talked about attending an energy symposium in her state and taking the time to introduce herself to the CEO of a oil and gas company.

> You're not necessarily saying a lot but you're going up and making sure you are meeting them. You're giving them your business card. And you're not spending more than a minute or two, but then the next time you're in a business situation, that person will recognize you… especially as a woman.

While a majority of the respondents indicated interest in the external role, some of the respondents said they were frustrated that it was so important. At least four of the interviewees said they were too busy to take on such a role, and others indicated that they did not enjoy it. They admitted that they were ill-prepared for that aspect of the presidency.

Ken, for example, said he had strong managerial skills with important knowledge in running academic departments and the business side of a college, but he was not as strong with his communication skills. Even though he worked as an interim president for several years, Ken said his lack of public relations abilities had limited his ability to earn a presidency, something he found upsetting when hiring committees often asked him so many questions about how he would tackle the president's external role.

> I've done it, and I have had pretty significant records of accomplishments through my external relationships. It's not one of my biggest comfort areas nor will it ever be. In other words, it's one of the things during interviews that I've been on that I get asked about. People pick up on it.

Eric said early in his career he took too much pride in his success, and he had tried to become more humble as he has aged. He said he had become a bit more of an introvert over the years, and he wondered if his attempt to be less arrogant had had a role in that. He also said he had a physical handicap that caused him discomfort in a public setting. Ultimately, Eric said too much stock was placed on president's ability to work in the community. He said his experiences indicated that presidents needed a wide variety of skills are needed to be successful.

> I don't need to seek the limelight. I don't need my name in the paper. I don't need my picture in the paper. I work behind the scenes, do what needs to be done. I've kind of become more that person I think. And so, in a presidency if you have to be the face and the voice of the institution, and the cheerleader of the institution, and fund raising, and… I don't mind getting out and meeting people. But if I have to schmooze somebody along just to get a donation out of them, I'd question if that was a genuine friendship I had with them or if there was an ulterior motive for that friendship. And I've seen that. And I'm going, "That's not me."

Eric said that while he was very comfortable on the campus, he had not enjoyed the community role. He said his president recently asked him to attend a Christmas morning coffee in the town.

> Okay, I'll do it, one time. I did it. Did I go in there and make sure I shook everybody's hands and make sure everybody there knew I was there? No. I went. Did my appearance. Visited with a few people and made a quick exit.

Other than his good public speaking skills, Barry also admitted that he did not have strong public relations skills. He said he was an introvert, and while he had been good at developing one-to-one relationships and worked well with his staff, he was not someone who enjoyed large crowds or parties. "If it's part of my job, I can go out and shake hands and talk with people and make small talk and those types of things, but again, it is something I need to work on."

Angela served on a couple of community boards, though did not always enjoy the work because she struggled to relate to her fellow board members.

> You know the world of the banker and the realtor and the business people is not necessarily a world that I understand. I understand about making money but that is not the world that I have lived in. What I do is not about the money. It's about the changing of lives and the value added, and so sometimes our goals are not the same. I remember telling our director here of the United Way, "I probably have more in common with your clerical staff than I do with some of these board members."

A final concern expressed about the public relations role was tied to the public nature of a community college president and the expectations of working under such a big spot light. In talking about her current president, Angela said she related to her

president's discomfort at always being on stage: "And then there is the fact that the presidency is more of a public persona than what I think she's comfortable with," she said. "And I think I would struggle with that. Because it's like front and center."

Monica, who worked as a vice president of development, indicated that she was comfortable in the community, though later said one of the things she wearied of as an economic development director was being the public face of her organization. She became "the face of controversy" whenever trouble arose and she grew weary of smiling for the public no matter what was occurring. She said she would have to get used to that again if she became a president.

Understanding of Public Relations Concepts. The study's participants said they understood the concepts related to public relations though a majority indicated they did not use them often. For example in developing public relations campaigns or tools, Mahoney (2008) wrote that a vital role for practitioners is the creation and communication of key messages. Mahoney (2008) defined messages or messaging as the information that the organization wants the audience to know and understand. Few of the vice presidents, however, offered examples of times when they created a message prior to a meeting or developing a form of written communication. They said they did not have the time for the concept of messaging, even though they understood its importance.

Connie summed up several people in the group:

> But with something like meeting someone new, I really don't think you script it. But I think if you want to appear that your college is a player in something, then you've got to at least make sure that they know your college has a workforce development office and that you offer programs important to them. You know, that's something you don't script, but you still want to make sure they know.

Dale said he understood concepts of creating messages for certain audiences, pointing to a fundraising meeting with a local businessman. He said he thought about how to communicate with this person prior, noting this man would not give money to a passionate speech, but rather to a more bottom-line and rational message. Dale knew that this approach was best for this person. As proof, he said he got the donation.

The vice presidents also indicated that they rarely worked closely with the public relations offices on their campuses, other than when receiving a referral for a media interview. In those cases, the vice president might speak briefly with someone from the public relations office, though they did not strategize about what to say or how to answer certain questions. Robert and Cathy said they had worked with the public relations people at their colleges several times, though most of the vice presidents indicated that the opportunities were rare because the public relations director and her/his staff often reported directly to the community college president.

Despite this lack of direct experience, several of the vice presidents indicated their strengths laid largely in the public relations realm. One such case was June, who said she was a capable communicator with strong skills in collaboration and building relationships. She said she learned to build relationships simply by talking to people and getting out of her office. One huge part of her effort was listening. She recalled her first day as a vice president, when she came to the college and discovered that the faculty members were distrustful of the college and the president. A later Higher Learning Commission (HLC) visit, which she described as "disastrous," only reaffirmed that she needed to reach out to her faculty. "And so I walked into a very negative situation where the president was bashed a lot," she said. "And I had a little bit of time to help rework some of the HLC document." Working closely with another vice president, June tackled some of the concerns raised by the HLC officials, while also

trying to re-engage her faculty with the college. June immediately began making connections with the different faculty, chatting with them daily to learn what issues were of importance to them.

> My initial message to the faculty was listening. It wasn't talking. To me a good leader does a lot more listening than talking. There are appropriate times for that, but in a situation where it's a somewhat negative climate, listening, to me, was probably the biggest thing I could do.

In describing the slow process of building rapport, June was asked how she was able to build trust when many other leaders might fail. She said it came down to honesty and transparency. For instance when June was re-organizing her academic departments, she presented a couple of scenarios to her faculty. She said she "got slammed" by the faculty, some telling her, "this is the stupidest thing I have ever seen." Rather than getting angry or obstinate, she offered honesty.

> I said to them, "Okay, hey, I'm learning from what you're telling me. We'll go back to the drawing board and rethink this." For me, this was one of the first times that they could see me being honest. We came back and worked on it for like another month and then returned with three options. "Choose one which you think is best for the institution," I said.

Meanwhile, June was also counseling the president, who was dis-engaged from the college and his job. June and another vice president said the current president needed to get out of his office and start talking to people. They were not successful in their advice, and the president left soon after.

Self-Awareness about Abilities including Public Relations Skills

In looking at how the vice presidents are preparing themselves for a presidency, some time was spent during the interviews discussing how the vice presidents were developing themselves and what skills and attributes on which they hoped to improve. This included my asking them to assess their perceived strengths as a president and what deficits they might currently face. The issue of fit and the president's vision were

two discussion points that came up often during the interviews. When asked, all of the vice presidents said they thought they were ready to be president at this moment, assuming the community college's fit was a good one.

Assessing Strengths and Weaknesses including Public Relations. In assessing themselves, the vice presidents often talked about their abilities to work within the community college environment. This included their skills as administrators and project managers. Some common weaknesses related to their external skills and comfort with public relations responsibilities.

June said she had strong communication skills and worked well with groups of people. She said she had had great success in using collaborative leadership in large part because people like to feel included and respected. June, however, later admitted that her leadership style of collaboration was hard to maintain because it took much longer to reach a decision. And though she would at times have liked to come up with the decision herself, June said a collaborative decision was often better and more sound than what she might come up with on her own. She also said that she had been told by mentors that she must learn to be more decisive.

Nancy said one of her strongest attributes was her track record of innovation, especially in working with business and community leaders. She listed numerous academic programs she helped start or grow including ones related to energy, agriculture, education, and healthcare. To do this, she worked with many of the larger industries in her region. She said she was a strong listener, which had served her well because while she did not always come up with these innovative programs, she said she was smart enough to know when she heard a good idea.

> I'm certainly an innovator. But I'm not that way out there entrepreneurial. I appreciate that entrepreneurial's vision and I'm happy to incorporate then you've got to make sure that you don't step on everybody else in the process. And I was, you know, I was emphatic. I've always said I've had clean-up which is probably not the presidential position, but on the other hand, I'm always innovative, so that's one of my strengths is that I can go and say, "Okay. How can we make this idea work? How can do it so that people feel comfortable" because a lot of time people are uncomfortable with change.

Nancy also believed she has good relationship-building skills, noting that she has started numerous programs at the college by working with local businesses and the other community colleges in her system. She talked about one particular program that she wanted to offer at her college and discussed the idea with surrounding community colleges to get their input. One of the schools said they offered the degree program and were trying to grow and expand their number of students in the prorgram. "And I said, 'Fine' and backed off," Nancy said. "We're taking what we wanted to do in a different direction. And so we're trying to have that cooperation because I think it helps a lot." These relationship-building skills also work well internally, she said, where Nancy had been able to lead her faculty and staff members through a series of important changes within her college.

Monica came to the college from the business world and said she needs to work on her speaking style in a couple of areas. First, she said she was more directive than she should be at times, something that might make it hard for her to connect to faculty. She also said she was not an inspirational speaker, something she has noted as a strength in some of her past presidents. She told a humorous story about an off-the-cuff joke she told while speaking in church, which surprised the parishioners and her husband. Her husband told her she was rarely funny or improvisational. Monica also said she has struggled at times deferring to others during meetings. She said she likes to be in charge. Monica said she knew her body language at times communicated power even

when she was not running the meeting, and she needed to be more aware of how to better manage this, especially when working with a board of trustees or community leaders. Conversely, Monica identified her strengths as being able to get a lot of work done in a short amount of time and building consensus within a group. She believed the second skill would serve her well as a president. She said she also had strong public relations skills and could work in any external role as a community college president.

Some of the vice presidents said their strengths were tied more to their abilities as an internal manager and administrator and less about their ability to work in the community. Ken, Angela, Eric, and Barry all said that the CEO of any community college must understand the workings and operations of the entire campus.

