

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AVAILABLE FOR  
WOMEN AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN ILLINOIS

by

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## ABSTRACT

In this qualitative case study, surveys, and semi-structured interviews of six women leaders at three community colleges was conducted. The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of what types of leadership development opportunities are essential to ensure the development of women leaders in community colleges in Illinois. This development is necessary so women are well positioned to assume senior leadership roles in these unique institutions.

Women's underrepresentation in community college leadership positions, particularly at senior management levels, could be due to the lack of leadership development training. To understand the issues surrounding women's underrepresentation, leadership training, and leadership opportunities, this research identified six women leaders from three Illinois community colleges. The institutions were selected based on size—small, medium, and large; and the leaders were selected based on level of leadership—one a female president and the other a senior administrator reporting to the president who was also female. This study focused on four issues: (a) if there had been any gains in representation for women leaders at community colleges in general, and within Illinois, specifically; (b) what experiences helped women achieve higher administrative positions; (c) what training is available for women in Illinois community colleges; and (d) is there a relationship between the participants' Skills Inventory and their leadership role. The study provides recommendations for community colleges, suggestions for building a leadership development program based on current

programs, and recommendations for future research. The information gathered from this study has provided valuable insights as to what types of programs are available, and perhaps more importantly, what types of programs need to be developed to ensure the development of women who can effectively lead community colleges in the future.

**KEY WORDS:** women leaders, leadership programs, community college leadership

## DEDICATION

Three minutes is a long time for children to be patient, let alone three years. Thankfully I have three of the best kids in the world, and they were so patient with mommy during her doctoral journey. At 5, 6, and 7 years of age, they demonstrated a lot of patience; I know it was a lot to ask. Now, at the end of my journey, you are 8, 9, and 10 years old, and I am so proud of all of you and how supportive you have been of mommy during this time. Thank you, Makayla, Harlo, and Mason! Mommy loves you all the way up to the universe and back.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

### INTRODUCTION

Community colleges have been in existence since the early 1900s. Up until the 1940s, community colleges were referred to as junior colleges (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In 1922, the American Association of Junior Colleges defined the junior college as “an institution offering two years of instruction of strictly collegiate grade” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 3). The term *community college* became more predominant in the 1950s and 1960s for the publicly supported institutions not connected to a university. The term *community college* is defined as any regionally accredited institution that awards an associate degree in art or in science as its highest degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

The goal of community colleges started out as an extension to high school for students to further their skills and prepare for a job. As community colleges have evolved, so has their importance to the public. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) explained, “Community colleges have been inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience” (AACC, 2017, para. 1). Currently there are 1,132 community colleges across the United States (AACC, 2017). The number of community colleges has not changed much over the past 50 years. Most leaders at community colleges have been employed within the sector for a good portion of that time. To ensure that community colleges continue to prosper as they “enroll half of the students who

begin college in the United States” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 18), there is a need for successful leaders within the institutions.

The impending retirement of baby boomers means there is a coming transition of community college leaders across the United States. Unfortunately, there is not a large pool of leaders to replace many of the community college presidents and senior administrative level positions. A need for leadership development training is very important, and a focus on developing women for leadership roles should be a top concern. Women are underrepresented in senior leadership roles in community colleges. Widely available and cost-effective professional development opportunities and training that prepare women for these roles are seriously lacking.

The fact that there is an enormous gap in leadership training for women at community colleges is not surprising. Women seem to be clustered in low- and mid-level positions at community colleges across the United States, and very little effort has been made to change the leadership path for these women leaders. According to an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, women tend to shy away from “promotion and leadership because of a perception that advanced positions in academe are not open to women” (Ward & Eddy, 2013, para. 5). Professional development programs and training opportunities that prepare women for leadership roles could help elevate them to senior-level leadership positions in community college, thus closing the gap.



## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The need for women in senior leadership roles is particularly paramount when considering current demographics of senior-most administrative positions (presidents and other positions that directly report to the president) at community colleges. This, coupled with the lack of effective leadership training opportunities widely available and specifically tailored for women, creates a challenge that needs to be addressed. Most women leaders decide to stay in their current positions and do not pursue advancement due to “a lack of internal opportunities, or a desire to avoid the spotlight” (Ward & Eddy, 2013, para. 6).

It is well documented that many senior administrators are at or near retirement age. The impending exodus of community college leadership over the next 10 years is well documented. Lambert (2014) wrote that “75% of current presidents” (para. 2) plan to retire by the year 2024. Community colleges need to focus on building the leadership pipeline through a “meaningful professional development program for all leaders at the college” (Riggs, 2009, n.p.). The second issue that community colleges face is the lack of women leaders in senior-level leadership positions. The rate of change in leadership positions for women has stalled since the 1990s (American Council on Education [ACE], 2017a). Understanding that leaders can and should be developed, and, in particular, women leaders at community colleges should be a key focus at community colleges to prepare future leaders to replace the retiring leadership.

Offering leadership development opportunities to women leaders will help to begin the shift in gender in senior-level leadership positions at community colleges.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) and five other groups—the Association of Community College Trustees, Achieving the Dream Inc., Aspen Institute College Excellence Program, League of Innovation in the Community College, and

Student Success Initiatives at the University of Texas-Austin—have pledged to share information and support as they ramp up efforts to get qualified individuals into and through the leadership pipeline. (Lambert, 2014, para. 5)

The American Council on Education (ACE) started the Moving the Needle campaign that calls for more women presidents at colleges and universities (Rogan, 2016). The launch of the Moving the Needle campaign in January 2016 comes at a critical time as community colleges begin to experience a high volume of presidential retirements (Rogan, 2016). The need to change what a good leader looks like is just the beginning. Rogan (2016) wrote, “Presidents from the community college world recognize the value of diversity in leadership at their schools, not just in terms of parity but also for the precedent it sets for their students and the communities the leaders serve” (para. 6).

Leadership development at community colleges is often an afterthought, and when there is an option for leadership training, the development of women leaders and their skillset does not seem to be the focus, based on data from the American Council on Education. Their report, *The American College President 2017*, stated that only 30% of college and university presidents are women (ACE, 2017a). To increase the number of women in leadership positions at community colleges, institutions need to create encouraging and supportive environments for women who aspire to higher leadership positions within the institution (Ward & Eddy, 2013).

## **PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH**

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in

Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. Those positions include president, vice president, chief financial officer, and other positions that directly report to the president in an administrator capacity. The issue that community colleges face is twofold: (1) a lack of leadership development, and (2) a lack of women leaders in senior-level positions within community colleges. Based on data from 2016, only 36% community college presidents are women (Atlas, 2016). To reach this position, women leaders need leadership development opportunities to help with their advancement at community colleges.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The guiding questions of this study include:

1. What type of training or education is essential for women community college leaders in Illinois to move into senior-level administrative positions?
2. What type of training or education is offered to women in community colleges in Illinois that prepares them for senior administrative positions?
3. What types of skills are developed through training and education programs that prepare women for senior-level positions in Illinois community colleges?

## **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

The literature review provides a contextual lens related to the concepts and theories used to situate the study and analyze the findings. The purpose of the study is to identify successful leadership development programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. Those positions include president, vice president, chief financial officer, and other positions that directly report to the president in a senior leadership capacity.

A myriad of concepts and theories complement the unique nature of this study. Because this study is situated within the community college, the historical context of these important institutions will be examined. In addition, skills-based theory will be compared and contrasted to trait-based theory. Transformational leadership theory provides a framework that underscores the importance of developing leaders that can stimulate effective change.

Preparing new leaders for the future is a huge concern, as is addressed in the literature by Pamela Eddy (2010). Due to the high rate of retirement that is anticipated over the next decade at community colleges, it is important to prepare future leaders. Eddy stated, "Formal training sessions and programs provide a way to learn new skills and to increase networking occasions with other leaders" (p. 137).

## **HISTORY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The demand for access to postsecondary education grew during the 1900s. In 1924, the rate of students graduating from high school was 30% and by 1960 that percentage grew to 75% (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Those high school graduates were prepared to reach higher educational levels by pursuing postsecondary opportunities. Many early educators noted the need for two-year postsecondary education, which began the widespread development of community colleges from 1910–60, with nearly two opening each year during that timeframe. By the early 1970s, there were 910 public community and junior colleges, and during the 1980s and 1990s the number of public community colleges settled at 1,075 across the United States (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The focus of community colleges is on access for and within the

communities that they serve. Due to their location, affordable tuition, and flexible schedules, community colleges are often the best educational option for many Americans.

A key component of community college success comes from the management of these institutions by former faculty who first served as part-time administrators, and then as these institutions became more complex, full-time administrators. As the former faculty became administrators and moved upward through the ranks, many became presidents and their tenure at the community college became shorter. The average tenure for presidents at community colleges has remained relatively consistent at 7.5 years.

Notably, Cohen and Brawer (2003) discovered that the shift to hire more female presidents at community colleges has been slow as “only 34% of the presidents hired between 1995 and 1998” (p. 127) were women. In contrast, the majority of undergraduate students over the past 35 years have been women, including those at community colleges (Ward & Eddy, 2013). Thus, although women are participating in postsecondary education in greater numbers than men, women are not moving into senior executive positions within these institutions at the same rate. The need for more women leaders at community colleges is consistent with the data from Atlas (2016) showing that only 36% of community college presidents are women.

Community colleges will be facing a significant challenge to replace leadership over the next decade due to turnover and impending retirements. A major concern for community colleges is who will replace individuals in the administrative ranks, as this impending exodus becomes a reality. Unfortunately, there has been little movement in the development of community college leaders for the future. In 2013, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) reported that six community college organizations had teamed up to address

the coming leadership crisis through the sharing of information. The choice that community colleges will have to make is whether to bring in leaders with little or no experience in the sector or to “identify potential leaders and provide adequate training to prepare them for senior administrative roles” (Rice & O’Keefe, 2014). The goal of this study is to identify leadership development programs available for women at community colleges in Illinois. “The recruitment, preparation, and selection of leaders with the skills required to dramatically improve community college student success is critical to all community colleges” (ACCT, 2013, para. 2).

## **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

James MacGregor Burns first introduced transformational leadership in 1978 in his book *Leadership*. The goal of transformational leadership is to develop followers into leaders through valuable and positive learning to optimize their performance. Bernard M. Bass (1985) continued to build on the work of Burns by providing a means of measuring transformational leadership and its effects on followers. When transformational leaders guide a follower, they are building the follower’s technical, human, and conceptual skills through mentoring, teaching, guiding, and empowering.

Women leaders tend to be much more transformational in their leadership style, while men tend to be more transactional in their leadership style (Bass & Bass, 2008). Although there is no right or wrong between the two leadership styles, the effects of transformational versus transactional leadership styles have been studied and documented throughout the years. According to a study conducted by Brown and Moshavi in 2002 (as cited in Bass & Bass, 2008),

“440 university faculty in 70 departments showed that faculty satisfaction was positively correlated with the transformational leadership of their department heads” (p. 639). In another study related to transformational leaders conducted by Harvey, Royal, and Stout (2003), but this time with a focus on instructors with transformational leadership styles, 120 liberal arts students rated their instructors higher and indicated that the instructors were more effective, respected, and trusted (Bass & Bass, 2008).

Transactional leaders tend to be a bit more reactive and intervene typically when goals or standards of the organization are not being met. The transactional leader is effective in managing the predetermined rules, procedures, and processes that need to be followed by employees but often misses the point of validating an employee’s effort or recognizing the positive performance and contribution of the employee. This type of leadership style can tend to be less effective when relationship building and understanding the culture of an organization, such as in higher education, set the basis for success. Creating a collaborative culture is not a strong attribute of transactional leaders. This trait is highly important as higher education places great value on collaboration, which is paramount in ensuring student success.

Transformational leaders are needed to guide community colleges in the future. Women are more transformational, and with a lack of women leaders in higher education, the tendencies for transformation leaders to build collaboration, strong appreciation for professional and human values, and strong interpersonal bonds with subordinates are all helpful and effective in ensuring the success of community colleges. The pace of change within the leadership ranks at community colleges is necessitating the need for the development of

women leaders who will be able to successfully navigate and respond to the needs of community colleges for future success.

### **TRAIT-BASED THEORY**

During the early 1900s and up until the late 1940s, leadership studies focused on traits, meaning that many early theorists believed that leadership was dependent on certain qualities of the leader; in essence, leaders were more apt to be born that way. Thomas Carlyle's "great man" work began the emergence of the trait-based leadership theory. In 1869, Francis Galton (as cited in Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 49) continued with Carlyle's views and stated that leadership qualities are unique and possessed only by extraordinary individuals. Galton suggested that traits that leaders possess are indisputable and cannot be developed. In 1948, Stogdill (as cited in Northouse, 2016, p. 15) challenged this belief and stated that people were leaders based on situations and not on traits.

Zaccaro, Kemp, and Bader (2004) developed a model based on a leader's traits and the influence that traits have on a leader's effectiveness and performance. The model is based on two basic premises that emerged from other leadership models (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Fleishman, & Reiter-Palmon, 1993; Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000):

1. Leadership emerges from a combination of multiple traits and how each set of traits influences the others.
2. Leader traits differ based on certain leadership traits and how those traits affect leader performance in certain situations. (Zaccaro, 2007)

Zaccaro (2007) was clear that leader traits are not an exhaustive list and that their research is simply a means for further "conceptually driven and sophisticated research" (p. 14).



## SKILLS-BASED THEORY

The skills-based theory, which evolved in the mid-20th century, contradicts the belief that individuals are born with certain qualities that make them effective leaders. In 1955, Katz formalized the three-skill approach (technical, conceptual, and human skills), which states that leadership skills can be learned and developed. Unlike trait theory that is widely known and studied, skills-based theory is much less studied and thus may not be considered as important for leadership success. The skills-based theory of leadership solidifies that leaders can be trained and developed through well-developed and compelling leadership-focused programs. In 1955, Katz identified the skills that could be developed in his *Harvard Business Review* article, "Skills of an Effective Administrator." Katz (1955/2009) suggests that skills at different levels in the management hierarchy exist, and even though some individuals possess an innate ability to lead, others who lack leadership skills can still improve their performance and develop overall effectiveness. Katz's Three Skills Model is as follows:

- Technical Skills – the ability to work with things and having knowledge, competency or proficiency in specific work or activities;
- Human Skills – the ability to work with people and to communicate and work within teams;
- Conceptual Skills – the ability to understand, work, and better decide on actions to take regarding concepts and ideas in the particular field of work. (Katz, 1955/2009)

If the skills-based theory helps leaders build their technical, human, and conceptual skills, then it is creating transformational leaders.

During the 1990s, Mumford, Marks, and colleagues (2000) studied Katz's theory and conducted further research, which drove them to propose a new model. The Skills-Based Model has the following five components:

- Individual Attributes (consists of four components)
  - General cognitive ability (a person’s intelligence)
  - Crystallized cognitive ability (acquired intellectual ability through experience)
  - Motivation (three types)
  - Personality (traits that influence leadership such as openness, tolerance, curiosity)
- Competencies (consists of three components)
  - Problem-solving skills (solve new, unusual, or ill-defined problems, and understand the capacities within the organization)
  - Social judgment skills (understand people and social systems)
  - Knowledge (schema, being able to organize information and process it in a complex manner, such as an “expert”)
- Leadership Outcomes (consists of two components)
  - Effective problem solving (finding solutions that are logical, effective, and unique)
  - Performance (how well a leader performed the job)
- Career Experiences
  - Hands-on experience; this is the piece that defines that leaders can be developed and are not “born leaders”
- Environmental Influences
  - Factors that are outside the leader’s competencies, experiences, and traits (Mumford, Marks, et al., 2000)

Northouse (2016) expounded on the skills approach in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice* and discussed how this approach is very appealing because it demonstrates that people can learn and develop leadership skills, whereas traits are innate and cannot be learned. Making leadership development opportunities available to everyone by utilizing the skills-based

approach is very important to organizations that attempting to develop their leadership pipeline. In his book, Northouse shares the “Skills Inventory” (p. 67), which measures Katz’s three predominant skills via a Likert scale. One of several criticisms that Northouse mentions is that the skills approach claims not to be a trait model, even though it has a major trait component: Individual Attributes.

## **LITERATURE SUMMARY**

The focus of this study is to gain an understanding of what types of programs and training opportunities are essential to ensure the development of women leaders in community colleges in Illinois. This development is necessary so women are well positioned to assume senior leadership roles in these unique institutions. Research confirms that leaders can be developed. As community colleges continue to evolve in these uncertain times caused by funding challenges, the increasing pace of technological change, and new competitors entering the postsecondary market, it is essential to have a cadre of effective leaders ready to effectively guide these institutions. The literature also confirms that there is a need for more women in senior leadership roles in community colleges, and that women tend to be more transformational than transactional in their leadership styles. The information gathered from this study will provide valuable insights as to what types of programs are available and, perhaps more importantly, what types of programs need to be developed to ensure the development of women who can effectively lead community colleges specifically located in Illinois.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This overview of the research design explains the methodology and why it is appropriate for identifying successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. The methodology section includes (a) an overview of qualitative inquiry and case study methodology; (b) data collection methods, including sample, site, and participant selection criteria; and (c) techniques to be used for data analysis.