In assessing their skills and weaknesses, several of the vice presidents said a person could overthink the process of earning a presidency and had to have confidence in their own innate abilities. Often they brought up the issue of finding the right fit, meaning to locate a community college that was searching for a specific set of skills where the new president could be most successful. Sometimes those skills were something that the previous president lacked and may not tie strongly to public relations or external abilities. Ken said earning a presidency has a certain serendipity to it, based on some of the colleges that have shown the greatest interest in him and made him one of their two top finalists. Some of these schools were not where he would have normally applied or seen his skill set as most valued. This brought up a common theme throughout many of the interviews: the concept of fit. Ken, who called himself "a great utility infielder" and "a nuts-and bolts administrator," said he had developed the reputation of being "a fix-it guy," which had made it more difficult for him to find a job. He said he had searched for jobs that might suit his strengths in the academic and financial arena, though also admitted his strengths as an internal administrator had

made it hard for him to convince a hiring committee to pick him. Ken added that he did a great deal of research before applying for a presidency, looking for the right fit for his skill set as "a strong and decisive leader." He said not every board wants this.

> They are looking for somebody that either doesn't rock the boat or can be driven by the faculty or other constituencies at the college. If you are not a good fit for the college, it probably doesn't do any good to be part of that search anyway.

Monica talked about fit within her career and said she had grown up in rural communities and had wondered if she would end up in a presidency in a smaller community. She had lived in urban areas and may return to one, though she thought if she was ever a community college president, it would be in a rural setting in the western United States. "I like going to the grocery store and recognizing people and having conversations with people I know. When I go out to dinner and happen to run into people I know, I like that. I like that part of rural." She added her external skills would work better in a smaller community.

The issue of fit also related to what type of president the hiring committee was seeking. Barry said the right fit was critical to a president's success, especially because the trustee hiring committee had a certain kind of candidate in mind.

> You come in with a certain set of skills and expectations, this is what I think needs to happen, or this is what I'd like, what I think should happen. And how that matches up with the board is going to be somewhat to a degree as to whether they're going to hire you or not. So and again, it all depends on what the board is looking for. Because a person may be a good housecleaner but not a good builder.

Barry had noticed that boards of trustees tend to hire presidents who were different than the last president. This was understandable, he said, when there was a serious deficit in the previous president, though it could also make it difficult for community colleges to build some sort of momentum. "There are some institutions who are looking for young presidents who will want to be there for 25 years," Angela said. "Some institutions want people who are very well seasoned."

Eric said fit was an important consideration to him in seeking a presidency and was one reason he did not apply for a recent presidential opening at his college. The previous president had been very successful and popular, especially in the community, and Eric worried that he would live in his shadow. He said he could not match the former president's people and public relations abilities. In explaining his decision not to apply, he offered an example early in his career when he took over a high school teaching job and a floundering academic program. He took it over and in a couple of years was able to build a successful program.

> I'll tie it back into my first high school teaching position and having some older brothers who have always given me good advice or you think it's been good advice. You want to if you're going to make of jump, make sure you're doing so in an environment or an atmosphere that you're going to improve your chances of success. We'd just had very, very well liked very successful president. I would not want to follow in his shoes. I'm young enough there will be other opportunities and other chances. And I also, that was one piece of it. The other piece of it is I've been here 15 years. If I haven't, I think when a president comes in you expect that person to bring new ideas. If haven't got my new ideas on that table in 15 years, then I should have been fired a long time ago. So I really didn't view it as a good situation.

Finally, the concept fit was tied to the uncertainty today of taking on a presidency. Several of the vice presidents talked about the importance of locating a community college that offers job security. Angela said finding the right fit was critical because accepting the wrong presidency could be a risky career ender. "I know someone who is working in southeast Asia now who was a president for six months. And I don't know if that job was the only thing available to him," Angela said. Ken, who has interviewed for several presidencies, had decided not to apply for some job openings because the community college has shown a history of "chewing up presidents."

Self-Reflection in Building Public Relations Skills. The vice presidents talked often about the importance of self reflection and taking time out during each day to think about who they were and what they hoped to accomplish. The leaders said they

often reflected on their desire to become a president, though said this desire might not always be within their control. They said becoming a president was often an issue of fit. They said some of this self-reflection was used to help them develop themselves into stronger leaders, and other parts allowed them to think about their day's experiences and how things went. Few examples, however, were given related to reflecting on public relations skills.

One of the few public relations examples involved Dale, who said at the end of our interview he did not get the presidency for which he had applied, though he was the runner up. Through self reflection, he initially thought he interviewed well with the hiring committee and connected with the campus. He was later told, however, that while "the faculty loved me and pulled hard for me," the classified staff were concerned that his love of academics would leave them out of the mix at the institution. "Apparently, I did not speak to them," he said. "I did not tell them that they are a valued part of the college setting. That is something I will work on in future interviews."

Another example tied to public relations involved Eric, who spoke a little about his physical handicap, which he said made him uncomfortable at times in public settings. When he was later asked if he had sought help or treatment to minimize his handicap, he said no, and instead had tried to mange it on his own.

In reflecting on themselves as potential presidents, several of the vice presidents indicated that they could not be classified as visionaries. I did not ask them about this particular trait, though some of the vice presidents brought it up and said that it appeared to them that community colleges were looking for presidents who were also visionaries. Some said this tied strongly to a person's public relations skills and their ability to impart that vision on the campus and the community. Ultimately they

believed visionaries were people who could inspire others to share the president's vision. The vice presidents added that they did not know how they could develop this ability in themselves.

Eric believed his many years on the academic side of an institution was a strength, especially because community colleges were all about teaching. He also said he had a strong analytical mind and had been a good problem solver in the past. He said he was not a visionary, however, and instead was an introvert who enjoyed the campus environment more than the community. He said his lack of experience in public relations and the community would be seen as a deficit, especially because he said most community colleges want presidents with strong relationship-building skills.

> I'm not a great interviewer. I'm not a great oral communicator. I don't, things don't just flow and roll off my tongue and I can't paint this beautiful picture for you. That's not me. I'm the curtain puller. You've been to a play. It doesn't matter who those actors or actresses are the curtain puller over there has the most important job.

Likewise, Monica did not see herself as a visionary though she thought that was one thing for which presidential search committees were looking. She said she had met very few visionaries in her life, and was not sure how one would develop that trait. She said she was more strategic in her thinking and not a visionary, though she also said that visionaries were rare and hard to find. She said the word was thrown around too often.

Nancy said she did not see herself as a visionary. She also said that because her background was in the sciences, she tended to take things at face value. She said she believed what she was told and assumed others were honest and straightforward.

> That's my first approach to people. I'm honest and straightforward with you. I'm not going to play funny little games. And I don't expect that of other people. When I get confronted with it I'm always going, you know I'm shocked. And I'm disappointed. And that's part of that nerd approach I think because it's too analytical. (laughs)

Leadership Development Strategies for Growing Public Relations Skills

All of the vice presidents talked about their own leadership development efforts over the years and the people who supported them. About half of the respondents offered examples of efforts aimed at developing their public relations and communication abilities. They talked about many different strategies such as creating a network of mentors and obtaining a doctorate, though in developing public relations skills, the main tools used included: observing others, experiencing the role of the president, and reading literature and attending conferences.

Robert offered one of the stronger examples of thoughtful leadership development in large part because he has worked for many people who served as mentors supportive of his progress. His current college included leadership development as one of its three top goals for the institution.

> It is how are we going to transition to the future, and a key process for that is working with people and developing people. But I look at other colleges that I work with, but I don't know how formalized it is, and if there are resources being placed behind it. It seems these development processes are much more informal, especially as it relates to public relations skills which is your topic. If you have a person who believes in mentoring, and they are in a position to mentor, then they will. And on the other side, if you have a person who lines up on the other side, and they are inclined to be mentored, you have a good fit. But I don't see a whole of strategically looking at doing that, and uh, I think collectively we are missing some opportunities.

Several of the vice presidents offered clear plans of personal development, while others were less systematic. In most all of the interviews, however, little evidence was offered of community colleges or the community college system as a whole providing help in developing leaders at their institutions. Instead, the individual vice presidents, with the help of friends or other leaders, were in charge of their development. Some said they preferred that form of development, though others would have liked more help along the way.

Observing others. A couple of the vice presidents said they have used observation over the years to better understand the community college presidency. They said this method was especially helpful in understanding the president's public relations role. Angela said she has paid close attention to her presidents and observed how they handled certain situations. She cited board relations as one area that had been most enlightening.

> What I have seen in the past is that presidents who have been successful really take the time to nurture that relationship with their board, whether it is one-on-one or in groups of two or three. You have an issue that you need to get their opinion on, so you take them to lunch or you invite them to campus about talk about those things. You do that before the board meeting.

Eric said many subjects cannot be learned in a book but you can understand them if you watch others. It was a matter of being observant, he said. As an illustration he talked about his previous president who had strong public relations skills and spent a great deal of time working with the community. He spent hours on the phone, at meetings, or sending handwritten Christmas notes to important stakeholders. "Even though he didn't agree with everything that they said, did, stood for, or support, he still knew that that was an expectation that you, those people have got to be on your side," Eric said.

Eric was especially impressed when his president was able to build a bond with the local newspaper editor, who had battled with the previous president.

> He was willing to walk down there and hold up the white flag and go, "Truce. Let's sit down and figure out what was wrong. Now that guy's gone. If you had grudges against him, don't hold that against me. Let's get it on the table. Clean slate. Let's fix it." It worked fine. They were co-chair of the Rotary together. Found speakers together. He really worked really hard at fixing that. We got really good coverage. We have two newspapers. One's a daily, one's a weekly. Two radio stations. And we have presence on both of them. Make sure we spend money with all of them.

Barry said he learns best by experience and by watching others. He used observation early on in his career to learn the job, and said you can often learn more by listening and watching others than by talking. In observing his many presidents he had learned to have a sense of humor, to not take yourself too seriously, treat people like people, and do not be afraid to speak your mind. "And, I think, do the right thing," he said.

Nancy said she made sure to observe all of her past presidents at work and had logged many of their accomplishments. She talked about one president who was very good at building bonds with others on the campus and in the community. If she ever becomes a community college president, Nancy said she would use what she learned from this president.

> And the first thing I would do is sit down and I would do this both internally and externally, and have a one-on-one half hour meeting with every single full-time employee. And all of our important citizens, in the case of the community college, the mayor, all the city council, the people that are on the advisory boards, the big stakeholders in the college externally. And you know find out a little bit about them. Find out, make that connection with them. And find out what their dreams are for the college. You know and really gather that information.

Nancy added that while sitting down with numerous people would be a time-consuming task, the pay-off to the community college would be immense.

Cathy said she had always watched other leaders around her, especially the president. She had a relationship with one of her vice presidents that allowed her to ask the person about decisions the president or vice president had made.

> And that was good mentoring for me, because then I got to know the ins and outs of some of the decisions and the back-end themes. And I was very fortunate and honored that my vice president trusted me with some very confidential information so I could get the whole picture of, this is why this happened. So I had to keep that. I couldn't say anything. And I didn't. But I think just seeing the decisions and what I thought would be good for the institution or not and kind of comparing my thought process to that of the president or that of the VPs and I would like to do that.

Cathy said she has tried to offer the same type of access to her own staff members if they wanted it. She said she is currently working a couple of staff members at her community college.

Robert said his current president had allowed him to shadow the position at important meetings. He said he had learned a great deal from his president in how she worked with difficult people and situations.

Experiencing the President's External Role. Throughout the interviews the vice presidents noted that current and past presidents had been the person with the most control in their development. They said it was critical to maintain a positive relationship with that person, especially if someone wants to better understand the president's external role.

For example June said her current president had been very open in allowing June to take on new roles, including external responsibilities. She hoped in the future to have more experience with foundation work and building relationships with donors.

Robert called his current president a mentor and said she had been instrumental in his growth as a leader. He meets with his president each year to go over his goals, some related to the college and some related to personal development. He said the president tried to give him as many experiences as possible for a future presidency, including numerous assignments that require the building of public relations abilities.

Monica's president often sought her out when he needed help with a community issue or a problem with a stakeholder relationship. During our first interview, for instance, she and her president had just met about a board issue and how to settle some hurt feelings based on the sharing of confidential information with only a few of the board members. Monica said her experiences indicate the president is vital in the development of vice presidents, in part because a strong and supportive president

creates an environment where people can prosper and be willing to take risks and take on new projects. She said she was happy in her current role, and likely would remain in it as long as her current president remained. Monica added that her current president is interested in developing the entire campus and has encouraged his people to attend different conferences to learn more about their jobs and leadership. She said she did not get a sense that his philosophy was neither shared by other community college presidents, nor was there a national effort at community colleges to develop leaders. For example, she said there is little done within her state to create a conference for future leaders, something that surprised her based on the high turnover rate of presidents at the surrounding community colleges.

Within this section the participants offered various examples of learning to become a president either by directly serving in the president's role or by experiencing the president's public relations role. They said some of their presidents were very supportive of this effort, though others were less interested in offering this experience. A couple of the vice presidents have served as an interim president and experienced the role for a significant amount of time.

The best example is Ken, who served for nearly three years as an interim president, taking on the entire role of the position while working closely with another community college president who mentored him on financial issues and community relations. Ken said he worked in all facets of the public relations arena, something that was further strengthened by his close relationship with a mentor president with strong external skills. Ken said that this community college president who helped him greatly during his three years as an interim president. The mentor had strong financial understanding and public relations skills and taught Ken how to excel in both facets of the job. Ken credited his mentor as responsible for helping him save his college, though

because Ken had to make some difficult financial decisions, his experience as an interim president hampered his relationship with the system offices and made it impossible for him to ever earn the role on a permanent basis. Still Ken occassionally talks to his mentor and appreciated their time working together. During the second interview Ken talked more about their relationship, noting that his mentor was such a forceful personality, while Ken was someone more comfortable behind the scenes. In earning a presidency, Ken's mentor gave him this advice:

> He supported me as a president, but he also told me, "You know, Ken, your biggest problem is me." And I told him, "I know my biggest problem is you." Because in that situation, he is such a highly regarded figure, that I am just the guy working on the side, it most creates a chief of staff position, which is how people saw me, even though that was not what I was doing.

Dale worked six months as the interim president at his college until a new president was hired. The board of trustees considered four different applicants before appointing Dale to the role. Dale won out, he said, because he promised not to apply for the permanent presidency. He got a taste of all facets of the presidency, especially many of the external responsibilities such as fundraising, legislative work, and media relations. He said he enjoyed the role, though was surprised by the dramatic jump in responsibility he experienced. "I was astonished at how many decisions, big decisions, came to me." Dale said it was a challenging time for him, however the experience as interim president was a successful one because Dale was comfortable in his own values.

June took on the role of president with the help of another vice president when her current president became disengaged from the college and disinterested in the job. She said her community college was in crisis and she had to manage many stressful situations while also maintaining a positive relationship with her president. Though she was not the recognized president, she took on many components of the job including some external responsibilities.

Robert offered numerous examples of his different presidents allowing him a great deal of responsibility in a variety of leadership roles. This had included work on capital construction projects and lobbying efforts in the state legislature. He also had an opportunity to represent one of his presidents at trustee meetings. His current president has assigned him new duties as they come up to give Robert more experience in human resources, student services, and academic affairs. These assignments appeared to be purposeful with the goal to build Robert's resume as a future president.

Cathy talked about the power of internships and often advised students to work in the field before deciding on a major. She said as a psychology major herself, she had little idea what she might do with the degree and often told students thinking about the major to go out and first work with children, adolescents, or troubled teens "to make sure that's what you want to do." She added she wished such internships were available for people interested in a community college presidency. She said that would be especially powerful in helping apiring leaders to understand the public relations expectations of a community college president.

All of the vice presidents were asked about their experiences serving in the external role of a president. Numerous items were bought up, though the interviews focused on the following list: fundraising, media relations, board relations, lobbying and community relations.

In relation to fundraising, only a few of the vice presidents indicated much experience with donor relations and the solicitation of money. Many said the foundation work was something they liked the least, or expected to like the least if they became a president. They said it took courage to ask people for money and time to build a relationship to get to that point. The topic came up several times including during Robert's interview: "I do feel comfortable in building relationships," he said,

"but I don't feel that yet when it comes to asking someone for money." Eric said he would find it "very challenging to try to raise money" and would need a strong foundation director in place to be successful.

> I've seen presidents who became friends and schmoozed, if you want to use that term, somebody you know just to get a check out of them. And once they got the check out of them, they were never on their calendar again. See? That would be hard for me. That would be. That doesn't seem genuine to me.

Dale was one of the few vice presidents who said he enjoyed fundraising, in part because he gained some actual experience in the field while serving six months as an interim president.

> I found that in fundraising, in raising money, which is so important in the presidential role, I am actually pretty good at it. I was actually pretty effective, in part because people want you to be passionate about your college.

Monica, who oversaw her college's foundation, said she was obviously very comfortable in her role, though the success of any foundation depended largely on the president. She was also the only vice president of development that I ran into during my interviews, and one of the few I could find across the country. She said her president had seen the model while working at a community college in New England, and admitted that the position is rare. She also said that though she had the most external experience of anyone at her college other than the president, someone in her position was not usually considered for a presidency.

Nancy said she did not have a lot of experience in donor relations though she believed she could do it. The key, she said, was to hire a strong foundation director. She cited the current foundation director at her college, who was an obvious extrovert and a natural "schmoozer."

> And he's right there in front and carrying that first wave. And he's natural at it. It's not something that's natural for me. I can certainly come in behind him and add that credence. That's not going to be my strong suit. I'm a little bit more reserved.

Likewise, the vice presidents indicated a lack of comfort in working with reporters or members of the media. Several said the relationship was adverserial by design, though they also said to be a successful community college president it was important to master media relations.

Monica was one of the few vice presidents who had received media training and talked about some of the tenets of interviews and interacting with the media. "It is all about quotable quotes, keep your message clear. And you know that whatever you say or write could end up getting used," she said. In her past role as an economic development director, Monica worked with reporters often and offered a couple of examples of understanding their need for information and ways to ensure positive coverage. Monica said she has had a contentious relationship with some members of the media at times, especially when she worked in economic development and had to contend with a local newspaper publisher and owner who did not believe their town needed an economic development office. She said that experience made her more cautious in working with the press and taught her to only answer the questions asked. "The less you give them, the better the outcome," she said.

Cathy had worked with the media often and experienced many public relations roles early in her career when she worked as an advocate for a local non-profit agency. She said she often had to go out in the community and speak before groups while trying to build awareness using media and networking. Most of the vice presidents have worked with the media in some facet, and several offered a negative view of reporters and journalism. Angela said she was uncomfortable during interviews though had done some interviews in the past. Robert said the media had interviewed him many times, though he was sometimes frustrated by what stories they covered and what they ignored. He spoke about several positive things happening at his community

college that were not being covered. He then talked about a front page story in the previous day's newspaper that was critical of his college and had very little news value. Robert added that many of the presidents with whom he worked in the past worried a great deal about media coverage and what might be written or aired about their college.

Robert said he had heard community college presidents talk about media relations at a couple of seminars, though the advice was sometimes conflicting and unhelpful. For instance, during a national training seminar, one president told the audience to share nothing with the press. "And another president said, when he had a scandal, the first call he made was to the newspaper. He told the reporter, 'We have a big story. Do you want to come down?' I was blown away by that," Robert said. Still Robert said the lack of clarity here was frustrating.

Connie said she enjoyed working with the local newspaper and radio stations, though admitted her local media outlets was more supportive of her community college partly because her town was smaller. She said she was surprised by how adversarial the press was with community colleges in larger communities. She cited one community college south of her that always received harsh news coverage and had cost one community college president his job.

Nancy said she would like more experience working with the press and conducting interviews, admitting she was apprehensive about that role. "There's been a couple of times where I've been in front of the media," she said. "It makes me really nervous. I've got to get better at that."

In discussing how to build a strong relationship with a possible future board of trustees, the vice presidents offered few examples of working directly with their trustees, in large part because that was seen as a president's role.

Angela said she did not enjoy working with boards and was comfortable in

allowing her president that role. Monica noted a recent effort by her college's board of trustees to allow vice presidents more involvement and access in decision making.

Barry said he had gained experience understanding boards and legislators through working on discussions about capital construction projects on his campus. His college had submitted a couple of major building projects to the legislature, and he had been able to take part in some of the discussions. He also learned more about donor relations because the legislature liked the schools to raise some of the money for these buildings from the community. Barry had traveled with board members to his college's outlying campuses for meet-and-greets. He said those trips were informative and provided him with learning opportunities.

Other than making sure he was good at his current job as a vice president, Barry was not actively developing himself for the presidency. He said he mostly wanted to present himself in a professional and ethical manner. Barry said that he had yet to apply for a presidency but would be interested if his own community college approached him. He said he had a good relationship with the board and worked hard to ensure when he interacted with them they would see him as a president.

> When I am making a formal presentation to them, I am thinking, "These are the people." I mean you are basically interviewing for the job. You want to be at that point when it's time and they see your name, they go, "Oh, I didn't know he was interested." And then they don't automatically say, "Oh, he would never make it," or something.

The vice presidents indicated their greatest levels of comfort with the president's lobbying and community relations role. Many of the vice presidents had met with their local legislators on the campus as part of college information gathering sessions, though in most cases, it was the president who did most of the speaking. Only a couple respondents had ever traveled to the state legislature to help advocate for their community college.

Monica had worked in the state capital during her time as an economic development director, and hoped her president would ask her to take a larger role in the governmental affairs arena in the coming year.

Robert offered the largest number of examples of legislative experience, including a chance early in his career to build a branch campus. This project required him to work with the community and local political leaders to develop the land and find funding for the project. Later, when funding was being requested for a new building, Robert's president asked him to lead his college's lobbying efforts with the state legislature. The two worked closely together to plan for Robert's trip to the state capital, beginning first with a review of the members of the legislature. They looked at who they could count on for support and who might oppose them. They also mapped out messages and facts to bring with them when approaching the lawmakers. Robert was required to rehearse these messages and act out scenarios with the president. The president even offered tips on how to communicate with each legislator, noting his/her communication style and whether he/she liked personal contact or emails. The two administrators identified the people with whom he should spend time, including 30 legislators who were likely on the fence. Robert then spent two weeks at the state capital working with the head lobbyist for the community colleges and the other community college presidents in the state.