### **Research Design**

In this study, a qualitative case study methodology was utilized. The researcher is seeking to identify the leadership-focused programs that senior-level women leaders attended and determine if the programs were helpful to them in obtaining an executive position at their respective or another community college. In addition, the researcher sought to assess each leader's Skills Inventory, which is based on Katz's skills-based theory and developed by Northouse (2016). Determining if the women are strong in each of the Skills Inventory areas, including technical, human, and conceptual skills, will help to determine if training had a positive effect on their ability to obtain a senior-level position in an Illinois community college. The score is determined by the results of the Skills Inventory, which is addressed in detail under Data Analysis.

Prior to the interviews, the Skills Inventory (Northouse, 2016) and an online demographic survey was completed by six women leaders. The demographic survey ensured that the interviewees met the selection criteria for the study, whereas the Skills Inventory

measured the three essential leadership skills identified by Katz (1955/2009). These results helped discern if there is a relationship between the development of the three leadership skills identified by Katz and the number of leadership programs attended by the research participants.

Yin (1994) defined the case study as follows: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Case studies are also considered within a bounded system as the number of individuals who could be interviewed is limited (Merriam, 1998). A qualitative case study involves the researcher using interviews, surveys, and observations to determine the types of leadership training that the women in senior-level leadership positions have attended or have access to at their respective community colleges.

This case study is intrinsic for the researcher, meaning that there is a genuine interest in the case, and the researcher’s intent is to gain a better understanding from the study (Stake, 1995). As a woman in a leadership position at a community college, this research is personal, as there are currently no leadership programs at the community college where the researcher is employed that help to prepare women for senior-level leadership positions. Placing similar individuals at the core of the research makes the study culturally grounded.

Since each of the individuals in this study shares similar positions but has had different experiences in advancing to a leadership position, it is important to use interviewing as one of the main approaches in this case study. A semi-structured interview allows for a mix of more and less structured questions. The interview and related survey help the researcher gather the

data that are needed to determine the findings of the study. This study includes some comparative analysis to determine if women leaders who attended more leadership development programs scored higher on the Skills Inventory. Using the Skills Inventory survey earlier in the study allowed the researcher to gather responses from women leaders and to draw conclusions from this random sampling of the population.

For the Skills Inventory, an ordinal level of measurement was used as the Skills Inventory uses a Likert scale of measurement (i.e., 1 = Not true, 2 = Seldom true, 3 = Occasionally true, 4 = Somewhat true, 5 = Very true) (Northouse, 2016). The Skills Inventory measures the technical, human, and conceptual skills, and the questions are structured and close-ended. The demographic survey questions are mixed with both closed and open-ended questions, which are clear, not leading, mutually exclusive, and professional in nature.

#### Data Collection

The data collection methods that are most appropriate for the study are the demographic survey (Appendix D) and Skills Inventory (Northouse, 2016) described previously, as well as interviews, field notes, and data mining of documents that pertain to the research. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, "In education, if not in most applied fields, interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies" (p. 106). They further state that interviews may be "the *only* source of data" (p. 106) for qualitative researchers. The demographic survey is important in narrowing down the sites and the participants for the study, thus ensuring the participants meet the sampling criteria. The interviews are the key method of data collection, as the participants engage with the

researcher and share firsthand experience when explaining the types of available leadership programs for women in leadership positions at Illinois community colleges.

In addition, data mining of relevant documents transpired as the researcher requested both personal and official documents about the leadership programs and the experiences, as well as notes that the participants captured related to the professional development programs they completed. Finally, using field notes to describe “the participants, the setting, the activities or behaviors of the participants, and what the observer does” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 151) assisted in giving rich detail so that the researcher could later visualize the interview, which helps in the recollection of details. Thus, surveys, interviews, field notes, and document collection helped to “uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106).

### *Sampling, Site Selection, Participants*

In a qualitative case study, the researcher uses a purposeful sampling to obtain the most in-depth understanding of the study. Creswell (2003) explained, “The purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study” (p. 118). This case study identified a homogeneous or criterion-based sampling of women in senior-level leadership positions at community colleges in Illinois. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that criterion-based selection is when the researcher identifies certain criteria for the purposeful sampling that will “guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (p. 97). This purposeful sampling gives the researcher insight into the types of leadership programs available to women in leadership positions that have helped their advancement into senior-level and presidential positions.

Three sites were identified for the study, all of which are community colleges in Illinois. These community colleges were categorized into three sizes, as defined by the Carnegie Size and Setting Classification System (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education 2017): (a) small institutions defined as having 1,999 FTE or less, (b) medium institutions as those having between 2,000 and 4,999 FTE, and (c) large institutions defined as those having at least 5,000 annual FTE. This delineation helps to determine if the women leaders in these institutions had different leadership development opportunities.

Two participants from each of the three sites were interviewed. The criteria for the participants in the purposeful sampling were bounded by the following four characteristics:

1. The participants are all women.
2. The participants must work in an Illinois community college.
3. The participants must be in a senior-level leadership position, such as president or reporting directly to the president.
4. The participants must be in their current position for at least three years.

The importance of the participants having at least three years of experience means that they have had the opportunity to understand their role as a senior-level leader and utilize the skills that they have developed.

Since the purpose of this study is to determine what types of leadership programs are available to help advance women leaders in Illinois community colleges, another important criterion for the purposeful sampling is surveying and interviewing women in senior-level leadership positions in both presidential and administrative roles at the college. It is important to compare the presidential versus administrative perspectives on the leadership programs available at their respective community colleges, as they may have experienced similar or



completely different opportunities. To make this comparison, it was beneficial to interview two women from each site, one woman serving as president and one woman from an executive leadership role who reports directly to the president.

The invitation, Skills Inventory, and survey were sent directly to the participants' work email addresses to ensure that they were the recipients of the instruments in this research. The survey web service Free Online Surveys ([www.freeonlinesurveys.com](http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com)) was used to conduct the Skills Inventory and demographic survey and manage the responses. This tool allows a unique code to be assigned to each participant that to help validate that the participants are who they say they are when participating in the survey. Having this unique code used by each respondent helps to mitigate further threats to validity and reliability in the research. This survey tool also assists in basic analysis of the results from the survey because of its reporting capabilities.

The participants in the study are women in senior-level leadership roles in community colleges in Illinois. This group was chosen because currently only 36% of community college presidents are women (Atlas, 2016). The target population list of community colleges, including the institutions within Illinois, was gathered from the Carnegie Classification website (2017), which delineates their size category. Illinois is part of Region 4 and includes 48 community colleges. The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) website was used to collect the list of all women leaders at community colleges in Illinois. This information revealed that of community college presidents in the 48 Illinois community colleges, 18 are women and 30 men (ICCB, 2017). The women leaders were further identified by using the Illinois Community College Trustee Association (ICCTA, 2017) handbook, which lists all Illinois community colleges and the presidents of each college.

### *Limitations and Delimitations*

According to Creswell (2003), “A case study is an exploration of a bounded system” that is “bounded by time and place” (p. 61), a condition that, then, causes limitations in qualitative research. Since limitations can weaken a case study or skew the data collected, it is important for the researcher to be aware of the limitations within the research. Research limitations in this study include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The scope of the case study was small, with only six participants, so the study is limited to the findings from these subjects.
2. Respondents are limited in their personal recollection from memory.
3. There is potential for researcher bias, as the researcher is a woman leader working at an Illinois community college.

Delimitations are conditions that are defined by the researcher and that limit the scope of the study. The delimitations include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. The study was bound by time and place since the focus is on Illinois community colleges.
2. Participants are limited to only women presidents or those in positions that report directly to the president in leadership roles.
3. There were a limited number of participants in the study.

### *Data Analysis*

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis occur at the same time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data analysis is an ongoing process that continues until saturation occurs. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained, “Saturation occurs when continued data collection produces no new information or insights into the phenomenon you are studying” (p. 199). The goal is to make sense out of the data that are collected. The data analysis methods

used in this case study are data managing, reading and memoing, category coding, theming, determining patterns, and interpreting and organizing the data collected. Merriam (1998) expounded, “Data analysis is one of the few facets, perhaps the only facet, of doing qualitative research in which there is a right way and a wrong way” (p. 162).

The results of the survey data and Skills Inventory were analyzed using IBM SPSS software to perform a relationship analysis to determine if there is a connection between how the participants scored on the survey and the number and types of professional development leadership programs they participated in. If women leaders who scored in the high range are also the same women who have attended more leadership development training, these data can help in determining if leadership training does matter. The scoring interpretation for the Skills Inventory is as follows:

- 23–30 High Range (less training needed in the particular skill)
- 14–22 Moderate Range (more training may be needed to improve score)
- 6–13 Low Range (more training needed in the particular skill)
- Technical skills are measured through responses to items 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, and 16
- Human skills are measured through responses to items 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, and 17
- Conceptual skills are measured through responses to items 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, and 18 (Northouse, 2016, pp. 67–68)

If a relationship is found between the number of leadership development programs attended and the Skills Inventory scores, it is possible that the number of programs could have influenced the Skills Inventory score. The score may help to prove the direction and strength of the relationship between the two variables: survey score and the number of leadership training opportunities completed. If one variable increases simultaneously with the other, then a

positive relationship exists between the number of programs attended and a high Skills Inventory score. If the Skills Inventory score is low, even though the number of programs attended is high, this could mean that leadership development programs have little or no effect on a leader's overall skills. Other variables not present in the research can have an impact on the results within the analysis. However, this information can be used to determine if certain programs were more helpful in gaining the necessary leadership skills, rather than the number of programs attended.

When interpreting data from interviews, field notes, and documents, data analysis begins at the time the data are collected: "Data analysis is not easy, but it can be made manageable if you are able to analyze along with data collection" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 236). Managing data by identifying key words or phrases and storing data in a safe and workable manner are important as data analysis commences. Theming and coding are used so that the researcher can identify patterns in the data, which helps in the overall analysis of the data collected. Merriam and Tisdell stated, "Analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses and once all the data are in" (p. 195). Finally, the objective of interpreting and organizing the data is to make sense and meaning of what is being studied so that the findings can be shared and understood by others. The result should be enough evidence situated in the conclusion that is clear, credible, and convincing to others.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

The following terms and definitions were used in this study.

*Administrative-Level Position* – individuals involved in a number of planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and evaluating activities of major units; examples are president, vice president, dean, academic department head, and other positions that report directly to the president. This definition is used interchangeably with executive-level position and senior-level leadership position.

*Conceptual Skills* – the ability to understand, work, and better decide on actions to take regarding concepts and ideas in the particular field of work (Katz, 1955/2009).

*Executive-Level Position* – individuals involved in a number of planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and evaluating activities of major units; examples are president, vice president, dean, academic department head, and other positions that report directly to the president. This definition is used interchangeably with administrative-level position and senior-level leadership position.

*Full-time Equivalency Enrollment (FTE)* – a standardized measure of student enrollment at an institution that equalizes the number of full- and part-time students (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017).

*Human Skills* – the ability to work with people and to communicate and work within teams (Katz, 1955/2009).

*Senior-Level Leadership Position* - individuals involved in a number of planning, organizing, directing, controlling, and evaluating activities of major units; examples are president, vice president, dean, academic department head, and other positions that report directly to the president. This definition is used interchangeably with administrative-level position and executive-level position.

*Skills-Based Theory* – used to develop effective leaders, as it addresses leadership as something that can be learned, and something that is accessible to everyone (Burkus, 2010; Redmond, 2015a).

*Technical Skills* – the ability to work with things and having knowledge, competency, or proficiency in specific work or activities (Katz, 1955/2009).

*Trait-Based Theory* – leaders who are considered successful have a set of innate characteristics or qualities (Redmond, 2015b).

*Transactional Leadership* – emphasizes the exchange that occurs between a leader and followers based on direction from the leader about requirements to reach desired objectives (Bass & Bass, 2008).

*Transformational Leadership* – the leader elevates the follower morally about what is important and valued and goes beyond the simpler transactional relationship of providing reward or avoidance of punishment for compliance (Bass & Bass, 2008).

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The lack of women leaders in community colleges and the need for leadership-focused development programs for women have never been more important than now due to the number of impending retirements. Based on the work of Katz in 1955 and by Mumford and his colleagues in the 1990s, leaders can be trained through the skills-based theory and models of leadership. Refocusing attention away from trait theory and toward skills-based theory allows community colleges to feel empowered to grow their own leaders for future success, which is important for community colleges in Illinois. It is also important to grow the ranks of female

leaders in these roles, as they have skills that are conducive to transformational change that is needed to ensure strong futures for Illinois community colleges.

Determining if there are successful leadership development programs available for women leaders at community colleges in Illinois is the goal of this research. It is also important to determine if women leaders who attend more leadership programs score in the high range on the Skills Inventory, thus providing evidence that these programs assisted them in moving into senior-level leadership positions. Ultimately, the research may confirm the need to build such programs, which will increase the pipeline of women with the talents and skills needed to lead community colleges in Illinois for years to come.

In Chapter 2, the literature review will provide insight into the lack of women leaders at community colleges, transformational leadership, and the well-known trait-based theory versus the skills-based theory, which is driving the research.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### INTRODUCTION

The original mission of community colleges was to further prepare students for the workforce. As community colleges have evolved, so have their mission and importance to the public. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) explained, “Community colleges have been inclusive institutions that welcome all who desire to learn, regardless of wealth, heritage, or previous academic experience” (AACC, 2017, para. 1). As a result, community colleges “enroll half of the students who begin college in the United States” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 18). Currently there are 1,132 community colleges across the United States (AACC, 2017). The number of community colleges has not changed much over the past 50 years, and many current leaders have been employed in the sector for many years and are nearing retirement. To ensure that community colleges continue to prosper, there is a need for successful leaders to guide these institutions into the future.

A myriad of concepts and theories complement the unique nature of this study. Because this study is situated within the community college, the historical context of these important institutions will be examined. Gender and leadership are a key component of this study, so the reason why women are important leaders in higher education and community colleges is discussed. Women leaders are the only participants in the study; thus, how women lead and



their leadership styles will be described. In addition, skills-based theory will be compared and contrasted to trait-based theory.

## **HISTORY OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

The American community college, originally referred to as junior college or two-year college, made its historical appearance in 1901 with just six students, at Joliet Junior College. The history of the community college began based on the work and recommendations of Henry Barnard, the first U.S. Commissioner of Education; John W. Burgess, a professor at Columbia College; William Rainey Harper; and Alexis Lange (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In 1871, Barnard suggested that there be a continuation of studies at the schools in the District of Columbia for general literacy and scientific culture (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Again, in 1884, both Burgess and Harper made similar suggestions that high schools add two or three years for preparing students for the university level and/or high schools adding two years of additional schooling to prepare students for college-level work (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). To expand on the work by Barnard, Burgess, and Harper, Lange believed that the junior college would not only help prepare students for college, but also provide training to enter the workforce (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

The demand for access to postsecondary education grew during the 1900s. Prior to the 1900s, graduation rates from high school were very low, and public school districts were unable to provide two more years of schooling without special legal approbation (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). During the early 1900s, junior colleges grew from a total of 20 institutions in 1909 to 170 by 1919. By 1930, 440 junior colleges were in 43 of the 48 states, with an average enrollment of

160 students per institution. Between the 1930s and the 1970s, the number of junior colleges more than doubled to 1,141 (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). The enrollments at the institutions have grown over the years, but the number of community colleges has remained stagnant. The current number of community colleges today is 1,132 (AACC, 2016b).

The focus of community colleges is on access for and within the communities that they serve. Due to their location, affordable tuition, and flexible schedules, community colleges are often the best educational option for many Americans. A key component of community college success comes from the management of these institutions by former faculty who first served as part-time administrators, and then as these institutions became more complex, full-time administrators (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). As the former faculty became administrators and moved upward through the ranks, many became presidents and their tenure at the community college became shorter. The average tenure for presidents at community colleges has remained relatively consistent at 7.5 years (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Notably, Cohen and Brawer (2003) discovered that the shift to hire more female presidents at community colleges has been slow, as “only 34% of the presidents hired between 1995 and 1998” (p. 127) were women. In contrast, the majority of undergraduate students over the past 35 years have been women, including those at community colleges (Ward & Eddy, 2013). Thus, although women are participating in postsecondary education in greater numbers than men, women are not moving into senior executive positions within these institutions at the same rate. The need for more women leaders at community colleges is consistent with the data from Atlas (2016) showing that only 36% of community college presidents are women.

## **CURRENT LEADERSHIP CRISIS**

The impending retirement of baby boomers means there is a coming exodus of community college leaders across the United States. Unfortunately, there is not a large pool of leaders to replace many of the community college presidents and senior administrative-level positions. Cohen and Brawer (2003) stated that successful community colleges are “blessed with the proper leaders” (p. 134) and community college success is due to leadership. The study of higher education leadership has a long history and is not about a set of traits, per Cohen and Brawer (2003). Yet, the challenge of hiring more diversified leadership at community colleges remains (Seltzer, 2017). The American Council on Education conducted a study in 2017 titled *American College President Study*, finding that more than 60% of college presidents are still white men in their 60s. The number of women presidents has risen just 4% since 2011, to only 30% of all college presidents in 2016 (ACE, 2017a).