> It was high stakes. And when the vote came down, it was gut wrenching. You hear yes, aye, no, nay, and you count. We passed the senate, I believe by 18 to 16. That was not a very wide margin. In the house, it was much wider.

Robert said this experience was invaluable to him and had given him more confidence in his ability to succeed someday as a president. This experience was also rare. Most of the vice presidents sit on community boards, though none of the others had ever spent that kind of time working on messages and communication strategies.

In the states overseen by a system, the vice presidents said that the system president was often the person who oversaw governmental affairs efforts. The presidents might work with their local legislators, but did not travel to the state capital as extensively. For example, Nancy had little experience working with state legislators, however, she had built strong relationships with local politicians, especially in her partnerships with local businesses, to create new academic programs.

Almost all of the vice presidents served on a board or two in the community. Some said they very much enjoyed the experience, though others said it was hard to pull away from the campus to attend a meeting downtown. Angela said she was not always certain of the value of her involvement with the community board to her community college. Barry said he was not active in the community in his community college town because of a long commute home, though he had served as the chamber of commerce president and on the statewide economic board at previous colleges.

Dale, who served on a couple of community organizations, also talked about the importance of networking outside of the community. During the interview he indicated a relationship with all of the other academic vice presidents in his state as well as the community college presidents. He talked about what is going on with their campuses and the environments where they work. During our interviews he assessed most of the presidents in the state.

In terms of community impact Robert told the story of the value of being active in the community. Before he was employed as a vice president, Robert worked at one community college that served a large Latino service area. During a community night event he had a conversation with a friend about whether or not undocumented workers should have access to college in the United States. At the time Robert said he had mixed feelings about the issue, though through their conversations, he realized his college was

not meeting its mission with a policy that would not grant credit to someone who wasn't a U.S. citizen. He decided to rewrite the policy and bring it to the president for approval. Living in a politically conservative rural community, Robert said there was a great deal of opposition to the idea. However the president allowed Robert to proceed and present the new policy to the board. Despite a split board and concerns that the new policy might become a negative front-page story in the local newspaper, the community college opened itself up to undocumented workers. That experience gave him a sense of what he could do as a president.

> The thing about it is as I have moved up, I have learned that I can increase my circle of influence. I know it sounds like ego, but I say this with no ego, I want to be a president because I can influence how colleges are run. I bring strong values based on relationships and doing things the right way. I see that occurring more as a president.

Cathy said she her involvement and understanding of the community has motivated her to become a president. She recalled a student she advised while working at a largely Hispanic community college located next to the border of Mexico. The student was thinking about majoring in agriculture even though the major had a poor image in the community.

> There was just this bad cloud over going into agriculture because you have these Mexican families working in the fields. And that's the first time I'd ever seen that. In my home state you have combines and they plow the fields. This was the first time I saw them get off the bus, go into the fields in the morning, load up at night, go back and cross the border. That was just a shock to me.

Cathy told the student about new technologies being developed in agriculture and that the field was one that he should be proud of. The student pointed out of the window of Cathy's office toward an open field.

> He said to me, "You see that lady out there. She has the red scarf on. See that. That's my mother. My father's working next to her." He said, "They're working these fields so I can be here." I'm looking at them and I'm looking at him, and it was like, you know, how far we still have to go. And so you know every once in a while I looked out there and would see them.

Cathy said she kept in touch with this student during his time at her community college and often talked to him about his guilt about being in college while his parents worked in the fields. Still Cathy said she learned a great deal from this student and was inspired by the power of an education. She added that she was pleased when he earned his bachelor's degree from a state university.

Reading Literature and Attending Conferences about Public Relations. The vice presidents offered many examples of their efforts to develop themselves by reading magazines and books tied to community colleges and leadership development. They also attended conferences each year including some that were designed to help them become a community college president. They said they did not, however, have many examples of learning how to improve their public relations skills.

June said an important development tool for her was reading books and magazine articles about leadership and community college issues. Currently she was studying what was happening to concurrent enrollment across the U.S., since that was the "latest thing" in community colleges. She said the reading helped her locate trends before they came to her school and uncover ideas at other colleges that work. Barry said he read a large quantity of books and had used these studies to work on some of his weaknesses. He had led numerous leadership initiatives at different schools and had read several books on negotiation and how to improving people skills. Dale spent his free time reading articles and books about community college issues, as did Robert. Both believed it was critical to stay current on what is happening nationally to education and community colleges.

Several of the respondents said they had attended outside training seminars including programs offered by the League of Innovation, the AACC, or their own system. Though praised as useful, the trainings were also criticized because issues

related to public relations were not a common topic. When public relations issues came up in seminars, they often focussed on improving an applicants communication skills during a presidential job interview. "It (public relations) is brought up a lot, though it is not covered as it could be," Angela said. "It does help though in forcing you to collect your thoughts and figure out what you would bring to the table and how you would sell that to a board of directors."

Robert said some of these trainings aimed at prospective presidents spent more time advising candidates how to get a job and less time in how to be successful in the job. He also said he had attended training sessions that offered conflicting information and opinions.

June, who said she would like to attend the AACC's leadership institute, had taken part in some leadership programs offered through her system. Nominated by her president for the training, she said the sessions were helpful, though she also said that the system had not indicated if it will continue to offer the leadership programs.

Monica said her affiliation with outside organizations such as the AACC has been helpful in her professional development. She said she got a sense that community college presidents believed these affiliations were valuable for presidential advancement.

Eric said he had done little to prepare for a presidency, though last year he did attend an academy for aspiring presidents put on by his system. He said his president approached him about applying for the training, which he said was a great compliment. He said the training itself was helpful because he had seen presidents who took the job without understanding the role. He said that little of the content talked about the external role.

> The other piece of that too was, just to give you more insight, some people become a president they really don't know what they're getting into. So we actually spent a lot of time on what that role is, what the role even outside the office is in the community. And so to really make sure that, don't get into this if that really not what you want to do.

Unintended Findings: Gender Bias Harms Development

During the interviews, I asked the vice presidents about possible impediments to their development, and while issues of gender and race were not pursued in the study or the scripted interview questions because the issues were not part of the original research questions, some of the female and minority participants said their gender and race had presented challenges during their careers.

In terms of gender Connie said she was not seriously considered for a presidential opening at her college because the previous president had been a woman and had left the college unexpectedly. This sudden departure angered the board and, even though Connie had a good relationship with the board members, she said the interview was only given to her out of courtesy.

> It was very disappointing to me when she left, and to most people in the community. But then what happened was, there was a kind of backlash against women. "Because (imitating a male voice) well what would you expect from a woman." I mean, we had faculty members saying that in the hallway. I mean we were just rather appalled.

Connie said if the president had been a man, the board members would never have thought they could not hire another male. She was sure, however, it was on the board's mind when the trustees interviewed her for the presidency. Connie added her gender has caused her to work harder than her male counterparts and spend a great deal of time researching projects and preparing for meetings. She noted she often attended meetings in which she was the only female in the room. She said she was not intimidated during those meetings, though she also knew she must speak wisely and thoughtfully or else her intelligence due to her gender would be questioned.

Angela talked about her first vice presidency and being the only female leader within the cabinet. She said she often felt like an outsider within the group, believing she lacked the same access to the president as her male counterparts. Angela said her gender was an important part of her development, or lack of it, early on. She recalled early on in her career working solely for male presidents who were most comfortable working with male administrators. She remembered being the only female administrator in a meeting with 15 other men. She also recalled working with male vice presidents and coming into work on Monday morning and feeling left out of the group:

> We would have meetings on Monday morning and they would start on the Monday morning quarterbacking, you know, talking about the football games they had seen Sunday on television. And they would use military and athletic metaphors with everything and they would play racquetball against each other for lunch. I was left wondering: Am I thinking there are decisions being made or other things while they are in the locker room or racquetball court that I am not privy to?

Angela said she received little encouragement in this environment and this lack of encouragement led her to change jobs. She said much of that has changed over the last 20 years as more women have stepped into presidential positions. She joked that she had often heard male administrators complaining that they were being ignored for jobs. This did not mean, according to Angela, that there were not still deficits:

> There are a lot more women in those roles, but there are practically no minorities. When you look at the community colleges, you've got a lot of schools with students that are Latino, African-American, and you know what, it would be nice if there was a president who was a reflection of that population.

Cathy said early in her career she had to deal with the gender issue because there were no female presidents in her home state. She often entered meetings with men knowing that she would need to speak their language:

> And so in developing myself, I am a woman. I'm female. I embrace that. I love that. That's who I am. But I also know, like the book, act like a lady, think like a man. I knew I had to develop that part of me because when you go to legislators and you're sitting at the capitol, you want to be treated as an equal. And yes it

> was in my head that because I am a black female that may make a difference with how people treat you. You know there are people who appreciate that and there are people who do not. And there are people who ask, "Is that still relevant to have those schools like that? What's the deal? We've got affirmative action. What's up with that?" So you know I would hear those conversations and I knew that deep down inside which is part of where that ego came from, I am the best. And I know it and I will show you that I'm the best. So you know that helped to fuel a little bit of that ego of you know I'm just good. I'm just as great. I can do this. And if I have to show it to you, I will. And if you accept me, fine. If you don't, fine but there's more than one way to skin a cat. I've got to figure out how to skin it to get what I need to get for this student population or for these kids or for whatever it is.

Cathy said while it was not purposeful, she had worked at a variety of different colleges including two-year, four-year, rural, urban, African-American and Hispanic. She said her time at a predominantly Hispanic community college was especially eye-opening because she said many of the issues she discovered there were similar to what she experienced at a black college, and yet there were subtle differences. For example some of her female Hispanic students struggled in the college setting because of lack of support at home. She said some families were very traditional and wanted their daughters to major in nursing even though the female student wanted to be an attorney. She also recalled one student whose father did not know she was taking classes. The father showed up one day and took her out of the class. The student did not return to the college the rest of the semester. Cathy said she has worked harder in her leadership roles because of her gender and her race. In general people had been supportive of her, though she recalled one older community college president who had had few contacts with African-Americans during his life and would always begin conversations with Cathy talking about athletics or Cathy's hair. Cathy said she would often offer the president other topics of conversation, but he would always return to sports and her hair styles. Cathy said she could have been upset by these conversations but she did not believe the president was being racist.