Community colleges will be facing a significant challenge to replace the aging leadership over the next decade, as the average age of presidents is 61.7 years old (Seltzer, 2017). The leadership pipeline is shrinking due to turnover and impending retirements. A major concern for community colleges is who will replace individuals in the administrative ranks, as this impending exodus becomes a reality (Seltzer, 2017). Unfortunately, there has been little movement in the development of community college leaders for the future. In 2013, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) reported that six community college organizations had teamed up to address the coming leadership crisis through the sharing of information.

The choice that community colleges will have to make is whether to bring in leaders with little or no experience in the sector or “identify potential leaders and provide adequate training to prepare them for senior administrative roles” (Rice & O’Keefe, 2014). There have been years of speculation about hiring from outside and finding a more diverse pool of applicants, yet Jonathan Gagliardi, associate director of ACE’s Center for Policy Research and Strategy, stated that presidents are still chosen due to their experience, which does not help to diversify the hiring pool for leadership positions (Seltzer, 2017). “The recruitment, preparation, and selection of leaders with the skills required to dramatically improve community college student success is critical to all community colleges” (ACCT, 2013, para. 2).

## **LEADERSHIP STYLES AND WOMEN**

Gender-specific leadership has been studied for decades, with an emphasis on leadership style differences and traits. Eagly and Johnson (1990) wrote that women tend to make decisions in a more collaborative style and possess greater interpersonal behavior, which lends itself to women being more democratic leaders. Men, however, tend to be more direct and less likely to accept others’ input, which is a more autocratic style of leadership (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Democratic leaders are more apt to delegate some control, encourage participation, and empower employees. This style of leadership is also referred to as transformational leadership, first introduced by James MacGregor Burns in 1978.

The goal of transformational leadership is to develop followers into leaders through valuable and positive learning to optimize their performance. Bernard M. Bass (1985) continued the work of Burns in 1985 by providing a means of measuring transformational leadership and

its effects on followers. When transformational leaders guide a follower, they are building the follower's technical, human, and conceptual skills through mentoring, teaching, guiding, and empowering. Eagly and Johnson (1990) did further gender and leadership studies and concluded that women leaders were more democratic as well, and part of the reason for this was due to their social skills and understanding of others' feelings and intentions. The work of Bass and Bass (2008) further solidified that women leaders tend to be much more transformational in their leadership style, while men tend to be more transactional in their leadership style.

Although there is no documentation stating that one leadership style is correct while the other is not, the effects of transformational versus transactional leadership styles have been studied and documented throughout the years. In a study conducted by Brown and Moshavi (as cited in Bass & Bass, 2008, p. 639), "440 university faculty in 70 departments showed that faculty satisfaction was positively correlated with the transformational leadership of their department heads." Research conducted by Harvey, Royal, and Stout (as cited in Bass & Bass, 2008) focused on instructors with transformational leadership styles. In that study, 120 liberal arts students rated their instructors higher and indicated that the instructors were more effective, respected, and trusted than their transactional counterparts.

Transactional leaders tend to be a bit more reactive and intervene only when goals or standards of the organization are not being met (Burns, 1978). The transactional leader is effective in managing the predetermined rules, procedures, and processes that need to be followed by employees but often misses the point of validating an employee's effort or recognizing the positive performance and contribution of the employee (Yukl, 2013). In higher

education, this type of leadership style tends to be less effective when relationship building and understanding the culture of an organization often set the basis for success. Yet, creating a collaborative culture is not a priority for transactional leaders. Valuing employee efforts and teamwork, as well as promoting a collaborative work place, is a key to success in higher education. This validates that transformational leaders are more effective in a higher education setting.

In looking at women and men as leaders, particularly in higher education, the traits of transformational leaders tend to align more directly with the needs of the community colleges. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2017) explained, “Institutional transformation cannot take place without the development and continual improvement of a college’s leadership” (n.p.). The AACC provided a guide called *AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders* (2013) explaining some core competencies needed by community college leaders. One of the competencies is collaboration, and interestingly, collaboration is one of the key qualities of the transformational leader. Transformational leaders are successful because of their ability to work for the benefit of the team or organization by motivating followers (Burns, 1978).

Numerous studies have shown the differences in leadership approaches between women and men. Descriptive terms have been used to show the differences between the two genders when it comes to the concept of leadership. Table 1 lists the contrasting descriptors.

Table 1: *Male Versus Female Leadership Descriptors*

MALE	FEMALE
Structure	Consideration
Transactional	Transformational
Autocratic	Participative
Introduction-giving	Socio-expressive
Business-oriented	People-oriented

(Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003)

Women leaders tend to be referred to as more feminine in nature, and several theorists believe that these characteristics give women an advantage over their male counterparts (Appelbaum, Audet, & Miller, 2003). Claes (1999) and Kabacoff (1998) stated that women are more people-oriented and men are more business-oriented when it comes to their leadership skills. Their research also found that their superiors tend to see both genders as equally effective; however, peers and those who directly report to the president rated women slightly higher when it comes to leadership effectiveness.

According to Bass and Bass (2008), several studies confirmed that women tend to be more transformational than their male counterparts. Bass and Bass also contend that although more women have obtained first- and mid-level management positions due to affirmative action, a glass ceiling remains as women attempt to move into executive positions. They state further that “women may have to be that much better leaders than their male counterparts to attain the same positions of responsibility and levels of success as men” (p. 17). Thus, it is

troubling that although women leaders tend to be more transformational, they are not moving into senior-level management positions with any regularity.

Many would agree that more leaders who are transformational are needed to guide community colleges in the future. Although women tend to be more transformational in their leadership style than men, there is a lack of women leaders in higher education (Burns, 1978; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Several factors may keep women from pursuing leadership roles, including raising families and other familial obligations such as caretaking for parents or others. Other possible factors that affect women in their pursuit of leadership roles are gender inequalities and some prejudices toward women that still exist. Eagly and Carli (2004) state that women do not tend to pursue professional development or expansion of their work experience in the same way that men do, and that men are more likely than women to be given opportunities for training and advancement and have an easier time finding a mentor.

For women to become empowered and have similar opportunities to their male counterparts, women must be viewed as emerging leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2004). In 2016, the American Council on Education (ACE) began a charge called Moving the Needle: Advancing Women in Higher Education Leadership. The campaign has four distinct goals:

1. Generate a national sense of urgency elevating the need for advancing women in higher education leadership positions.
2. Encourage governing boards and other higher education institutional decision- and policy-making bodies to consider practices for recruiting and hiring women to chief executive offices.
3. Achieve women's advancement to mid-level and senior-level positions in higher education administration by building capacities in women and in institutions.



4. Suggest practices and models that recognize success in advancing women in higher education. (ACE, 2017b)

To increase the number of women who both emerge as leaders and gain opportunities for leadership growth and development, more focus is needed on advancing women into leadership positions. The Moving the Needle campaign hopes to change the face of leadership in higher education by “having women in chief executive positions at half of the nation’s colleges and universities” (Rogan, 2016). Their goal is to have this accomplished by the year 2030. Like ACE, several other organizations are realizing the importance of growing and educating women to become successful leaders in higher education.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This research explores leadership development programs for women at community colleges in Illinois. Many theorists believe that leadership is based on a common set of characteristics or personality traits. Ralph Stogdill (1948) was the originator of the trait theory and concluded that certain traits were needed for a leader to emerge. Other theorists, however, stated that leadership is something that can be taught or learned by the individual (Katz, 1955/2009). In the early 1990s, Mumford and his colleagues (2000) advanced the skills-based approach by contending that a leader’s ability is based on a set of developable skills (Northouse, 2016). In this research, the skills-based theory provides the theoretical lens, which is used to illustrate the need for leadership development training.

## Leadership Theories

Several different theories on leadership take a position as to whether leaders are born with certain traits and characteristics or whether leaders can be taught relevant leadership skills, knowledge, and abilities through training and doing. The well-known trait-based theory developed by Ralph M. Stogdill in 1948 concludes that leaders are born with certain traits. A lesser-known leadership theory referred to as skills-based theory claims that leaders can be developed. This was first introduced by Robert L. Katz (1955/2009) in his article titled “Skills of an Effective Administrator.” Many theorists have since completed further research on both trait-based theory and skills-based theory, adding additional insights that both support and challenge each theory.

### *Skills-Based Theory*

The skills-based theory, which evolved in the mid-20th century, contradicts the belief that individuals are born with certain qualities that make them effective leaders. In 1955, Katz formalized the three-skill approach (technical, conceptual, and human skills), which states that leadership skills can be learned and developed. Unlike trait theory that is widely known and studied, skills-based theory is much less studied and thus may not be considered as important for leadership success. The skills-based theory of leadership solidifies that leaders can be trained and developed through well-developed and compelling leadership-focused programs. In 1955, Katz identified the skills that could be developed in his *Harvard Business Review* article “Skills of an Effective Administrator.” Katz suggests that skills at different levels in the management hierarchy exist, and even though some individuals possess an innate ability to

lead, others who lack leadership skills can still improve their performance and develop overall effectiveness. Katz’s Three Skills Model is as follows:

- Technical Skills – the ability to work with things and have the knowledge, competency, or proficiency in specific work or activities.
- Human Skills – the ability to work with people and to communicate and work within teams.
- Conceptual Skills – the ability to understand, work, and better decide on actions to take regarding concepts and ideas in the particular field of work. (Katz, 1955/2009)

Katz took his theory a bit further by stating that although all leaders require all three skills (technical, human, and conceptual), the relative importance of each of the skills changes based on the leader’s position (Table 2). Katz (1955/2009) did state, however, that human skill, which is the ability to work with others, is important at every level.

Table 2: *Three Skills Model and Importance by Management Level*

	TOP MANAGEMENT	MIDDLE MANAGEMENT	SUPERVISORY MANAGEMENT
Technical	Low	Medium	High
Human	High	High	High
Conceptual	High	Medium	Low

(Katz, 1955/2009)

Katz (1955/2009) did ascertain that since there tend to be more positions that directly report to the president to supervise at lower levels, the lack of human skill for supervisory management can be more detrimental for leaders and their subordinates. On the other hand, the importance of conceptual skill, which includes the ability to take actions that may require more abstract thinking, increases as higher-level management positions are attained. This is

because policy decisions at higher levels of management are made necessitating the need to recognize how changes in one part of an organization can affect the entire organization and operations (Katz, 1955/2009). Finally, technical skill is the one area that can most easily be learned and is most important at the supervisory-management level. To understand the job responsibilities of their employees, leaders must have technical skill. It is interesting to note that Katz stated that technical skill development is an area of focus for all employees and not just for leadership positions.

Northouse (2016) expounded on the skills approach in his book *Leadership: Theory and Practice* and discussed how this approach is very appealing because it demonstrates that people can learn and develop leadership skills, whereas traits are innate and cannot be learned. Making leadership development opportunities available to everyone by utilizing the skills-based approach is very important to organizations that are attempting to develop their leadership pipeline. In his book, Northouse shares the “Skills Inventory” (p. 67), which measures Katz’s three predominant skills via a Likert scale. One of several criticisms that Northouse mentions is that the skills approach claims not to be a trait model, even though it includes a major trait component referred to as Individual Attributes.

Individual attributes focus on four central traits, which include intelligence, crystallized cognitive ability, motivation, and personality. Mumford, Zaccaro, et al. (2000) explained that leadership skills can develop based on certain individual experiences, which are influenced by the basic individual attributes. In other words, leadership is more likely to develop in an individual if certain traits are evident. Leadership propensity is most often associated with the first individual attribute of intelligence, or general cognitive ability, which is information

processing and reasoning skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). This complements the need for conceptual skills articulated by Katz. The second attribute, crystallized cognitive ability, as described by Bass and Bass (2008), includes written and oral expression and is also defined as “intelligence that develops because of experience” (Conway, 2011). Written and oral expression is strongly connected to the human skills Katz identified as critical to effective leadership. Interestingly, human skills are germane to all levels of leadership.

The third and fourth attributes most associated with leadership are motivation, explained as the want or willingness to lead, and personality, such as openness, curiosity, and adaptability. The seminal research about motivation and personality originated with Abraham Maslow in 1954. In the book *Motivation and Personality*, Maslow and Frager (1987) defined a hierarchy of needs that begins with basic human needs such as food and shelter and extends to self-actualization, where individuals reach their full potential. As each need is satisfied, the next need dominates an individual. Furthermore, Maslow and Frager (1987) believed that healthy people are self-actualizers because they can satisfy their highest psychological needs, which integrates the components of their personality, or self. Maslow’s theory has become central to understanding motivation in the workplace and its impact on personality. Mumford, Zaccaro, and colleagues (2000) agreed that the potential for leadership and motivation is held by many individuals and often “emerges through experience and the capability to learn and benefit from experience” (p. 20).

### *Trait-Based Theory*

During the early 1900s and up until the late 1940s, leadership studies focused on traits, meaning that many early theorists believed that leadership was dependent on particular

qualities of the leader; in essence, leaders were more apt to be born that way. Thomas Carlyle’s “great man” work began the emergence of the trait-based leadership theory. Francis Galton (1869, as cited in Bass & Bass, 2008) continued with Carlyle’s views and stated that leadership qualities are unique and only possessed by extraordinary individuals. Galton suggested that traits that leaders possess are indisputable and cannot be developed.

In 1948, Stogdill disagreed with Carlyle and Galton and stated that leadership is based on the individual’s interaction with and in a social situation, and not on specific traits. Stogdill continued to do further research and, in 1974, built on his earlier theory by adding that people are leaders based on certain traits as well—such as initiative and fortitude—and how certain traits are common among leaders in a wide variety of situations (Stogdill, 1974). Stogdill explained that leaders have innate traits that enable them to lead. He also concluded that leaders possess certain skills that are critical leadership skills (Table 3). He also did not believe that any of the traits or skills of leadership could be learned, believing that a leader’s intelligence level was delimited based on the average group members’ intellectual abilities.

Table 3: *Traits and Skills of Leadership*

TRAITS	SKILLS
Adaptable to situations	Clever (intelligent)
Alert to social environment	Conceptually skilled
Ambitious and achievement-orientated	Creative
Assertive	Diplomatic and tactful
Cooperative	Fluent in speaking
Decisive	Knowledgeable about group task

TRAITS	SKILLS
Dependable	Organized (administrative ability)
Dominant (desire to influence others)	Persuasive
Energetic (high activity level)	Socially skilled
Persistent	
Self-confident	
Tolerant of stress	
Willing to assume responsibility	

(Stogdill, 1974)

Following Stogdill, James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner did additional research in the 1980s in which they surveyed more than 1,500 managers. Their research was focused on determining the top traits good leaders possessed. Their research pointed to the four most admired characteristics in a leader's life, based on what followers articulated as being most important: being honest, inspiring, forward-thinking, and competent (Kouzes & Posner, 1987). Then, in 1987, Kouzes and Posner presented the five common leadership practices, which stated that leaders "challenge, inspire, enable, model, and encourage" (p. 1). Kouzes and Posner were asked throughout their research and while giving speeches whether leaders are born or made. In their opinion, "the only honest answer is no one knows for sure" (Kouzes & Posner, 1987, p. 290).

#### *Skills-Based Theory Versus Trait-Based Theory*

During the 1990s, Mumford and colleagues studied Katz's theory and conducted further research around the leadership skills model. The skills model infers that individuals can become

better leaders by learning from experience and that very few individuals are born with leadership traits (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). They first identified three effective leadership competencies. The competencies are the most important element; however, they are based on many scholarly studies conducted around effective leadership qualities and skills.

The first set of skills was problem-solving skills, which means that the leader brings a different perspective to solving a unique or vague issue (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). Second, social judgment skills enable leaders to comprehend social systems and the individuals and their behaviors. The social judgment skill means that the leader cannot only formulate a plan that works within the systems of the organization, but also communicates a vision, gains support, and motivates others (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). The third competency identified was knowledge and the leader's ability to collect, organize, and be knowledgeable about the data. This competency is often linked with the leader's problem-solving skills. Knowledge is not just about an accretion of information; it is the effective application of schema or key facts to accurately assess a situation or diagnose the information provided (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000).

After identifying the three leadership competencies, Mumford and his colleagues continued their work and developed a model based on Katz's 1955 skills-based theory. The skills-based model, which is also known as the leadership skills model, observed the association between a leader's performance and capabilities and the leader's knowledge and skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). Previous studies of leadership focused on behaviors that were observed when a leader interacted with followers, or on how certain traits, if not present,



indicated that an individual would not be considered a leader (e.g., Bass & Bass, 2008; Fleishman, 1973; Yukl, 2013).

The skills-based model is a cognitive model that lends itself to the idea that “leadership ultimately depends on one’s capability to formulate and implement solutions to complex social problems” (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000). The skills-based model is based around the five components, with associated competencies and skills, listed in Table 4.

Table 4: *Five Components of the Skills-Based Model*

INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES	COMPETENCIES	LEADERSHIP OUTCOMES	CAREER EXPERIENCES	ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES
General cognitive ability	Problem solving skills	Effective problem solving	Hands-on experience, this is the piece that defines that leaders can be developed and are not “born leaders”	Factors that are outside the leader’s competencies, experiences, and traits
Crystallized cognitive ability	Social judgment skills	Performance		
Motivation	Knowledge			
Personality				

(Mumford, Marks, et al., 2000)

Observations about career experience and skills development made by Mumford and colleagues in 2000, aligned with what Ericcson and Charness noted in 1994. Seven to 10 years is the typical timeframe needed for individuals to develop top-level skills in a career field (Mumford, Zaccaro, et al., 2000).

Developing future leaders for community colleges needs to begin now, as noted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC). The AACC has been offering relevant,

high-level leadership development programs since the early 2000s, with the goal of training and developing community college leaders for the future (Lambert, 2014).

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

Preparing new community college leaders for the future is a huge concern, as is addressed in the literature by Pamela Eddy (2010). Due to the high rate of retirement of senior leadership in community colleges anticipated over the next decade, it is important to prepare future leaders to ensure that these notable institutions continue to thrive. Community colleges provide access to higher education for all, which is critical in preparing individuals for higher degrees and the workforce. Eddy stated, "Formal training sessions and programs provide a way to learn new skills and to increase networking occasions with other leaders" (p. 137). Thus, she is stating that leaders can be developed. In the multidimensional model described by Eddy, there are five basic propositions:

- Proposition 1: There is no universal model for leadership.
- Proposition 2: Multidimensional leadership is necessary in complex organizations.
- Proposition 3: Leaders rely on their underlying cognitive schema in making leadership decisions.
- Proposition 4: Leaders often adhere to their core belief structure.
- Proposition 5: Leaders are learners. (Eddy, 2010, pp. 33-36)

The importance of Proposition 5 highlights that not only current leaders but also potential leaders must experience a wide range of opportunities and leadership development activities (Eddy, 2010). "Leadership development opportunities must also take into account the

problems and opportunities inherent in planning for leadership succession” (Eddy, 2010, p. 142).

A need for leadership development training is very important, and a focus on developing women for leadership roles should be a top concern. The American Council on Education’s Women’s Network Executive Council began a national awareness campaign aimed at achieving equality for women in senior leadership roles within higher education (ACE, 2017b). Women are underrepresented in senior leadership roles in community colleges, so the goal of the Moving the Needle program is to collaborate with other associations and organizations to increase to 50% the number of women working in chief executive positions by 2030 (ACE, 2017b).

Widely available and cost-effective professional development opportunities and training that prepares women for these roles are seriously lacking. The fact that there is an enormous gap in leadership training for women at community colleges is not surprising. Women seem to be clustered in low- and mid-level positions at community colleges across the United States, and very little effort has been made to change the leadership path for these women leaders (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002). According to an article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, women tend to shy away from “promotion and leadership because of a perception that advanced positions in academe are not open to women” (Ward & Eddy, 2013, para. 5). Professional development programs and training opportunities that prepare women for leadership roles will help elevate them to senior-level leadership positions in community colleges, thus closing the gap.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

The focus of this study is to gain an understanding of what types of programs and training opportunities are essential to ensure the development of women leaders in community colleges in Illinois. This development is necessary so women are well positioned to assume senior leadership roles in these unique institutions. Many theorists confirm that leaders can be developed. As community colleges continue to evolve in these uncertain times caused by funding challenges, the increasing pace of technological change, and new competitors entering the postsecondary market, it is essential to have a cadre of effective leaders ready to guide these institutions effectively.

The literature also confirms that there is a need for more women in senior leadership roles in community colleges, and that women tend to be more transformational than transactional in their leadership styles. The information gathered from this study provides valuable insights as to what types of programs are available and, perhaps more importantly, what types of programs need to be developed to ensure the development of women who can effectively lead community colleges specifically located in Illinois.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women in leadership positions at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. Those positions include president, vice president, chief financial officer, and other positions that directly report to the president in an administrative capacity. This research study focused on the types of training available to women at community colleges in Illinois and the skills-based theory of leadership and how leaders can be cultivated.

Chapter 3 is an illustration of how this research study was conducted. The following sections explain the methodology, research design, analysis, and validity of the study. This chapter provides the following: (a) the research questions used that drive the design of the research study, (b) the paradigm and methods used in the study, (c) the process used to collect the data, (d) the data analysis procedures, (e) validity and reliability related to this research, (f) limitations within the study, and (g) the researcher as the instrument.

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Several questions were identified to determine what types of leadership development programs are available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. Those positions include president,

vice president, chief financial officer, and other positions that directly report to the president in an administrator capacity. The guiding questions of this study are as follows:

1. What type of training or education is essential for women community college leaders in Illinois to complete to move into senior-level administrative positions?
2. What type of training or education is offered to women in community colleges in Illinois that prepares them for senior administrative positions?
3. What types of skills are developed through training and education programs that prepare women for senior-level positions in Illinois community colleges?

The research questions help to guide the researcher in identifying any available leadership development programs for women leaders at community colleges in Illinois who would like to advance into senior-level leadership positions.

## **THE QUALITATIVE PARADIGM**

The main goal of research is to gain further knowledge and insight where little was known prior to the engagement in the research process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). It is important to understand that qualitative research is based on understanding the meaning that people take from their experiences in the world.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to take many experiences and make sense of them by describing each participant's interpretation. Shank (2002) has defined qualitative research as "a form of systematic empirical inquiry into meaning" (p. 5). *Systematic* involves having a system or method for gathering the information on others' experiences. *Empirical* is defined as verifiable based on observation or experience, and *inquiry into meaning* is how the researcher deciphers and understands the information that is collected.

Qualitative research involves data collection from human participants. The data collection methods that were most appropriate for the study were surveys, interviews, field notes, and data mining. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained: “In education, if not in most applied fields, interviewing is probably the most common form of data collection in qualitative studies” (p. 106). They further stated that interviews may be “the *only* source of data” (p. 106) for qualitative researchers.

One of the key concerns in qualitative research, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), is to understand the “*emic* or insider’s perspective” (p. 16) and “to achieve an *understanding* of how people make sense out of their lives” (p. 15). Since qualitative research also utilizes “*the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis*” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 16), the use of verbal communication, human interaction, and observing the nonverbal reactions of the participants was a large part of the data collection in this qualitative study. The goal was to interview six women in senior-level leadership positions at three different community colleges in Illinois. Those positions included president, vice president, chief financial officer, and other positions that directly report to the president who serve in an administrative capacity.

There are five key features of qualitative research, as described by Bogdan and Biklen (2003):

1. Naturalistic – By conducting onsite interviews with the individuals included in the study, it is a natural interaction between researcher and interviewee.
2. Descriptive Data – All data collected by the researcher are descriptive by using words and not transformed into numbers. The researcher assumes that nothing is trivial.

3. Concern with Process – Researchers are concerned with the process of collecting that data and not just the outcomes or products.
4. Inductive – Because induction is considered a bottom-up approach, the researcher is not trying to prove or disprove a hypothesis but rather takes what is learned through the research and makes meaning out of it to determine what path to take and draw a clear picture of what is learned from the subjects in the study.
5. Meaning – The researcher is concerned with how the participants make sense of their lives and their experiences. Capturing accurate information during the interviews is key. (pp. 4–8)

In a qualitative study, it is of the utmost importance that the researcher captures the data accurately and in a natural setting. It is important to put emphasis on the process and not just the data collection. The need to be open and as unbiased as possible during the interview and data collection process and having an honest and meaningful relationship with the interviewee are also important. The result will be to find meaning in the data collected, in an accurate manner, to interpret the interviewee's experiences. When using the interpretive approach, the researcher is not just describing what data were collected but also finding meaning and describing the phenomenon (Merriam, 1998).

### **CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY**

Within the qualitative paradigm, there are options as to which methodology to use. A qualitative case study method was used based on the phenomenology approach as described by Trochim, Donnelly, and Arora (2016). This approach focuses on the participants' "experiences and interpretations of the world" (Trochim et al., 2016) and what types of leadership development programs helped them to advance in their careers. The case study method can be defined by three characteristics:



- Particularistic – has a focus on a certain phenomenon, event, or situation and can illuminate a certain problem;
- Descriptive – the product is a complete description of what is being investigated;
- Heuristic – brings about new meaning, or other alternatives were not chosen. (Merriam, 1998)

Since this case study was interpretive, it aligns with the descriptive characteristic within the case study method. For a phenomenon to be a case study, it must be intrinsically bounded (Merriam, 1998).

A case study can be described as bounded, such as one program or one group that can be “fenced in” as in a bounded system (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 38–39). The study, to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions, is a bounded system. This means that women (bounded), in senior-level positions (bounded), at community colleges only (bounded), in Illinois only (bounded), have or do not have access to successful leadership programs (also bounded). The study did not include males, middle-level positions (e.g., directors, senior managers, managers), or other colleges or universities either in or outside of Illinois. Merriam and Tisdell’s (2016) definition of a qualitative case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (p. 39).

The need to focus the study and the participants included in the study was in line with what Bodgen and Biklen (2003) described: “The general design of a case study is best represented by a funnel” (p. 59). This funnel description explains how “the start of the study is the wide end” (p. 59), and the researcher adjusts, based on some of the data collected and how feasible it is to proceed in a certain manner. The researcher continues to modify and adjust the

design and eventually determines specific aspects to focus on where “the data collection and research activities” were narrowed down to specific “sites, subjects, materials, topics, questions, and themes” (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 59).

The survey of the women in senior-level positions at community colleges in Illinois represents the wide end of the funnel. To narrow down the participant pool for interviews, the first respondents, their answers to the demographic and criteria-related questions, and their willingness to participate are what the researcher used to determine which respondents were included in the case study.

This case study was *intrinsic* for the researcher, meaning that there is a genuine interest in the case and the researcher’s intent was to gain a better understanding of the study (Stake, 1995). As a woman in a leadership position (e.g., director, senior manager, manager) at a community college in Illinois, the researcher had a personal interest in this study. There are currently no leadership programs at the community college where the researcher is employed that would help the researcher to advance into a senior-level leadership position, and the research is culturally grounded by placing similar individuals at the core of the research.

The goal of this qualitative case study was to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions. The lack of a “meaningful professional development program for all leaders at the college” (Riggs, 2009, n.p.) could be determined and the need for the study is intrinsic to the researcher. The fact that the overall research required was based on conducting a study in a natural setting and making

sense of the meaning that people are bringing to the study clearly proves the use of a qualitative case study as described by Creswell (2003).

#### Site and Participant Selection

In qualitative research and case study methodology, a key focus is to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under study by gaining insight from an individual's own experiences. To address the driving questions within this study, selection of the participant sampling is purposeful (Patton, 2002).

Merriam (1998) explained that purposeful sampling assumes that the researcher wants to gain more insight and understanding from the participants, so it is important to choose the sampling where the most information will be learned. Gaining rich, thick data from women community college presidents and those who directly report to them is purposive in this study. In criterion-based selection, also known as purposeful sampling, the researcher creates a list of attributes for participants and sites, which will directly correlate to the purpose of the study (Merriam, 1998). Purposeful random-based sampling was utilized as well in determining the participants. Random-based sampling is defined by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) as utilizing a purposeful sampling and then adding a random selection of individuals from the respondents.

Purposeful criterion sampling with a random-based sample was utilized in this study.

The following criteria were used:

1. Participants were selected from a list of female senior leaders at community colleges in Illinois.
2. Two participants were selected from each site, one a female president and the other a senior administrator reporting to the president who was also female.
3. Participants were in their current positions for at least three years.

4. Participants were selected from small, medium, and large community colleges.

The researcher utilized this purposeful criterion sampling to increase the probability of capturing relevant facts in the study. To add credibility to the study, it was important for the researcher to add a level of random-based sampling in choosing the participants randomly from the list of respondents. To obtain a more holistic understanding of the phenomena under study, the researcher had to compare and contrast the viewpoints gathered throughout the study.

#### Site Selection

There are 48 community colleges in Illinois, which provided a large variety of research sites to choose from as the first step in purposeful sampling. The goal of the research was to narrow down the sampling to three community colleges in Illinois based on the size of the institutions. This is determined by student enrollment. The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2017) explains that all two-year college enrollment is determined by including all undergraduates in the data. Carnegie also distinguishes between size classification based on colleges being either two-year or four-year degree-granting institutions. Five different size-based categories are defined for the two-year institutions, which are determined by full-time enrollment (FTE) data as follows:

- Two-year, very small – Fall enrollment data indicate FTE enrollment of fewer than 500 students at these associate degree-granting institutions.
- Two-year, small – Fall enrollment data indicate FTE enrollment of 500–1,999 students at these associate degree-granting institutions.
- Two-year, medium – Fall enrollment data indicate FTE enrollment of 2,000–4,999 students at these associate degree-granting institutions.
- Two-year, large – Fall enrollment data indicate FTE enrollment of 5,000–9,999 students at these associate degree-granting institutions.

- Two-year, very large – Fall enrollment data indicate FTE enrollment of at least 10,000 students at these associate degree-granting institutions. (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2017)

To narrow down the purposeful sampling of participants by site, the criteria were:

- One community college from the very small/small (student enrollment of 1,999 or less) categories;
- One medium (student enrollment between 2,000 and 4,999) community college;
- One from the large/very large (student enrollment of 5,000 or more) categories of community colleges in Illinois.

The Illinois Community College Board (ICCB, 2018) provides a summary profile of the Illinois public community colleges in its data book, which helped guide the researcher in determining which community colleges to survey in Illinois. This resource included the name and contact information for the presidents of each Illinois community college. By using multiple, differently sized institutions, the researcher was able to determine which women in senior-level leadership positions to interview, and the different types of leadership programs available to them at each of the different community colleges.

### Participant Selection

In a qualitative research study, the researcher uses a purposeful sampling to obtain the most in-depth understanding of the study. Creswell (2003) explained, “The purposeful selection of participants represents a key decision point in a qualitative study” (p. 118). This case study identified a homogeneous or criterion-based sampling of women in senior-level leadership positions (e.g., presidents, vice presidents, chief financial officers, and any other administrator-level position that reports directly to the president) at community colleges in Illinois. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated that criterion-based selection is when the researcher identifies certain

criteria for the purposeful sampling that will “guide in the identification of information-rich cases” (p. 97). This purposeful sampling gave the researcher insight into the types of successful leadership programs available to women in leadership positions at community colleges that assisted in their advancement into senior-level positions.

There were two participants from each of the three sites, as determined in the research site sampling. The criteria for the participants in the purposeful sampling were bounded by the following five characteristics:

1. The participants are all women.
2. They must work in an Illinois community college.
3. They must be in a senior-level leadership position, such as a president or one who reports directly to the president in an administrator role.
4. They must manage five or more employees.
5. They must be in their current position for at least three years.

Having at least three years’ experience is important because the women have had the opportunity to understand their role as a senior-level leader and may have had previous and current opportunities to pursue leadership development training to better their leadership skills. Managing at least five employees ensures that these leaders had sufficient scope in their leadership responsibilities.

Because the purpose of this study was to determine what types of successful leadership development and training programs are available to women in leadership roles in Illinois community colleges, another important criterion for the purposeful sampling was surveying and interviewing women in senior-level leadership positions from different hierarchical levels within the institutions. The first interviews were with women presidents. To ensure that

institutional priorities are met, this senior-most position is vital to guiding and setting the vision for the college. It was important to ascertain what types of professional development programs were germane to these women in acquiring their presidency. The second interview at each of the three institutions was a senior woman administrator who reports to the president. This individual was a member of the president's cabinet or part of the senior administrative team. These interviews provided a baseline as to what types of professional development experiences were most useful in helping these women move into these senior roles. These individuals advise the president and often seek to become presidents themselves.

The importance of a purposeful sampling in qualitative research is to ensure that participants are chosen based on the need of the researcher to learn the most from the individuals who have experienced what is being researched. To determine what types of successful leadership development and training programs are available to women in leadership positions at community colleges in Illinois, it was important to follow the characteristic criteria that are specific to the purpose of the study. It was key that the purposeful sampling provide insight, understanding, and the most information that can be obtained so that the researcher could learn as much as possible for the case study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

## **INSTRUMENTATION AND DATA COLLECTION**

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women in leadership positions at community colleges in Illinois, which helped them attain senior-level management positions. The data

collection methods that were most appropriate for the study were surveys, interviews, field notes, and data mining.

Prior to conducting any surveys or interviews, it was important to perform a data collection pilot. To pilot the interview process, three women leaders were chosen from the researcher's current place of employment. All three women directly report to the president of the college, have been in their current roles for at least three years, and manage at least five individuals. The researcher conducted the mock interviews to practice interviewing women in leadership roles. It was also important for the researcher to receive feedback from the mock interview process to assure the interviews with the research participants were appropriate to the purpose of the study.

### Surveys

The first step in determining which participants to interview was through a survey of 24 women in senior-level leadership positions at 12 Illinois community colleges. The objective was to study six women in senior-level leadership roles from Illinois community colleges of different sizes: two women from a very small/small college, two women from a medium-sized institution, and two women from a large/very large institution. Surveying nearly four times the number needed for the interviews helped ensure that a sufficient pool of senior-level women in leadership positions from three different Illinois community colleges met the criteria and were available for interviews. The goal of the surveys was to narrow down the number of women from 24 to six based on their responses. For example, the surveys affirmed that (a) the respondents were women who have been in their positions for the required length of time, (b)



they were presidents or senior administrators who reported to the president, and (c) they supervised the required number of employees. The list of possible participants was acquired from the Illinois Community College Trustees Association (2017) list of community college board members and presidents.