> I grew up with my great grandmother and her siblings. Four of, three of them were still living through my life, and so I, you know I understood the era that he was coming from just a little bit because of her and then my grandmother and all of that. And I just knew, you know this man is from the northern part of America. Probably not any black people where he was from, the places he'd been you saw them on the peripheral, you probably never. And he worked in college and they were probably employees of yours but you probably were not close to them. So to be that up close and personal, I can't say I was the first person, or only person, but consistently you had to deal with me. And so I would just give him outs and talk about things. I didn't get offended. I never got offended. I just understood, this man is almost 80 years old. This is his reality. And he acknowledges me. He knows I exist, all of that. So you know I'll just deal with it. I'll work with it. Whereas some people would have been upset or what ever, it was like, "You know he's almost 80 what are you going to do?" So it was just like, you know I'm not offended, because he was a great guy. He really was. And I learned a lot from him. I just took it as was.

Connie did note one gender advantage relating to the role of the spouse. She said her husband was a private person and would likely remain removed from the college if she became president. She said most communities would be much more accepting of a husband who was private as opposed to a male president with a disconnected wife. "I've seen female presidents go ahead and make it work even when the husband is maybe more standoffish. And I think that's fine."

Unintended Findings: Board Politics Hampers Development

A second unintended finding related to governance issues at the various community colleges. During several interviews, the vice presidents talked with force and passion about how the people overseeing community colleges — namely boards and system offices — were hurting the development of future presidents. Again, this issue was not part of the scripted questions that I used during my 11 vice presidential interviews.

At several of the community colleges I visited, the vice presidents had little positive to say about their interactions with boards or system offices. Though the literature indicates that boards and systems should be integral players in developing

future community college presidents (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003), this study's participants told stories of intimidation and political games. For instance, Angela said she would struggle working for a board based on past hiring practices and what she had witnessed during trustee meetings.

> I have sat at board meetings where the president squirmed. Literally squirmed. Because the board took over the meeting, embarrassed staff members and administrators, or even people they hadn't hired yet. I remember once where they were ready to hire someone and then at the board meeting, with the man sitting in the audience, decided not to hire the person. How do you do that?

Angela said she would prefer to work for a system after witnessing the difficult nature of working with a board. "That's not to say that all boards are bad or that they can't work. I think it depends on the board and on the community," she noted.

One of the vice presidents said he/she had had a significant public blow up with a board member. The vice president said I could use this information but "to be careful." He/she asked for complete anonymity in relaying the story, which is why the person's name and gender are not being identified. He/she talked about the first meeting the vice president attended at his/her college and the board member was there. After the meeting he/she was introduced to the board member and was told in front of a half a dozen people that the vice president was not welcome at the college and that the board member was going to get rid of the vice president. A second flare-up occurred in a store in the community when the board member approached the vice president and swore at him/her in front of the vice president's children and numerous store customers. The two confrontations have caused a great deal of stress in the life of the vice president, and he/she has only survived because of presidential and internal staff support. Still the vice president cannot attend some meetings where the board member might be, and the college was trying to facilitate an outcome to satisfy the two parties and the college. This vice president concluded the story with this thought: "It is

finite learning. And so, you know, from my standpoint, I wish it hadn't happened but I think it accelerated a lot of the learning. Um, you find out how to identify your friends really easily."

Barry said even though his president would likely retire in the next couple of years, the board of trustees did not appear to have any type of succession plan in place. He said this was a little surprising because his college had already experienced some failed presidential searches in the past. Barry did say his college used to give preferential treatment to internal applicants with job searches, though he was not sure if that extended to presidential searches.

One of the few cases of positive board interactions came from Connie who said she knew the board was supportive even when she struggled with a difficult president. She was thinking of leaving the college and ran into a board member in the grocery store. He quizzed her:

> "So Connie, I've heard you are thinking about leaving." And I said, "Well, I'm not going to do anything like that." We talked more and he encouraged me and asked for patience. I know he was trying to support me even though his hands were tied.

Connie was also friends with another board member, who had pushed her to grow as a leader and take on new roles. They often spoke on the phone and shared a mutual respect.

> She encourages me. She will say things like, 'I am so glad we have you in that spot Connie. Finally, we are going to get learning back on the right track.' She will even text me, 'You did an awesome job with graduation.'

But Connie's positive experiences here were rare.

Community college systems did not fare much better with the vice presidents who did not work with boards. In describing the role of community college systems, the participants did offer some examples of attempts to build leaders from within. For

instance one system sponsored a training program that brought interested community college leaders together for presidential training sessions. While the sessions were helpful the vice presidents who took part noted there has been little follow-up within the system.

In general, however, systems were described as a detriment to the development of future presidents. Nancy noted that she had thought long and hard before applying for an open presidency within her system because her system had been quick to get rid of its presidents. Nancy said she had spoken to other vice presidents in her system who have said the current environment was not beneficial to new presidents. She said the system president had already fired six presidents during her tenure, making some people hesitant to apply.

> And so, it's a very risky position. And trying to understand how to work with someone in that position. And work effectively and not get them so that all of a sudden she turns on you. And you must understand how to work with that.

Nancy added that while the politics within her system were "not nice" right now, being part of a group of community colleges did have some positives:

> One of the good things about a state system is you have the clout of a state system behind you and so doing state-wide articulation agreements and working, you know, you've got enough clout that you can go to the legislature and mandate communication between two- and four- year institutions. And so the benefits to students of having a community college system is huge. But on the other hand, you know it's just a lot bigger politics. (laugh)

June, who was a finalist for a presidency within her system, acknowledged that pursuing a presidency could be very precarious. She said she talked to numerous mentors before sending in her application.

Ken said he had quit looking for a presidency within his system because of a poor relationship with the current system president. Ken said one of the issues he faced as an interim president was that he had to make many tough decisions over the three

years, which created bad feelings with some people within the system and some people within his college. "You can't lead without making some people angry." Ken said another problem with systems was they tried to run every community college the same way and often mandated procedures that may not work well at a specific school. Not only was this approach impractical, he said, but it also impeded the president's problem solving skills and leadership development. Ken said his system was slow to promote from within and did not support its presidents or vice presidents very well. For these reasons, he was looking for an available presidency outside of his current system.

> I think the only thing that has saved me in the system is I went from a president's level to a vice president's level, and I report to a college president now and not the system president. So I have been kind of insulated, though that has been kind of a spectre over my advancement these last couple of years.

Essence Statement

This study's purpose was to understand the meaning of the development of public relations skills in vice presidents who wish to someday serve as a community college president. Phenomenology seeks to look at experiences in their entirety, rather than breaking actions into small variables and parts. Moustakas (1994) affirmed this idea when he wrote: "Phenomenology is concerned with wholeness, with examining entities from many sides, angles, and perspectives until a unified vision of essences of a phenomenon or experience is achieved" (p.58). Creswell (2007) said that establishing the participants' underlying common experiences within a phenomenological study divulges the "essence" of the phenomenon being studied.

All of the vice presidents in the study indicated they were guided through their leadership development efforts by the concept of "fit." The vice presidents indicated that they did not intend to apply for every community college presidential opening, but rather ones that fit their values, skills, abilities, reporting structure, or personal

preferences. Three of the vice presidents said they had a small list of community colleges where they could serve as president, either because of family considerations or a desire to build on existing retirement benefits. A couple of the vice presidents talked about their own skill set and noted that their public relations and communication skills were not strong. In these cases, "fit" would mean finding a community college that wanted a strong manager and someone with a sound understanding of how community colleges function. Personal values was another consideration for "fit." For example, June wanted to lead a community college that had values matching her own including honesty and openness. Dale wanted to serve as president at a community colleges committed to academic excellence. Despite not having a doctorate, Nancy said she wanted to work at a community college that valued innovation and new ideas. Finally, "fit" was brought up when talking about the reporting structure of the college. Angela, for instance, said she would prefer to work at a community college that was part of a larger system, rather than one that reported to a local board of trustees. She said she did not believe she would mesh well with a board of trustees. Other vice presidents talked about their displeaure with the system offices and felt more tied to the community if they reported to a board.

Their discussions of "fit" tied directly to their own comfort level with the public relations expectations of the community college president. Those who indicated greater personal efforts at developing their external skills and a comfort with the president's public relations expectations offered many more community colleges that might be a good fit. Conversely, those who said they would likely not enjoy the public relations role of the community college president, or were not doing much to prepare themselves for that role, said they were more careful in considering their own personal "fit" with the college. Ken said he had applied often but looked only for community colleges that

valued his strong internal skills. Eric said he did not apply for a presidential opening at his own college because his previous president had been flamboyant and viewed with strong public relations skills. Eric felt he would be unfairly compared to his previous president, whose ability to build relationships in the community were much stronger than Eric's.

Finally, the vice presidents used the term "fit" several times in their interviews even though it was not part of my original slate of questions. Often, the vice presidents brought up the concept when asked about their strategies for pursuing a presidency. They also raised it when noting that many community college presidents had short tenures because their leadership style and abilities were not in harmony with their respective campuses. Based on their own experiences, the vice presidents said the life span of a community college president was a precarious one, and that it was important to find an institution where they "fit" best. During later interviews, I asked some of the presidents to define "fit." Many of the answers tied closely to this vice president's explanation, "Fit is a situation where I can be most successful."

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This final chapter features a summary of my study and discusses what I discovered in my findings. I have included an interpretation of the data collected, the conclusions that I reached from my data, and possible implications from the study. Finally, I close this chapter with some recommendations for future research studies resulting from my findings.

Summary of the Current Findings

The purpose of the qualitative phenomenological study was to determine what community college vice presidents who wish to be a president someday are doing to development themselves for their future role, with an emphasis on building public relations experiences and understanding. This phenomenological study provided insights into the development of a community college president's public relations skills, looking at processes that are working and those that are ineffective. In addition, this study added to growing collection of research studies conducted on community college leadership.

Research Questions and Findings

This section will look at how my study's findings address the three research questions. This includes the following:

- How are current community college administrators who hope to become community college presidents preparing for the public relations role that comes with the job?
- What are the experiences and perceptions of aspiring community college administrators related to leadership development and their future public relations duties?

- What elements contribute to or inhibit their abilities to gain public relations skills and develop as leaders?

Question One: How are current community college administrators who hope to become community college presidents preparing for the public relations role that comes with the job?

Though all of the vice presidents said the community college president serves as the external arm of the institution, only six of the 11 of the people interviewed — barely half — indicated they were working to develop their public relations skills. Those who were active in preparing for the public relations role said direct experience was most helpful, whether it was working directly with donors, legislators, reporters or board members.

Observation was also listed as a powerful tool, assuming the vice president was able to work closely with her/his president on different external projects. Mentors were also noted as useful in the development process, though the vice presidents offered few examples related to gaining public relations skills. What follows is a closer look at this question.

Leadership Development Efforts to Gain Public Relations Skills. The vice presidents often talked about the importance of the community college president in helping them grow as leaders, which will be covered in the third question. In general, however, most of the development of these leaders was done by the leader her/himself. Some of the leaders had crafted development plans and had a clear sense of what leadership traits that they wanted to develop and how they would do so. Other vice presidents were more random in how they built their leadership abilities. Many of the study's participants complained that they did not have the time or the money to take on new projects, volunteer in the community, take classes, read articles or attend

conferences. They said this problem was limiting their developmental efforts. In terms of leadership tools that they used to build public relations skills, they cited observing the president, experiencing the role of the president and training programs.

Observation was mentioned often because it was viewed as one of the easier leadership development tools available, one that meshed with the busy lives of the vice presidents. Many of the vice presidents said they watch their president at work, especially when the president is taking on public relations duties. They said through observation they have learned how to communicate with different groups on the campus and in the community, how to work with legislators, how to build business partnerships in the community, how to work with donors, and how to interact with the media. Observation of the president was especially helpful, the vice presidents indicated, in seeing how the president managed relationships with his/her board of trustees. The vice presidents perceived that this was a critical relationship for presidents and could determine success or failure in the job. Though the participants said observations were a valuable tool, they did say the opportunities were not as plentiful as they would like; they expressed a desire to spend more time working alongside the president.

Actual presidential experience was considered a more valuable development tool, though one that was not always available or practical. A couple of the vice presidents said their presidents allowed them different opportunities to better understand the job of being a president, though they said that these opportunities did not occur often enough. This complaint was especially true of the external role of the president, which was something that some presidents were not willing to delegate, according to the perceptions of the vice presidents. One rare example was one president who delegated many assignments to her vice president to help prepare him for a future presidency.

This included sending him to the state capital for one legislative session to lobby for a new campus building. The president has also given this vice president a chance to interact with the board, community donors and local news reporters. Another vice president talked about her president's efforts to get the community college more involved with the surrounding town. This president expects all of the college's leaders to serve on local boards and have relationships with leaders in the community. Overall, the vice presidents indicated that actual experience at work was the most valuable training tool for understanding the public relations role of a community college president.

Another form of experience came when some of the vice presidents served as interim presidents. All of the vice presidents who served in this role said they gained an understanding of the life of a community college president, especially the heavy public relations demands. One vice president said the experience was valuable, and confirmed that a president spends a bulk of his/her time working on community issues, though he also said the opportunity has hurt his ability to earn a future presidency because of conflict he had during his tenure with the state's system president. Another vice president said he learned a great deal as his college's interim president, and had no idea how many important decisions that a community college president was expected to make each day. He was also surprised by how many people in the community had access to the president. He said as interim president he was always working, even when shopping at a local store. He said that simple conversations in the community could have a dramatic affect on the college and that presidents were always wearing their public relations hat. This vice president said in addition to public relations training, aspiring presidents should spend more time developing their abilities to make tough decisions in a short amount of time. Two vice presidents talked about taking on the role

of the president because a disengaged or weak leader oversaw their community college. They said this experience was also fruitful, though it put them in tenuous situations as they tried to not overstep their authority.

The third leadership tool identifed for building public relations skills, according to the vice presidents, was attendance at internal and external trainings. The literature often mentioned the value of internal training programs on community college campuses in creating future leaders (Hull, 2005). The vice presidents talked about creating these programs on their own campuses, though rarely did they discuss their own experiences in these grow-your-own academies. The reason, in large part, is that they began their careers before these programs became popular. Still, the vice presidents said these academies on their own campuses were helpful in leadership development.

Several of the vice presidents said they had attended national and regional training programs for administrators who want to become a president. They said they had attended a few training sessions tied to the president's public relations role, though the vice presidents said those classes were rare and not always helpful because they were many times vague in their teachings. Often, the trainings related to developing presidents focused on helping the vice president to better communicate his/her vision and abilities to a hiring committee. Some vice presidents expressed concerns that these training programs spent more time teaching how to craft a resume or answer certain interview questions, and less time on being successful once the new president was hired. Others said they liked the conferences because they allowed them to network with other presidential candidates — a valuable public relations tool — and develop friendships that might have future worth. A couple of the vice presidents were critical of these training programs, saying they were expensive and not easy to attend because

of their busy schedules. Doctoral training, especially degrees tied to community college leadership, were said to be somewhat helpful in developing future presidents and helping them understand the culture and operations of a community college, however the vice presidents said their classes had no tie to growing public relations or external abilities.

Question Two: What are the experiences of aspiring community college administrators related to leadership development and their future public relations duties?

The vice presidents offered varied experiences and stories related to their efforts to prepare for their future public relations responsibilities. Some expressed frustration with the public relations expectations and admitted it was not something they enjoyed. Others were seeking out external opportunities whether it was working with the business community or involving community leaders with the implementation of a new program on the campus. All of the vice presidents said their jobs, by their nature, required to focus on the campus and its many internal components. But they also came to learn over time that the community college president was expected to spend a majority of his/her time away from the campus on various public relations projects.

The President is the Chief Communication Officer. The literature offered numerous examples of how the community college president's job has evolved from being someone who worked primarily on the campus to someone with major responsibilities in the community (Pinchback, 2011). This includes the need to build partnerships with local businesses, to establish relationships with political and legislative leaders, to create friendships with lucrative donors, and foster open communication with news reporters and media outlets. The findings look at the importance that the vice presidents give to this role and the energy they have expended toward the development of stronger public

relations skills. When asked about these duties, the vice presidents all agreed that the community college president serves as the external arm of the institution and that public relations and communication skills were integral to the president's success. Though they never called their president the chief communication officer, they agreed with Caywood (1997) that it was the president's job to build strong relationships with key constituents and publics including donors, legislators, alumni, board members, and business leaders in the community.

Some of the vice presidents mentioned failed presidents who held the job for only a short time, losing their jobs largely because they were poor relationship builders and communicators. Many of the vice presidents praised their current president for his/her ability to develop relationships on the campus and the community. One vice president talked about the growth of her community college in large part because of her president's ability to partner with the business community. Another vice president talked about a past president who had been able to mend fences in the community, which did not have a good relationship with the college. He offered the example of the president building a partnership with the local newspaper, which in the past had criticized the community college. This president was able to gain better coverage in the paper for the college because of his public relations skills. Overall, the vice presidents agreed that the public relations role is a vital part of a community college's job description.

Yet though the vice presidents affirmed the importance of a community college president's external efforts, several of the study's participants had done very little to prepare for that role. One reason for this is that some of the respondents did not like the public relations role. Because of unfavorable experiences in the public relations role, they tended to avoid opportunities to learn more about that responsibility. They all

talked about the importance of gaining different experiences on the community college itself, though some discounted the value of experiences in the community or in working with community leaders. Another reason for a lack of preparation is that these vice presidents had limited developmental opportunities because their presidents did not give them many opportunities to take on that role. One vice president mentioned a wish that her president would delegate external duties to more people on the campus; another vice president said it was not the responsibility of the president to give administrators a "full flavor" of the presidency. Those vice presidents who had strong public relations experiences or development opportunities gained these skills either because they reached out in the community themselves or had presidents who encouraged them to do so. A third reason for this reduced level of comfort with public relations duties was tied to the past and current jobs of these vice presidents. Those who were most comfortable had served as foundation directors or had held past jobs as community activists. Others had worked as academic vice presidents who had to develop business partnerships in the community to create new programs. The vice presidents with limited public relations experiences had worked primarily in the academic community or student servies offices in roles that kept them on the campus. The key element here is that the vice presidents with strong public relations experiences seemed to have the best idea of how they would obtain a presidency and what they would do with it once they were hired. A couple of these vice presidents said they had a developmental plan in place that outlined a systematic approach to earning a presidency and ensuring they were successful in that role.

Conversely, about one-third of the vice presidents admitted they don't like the public relations role of the presidency and said they were more comfortable with the internal nature of campus life rather than events in the community. Some of these

respondents thought the public relations role was over-rated and over-valued by hiring committees and boards of trustees. They said they could be the external arm of the community college, but confessed they would not enjoy that part of the job. This disconnect between the president's external and internal duties came up clearly when the vice presidents were asked about the implementation of public relations tools in their work lives. For example, only two of the vice presidents said they have tried to incorporate public relations concepts into their work. For example, most every respondent understood the idea of messaging, though very few actually used this concept when running a meeting or communicating with a key stakeholder. One vice president said he is confident in how he expresses himself and often "wings it" during these encounters. Several of the vice presidents said they would rely on strong public relations and foundation directors if they were hired as president. The most common time that the vice presidents offered examples of using public relations tools was when they applied for a presidency. Several mentioned the self-image that they were trying to create for the hiring community and the use of specific messages to convey their strengths and conceal their weaknesses.

Presidents Must Fit Well with their Campus and Community. The vice presidents talked often about the issue of fit related to finding a presidency that best suited their own personal strengths. Those who said they had weak public relations skills believed they could find a community college that was looking for someone who worked best on the campus and not in the community. One vice president said his background working in rural agricultural communities made him a natural fit for certain jobs, even if he did not have strong public relations abilities. Conversely, those vice presidents who said they were working to develop their public relations skills said such preparation widened their fit, and allowed them to consider leadership roles at community colleges

that fit with their values or personal mission statement. Fit also tied to their concern about the high turnover rate of community college presidents. The vice presidents said it was critical to not put oneself in a bad situation because it could end that person's career as a president in quick order. They also said that systems and boards of trustees often make poor hiring decisions because they don't know what kind of qualities that they want to hire. These hiring committees were not thinking of fit. For example, several of the vice presidents talked about the importance of being a visionary, even though they said there are very few of them available. The vice presidents also said they would not classify themselves as visionaries. In discussing this theme, the vice presidents said they were not sure how a person would develop visionary skills. Communication and public relations abilities were also something that hiring committees also look for, according to the vice presidents, though the hiring team often struggles with how to identify people skills. One vice president said some trustees assume that if the president communicates well during the hiring process and can make a connection with the hiring group that the person has good public relations skills. That is not always true, she said.

Even though the vice presidents did not talk about the issue of fit from the perspective of the board of trustees or the system president, it was a common belief that hiring committees should spend more time deciding what traits and skills that they want and more energy making sure that the president they hire was a good fit for the community college. Five of the vice presidents talked about the damage caused to their community college because of the high turnover rate of presidents and said these poor hiring processes must end.

Question Three: What elements contribute to or inhibit their abilities to gain public relations skills and develop as leaders?

The vice presidents talked often about their current and past presidents and how they were instrumental in their development. Several of these vice presidents said the president was the most important person in the development of leaders at their community college. Presidents often advised these vice presidents on what skills they needed to develop and what roles they needed to experience. This included a heavy emphasis on mastering public relations skills.

The Importance of the President in Developing the External Role. In discussing their career paths, many of the vice presidents talked about a past or current president who served as critical guides in their jobs. Often, it was the president who first identified the vice president as a future leader and inspired the vice president to consider running his/her own community college someday. Presidents also offered career advice to these vice presidents, used their clout to protect their leaders, and found the funds within the college to pay for trainings and classes. The vice presidents said that these exemplary presidents created a culture on the campus where future leaders could grow and bloom. Such presidents were able to serve in this role for several years and create a sense of stability on the campus. The better presidents also gave their vice presidents a chance to take on challenging roles that would give them a glimpse of the president's role. Often this included the president's public relations role, about which the vice presidents offered numerous examples of working with the president on various external assignments. One vice president talked about her current president and how he was developing all of his vice presidents for a future presidency including an expectation that all vice presidents had a community role. Another vice president met regularly with his president to decide on what experiences were needed

to better prepare him for a presidency. This vice president had served both in academics and student services while also taking on roles of interim human resources director and lobbyist. He said his president believed that more experiences within the college and out in the community would more fully develop this vice president as a leader.