The invitation, Skills Inventory, and survey were sent directly to the participants' work email addresses to ensure that they were the recipients of the instruments in this research. The survey web service at [www.freeonlinesurveys.com](http://www.freeonlinesurveys.com) was used to conduct all surveys and handle responses. This tool allowed a unique code to be assigned to each participant to help validate that they were who they said they were when participating in the survey. Having this unique code used by each respondent helped to mitigate further threats to validity and reliability in the research. This survey tool also assisted in basic analysis of the results from the survey with its reporting capabilities.

## Interviews

Once the selected participants agreed to participate in the research, the main data collection method was face-to-face interviews. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) stated, "The most common form of interview is the person-to-person encounter, in which one person elicits information from another" (p. 108). Conducting face-to-face interviews with the women in the study was key to the success of the data collection and helped in informing further data collection, such as documents about leadership programs that they have attended in the past. During the interviews, it was essential to ask open-ended questions to give the interviewees the opportunity to provide an account of their progression into senior-level leadership positions

and explain what type of professional development was critical to their success. This provided key insights that addressed the driving questions of the study. Face-to-face interviews also allowed the researcher to observe body language, eye contact, and other nonverbal cues that added meaning to the participants' responses.

Creswell (2003) explained the importance of asking open-ended questions, audiotaping the interview, collecting field notes, and transcribing the interview. There are three types of interviews (see Table 5), which vary by structure, as mentioned by Merriam and Tisdell (2016, p. 110).

Table 5: *Interview Structure Continuum*

HIGHLY STRUCTURED/ STANDARDIZED	SEMI-STRUCTURED	UNSTRUCTURED/INFORMAL
Wording of questions predetermined	Interview guide has a mix of more and less structured interview questions	Open-ended questions
Order of questions is predetermined	All questions are flexible	Flexible, exploratory
Interview is oral form of written survey	Data required from all respondents is usually specific	More like a conversation
In qualitative studies, usually used to obtain demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)	Largest part of interview guided by list of questions or issues to be explored	Used when researcher does not know enough about phenomenon to ask relevant questions
Example: U.S. Census Bureau survey, marketing surveys	No predetermined wording or order	Used primarily in ethnography, participant observation, and case study

The most appropriate type of interview for this case study was the semi-structured format. This type of interview gave the researcher the opportunity to have a set of structured

questions that helped in collecting the specific data needed from all participants, but still allowed a bit of flexibility in asking some clarifying or follow-up questions, as needed. Since the order of the questions was not important during the interview, the semi-structured approach worked best.

### Field Notes

Another aspect of data collection for this case study was field notes. Once each interview was completed, notes about the interview from the researcher's perspective were an important aspect of the data collection process. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explained field notes as "a description of people, objects, places, events, activities, and conversations" (p. 118). "Ideas, strategies, reflections, and hunches" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003, p. 118) were also recorded, which helped the researcher reflect on what was learned and experienced during the interview and, in turn, helped the researcher in later analyzing the data.

It was important that the field notes were very descriptive and meaningful. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) also suggested drawing out a diagram of the room that depicts where the interviewee sat; where the researcher sat; and the location of furniture, windows, plaques, doors, etc., in the room; as well as making notes of how the researcher felt during the interview. This is what is referred to as the *reflective* component of field notes: "Reflective comments can include the researcher's feelings, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, speculations, and working hypotheses" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 151). Being able to jog the memory during the data analysis phase was an important reason for scribing detailed field notes in this qualitative study.

## Mining Data

The final piece in the data collection for this qualitative study was mining data from documents and artifacts. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) referred to *documents* as “a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical material relevant to the study” (p. 162). Artifacts are things such as art pieces, trophies, or awards, like a three-dimensional object as explained by Merriam and Tisdell. In this study, there was no formal plan to collect artifacts, yet there was an effort to collect documents that were relevant to the purpose of the study. Some of the participants provided training agendas and course descriptions, which gave greater insight to the study. Other documents that were helpful during data collection were leadership program materials such as syllabi, program guides, notes taken by the participants, and other documentation related to the leadership programs, as discussed by the participants. Some of these items were considered personal documents and others official documents. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explained personal documents as “first-person narrative that describes an individual’s actions, experiences, and beliefs” (p. 133), while official documents are “memos, minutes from meetings, newsletters . . . brochures, pamphlets, and the like” (pp. 136–137).

Any documents used in the study were verified as authentic and accurate, and the document was identified as a primary or secondary source (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Brochures and pamphlets as well as notes taken by the participant in a leadership program were considered primary sources, since the “originator of the document is recounting firsthand experience with the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 178). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended adopting a system for coding and cataloging documents, which aids in the data analysis process.

## **DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY**

Based on this qualitative case study, the data collection methods that were most appropriate were surveys, interviews, field notes, and data mining. The surveys were important in narrowing down the sites and the participants for the study and ensuring the participants met the research criteria. The interviews were the key method of data collection, as the participants engaged with the researcher and shared firsthand experiences and explained the types of available leadership development programs for women in leadership positions at Illinois community colleges. Another data collection method utilized by the researcher was data mining.

Both personal and official documents about the leadership programs and the experiences, and copies of notes that the participants captured related to the professional development programs they completed were gathered. Finally, using field notes to describe “the participants, the setting, the activities or behaviors of the participants, and what the observer does” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 151) assisted in giving rich detail so that the researcher could later visualize the interview, and they aided in the recollection of details during the data analysis process. Surveys, interviews, field notes, and document collection helped to “uncover meaning, develop understanding, and discover insights relevant to the research problem” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 106).

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

In qualitative research, data collection and data analysis occur at the same time (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Data analysis is an ongoing process that continues until saturation

occurs. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained: “Saturation occurs when continued data collection produces no new information or insights into the phenomenon you are studying” (p. 199). The goal was to make sense out of the data that were collected. The data analysis methods used in this case study were data managing, reading and memoing, and category coding, which results in theming or determining patterns. This aids in interpreting and organizing the data collected. Merriam (1998) wrote, “Data analysis is one of the few facets, perhaps the only facet, of doing qualitative research in which there is a right way and a wrong way” (p. 162).

## **DATA MANAGING**

Organizing and labeling all data collected is an important piece of the data collection and analysis. Managing and organizing data through a systematic means began early in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Having identifying notes, words, phrases, colors, or symbols during the early part of the data collection assisted in making the data analysis more manageable throughout the research process. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that having an “inventory of your entire data set” (p. 200) and storing “data in multiple places, including on a cloud storage site” (p. 201) help to avoid the horror stories that researchers have experienced with the loss of or damage to the data collected.

## **Reading and Memoing**

After the first surveys, interviews, and field notes were collected, it was of the utmost importance to read the information, make reflective notes, write memos and notations about the data collected, and begin some sort of categorization of the data. Memos, as explained by

Bogdan and Biklen (2003), are “think pieces about the progress of the research” (p. 122).

Likewise, memoing has been described by other researchers as “reflective notes that researchers write to themselves about what they are learning from their data” (Johnson & Christensen, 2004, p. 501).

### Category Coding

Data analysis begins in conjunction with data collection, to make sense of the data that were collected and find categories, themes, and patterns in the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Coding is designing some type of system to assist in easily retrieving specific themes or patterns in the data that were collected. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) described this system as coding categories, which are words, phrases, thoughts, or events that either repeat or stand out. It was important to begin category coding early on, which began after the first interview, as well as create descriptive field notes and then compare the next interview and field notes to find the patterns or themes that emerged.

Bogdan and Biklen (2003) explained 11 coding schemes in their book *Qualitative*

#### *Research in Education:*

1. Setting/Context Codes – most general information on the setting, topic, or subjects
2. Definition of the Situation Codes – place units of data on how the subjects define the setting or topic
3. Perspectives Held by Subjects – subjects share certain rules and norms as well as general points of view
4. Subjects’ Ways of Thinking about People and Objects – understandings of each other, of outsiders, and of objects that make up their world
5. Process Codes – words and phrases that facilitate categorizing sequences of events over time

6. Activity Codes – directed at regularly occurring kinds of behavior
7. Event Codes – directed at units of data that relate to specific activities that occur in the setting or lives of the interviewees
8. Strategy Codes – the tactics, methods, or techniques people use to accomplish various things
9. Relationship and Social Structure Codes – patterns of behavior among people, not officially defined by the organizational chart
10. Narrative Codes – informants’ stories of their lives that are framed in a certain way
11. Methods Codes – material pertinent to research procedures, problems, joys, dilemmas. (pp. 174–180)

Methods codes are used in most qualitative studies and were used in this case study, yet Bogdan and Biklen (2003) stated that often more than one coding scheme is utilized. In the beginning of the data analysis and in creating the coding scheme, it was extremely important to identify the pieces of data that were relevant to the study and that would assist in answering the research questions to ensure that themes and patterns were identified early in the data collection.

### Interpreting and Organizing

Searching for patterns, breaking the data down so that they are manageable, pulling the data apart and putting them back together to find what is relevant to the case study, and interpreting the findings so that they can be shared with others are often the most time-consuming and difficult parts of data analysis. When interpreting the data, it was important to realize that the “basic strategy is still inductive and comparative” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 227). The inductive approach “is concerned with the generation of new theory emerging from the data” (Gabriel, 2013). To interpret meaning from the data, there had to be a



comparative analysis done on the data collected. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained “consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what people have said and what the researcher has seen and read is the process of making meaning” (p. 202).

When interpreting and organizing the data, the researcher also included reflective analysis, memos, notes, and thoughts about the interviewees and the data collected. Since data collection is based on the researcher as the tool, the researcher included parts of her own experiences. Having an experience of the phenomenon being studied is called heuristic inquiry. Heuristic inquiry is how researchers include their own experiences as part of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Because the researcher is a woman in a leadership position working at a community college in Illinois, heuristic inquiry was present throughout the case study.

Data analysis begins in conjunction with data collection. Managing data by identifying key words or phrases and storing data in a safe and workable manner were important at the commencement of the data analysis phase. Theming and coding were used so that the researcher could identify patterns in the data, which helped in the overall analysis of the data collected. Merriam and Tisdell stated, “Analysis becomes more intensive as the study progresses and once all the data are in” (p. 195). Finally, interpreting and organizing the data were critical to make sense and meaning of what was being studied so that the findings could be shared and understood by others, which was the goal. The result should be enough evidence that is clear, credible, and convincing to others and is situated in the conclusion: “Data analysis is not easy, but it can be made manageable if you are able to analyze along with data collection” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 236).

## QUALITY AND VALIDITY IN RESEARCH

To ensure the quality of this research study, transparency, validity, and reliability must be present. Transparency is shown by “a documentary record of steps taken from start of the research to development of the findings” (R. Lake, personal communication, January 22, 2018). Since qualitative research cannot be precisely replicated, having a clear audit trail that delineates data collected, data analysis, and validity through research strategies establishes the transparency in this case study. The researcher as a tool allowed for deeper introspection of the data collected; thus, it was imperative for the researcher to become transparent in her involvement in the process. Continued transparency was available throughout the data collection process, and all data and documentation of processes is auditable.

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) presented eight different strategies that researchers utilize to prove validity and reliability in qualitative research:

1. Triangulation
2. Member checks/respondent validation
3. Adequate engagement in data collection
4. Researcher’s position or reflexivity
5. Peer review/examination
6. Audit trail
7. Rich, thick descriptions
8. Maximum variation (p. 259)

In this case study, the researcher’s goal was to use at least six of the eight strategies to prove validity of the research conducted. The researcher was aware that there were limitations

to the research and explained what was done to address those limitations via the strategies used.

The four strategies used to prove validity are triangulation, member checks, adequate engagement in data collection, and the researcher’s position or reflexivity. First, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained triangulation as using multiple sources of data or data collection methods to confirm emerging findings. A helpful visual depiction of triangulation by Latham (2017) is presented in Figure 1.

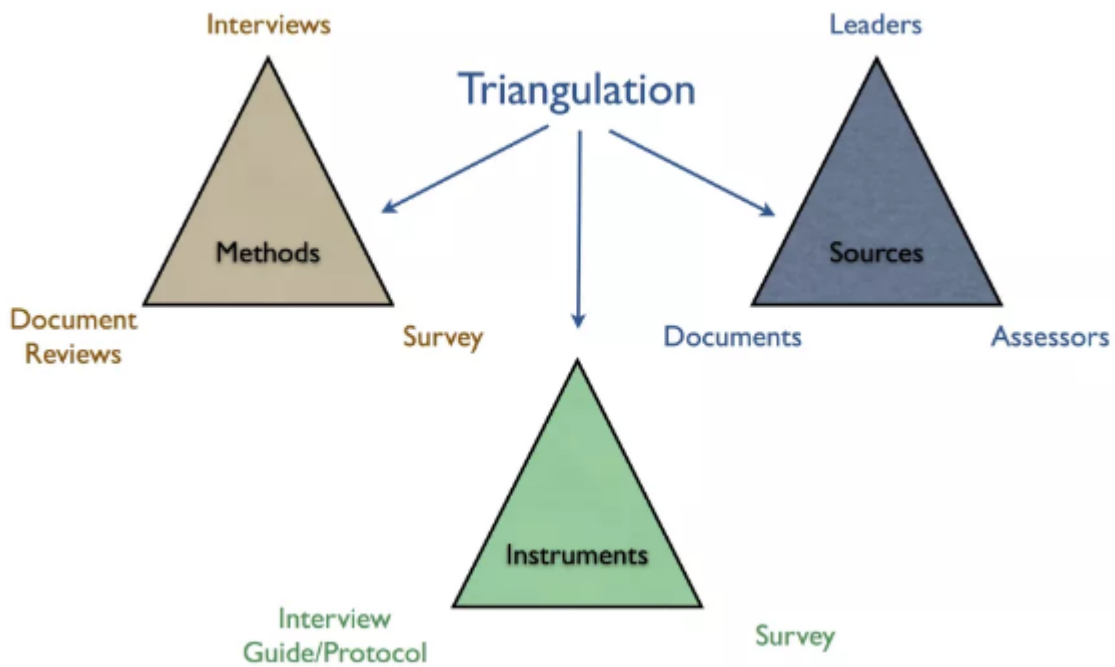


Figure 1. Data Collection.

Second, member checks or respondent validation is when the researcher solicits feedback from the interviewees, based on emerging findings (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Since the data collected were about available leadership programs at community colleges for women

in leadership positions, validation of the interpretation of the data collected from the participants about such programs helped to assist the researcher in ensuring that the participants' perspectives were captured appropriately.

The final two strategies of adequate engagement in data collection and the researcher's position or reflexivity somewhat go together in this case study. The reflexivity of the researcher was apparent, as the researcher is a woman in a leadership position at a community college located in Illinois. The researcher does acknowledge that there was bias in the research and thus data were triangulated, reflective field notes were taken, and there was a concerted effort to build trust and rapport with all participants. The researcher identified six participants from three different community colleges in Illinois to understand the phenomenon and personally collected data so that saturation occurred. Saturation occurred when the researcher began "to see or hear the same things over and over again, and no new information surfaces as you collect more data" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 248).

### Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness includes concepts such as validity and reliability and specifically refers to the rigor and systematic processes used in the research process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Rigor and consistency are paramount to the qualitative paradigm, as they strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Stake (1995) articulated that trustworthiness also includes two issues that are germane to qualitative research: validation and transferability. Validation is assured via triangulation of the data, as well as member checks. Transferability is achieved as the researcher establishes the

value of the research and justifies how the research might be used outside of the current context. As an example, leadership programs for women in leadership positions at community colleges in Illinois may be useful to women at other community colleges in other states. The data collected during the research could also be helpful to women leaders in the private sector or at four-year colleges and universities.

Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) mentioned four concepts in conjunction with trustworthiness in the qualitative framework: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The concepts assure that careful attention and documentation of the research design, objective data collection, systematic analysis, and interpretation are evident and practiced throughout the study. These concepts were achieved via the research design, which was detailed and meticulous, objective data collection and analysis, as well as authentic data interpretation throughout the study. As was mentioned earlier, dependability overlaps with transparency, as does the use of the audit trail to ensure that there is a dense description and that the triangulation of data was utilized. Finally, confirmability means that the results of the research can be “confirmed or corroborated by study participants and others” (R. Lake, personal communication, January 22, 2018).

### *Ethics*

In 1979, three principles were established in what became known as the Belmont Report (Christians, 2005). The Belmont Report was established as “the moral standards for research involving human subjects” (Christians, 2005, p. 146). Researchers in biomedical and behavioral research are required to follow these principles and Institutional Research Boards

(IRBs) help to govern and uphold the three principles in the Belmont Report. The three principles are as follows:

1. Respect for persons – subjects enter the research voluntarily;
2. Beneficence – researchers will secure the well-being of their subjects, avoid harm and minimize risk;
3. Justice – fair distribution of both the benefits and burdens of research. (Christians, 2005, p. 146)

The principles in the Belmont Report “reflect the same guidelines as dominate the codes of ethics” (Christians, 2005, p. 146).