Conversely, the president was identified at times as inhibiting the development of public relations skills. Some presidents were said to be hesitant to delegate public relations assignments and preferred to keep their vice presidents on the campus. For example, most of the vice presidents said they had little experience working with the college's board of trustees or the system president. Trustees, by their nature, communicated only to the president, and rarely interacted with the vice presidents. This lack of interaction with community leaders limited the vice president's experience, which the vice presidents said increased the likelihood of a failed presidency.

Challenges Posed by Trustees, System Offices, and Gender Bias. The literature indicated that boards should take active and positive roles in the development of community college leaders (Vaughan & Weisman, 2003). The same holds true for system offices. This study, however, found little evidence that these actions are taking place. Instead, boards of trustees were often described as meddling and petty, using their power to create uncomfortable situations for their presidents and vice presidents. Several vice presidents described confrontations with board members that made them question if they wanted to pursue a presidency. The vice presidents offered only a couple of examples of trustee members providing support to the vice president. In addition, the vice presidents said they had little interaction with their boards, other than watching how their presidents managed those relationships. Those observations were helpful, though they also made the vice presidents less willing to apply for a presidency. One vice president talked about only wanting to work for a system because

of how she had seen boards treat past presidents and administrators. Another study participant, who asked to be kept anonymous when telling a personal story, talked about an encounter with a board member who told the vice president that he/she was not welcome at the community college and should have never been hired. This problem escalated later during a profanity-laced exchange at a local store in front of the vice president's family.

Those vice presidents who reported to a system talked about the power that the system president had and how he/she had created intimidating environments in their respective states. One vice president talked about the high turnover rate of presidents in his state caused by sour relationships with the system president. A couple of the vice presidents said they had hesitated in applying for an open presidency because the system president had been quick to fire presidents who were struggling. Vice presidents in one state mentioned their system's efforts to develop new presidents with some training programs, something they said was appreciated, however they also noted there was little follow-up to this effort. The vice presidents blamed the problems caused by boards and systems as a big reason for the high turnover of presidents in their respective states.

During interviews with the female vice presidents, a common issue that came up in the conversations tied to the challenges they faced in their careers because of their gender. Though the issue was not brought up in the interview questions, the women in talking about their careers said they were often excluded from the same opportunities as their male counterparts. One female vice president said she felt isolated early in her career because she was the only female vice president within her leadership cabinet. She said the male leaders often built close friendships and excluded her from lunch meetings, racquetball games, and football parties. She said this exclusion hampered her

professional development. Another female vice president said she was not considered for a presidency at her community college because the previous president had been a woman, and was considered a poor hire by the board of trustees. Three of the female vice presidents said they learned early in their careers that they would have to work harder than their male colleagues, and needed to be more thorough in their jobs or else they would be scrutinized more closely. They said that the increased hiring of female leaders within community colleges has alleviated some of the problems, however gender bias does still exist.

Comparisons of Findings to Review of Literature

In reviewing my findings compared to what I found in the literature, two themes emerged. They included: (a) importance of president's public relations role, and (b) useful leadership development practices.

Importance of the President's Public Relations Role

According to the literature, as the nature of community colleges have grown more complex, so have the duties of the community college president. While the early presidents often had full control of the campus and made most of the decisions (Monroe, 1972), Lewis (1989) noted that presidents have had to change the decision-making process, becoming more participatory and democratic. Trustees, students and faculty expected to have a say in how the campus was run. Presidents also began looking outward as they were forced to manage relationships with state legislatures, finance committees, coordinating boards, and local constituents (Lewis, 1989). Shults (2001) noted this change in expectations as part of a 2001 American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) study of college presidents that surveyed them on the most important skills needed in future leaders (Shults, 2001).The presidents offered numerous recommendations relate to increased public relations skills including an

understanding of how to forge lasting partnerships, developing and communicating a clear vision, creating strong relationships with key publics inside and outside the institution, and demonstrating political savvy and strong communication skills (Shults, 2001). A 2011 Council of Independent Colleges study found that four of the six most time-consuming duties for community college presidents were tied to public relations efforts: fundraising, government relations, community relations and board relations (Song & Hartley III, 2012).

In other studies, McDonald (2012) noted the importance of the public relations role in a study that surveyed 48 California presidents about the leadership skills needed to facilitate longevity in their careers. In his first finding, McDonald (2012) the president's tenure is enhanced by her/his ability to communicate with others. Hasan (2008) made similar observations in his study that found that communication, collaboration, and community college advocacy were "very" or "extremely" important for accomplished community college leaders. Hassan (2008) noted the three traits were part of the six most important competencies formulated by American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2005) for effective community college leadership. Campbell, Mueller, and Souza (2010) found that the most important skill a community college president must have was people skills, including the ability to communicate to a wide range of people. Their study was part of interviews with 11 female community college presidents. In a study of a community college president's job, Besikof (2010) discovered these leaders spent 15 to 20% of their day on fundraising efforts.

All of this was affirmed in my research. The 11 vice presidents in my study noted that their president spent much of his/her time away from the campus meeting with business leaders, consituents, legislators, etc., and that the successful presidents that they had worked for all had strong communication skills. The vice presidents

acknowledged the need to develop those skills in future leaders, and all said they felt they were ready right now to step into a presidency. However, only about half of the 11 vice presidents interviewed said that they felt they would bring strong external abilities to the president's office.

Useful Leadership Development Practices for the External Role

Most of the literature related to leadership development tools discussed the use of mentors, campus leadership development programs and doctoral degrees tied to community college leadership programs. The vice presidents in my study concurred with the effectiveness of each one, though offered few examples that any of the three improved their public relations skills. Instead, they talked at length about the value of prior experiences in building public relations skills in leaders. The research literature offered several examples related to tie between experience and learning job skills. One such study was completed by King (2010), who found evidence of a positive relationship between the president's previous professional experience outside of the community college and what occurred with the institution's revenue trends. McCall, Lombardo & Morrison (1998) praised the use of learning from job experience as a useful tool for leadership development, noting such experiences might include special assignments. The importance of experience was demonstrated by Koelkebeck (1994) in his study that found that community college presidents with backgrounds as teachers and academic administrators were the least effective fundraiser. Those presidents who had worked previously with donors were more successful in raising money for their schools. In a similar study, Brunen (2012) found that these presidents with previous fundraising experiences did well in their job. The presidents interviewed in the study said the ability to build strong relationships in the community was critical to the role of a president, as was personal communication skills. Despite the importance of public

relations in a community college president's job, Pinchback (2011) said in his study that presidents continued to begin their careers in the academic arena and came to the job with limited experience in fundraising. Pinchback (2011) said this meant some presidents were entering their job missing a crucial skill. Barton and Cox (2012) noted that 82 surveyed school principals said that taking part in fieldwork and administrative activties were valuable in building their leadership experiences.

The vice presidents said they would like more fieldwork related to the public relations role and wish their president would give them more chances to learn this skill. They said they expected to learn this skill while working on-the-job, which several said was a problem. This was even voiced by the vice presidents who did not enjoy the external role or who felt it was over-rated.

Implications for practice

The research indicated that the community college presidents often had short careers in part because of the difficult environments and constituencies today on American campuses (Bernardin-Demougeot, 2008). My study supported that these environments existed. Some of this chaos was just the nature of community colleges today as they were expected to do more with less. The vice presidents said as their revenue streams decreased, they were being asked to serve more students and constituents in their community. Some of turmoil on their campuses was out of the control of presidents and was part of working at a community college in 2013. However, my study showed a couple of ways that community colleges could improve themselves in two ways and increase the longevity of future presidents: first related to public relations understanding and second tied to development roles at community colleges.

In terms of public relations understanding, all of the vice presidents admitted that a critical part of a community college president's job ties to his/her public relations skills. They said that their presidents often spent a bulk of their time working in the community promoting the college either with legislators, community groups, business leaders and/or prospective donors. The vice presidents offered numerous examples of their president building relationships within the community. Despite this admission, nearly half of the vice presidents said they were doing little to develop their own public relations skills or said they did not like that part of the president's job. Though these vice presidents said they felt they were ready to step into the president's role, they also said they did not have a proper understanding of the external role, or a desire to master this skill. When asked how they planned to approach this deficit, they often said that they would make sure they had strong public relations and foundation directors in place. They also said they could do the role, even if they did not like it. My research indicated that aspiring presidents would be better served if they had greater appreciation of the public relations expectations of the presidency with more emphasis placed on improving those skills.

As for development roles at community colleges, several of the vice presidents indicated they were developing their leadership skills on their own. Some have great support from their presidents and mentors, though many of the efforts to prepare themselves for a future presidency was done singularly. Community colleges need to work harder to set up systems to support the development of their leaders and identify them at an earlier age. The vice presidents complained that there was not a clear path to the presidency, and that they would have liked help earlier in their careers to better understand how to reach that goal. Community colleges as a whole must do a better job

of providing that information as well as providing support to people who want to move up within their own college or the community college system.

Related to this issue, the study indicated that the community college president and mentors are the two most important people in the development of these vice presidents. For example, presidents appeared to be the most important person in the development of future leaders at community colleges; they should continue in that role. It was the presidents who identified future leaders and offered them advice and opportunities to grow. Presidents could do more, however, especially in the area of public relations. Many of the respondents said the president took on the external role of the community college and rarely allowed the vice presidents to experience that role. One president was exemplary in that effort, allowing her vice president to serve as a lobbyist for the community college during one session of the state legislature, and sat down each year with the vice president to see what other experiences she could give him. Another president has asked his vice presidents to be more active in the community and take on a bigger presence in the local town. However, most of the vice presidents said that the president rarely delegated this role, or allowed the vice presidents to experience the external component of the presidency. Presidents should continue to assist in developing future leaders and be willing to delegate and provide feedback. Mentors were also important instruments of quality leadership development, though little evidence was shown that mentoring took place for teaching or imparting public relations skills. Community colleges should encourage more mentoring programs on their campus for their faculty, staff and administrators, urging people to both serve as mentors while seeking out others to provide support and advice, especially as it relates to developing public relations and relationship-building skills.

Implications for Future Research

This study began as a look at the leadership development practices of vice presidents who were interested in becoming a community college president someday. I focused a large part of my attention on the development of public relations skills, which is something that has not been studied extensively, though is gaining in importance. Through my research, I discovered many possible new avenues for this research.

For instance, one possible study could look at why community college presidents were not successful in their jobs. This came up often in the research and it would be interesting to talk to past presidents and ask them why they struggled in their role. A researcher could focus specifically on the public relations role, or be more broad in her/his scope. It would be difficult to get those leaders to talk to you and might be hard to access them. One solution might be to seek out presidents who were let go by their board. You could find names by searching newspaper and media reports about community college presidents who were fired or terminated. It would be valuable information to discover what happened during their tenures and what factors caused their termination. Of course, concerns about litigation might make such interviews more difficult, though that data collected could be highly informative. Emphasis could be placed on the president's people and public relations skills, and the results could help in the development of future presidents.

Another study could ask current community college presidents who have been successful in their jobs and talk about the factors related to their success. Again, public relations skills could be the focus. A researcher would have to determine what defines a successful president, whether it was longevity, accomplishments, or benchmarks related to finances or academic outcomes. The results could again be used to create new leadership development models.

Another study could involve interviews with current boards of trustees to see how they determine what they are seeking in a community college president. My study found that many boards are less than successful in this endeavor. A future study could look at recent hires and ask boards to talk about the hiring process and the attributes and circumstances that influenced the hiring process. The research could ask about how public relations abilities factored into the hiring process.

Other studies could look at specific aspects of the public relations role of the community college president including media relations, board relations, lobbying or fundraising. For example, a researcher could conduct a case study related to a capital campaign involving the college's foundation. The researcher could look at the president's role in the campaign and might ask questions about how the president prepared him/herself for that effort. Similar studies could feature efforts to improve media coverage in the community or the creation of a new academic program involving key businesses in the region.

A final idea would be to change the framework of my study in some way. For instance, this study looked at vice presidents only; however, a similar study could be completed using entry-level leaders at community colleges, especially since the vice presidents tend to use external training programs for their preparation. Entry-level leaders could comment about the developmental programs at their own college including any grow-your-own efforts at the institution. It would be interesting to see when these leaders start realizing that a community college president's role is largely external and examine if that realization changed their development efforts. Likewise, someone could expand this study to other regions across the country. This study included community colleges at several states west of the Mississippi River and was limited by geography. A review of what is happening in other states might be fruitful

Conclusion

The evidence collected in this study supports the belief that expectations are high for community college presidents and why many institutions might be struggling to find quality leaders. The findings support previous studies showing that presidents are expected to be adept at many roles, including having expertise in public relations and building relationships with many constituencies. Within my study, I found that nearly half of the research subjects interviewed were doing very little to build their public relations skills and instead were focussed on developing strong institutional experiences and knowledge. In addition, a majority of my aspiring vice presidents were preparing themselves for a presidency is a singular manner without a lot of support from others within the community college system. This was especially true of the efforts to develop public relations skills in vice presidents, and might help explain why so some community college presidents hold their jobs for such a short time. The findings also offered backing about the important role of community college presidents in the development of leaders, and that presidents and community colleges as a whole need to do more in the development of future leaders. Subsequent research might offer more information about these issues.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

The following questions were used in the interviews with all 11 vice presidents. The questions were not asked in this exact order, but rather followed the flow of the responses. Other questions were asked during the interviews depending on where the vice president took the interview.

1. Can you talk about your career in education and a little bit about how you ended up working in a community college setting and as a vice president?
2. At what point did you decide that you wanted to be a community college president?
3. Was this a decision that you made on your own or did you get some encouragement? If you were encouraged, who did so?
4. Why do you want to be a community college president?
5. If you were to interview with a community college, how would you sell yourself? What strengths or abilities would you mention?
6. If you were to assess your potential weaknesses as a community college president, what might they be? What are you doing to improve upon these weaknesses?
7. What kind of community college to you want to lead? Do you have a specific type of college in mind — urban vs. rural — or are you open to all instiutions?
8. How would you describe your comfort level with the public relations expectations of being a community college college? What are your thoughts about this responsibility?
9. How much time do you spend working on your communication and relationship-building skills? How do you know when you are effectively communicating with someone else?
10. Do you spend any time creating messages for different audiences?
11. How are you approaching your leadership development efforts? For example, do you have a plan in place? How do you go about assessing your abilities and performance?
12. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to fundraising at a community college.
13. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to media relations at a community college.
14. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to board relations at a community college.
15. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to lobbying and working with legislators at a community college.
16. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to community relations at a community college.
17. Please talk about your experiences and thoughts related to fundraising at a community college.
18. Who has helped you with your development?
19. Do you have mentors in your life? Can you talk about some of them? How did you locate these mentors? Do you mentor other people as well?

20. How helpful was earning your doctorate in preparing you for a presidency?
21. How helpful training programs and courses been in preparing you for a presidency?
22. How helpful has your president been in preparing you for a presidency? What projects has he/she delegated to you? What kinds of things does your president tell you during your annual evaluation?
23. What other developmental tools have been valuable to you in preparing to be a leader?
24. What challenges have you faced in your developmental efforts?
25. What efforts is your community college making to develop leaders in your institution? If you are part of a system, what is it doing to prepare future leaders?
26. Do you believe community colleges as a whole are working to develop future presidents and alleviate future shortages of quality leaders across the country?
27. Have you applied for a presidency? How did that process go?
28. If you have not applied yet, do you have a timeline in place when you might?
29. What factors would you consider in applying for a presidency?
30. Does your community college have a succession plan in place if your president steps down or is let go?

Appendix 2: Informed Consent Form
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study, which will take place from August 1, 2011 to December 1, 2012. This form details the purpose of this study, a description of your involvement and rights throughout the study.

Title of the Study
My qualitative study's title is *The Development of Public Relations Skills in Aspiring Community College Presidents.*

Principal Investigator
I am conducting my research under the guidance of Dr. Linda Kuk with the School of Education. If you would like to speak to Dr. Linda Kuk, her contact information at Colorado State University is 970-491-7243 and Linda.Kuk@ColoState.edu.

Co-Principal Investigator
I am a full-time journalism and communication instructor at Casper College in Casper, Wyoming. I am also a PhD student through Colorado State University's School of Education. If you would like to speak to me, you can call me at 307-268-2375 (work) or 307-797-6503 (cell). My e-mail account is pvanhouten@caspercollege.edu.

Research Team
Peter Van Houten, Co-Principal Investigator, will conduct the research under the guidance of Dr. Linda Kuk, Principal Investigator.

Study's Purpose
The study's purpose is to investigate the development of public relations skills in aspiring community college presidents, and to reveal experiences that either assist in this development or hinder the person's growth and understanding. In addition, this study will add to growing collection of research studies related to leadership development on community college campuses. As you likely know, the need for community college presidents is even greater today because of the coming shortage of presidents, and the growing complexity of the community college environment. Today's community college president faces a greater number of challenges, especially as funding sources dwindle while the needs of the community college student increase.

Participant Involvement
The research study will look at current community college vice presidents living in the Rocky Mountain region. Each vice president must indicate an interest in becoming a community college president someday and must have at least 5 years of experience as an administrator. Also, you must work at a public institution.

Page 1 of 4 Participant's initials_____ Date_____

The actual research will take place over two days, involving two interviews with you, lasting approximately 90 minutes on the first day and no more than 60 minutes on the second. I will also observe you in some sort of leadership or public relations role involving other people at the college or within the community. I will travel to your community for the interviews and observations.
I intend to interview 12 to 25 participants in five to six states. The research will conclude

once a level of saturation is reached, that point when no more new information is being offered.

Research Methods
The research methods that will be used to meet this purpose include three tools:
• One-on-one interviews; and
• Review of artifacts and documents related to the participant and her/his community college.

Benefits and Risks
This study will afford you the opportunity to reflect on your leadership development, especially as it relates to improving your public relations skills. Some participants may feel comfortable with their current level of development; others may decide to do more to improve their public relations abilities. Once concluded, the study will allow you and other aspiring community college presidents to learn what others are doing to prepare themselves, along with possible enrichments to that development as well as hindrances. You will not receive any compensation for taking part in this study.
Your main risk would be disclosure of your identity within your community and/or academic circle, especially if you offered private insights or criticisms of others about your development. To minimize this risk, I will use pseudonyms for you and your community college. In addition, I will interview vice presidents from at least five states in the Rocky Mountain region, making it very difficult to pinpoint a specific area or person. Finally, I intend to interview 12 to 25 vice presidents, which will offer a variety of responses and experiences. This, too, should minimize any risk of discovery.
A potential discomfort might be the observation of you in a public relations setting. In this case, you must provide permission before the observation and will have the opportunity to lay out any ground rules. You will be asked to notify the other people attending the observation prior to my visit. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher has taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

Your Involvement in the Study
Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to take part in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.
I will do my best to ensure that confidentiality is maintained by not citing your actual name or the college's identity within the actual study. You may decide to exit the study at any time, and may also request that any or all data collected from you not be used in the study. The interview will be tape recorded; however, your name will not be used on the transcript. Your name and identifying information will not be associated with any part of the written report of the research. All of your information and interview responses will be kept confidential. I will not share your individual responses with anyone other than the committee chair, though even then, I will not use your real name. Once the study is completed, the signed consent forms and data will be kept with Dr. Linda Kuk, the Principal Investigator.

Our discussion will be audio taped to help me accurately capture your insights in your own words. Only I and possibly a transcriptionist will hear the tapes. If you feel discomfort with the recorder, you may ask that it be turned off at any time. If you feel discomfort in using a transcriptionist, I will take care of this task on my own.
You also have the right to withdraw from the study at any time. In the event you choose to withdraw from the study, all information you provide (including the digital audio files) will be destroyed and omitted from the final paper.
Insights gathered by you and other participants will be used in writing my dissertation, which will be read by my committee chair, my methodologist and two other faculty members from Colorado State University. The finished dissertation will be housed in the Colorado State University library system. Though direct quotes from you may be used in the paper, your name and other identifying information will be kept anonymous. That means that no one, not even members of my dissertation committee, will know that the information you give comes from you. This study poses very few risks to its participants.

Access to the Data
We will keep private all research records that identify you, to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

Researcher Background
Peter Van Houten is completing the study as part of his dissertation requirement through Colorado State University's community college leadership doctoral degree with the School of Education. I have more than 15 years of experience working in the public relations field and currently work as a journalism and communication instructor at Casper College in Wyoming.

If You Have Questions
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in this study, please ask any questions that come to mind now. Later, if you have questions or concerns, you may contact me in a variety of ways:
• Email: pvanhouten@caspercollege.edu
• Phone: 307-577-5053 (home), 307-268-2375 (work), and 307-797-6503 (cell).
• Home Address: Pete Van Houten, 204 W. 15th, Casper, WY 82601.
If you would like to speak to Dr. Linda Kuk, her contact information at Colorado State University is 970-491-7243 and Linda.Kuk@ColoState.edu. Dr. Kuk is the Principal Investigator. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator at Colorado State University at 970-491-1655. You will receive a copy of this consent form to take with you.

Consent
Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. You signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing 4 pages.

_____ _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____ _____
Name of researcher providing information to participant Date

_____
Signature of researcher

Page 4 of 4 Participant's initials_____ Date_____