By the 1980s, four guidelines were established for professional and academic associations when conducting research using human subjects. These guidelines represent the “conventional format for moral principles” (Christians, 2005, p. 146):

1. Informed consent – subjects are agreeing voluntarily to participate in the research;
2. Non-deception – deception is not ethically justified or practically necessary;
3. Privacy and confidentiality – safeguards to protect people’s identities and research locations;
4. Accuracy – ensuring data are accurate and valid.

The researcher obtained informed consent, which means that the participants were not coerced into participating and agreed voluntarily. This agreement was based on fully disclosed information about the study. Deceptive practices and deliberate deception are not allowed under the code of ethics. In research, there is a possibility of deception by omission, so the researcher had to be aware of this during the data collection and analysis phases.

Christians (2005) expounded that “all personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity” (p. 145). When dealing with privacy and

confidentiality in this case study, the researcher addressed participants and their corresponding sites by a letter and number (i.e., Site 1, 2, 3; Participant X, Y, Z). Finally, accuracy in the data was a cardinal principle, as explained by Christians. All interviews with participants were recorded on two audio-recording devices and transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy. Having valid and accurate data in the case study ensures that the quality and validity of the research is morally sound.

### *Limitations*

No research study is flawless; thus, these weaknesses, also referred to as limitations, must be articulated. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), “No research study can be perfect, and its imperfections inevitably cast at least a hint of doubt on its findings. Good researchers know, and they also report, the weaknesses along with the strengths of their research” (p. 276). As with all research, case studies offer limitations. Research limitations in this study include but are not limited to the following:

1. The scope of the case study was small with only six participants, so the study is limited to the findings from these subjects, all from community colleges in Illinois.
2. Respondents are limited in their personal recollection from memory.
3. There is potential for researcher bias, as the researcher is a woman leader working at an Illinois community college.

There were definite limitations to the research study, as it is specific to community colleges in Illinois and specific to gender and position level (women in senior-level leadership positions). Yet, there was a need to narrow down the participants in the study to take an in-depth look at the types of leadership programs offered to determine if these programs assisted these women leaders in obtaining senior-level positions: “A case study is an exploration of a

bounded system” (Creswell, 2003, p. 61). A bounded system is described as “bounded by time and place” (Creswell, 2003, p. 61), which causes limitations in qualitative research. Since limitations can weaken a case study or skew the data collected, it is important for the researcher to be aware of the limitations within the research.

Delimitations are conditions that are defined by the researcher and limit the scope of the study. The delimitations include but are not limited to the following:

1. The study was bound by time and place since the focus is on Illinois community colleges.
2. Participants are limited only to women presidents or those in positions that report directly to the president in leadership roles.
3. There were a limited number of participants in the study.

Accurate recall by the participants as to the types of training and education they were involved with was also a limitation that needs to be acknowledged. This challenge was minimized by sending the interview questions to the participants prior to the face-to-face interviews so that they would have enough time to prepare any relevant documents or assist in recollection of any training they may have attended in the past.

Minimizing bias and subjectivity is paramount within the qualitative paradigm, as it relies on interpretation by the researcher. This limitation was addressed by having full disclosure about the researcher’s role as a female leader at a community college in Illinois. To prove that bias and subjectivity were minimized, the researcher also provided all participants with the consent form (Appendix B) prior to any survey requests or face-to-face interviews. The consent form provided data about the research and the researcher prior to the participant’s agreement to participate.



### *The Role of the Researcher*

Unlike quantitative researchers who disassociate themselves from the research process, qualitative researchers acknowledge and embrace their roles within the study process.

Researchers are thus considered an instrument of the study as they seek to gather meaning from the thick, rich data that are collected, rather than searching for connections between variables, as is the case with quantitative studies (Creswell, 2003). Therefore, it is important to articulate the background of the researcher.

The researcher has been in the education field for over 10 years and is a female leader at a community college in Illinois. The researcher also works for a female leader, who has shared her experiences regarding leadership training for community college leaders. Both the researcher and the researcher's manager have had to pursue leadership training opportunities through university-level programs or private-sector training and development companies. Most of the programs that the researcher and her manager have attended do not focus on developing female community college leaders.

In qualitative research, it is helpful for the researcher to build rapport with each of the participants. To build rapport and ensure transparency, the researcher was open about her leadership role at a community college in Illinois. Yin (2016) described this as portraying your authentic self. As a community college leader, the researcher was able to connect with each of the study participants based on a common understanding of community colleges. The researcher's leadership background and formal training and education have provided insights as to why meaningful professional development opportunities may be important to women as they seek higher-level leadership positions within community colleges.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

This study focused on identifying successful leadership development courses available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois for advancement into senior-level leadership positions. The vast number of impending retirements at community colleges has created a crisis in the leadership ranks, so it is of utmost importance that leadership development becomes a key focus at community colleges in Illinois as well as across the United States. The lack of women in senior-level leadership positions at community colleges is an indication that leadership training for women should be a priority to create a more diverse leadership pipeline.

The participants included in the research were senior-level community college leaders, which include presidents, vice presidents, and roles such as chief financial officer, and/or other positions that directly report to the president in an administrator capacity. This study included three different-sized community colleges, as defined by the Carnegie Classification System, one from the very small/small category, one from the medium category, and one from the large/very large category in Illinois. The final participant selection was based on the first six participants to respond to an interest survey and meet the five criteria established in the study, from the three different site types.

The six participants were then contacted and given the Skills Inventory survey as part of the initial data collection in this case study. The data collected included information from the demographic survey, Skills Inventory, interviews, field notes, and memoing, in addition to the rich, thick data collected from the semi-structured interviews, which were conducted in person.

Maintaining quality, validity, and trustworthiness, and being an ethical researcher were key throughout the research process. Using several of the eight strategies of triangulation—

respondent validation; audit trail; rich, thick descriptions; and reflexivity—ensured that this case study is valid, ethical, transparent, and transferable. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) wrote, “Producing a study that has been conducted and disseminated in an ethical manner lies with the individual investigator” (p. 266).

The goal of the research was to identify successful leadership development programs for women in leadership positions at community colleges that were germane to their advancement into senior-level leadership positions. The researcher understands the importance of providing leadership development for all future leaders at community colleges, but women were the focus, as fewer than 40% of community college presidents are females (Atlas, 2016). In the next chapter, Chapter 4, the research findings from all the data points will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research allows the researcher to examine an array of topics and gather data based on personal experiences, insights, and reflections from surveys and interviews. Yin (2016) stated that qualitative research “embraces the contextual conditions—that is, the social, institutional, cultural, and environmental conditions—within which people’s lives take place” (p. 9). This chapter highlights the value of the qualitative study method through survey responses, data collection, and field notes. The main elements include (a) descriptive data in participant selection; (b) summary of the data collected through survey responses, interviews, and field notes; and (c) emerging themes during the data analysis process.

This study explored the leadership development programs available for women at community colleges in Illinois and whether there were specific skills developed through the programs. To address the study’s research questions, a qualitative design method was used through a survey, a skills-related questionnaire, and face-to-face interviews with several women leaders at community colleges in Illinois. This chapter provides a review of the research questions, as well as data findings from the surveys, interviews, and the Skills Inventory developed by Northouse (2016).

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions were developed to help guide the researcher throughout the study. The guiding questions of this study are detailed below:

1. What type of training or education is essential for women community college leaders in Illinois to complete to move into senior-level administrative positions?
2. What type of training or education is offered to women in community colleges in Illinois that prepares them for senior administrative positions?
3. What types of skills are developed through training and education programs that prepare women for senior-level positions in Illinois community colleges?

## **QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS**

This qualitative case study included a pre-interview demographic survey, face-to-face interviews, an online Skills Inventory survey, and field notes. Participants are referred to through unique identifiers to ensure confidentiality. The six female participants included three presidents and three others who directly report to the president from three different Illinois community colleges of varying sizes.

### **Findings: Pre-interview Survey Demographic Data**

The demographic survey (see Appendix D) was designed to ensure that all respondents are women, currently have either a presidential role or a senior leadership position that reports directly to the president, work in an Illinois community college, and have been in their current position for at least three years. Institution size is determined based on the full-time enrollment (FTE) data from Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Participants are referred to only by their designation to protect their privacy. Table 6 identifies the six

participants in the study in relation to their position at the community college and the institutional profile.

Table 6: *Participant Designation by Institution Size*

PARTICIPANT POSITION	INSTITUTION SIZE	DESIGNATION
President	Small (FTE: 1,999 or less)	SA
Dean	Small (FTE: 1,999 or less)	SB
President	Medium (FTE: 2,000–4,999)	MA
Vice President	Medium (FTE: 2,000–4,999)	MB
President	Large (FTE: 5,000 or more)	LA
Vice President	Large (FTE: 5,000 or more)	LB

The demographic survey responses from the six participants provided the data shown in Table 7.

Table 7: *Demographic Data of the Participants*

DESIGNATION	GENDER	AGE GROUP (YEARS)	ETHNICITY	TERMINAL DEGREE	NUMBER OF YEARS IN CURRENT POSITION
SA	Female	55–59	Caucasian	Doctorate	8
SB	Female	60–64	Caucasian	Doctorate	13
MA	Female	65 years +	Caucasian	Doctorate	5
MB	Female	55–59	Caucasian	Doctorate	4
LA	Female	65 years +	Black, non-Hispanic	Doctorate	6
LB	Female	45–49	Black, non-Hispanic	Doctorate	6

## Skills Inventory

The Skills Inventory questionnaire that was used during the pre-interview stage was developed by Northouse (2016). The use of the Skills Inventory by the researcher was to determine if there was a relationship between the Skills Inventory scores (gathered through the survey) and the number of leadership development programs the women attended (gathered through the face-to-face interviews). The scoring interpretation for the Skills Inventory is as follows:

- 23–30 High Range (less training/development needed in the particular skill)
- 14–22 Moderate Range (further training/development may be needed to improve score)
- 6–13 Low Range (more training/development needed in the particular skill) (Northouse, 2016, pp. 67–68)

The results of the Skills Inventory that was sent to the six participants is presented in

Table 8.

Table 8: *Skills Inventory Findings*

	SA	SB	MA	MB	LA	LB
Technical	High (26)	High (27)	High (27)	High (25)	High (28)	High (25)
Human	High (24)	High (27)	High (28)	High (26)	High (30)	High (29)
Conceptual	High (27)	High (26)	High (26)	High (26)	High (25)	High (25)

The six women leaders scored in the high range for each of the three skills areas. The results correlate to the women needing less training in the skill area. Although the highest possible score is a 30 in any of the three skills areas, respondent LA was the only one who

scored a 30 and it was in the human skill area, which is an area that should be strong at all leadership levels in the organization (Northouse, 2016).

All study participants attended some type of leadership training, which was not available in Illinois and was not provided through their current institution. Table 9 provides participant attendance and program identification.

Table 9: *Participant Training Data*

TRAINING SESSION	SA	SB	MA	MB	LA	LB
AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute	X				X	
Harvard Seminar for New Presidents	X					
Leadership Development Program ( <i>Center for Creative Leadership</i> )		X				
Harvard Negotiation and Leadership		X				
National Institute for Leadership Development					X	
The Thomas Lakin Institute for Mentored Leadership					X	X
Ombudsman Training, University of Nevada						X
PhD in Education and Human Resource Studies, Colorado State University <sup>a</sup>			X		X	
American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program				X		

*Note.* X signifies that the participant attended the training program designated.

<sup>a</sup> Not all participants gave the name/location of the doctoral program attended.



## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

### Types of Training Needed for Progression

Research Question 1 was used to determine what type of training each of the participants believed would be needed for progression. Interview Question 2 (see Appendix C) was related to Research Question 1 and asked all the participants what prepared them for their current position. Five of the six participants stated that they had worked in several different departments at the college, which provided them with a wealth and breadth of knowledge in and about the institution. Three of the participants commented that they would take on things that were either out of their comfort zone or that provided them with different experiences. MA stated that she was “not afraid to step in and do whatever job is needed when they are short-handed.” She used the example that, even as the president, she has had to go over to the dock on a snowy day to sign for a delivery because they were short-handed. The receiving person was helping with snow removal, so she said it was the least she could do. This is just one example of leading by doing and learning about what others do within the college.

Several other answers from the participants were not directly related to training, yet they show that the women worked hard to get to the level they have achieved. Participant SB stated that she had to learn the importance of accountability and own her mistakes. SB commented that doing this showed a level of leadership, even when she was not yet in leadership roles. LB mentioned that having teaching experience helped her to reach her current vice president position, which aligns with her statement of having worked in many roles within

the college. LA stated that she was mentored and supported by good people along the way, which helped her to reach the presidential position.

#### Types of Training Offered in Illinois

Although the responses to Interview Question 2 did not evoke answers related to training that helped the participants prepare for their current positions, it was important to determine what types of training are available locally, in Illinois, and at their institutions. It was also important to determine if there was any type of succession planning that would help to drive the need for leadership training within their respective institutions. The results are presented in Table 10.

Table 10: *Training Offered in Illinois Community Colleges and Succession Planning*

PARTICIPANT	ANY LEADERSHIP TRAINING AT THEIR CC	TRAINING OFFERED	SUCCESSION PLANNING AT THEIR CC
SA	Yes	Faculty development and growth program and a mentoring program for faculty (not for staff)	No
SB	Yes	Supervisor training – understand their role and compliance training	No
MA	No	Tuition reimbursement only	Not yet
MB	No	Informal mentoring	No
LA	Yes	Leadership academy for building relationships at the college	AQIP to develop a formal one
LB	Yes	Leadership academy for building relationships at the college	AQIP to develop a formal one

The leadership training offered at the institution where SA and SB work was focused on the development and growth of faculty and was not specific to supporting a succession planning process that would help in developing the next group of administrators, including presidents. Likewise, the institution where MA and MB are leaders does not have a formal succession plan in place, and there is no formal leadership training available. Finally, at the large institution, a specialized leadership academy is available to 25 people each year and the result is a project that is presented to the campus. LA stated that the program is a way for individuals to work with other employees on a project or concept that they may never get to work with others on; however, it is only one year, and currently there is no succession planning process driving the need to train, develop, and replace retiring administrators. They have recently completed an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP) focusing on a formal succession planning process.

### Skills Developed Through Training

Each of the participants was asked two interview questions that related to Research Question 3: What types of skills are developed through training and education programs that prepare women for senior-level positions in Illinois community colleges? Interview Question 1 (see Appendix C) provided the data in Table 11.

Table 11: *Skills Important for Women Leaders to Have or Develop*

SA	SB	MA	MB	LA	LB
Confidence	Ability to think critically	Civility	Tenacity	Be committed	Reasoning – think logically
Ability to listen	Strategic thinking	Honesty	Communication	Willing to learn	Conflict resolution
Ability to make decisions	Manage up (ensuring your position)	Compassion	Grit	Know your purpose and mission	Do not need all the answers
Boldness				Help others be successful	Mentor – teach others to manage and make decisions
Courage					

Interview Question 5 (see Appendix C) clarified many of the responses to Question 1, as the participants stated which skills were developed through the training they attended. Table 12 shows the participant responses. Table 13 provides specific skills mentioned by the participants that show a correspondence with the quotes in Table 12.

Table 12: *Participant Quotes About Types of Training That Prepared Them for Leadership*

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
SA	“There was one day on finances, and they went through finances really well. One day on fundraising, really listening to others, then one day was on crisis. It was really, really good.”
SB	“Training on negotiation was really well done. It’s not just about getting what you want or positioning bargaining; it’s about really listening to the other person, putting yourself in their shoes, not judging, letting people have their time, and where active listening is so much more important than making your point.”
MA	“It was during that program that I took some classes that I wouldn’t have otherwise had, like the finance for higher education, or higher ed law. I taught communication, which was helpful in all my positions.”

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
MB	“The ACE conference for leadership for higher ed listening skills are very important. We created a little subgroup and still in touch today. Having these kinds of programs lets someone have a preview of what’s going on, or prepare them to feel comfortable.”
LA	“Colorado program offered course related to higher education leadership. The National Institute for Leadership Development was a wonderful leadership opportunity for women leaders.”
LB	“Ph.D. is in Interpersonal Communications. I taught speech communication, and I think that course, if nothing else, that course really helped me in terms of preparation. Ombudsman training, the 40-hour conflict resolution. It teaches you a lot about listening to people, how to listen to people . . . how to be empathetic.”

Table 13: *Skills Developed Through Training Attended*

SA	SB	MA	MB	LA	LB
Financial skills	Negotiation skills	Financial skills	Networking	Financial skills	Active listening
Political skills	Listening skills	Communication skills	Importance of support from others	Decision making	Communication skills
Process improvement	Self-awareness	Higher ed law	Encouragement	Resume and interview skills	What to work on to move to the next level of leadership
	Lifelong learning is essential	Teamwork	Teamwork	Learning more about myself	
		Sharing responsibilities			

### Mentoring Future Leaders

Although none of the research questions were directly related to mentoring, the fact that mentoring came up as a response to Interview Question 4 (see Appendix C) is essential to note. This topic came up when the participants were asked what trigger prompted their desire to move up in the organization. Thus, the researcher found it important to add a follow-up question about mentoring, which is a common practice in semi-structured interviewing. The follow-up question asked if there was/were any mentor(s) that helped them with moving into

their current positions. Participants SA and LA stated that there was one specific mentor, although they had others along the way. The data are shown in Table 14.

Table 14: *Mentoring Data by Participant*

PARTICIPANT	NUMBER OF MENTORS	GENDER	MENTOR'S POSITION IN ORGANIZATION
SA	1	Female	President at different CC
SB	2	Male Female	Manager, at a previous job President
MA	5	Male Male Female Female Male	President Faculty, when she was a student Manager Vice President Vice President
MB	3	Female(s)	Dean, director, and president
LA	1	Male	President prior to her
LB	3	Female(s)	Her mom, pastor, and president

Mentoring comments included the importance of mentors in their lives, particularly mentors who saw potential in them that they did not necessarily see themselves, or those who were able to see what they could achieve and were selfless in helping them, spending time with them, guiding them, and encouraging them to do more and achieve more. All six participants mentioned the importance of mentoring throughout the interviews, and several mentioned that because of their experience, they mentor others (see Table 15).

Table 15: *Participant Quotes About Mentoring*

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
SA	“She says you’re spot on, but because you haven’t faced it before, you don’t have the confidence to know for sure if you’re right. But I’m telling you that you’re doing all the right things. . . . So I have tried to pass that on to other females.”
SB	“The one thing that has meant a lot to me is if you can seek out or you get fortunate enough to have a mentor that really cares about you and your career, and I’ve been fortunate enough to have two, I think that really helps with the development as a leader.”
MA	“Yeah, definitely there were mentors. All my predecessors were the people that hired me and the people that taught me. Even when I was a student, I had a faculty member that saw potential in me and asked that I assist with labs.”
MB	“She was a great, great mentor. She’s the one that encouraged me to go get my bachelor’s and go get my master’s, and go get my doctorate. She was the one that encouraged me to apply for this job.”
LA	“Regardless of where you come from, with the right kind of support and encouragement you can be successful. I tell them, every day come to work with the expectation that you do the best job that you can with the job that you have. If the opportunity comes up for a promotion, then people will know, well, she’s done a good job in the job that she’s currently doing. It’s also very important that women help other women.”
LB	“Yeah, she’s great. Being able to watch her on a daily basis and just with her being so transparent and open about allowing that vulnerability of her allowing us to see her at her best moments and allowing us to see her at her not-so-great moments, I think it’s really helped.” Regarding another mentor: “She exudes that. So I think she’s a great mentor.”

### Are Leaders Born or Can They Be Developed/Trained?

Are leaders born or can they be developed or trained is part of the theoretical framework, and all six participants were asked their thoughts around this widely studied concept in Interview Question 3 (see Appendix C). Table 16 shares the initial responses of each of the participants.

Table 16: *Leaders Born Versus Leaders Can Be Trained/Developed*

PARTICIPANT	BORN	TRAINED/DEVELOPED	BOTH
SA		X	
SB			X
MA		X	
MB	X		
LA			X
LB			X

The response from MB was interesting. Her initial thoughts to the born versus trained/developed comparison in Question 3 was very concrete, as she stated that certain people have leadership traits/qualities that they emanate, but she questioned if they all choose to use them. MB stated that training would not make true leaders; they would just become more managerial (operational specialists), not real leaders. But when she was asked the final question, which was if she had anything to add, MB stated:

Yeah. I think you can train people, but how do you capture somebody that has that trait? And that's where I think this kind of program would be good. Because maybe I'm kind of considering it. I have a couple faculty—actually, all females—that I always say to them, "You will be a dean." And I said, "Don't deny it." And they say, "Oh, no, no." I said, "No, you'll be a dean. You just can't help yourself." But I think sometimes if you don't know it, you fear it, and you think it's too much, you can't do it. Because we've all been there. So, I think having these kinds of programs maybe would let somebody just have a little preview of what's going on or prepare them, so they feel comfortable to lead.

MB recognized that leaders can be trained/developed, but they need to be given the opportunity and the right program needs to be offered.



## EMERGENT THEMES

Thematic analysis and coding were utilized to identify the patterns of meaning from the data collected during the face-to-face interviews. The thematic analysis helped to identify four key themes based on the research questions. Table 17 summarizes the connection of the themes to the driving questions.

Table 17: *Linkage of Research Questions to the Themes*

RESEARCH QUESTION	THEME
What type of training or education is essential for women community college leaders in Illinois to complete to move into senior-level administrative positions?	Women are still underrepresented in leadership positions.  Mentoring is a key component to leadership success.
What type of training or education is offered to women in community colleges in Illinois that prepares them for senior administrative positions?	Illinois community colleges lack any type of leadership development training for both women and men; therefore, all leadership development training was completed outside of Illinois.
What types of skills are developed through training and education programs that prepare women for senior-level positions in Illinois community colleges?	Leaders can be developed; financial skills and communication skills were two of many skills developed through the programs attended.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

The focus of this study is to gain an understanding of what types of programs and training opportunities are essential to ensure the development of women leaders in community colleges in Illinois. This development is necessary for women to be well positioned to assume senior leadership roles in these unique institutions. Research confirms that leaders can be developed. As community colleges continue to evolve in these uncertain times caused by

funding challenges, the increasing pace of technological change, and new competitors entering the postsecondary market, it is essential to have a cadre of effective leaders ready to guide these institutions effectively.

The findings articulated in this chapter affirm that all participants were qualified for the study based on the research criteria. Their responses were captured and summarized by the questions offered in the semi-structured interviews that were then mapped to the research questions. A key data point that was uncovered during the research was that the six women discussed mentoring as a key piece to their leadership success. The six women mentioned a total of 15 mentors, which speaks highly of the importance of mentoring. Thematic analysis and coding were used, which resulted in four major themes that were exposed from the research. In Chapter 5, the qualitative data findings will be analyzed, and conclusions, implications for future research, and recommendations will be provided.

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

### INTRODUCTION

The data collection and analysis processes are closely aligned in qualitative research (Mertens, 1998). Thus, this chapter highlights the data collected from the surveys, field notes, and interview process and the strategies used to analyze the data. This study focused on leadership development programs available for women at community colleges in Illinois and whether there were specific programs as well as skills developed through the programs for women to progress in their senior-level leadership roles. The survey, field notes, and interviews provided the researcher with a deeper understanding of these leadership development opportunities to assist those who are interested in pursuing senior administrative positions in community colleges.

The chapter is organized by the themes that began to emerge from the data collection process. These themes focused on (a) the number of women leaders in senior administrative roles in Illinois community colleges and whether there had been any gains in representation, (b) what experiences were most compelling in helping women achieve higher administrative positions, (c) what type of training is available in Illinois that assisted these women in their career progression, and (d) which skills in the Northouse (2016) Skills Inventory were most important for senior-level administrators.

In the first section, the underrepresentation of women in leadership roles and whether leadership development training is available for women in Illinois community colleges is

examined. This analysis provides insight as to whether the gender gap in senior leadership positions has been addressed and whether leadership training programs were impactful in helping women achieve higher administrative positions.

The second section summarizes the type of professional development that was most effective in assisting women in senior administrative positions in Illinois community colleges in achieving their current position. The semi-structured interviews provided the opportunity to explore the types of experiences that proved most compelling and useful.

The third section focuses on if and how the three leadership skills, as identified by Katz in 1955, were developed through leadership training and what the women learned through the leadership development that they attended. The analysis also discusses where this leadership training was conducted.

Finally, the importance of mentoring for leadership success and the lack of leadership training opportunities in Illinois are discussed. The findings presented in Chapter 4 and analyzed earlier in this chapter are reviewed through the literature discussed in Chapter 2. This provides the contextual lens from which conclusions are drawn. It also raises additional questions that could be answered with further research.

## **WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTED AS LEADERS**

It has been well documented that women are underrepresented in senior administrative roles at community colleges. This research was conducted to learn what type of experiences, training, and professional development opportunities were most valuable to the six senior leaders who participated in the study.

Three of the six women who were interviewed are presidents at community colleges in Illinois. They are also the first women presidents at their respective institutions. Out of the 48 community colleges in Illinois, only 11 have women presidents. The national average for women presidents at community colleges is 33% (ACE, 2016a). Based on the data presented, Illinois is close to 11% below the national average when it comes to employing women in presidential positions at community colleges.

In January 2016, ACE launched the Moving the Needle campaign to work on the advancement of women in higher education leadership positions. ACE created a toolkit that provided six key talking points for institutions to help explain the importance of advancing women in higher education positions. One key talking point was the fact that over 60% of presidents in higher education are over the age of 61 and will be retiring over the next decade (ACE, 2016a). Another key talking point was how important it is to advance women leaders in higher education. The ACE (2016a) toolkit specifically stated:

Among other findings, women-led or women-governed organizations demonstrate financial success, productivity, innovation, employee satisfaction, retention, engagement, and positive reputations. Certainly, the benefits associated with women leaders in the private sector should and do apply to colleges and universities as complex organizations in their own right. (p. 3)

The data collected by ACE on women in leadership roles solidify the need for women to be developed for leadership positions. The goal of Moving the Needle is to have women serve as presidents in half of all colleges by the year 2030. This is a steep goal; however, the six women leaders interviewed during data collection all agreed that leaders can be developed.

## LEADERS CAN BE DEVELOPED

One of the primary research questions that was presented in the study asked, “Are leaders born or can they be developed or trained?” The theoretical framework reviewed research that confirmed leaders can be developed (Katz, 1955/2009). All six participants agreed that leaders can be developed and should be developed. Table 18 shows the final responses of each of the participants.

Table 18: *Participant View Adjusted Based on Leaders Born Versus Leaders Can Be Trained/Developed*

PARTICIPANT	BORN	TRAINED/DEVELOPED	BOTH
SA		X	
SB			X
MA		X	
MB <sup>a</sup>			X
LA			X
LB			X

<sup>a</sup>Study participant changed her view during the interview. Table 16 shows original response.

Skills-based theory clearly states that leaders can be developed in the three core areas of human, technical, and conceptual skills (Northouse, 2016). Katz (1955/2009) explained the level of importance of each of the three core leadership skills, based on their level of management. Northouse (2016) adapted the visual representation in Table 19 to show the importance of each skill by the level of management/leadership.

Table 19: *Skills Necessary at Various Levels of an Organization*

MANAGEMENT LEVEL	TECHNICAL	HUMAN	CONCEPTUAL
TOP Management	Low	High	High
MIDDLE Management	High	High	High
SUPERVISORY Management	High	High	Low

The human skill is important at all levels of the organization, as indicated by Katz (1955/2009), Mumford, Marks, et al. (2000), and Northouse (2016). The ability to work with others and understand the needs and sensitivities of others are key to the human skill.

Mumford, Marks, et al. (2000) compared Katz's human skill to what they called the social judgment skill in their research. All six participants scored in the high range on the human skill when taking the Skills Inventory, and this was the only skill where a participant scored a 30 (highest score possible) and a second participant scored a 29. Neither of the other two areas on the Skills Inventory (conceptual and technical) produced a score of 29 or 30.

Mumford, Marks, et al. (2000) explained that the core competencies needed for leadership success can improve through job experience and training. The core competencies of leadership are problem-solving skills, social judgment skills, and knowledge. In their research approach, Mumford and colleagues have placed the importance on leadership skills, which highlights the fact that leadership is universal, as anyone can develop into a leader. This is a strict contrast to trait-based theories, which strictly rely on individuals being born with or having specific traits that make them a good leader (Northouse, 2016). Traits cannot be taught and certainly are not something that is provided through a leadership development program.

The skills needed to be a successful leader can and should be developed through leadership development training.

Kouzes and Posner (2016) dedicated an entire book to the importance of learning leadership and the fundamentals of becoming an exemplary leader. In Chapter 5, titled “Learning is the Master Skill,” the authors described the importance of leadership development, being continuous learners, engaging in learning by having a growth mindset, and understanding that through development and learning, leaders can achieve greatness. “Making learning a daily habit is where you start . . . it’s not just how you start; it’s also how you finish” (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 203).

The Skills Inventory confirmed that these women scored high in all germane leadership areas and thus were proficient. It is difficult to ascertain if any of their training and development experiences specifically focused on these three skills areas. As these skills are proven to be important in leadership positions, it is important to determine if aspiring leaders do, in fact, possess these skills. Yet, it is unfortunate that it appears that administering the Skills Inventory is not a key part of the hiring process for senior administrators at community colleges, and there are no true comparable studies that focus on the Skills Inventory and higher education leaders.

#### Skills Developed Through Leadership Programs

The skills needed to be a successful leader in academia range from communication and collaboration to problem solving and organizational strategy. When the six women participants were asked what skills women needed to have or develop for leadership success, all six



participants mentioned attributes of communication and collaboration (human skill), all women explained the importance of working in several different positions and doing different jobs at the college (technical skill), and all participants mentioned conceptually related skills. Table 20 summarizes their responses.

Table 20: *Skills Important for Women Leaders to Have or Develop by Skill Type*

PARTICIPANT	HUMAN SKILL	TECHNICAL SKILL	CONCEPTUAL SKILL
SA	Ability to listen	Learn different jobs	Ability to make decisions
SB	Be an active listener	Prove you can do the job	Ability to think critically and strategically
MA	Compassion	Do whatever job is asked of you, learn different jobs	Civility and honesty
MB	Communication	Have experience and knowledge in different positions	Tenacity and grit
LA	Help others be successful and really listen to others	Willing to learn	Know your purpose and mission
LB	Mentor – teach others to manage and make decisions	Breadth of knowledge in many college positions	Reasoning – think logically

MA mentioned a particularly good lesson in one of the programs she attended, where they challenged the overall ability of the attendees as leaders.

We did everything. Union negotiations. You’d be in like a simulated cabinet session where, say, you were the president, and I was the vice president, and we’ve got the vice president of academic affairs, student affairs and different positions, and then all of a sudden someone would come in and hand you a note. And you’re like, “Oh, my gosh.” And they’d say there’s a political uprising on campus, and there’s a speaker, and people

are gathering, and the police are here, and how are you going to handle it? So, you'd have to kind of go through.

And then you're getting ready to do that, and then someone comes in and hands you a note. It's like, "Oh, my gosh, okay, so the governor's coming." And then you've got to just kind of juggle how are you going to do this, and how would you handle the situation. And it was like some really tough things. There were some really tough things.

She explained the importance of doing simulations for leaders so that they can experience what a real-life leadership situation could be like. It made her question if she really wanted to become a college president. Once she became the college president, she knew she had made the right choice and she could do it, but she needed a strong team and she would have a lot to learn.

MA also explained the importance of continual learning and how she took finance, higher education law, and several other courses to ensure success in her leadership role. All six participants mentioned that being a lifelong learner, continuing to attend professional development, and growing your knowledge as a leader are a key to leadership success. They also mentioned the importance of having a network or strong team and how mentors have been another huge key to their leadership success throughout the years.

## **MENTORING IS KEY TO LEADERSHIP SUCCESS**

During the initial interview, a key component of the leaders' success—the help of a mentor—was discussed. SA explained that the first year as president was rough, and she really needed someone to bounce thoughts off of and confirm that her decisions were valid for the institution. She reached out to another woman president that she met through the Illinois Council of Community College Presidents (ICCCP) and the relationship grew into a very

mentoring and helpful relationship that assisted SA in growing as a leader and specifically as a president. SA stated, “A colleague in the council was really the best (mentor) you can have.”

The other five participants all had similar responses to the question about whether they had a mentor that helped in their success, as summarized in Table 21.

Table 21: *Participant Responses to Mentor Relationships*

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
SB	“The one thing that has meant a lot to me is if you can seek out or you get fortunate enough to have a mentor that really cares about you and your career.”
MA	“Definitely, there were mentors. Vice president --- was a huge mentor for many of us. Her saying was always go out and make me look good.”
MB	“She was a great, great mentor. She’s the one that encouraged me to go get my bachelor’s, and go get my master’s, and go get my doctorate.”
LA	On the topic of mentors, “Regardless of where you come from, with the right kind of support and encouragement, you can be successful.”
LB	“You know, she exudes that. I think she’s a great mentor. Makes you want to be better.”

Research has proven that the effects of mentoring and mentor relationships on women administrators have resulted in “higher levels of confidence in their leadership abilities” (Schott, 2004, as cited in Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). Several studies of the effectiveness of mentoring on leadership success have shown that there is a significant benefit to having a mentor. Bynum’s (2000) study found that women leaders advised other aspiring leaders to secure a mentor. In 2003, Giddis uncovered a similar outcome in which women administrators attribute part of their career success to having a mentor.

Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) conducted research in Tennessee higher education institutions. They utilized a sampling of approximately 706 female administrators in a survey about mentoring. Of the 706 women, 239 responded to the survey; 28% of the women stated that they had a mentor, whereas 72% of them had more than one mentor. The results of this 2011 study aligned with previous studies from Bynum (2000), Moreton (2001), Giddis (2003), and Schott (2004), stating that the “mentoring relationships had prepared them for leadership” (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011, p. 22). One other key finding from Dunbar and Kinnersley was that informal mentoring tended to be the most effective mentoring relationship. This was determined to be the case as well in the study conducted by Ragins and Cotton in 1999.

Informal mentoring tends to allow for both the mentor and the mentee to develop a mutual connection based on similarities in personality and leadership styles. Often the mentor will see the mentee as she once was in the earlier part of her own career. This type of mentoring relationship tends to be more lasting and more supportive overall (McGregor & Tweed, 2002). Based on previous studies as well as their research, Dunbar and Kinnersley (2011) recommended that institutions focus on the development of a culture where mentoring is supported and encouraged for new and upcoming leaders. Dunbar and Kinnersley found that 90% of the mentoring relationships in their study were informal in nature. Thus, simply placing mentoring into a leadership development program where it is formal and structured is not nearly as successful as embedding it informally within the cultural fabric of the institution.

## LACK OF LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN ILLINOIS

Although all participants in the study attended some type of leadership development training, the 10 specific leadership training programs mentioned were not located at their respective institutions, nor were they located in Illinois. Also, all the leadership training experiences mentioned were either a doctoral program through an accredited institution or specific leadership training for presidents or positions that directly report to the president. A few programs offered leadership training to the dean or director level. No leadership development programs were mentioned that were geared toward the development of leaders within the lower management ranks. Table 22 provides the list of leadership training and locations that participants attended.

Table 22: *Location of Participant Training Attended*

TRAINING SESSION	LOCATION OF PROGRAM
AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute	Washington, DC
Harvard Seminar for New Presidents	Cambridge, MA
Leadership Development Program ( <i>Center for Creative Leadership [CCL]</i> )	Colorado Springs, CO
Harvard Negotiation and Leadership	Cambridge, MA
Kaleidoscope Leadership, National Institute for Leadership Development	Tucson, AZ
The Thomas Lakin Institute for Mentored Leadership	Minnesota
Ombudsman Training, University of Nevada	Reno, NV
PhD in Education and Human Resource Studies, Colorado State University	Fort Collins, CO
American Council on Education (ACE) Fellows Program	Washington, DC

Interestingly, LA and LB both mentioned that their institutions had recently completed an Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), which is an accreditation pathway of the Higher Learning Commission. As a result, their institution is working to develop a formal succession planning process that would include training for internal leaders who aspire to reach for higher-level positions within their institution.

The importance of leadership development training and having “well-prepared leaders is vital to the continued success of community colleges and their students” (AACC, 2013). AACC conducted a survey in 2004 that addressed the competencies of community college leaders and how well leadership training programs prepared the leaders for each of the competencies. The six competencies are:

- Organizational Strategy
- Resource Management
- Communication
- Collaboration
- Community College Advocacy
- Professionalism (AACC, 2013)

The responses to the survey revealed that 76% and 100% of respondents agreed that the six competencies were “very” or “extremely” vital, respectively, to the success of community college leaders. AACC (2013) also concluded that (a) leadership can be learned, (b) the leadership gap can be addressed through grow-your-own programs, and (c) learning leadership is a lifelong process, which includes the development of current and new leaders.

In 2013, Southeastern Illinois College designed and implemented a formal leadership development program. The program, called LeadSIC, included “cross-training, including topics such as negotiations, and process documentation, including topics such as hiring processes and budgeting” (Rice & O’Keefe, 2014). Part of the program initiative was to provide a breadth of experiences to program participants by rotating administrators in different bargaining units, along with training in the several areas previously mentioned. It was a yearlong program, with monthly meetings that included guest speakers focused on assigned topics. Program success measurements would help in determining if the program assisted participants in acquiring promotions to higher-level positions during the past five years. Unfortunately, further information on the program was not available.

Like ACE’s Moving the Needle campaign, which promotes the need for more women in senior leadership positions in higher education, ACE is now promoting the importance of developing community college leaders, both men and women, through the Spectrum Initiative.

Capitalizing on the imminent wave of college presidents’ retirements and the resulting opportunity to ensure a more inclusive pool of leadership talent, a group of leading higher education associations are partnering to lead The Spectrum Initiative: Advancing Diversity in the College Presidency. (ACE, 2017c, para. 1)

ACE offers several leadership development programs and a toolkit for higher education leaders to help in identifying, developing, and advancing emerging leaders at their respective institutions.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Chapter 5 analyzed the data collected in which several themes emerged: (a) women are underrepresented as leaders at community colleges, (b) leaders can be developed, (c) Illinois

community colleges lack leadership development training, and (d) mentoring is a key component in leadership success. It is vital that current leadership at community colleges understand the importance of developing future leaders, especially during a time of mass exodus for community college leaders across the country.

Partnering for leadership development, providing multiple position experiences for up-and-coming leaders, and promoting the importance of mentoring at the institutions can help create a plethora of future leaders that will be able to support the needs of the community college and sustain future success of these unique institutions. Chapter 6 will discuss conclusions and recommendations for community colleges and future research possibilities.



## CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### INTRODUCTION

Five themes emerged from the research. These include: (a) women continue to be underrepresented as leaders at community colleges in Illinois; (b) leadership development programs are severely lacking at community colleges in Illinois; (c) leaders can be developed and job rotation is an essential piece for development; (d) informal and organic mentoring is an important part of leadership success; and (e) women tend to be much more transformational in their leadership style, which is essential for community college leadership.

The following recommendations are being made based on the research conducted, the results of the data collected, and the themes that emerged. In preparation for the projected mass retirements of senior leaders over the next decade and the need to close the gender gap in leadership positions, it is germane that community colleges in Illinois focus on the initiatives below to develop leaders and create an environment for leadership success. The three initiatives below are listed in order of importance, based on the findings of this study.

#### Initiative 1: Mentoring

Institutions need to focus on the preferment of mentoring as an informal means of leadership development and success. The promotion of informal mentoring throughout the institution needs to be a top priority, especially for women. Women leaders benefit from mentors and particularly informal mentors (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). All six participants had

several informal mentors throughout their careers, and four of them mentioned the importance of being a mentor for other women. The women participating in this research attribute part of their leadership success to mentoring and learning from their mentors. They all affirmed that leadership development is a key factor in their success.

#### Initiative 2: Creating an Environment for Leadership Growth and Development

The need to create a leadership development program that will cultivate an environment of learning, succession planning, and preparing future leaders is key to the future success and relevance of community colleges. The literature affirmed that leaders will be retiring at an extremely high rate over the next decade, and there is currently no pipeline of new leaders to replace them (Seltzer, 2017). The average president is 61.7 years old and has historically been a white male (Seltzer, 2017). Not only do colleges need to begin training new leaders, but they need to look at diversifying the gender of leaders, as women currently hold only a third of college presidential positions (ACE, 2017b).

All of the participants in the program also mentioned the importance of development and learning by having many jobs and experiences at their institutions. They all believed that this helped in preparing them for their current position. They all believed that their breadth of experiences helped in building their depth of knowledge about the college and being a lifelong learner. Table 23 provides data around the importance of having many positions and opportunities to learn more about the college.

Table 23: *Participant Responses to What Prepared Them for Their Current Position*

PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
SA	"I learned about many different areas of the college, oftentimes by volunteering to do things/projects, etc. I had lots of different jobs at the college."
SB	"I worked hard. I took on things that were not always in my comfort zone."
MA	"There were different experiences. I had a background at different departments at the college."
MB	"I moved through the college as faculty, the chair coordinator, dean, VP, which helped build my knowledge of different positions at the college."
LA	"Having experience in other positions at the college as well as other colleges."
LB	"Teaching experience helped me and working in different areas of the college gave a breadth of knowledge to easily and quickly adapt."

Giving women many opportunities and training women to move into senior leadership positions should be a focus of community colleges across the country, but particularly in Illinois, since only 23% of presidents are women. This is more than 10% below the national average of women presidents at community colleges. The need for leadership development training for women in community colleges is the focus of this study. Leadership programs that are created need to focus on leadership qualities that support the community college mission and the need for transformational change, which is crucial to the ongoing success and relevance of community colleges in the future.

### Initiative 3: Creating a Program for Up-and-Coming Leaders

Based on the findings in Chapter 4 and the analysis in Chapter 5, it is very clear that there are no leadership development programs that focus on developing women or men,

particularly for supervisory and middle-level manager positions. The majority of leadership development programs that are available for higher education leaders are focused on higher-level administrators and new or current presidents. The program(s) created should allow for all levels of leadership, to attend and focus more of building leadership competencies and skills regardless of the leader’s position at the college.

The programs should focus on the following leadership competencies, as outlined by three distinct studies: (a) the AACC framework, (b) recommendations from current community college leaders, and (c) attributes included in current successful leadership programs. Table 24 describes the alignment of courses with the AACC (2013) leadership competencies for community college leaders.

Table 24: *Recommended Leadership Development Program Aligned With AACC Competencies*

AACC IDENTIFIED LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS	RECOMMENDED SESSION/COURSE	CURRENT PROGRAM OFFERING A SIMILAR SESSION/COURSE
Organizational Strategy – assess, develop, implement, evaluate strategies for long-term organizational health	Special Projects and Mentorship from current higher education leaders	ACE Fellows Program AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute
	Visioning with a Global Perspective	
Resource Management – equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information for physical and financial assets based on the mission, vision, and goals	Fiscal Management	ACE Fellows Program
	Building a Network of Supportive Leaders to Continue Development	Leadership Development Program (CCL)
	Finances	The Thomas Larkin Institute
Communication – listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels	Building Your Leadership Strengths	AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute
	Bridge the Gap Between Senior Leadership and the Front Line	Leadership Development Program (CCL)

AACC IDENTIFIED LEADERSHIP COMPETENCY REQUIREMENTS	RECOMMENDED SESSION/COURSE	CURRENT PROGRAM OFFERING A SIMILAR SESSION/COURSE
Collaboration – embrace and employ the diversity of individuals, cultures, values, and work effectively and diplomatically with all constituent groups	The Art of Collaboration	Leadership Development Program (CCL)
	Understanding and Building Relationships	Harvard Seminar for New Presidents
Community College Advocacy – understand, commit to, and advocate for the mission, vision, and goals of the community college	Advocating the Community College Mission	AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute
Professionalism – works ethically to set high standards for self and others, demonstrates accountability for the institution ensuring long-term viability for the college and community	Applying the Principles of Effective Leadership	AACC John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute
	Professionalism in Education and Leadership	PhD in Education and Human Resource Studies, Colorado State University

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Review of the literature confirmed that leaders can be developed, and that due to the impending retirements of senior-level community college leaders, it is germane to develop leaders to fill these important positions. This research affirmed that women are underrepresented in senior leadership positions at community colleges, particularly in Illinois. Connecting these two findings to the Skills Inventory developed by Northouse (2016) and based on Katz’s 1955 writings presents a compelling case to further study whether these skills are paramount for community college leaders.

Thus, an implication for further research includes utilizing the Skills Inventory with community college presidents in Illinois or across the United States and comparing the results

with Katz's 1955 study of executives in the workplace and/or Mumford and colleagues' 2000 study of 1,800 Army officers. Assessment of the results in the human, conceptual, and technical skills areas for academic leaders can help with understanding which leadership skills are lacking and thus where leadership training programs should focus. In addition, it would be helpful to ascertain whether the Skills Inventory would serve as an effective predictor of leadership success in community colleges. If so, then the Skills Inventory could be given as a screening tool for those applying for leadership positions.

All six women participants stated the importance of having several roles within the institution, which assisted them in gaining knowledge of how different areas function. It would be beneficial to examine the implications of leadership success for women based on how many roles and/or positions they have held at their institutions. This would help to determine if the number of job rotations correlated to leadership success. If so, then leadership programs could be designed to offer these experiences.

## **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

As community colleges continue to evolve in these uncertain times caused by funding challenges, the increasing pace of technological change, and new competitors entering the postsecondary market, it is essential to have a cadre of effective leaders ready to guide these institutions effectively. The focus of this study was to gain an understanding of what types of leadership development programs are available for women leaders in community colleges in Illinois. Unfortunately, there is a lack of leadership development training that will assist in the growth and development of future leaders at community colleges in Illinois. Developing leaders

who can guide these unique institutions is vital to their ongoing mission and viability in the higher education sector.

Women tend to be transformational leaders, yet they are underrepresented in senior-level leadership positions at community colleges, both nationally and in Illinois.

Transformational leaders are desirable to drive and sustain needed change in community colleges to ensure robust student persistence and completion. Leaders can be developed, and with meaningful informal and holistic mentoring and compelling professional development programs, women will be well-positioned to successfully lead these critical institutions to sustain future success.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER

## FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

### Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, 1010 Campus Drive FLITE 412F- Big Rapids, MI 49307

Date: November 2, 2017  
To: Dr. Sandra Balkema and Tammie Mahoney  
From: Dr. Gregory Wellman, IRB Chair  
Re: IRB Application #171009 (*Leadership Development Programs for Women at Community Colleges in Illinois*)

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, "*Leadership Development Programs for Women at Community Colleges in Illinois*" (#171009) and determined that it meets Federal Regulations Expedited-Category 6: Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes and Expedited Category 7: Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation or quality assurance methodologies.

This approval has an expiration of one year from the date of this letter. As such, you may collect data according to the procedures outlined in your application until November 2, 2018. Should additional time be needed to conduct your approved study, a request for extension must be submitted to the IRB a month prior to its expiration.

Your protocol has been assigned project number (#171009), which you should refer to in future correspondence involving this same research procedure. Approval mandates that you follow all University policy and procedures, in addition to applicable governmental regulations. Approval applies only to the activities described in the protocol submission; should revisions need to be made, all materials must be approved by the IRB prior to initiation. In addition, the IRB must be made aware of any serious and unexpected and/or unanticipated adverse events as well as complaints and non-compliance issues.

Understand that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights with assurance of participant understanding, followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document and investigators maintain consent records for a minimum of three years.

As mandated by Title 43 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (43 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual reviews during the life of the research project and a Final Report Form upon study completion. Thank you for your compliance with these guidelines and best wishes for a successful research endeavor. Please let us know if the IRB can be of any future assistance.

Regards,



Ferris State University Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

Version 1.2015

## APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM



Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study!

I am a student in the Doctorate in Community College Leadership program at Ferris State University and am working on a dissertation project designed to provide insights as to leadership programs that are effective in developing women for senior-level positions at Illinois community colleges.

To inform this project I am conducting interviews with women in the following positions: three community college presidents and three executive-level leaders who report directly to the president. I am contacting you to see if you would be willing to answer a series of questions about the types of leadership development programs that are available to women leaders that provide them with the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions at Illinois community colleges.

The expected length of the study participation is 20 minutes total for two surveys and one hour for the face-to-face interview at your location. The study consists of 3 parts:

- (1) a set of Demographic questions, accessible through an online survey;
- (2) a Skills Inventory, also accessible through an online survey; and
- (3) a set of questions would be asked via a personal interview at your campus location.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Additional details of the study are explained below in this informed consent form.

All information collected from this study will remain confidential; in the dissertation and any additional publications or presentations based on the research, I will use pseudonyms for participants and their institutions to protect the anonymity of all participants.

If you have any questions please give me a call at 847.925.6166 (office) or 847.331.8916 (cell) or send an email to mahonet@ferris.edu. You can also contact my doctoral faculty advisor or Ferris' Institutional Research Board at the contact information provided below.

Please review the following information carefully. At the time of the interview, I will review the study details with you and will answer any questions that you may have about the study.

Thank you again!

Tammie Y. Mahoney

### INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**Project Title:** Leadership Development Programs Available for Women at Community Colleges in Illinois

**Principal Investigator:** Tammie Y. Mahoney

Email: tmahoney@harpercollege.edu

Phone: 847.331.8916

**Faculty Advisor:** Sandra Balkema

Email: SandraBalkema@ferris.edu

Phone: 231-591-5631

### STUDY PURPOSE

You are invited to participate in a research study about "Leadership Development Programs Available for Women at Community Colleges in Illinois." The researcher is interested in gaining insight from women leaders in the following positions: three community college presidents and three executive-level leaders

who report directly to the president, regarding the types of leadership development programs that are available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois.

## **PARTICIPATION**

**Taking part in this study is completely voluntary.**

You are eligible to participate in this study because you are a woman in a presidential or executive-level position that reports directly to the president, at an Illinois community college. If you agree to be part of this study, you will be asked to complete two online surveys and participate in an interview. The expected length of the study participation is 20 minutes total for two surveys and one hour for the face-to-face interview at your location. The surveys are completely confidential and only accessible via a link sent directly to your personal email and via a user name/password. The interview will consist of a series of questions related to the types of leadership development programs that are available to women leaders that provide them with the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions at Illinois community colleges.

## **POTENTIAL RISKS/DISCOMFORTS**

This research does not constitute risk to subjects beyond the minimal level. Minimal risk: the data being collected is the participants' personal account and recollection of what has occurred. A pseudonym will be used to identify subjects and data will not be linked to the participant in any way in the written documents.

## **ANTICIPATED BENEFITS**

This research is designed to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them with the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Signing this form is required in order for you to take part in the study and gives the researcher your permission to obtain, use, and share information about you for this study. The results of this study may be published in the researcher's dissertation and related publications, but the discussion would not include any information that would identify you as a participant.

In order to keep your information safe, the researcher will protect your anonymity and maintain confidentiality. During the interview, the researcher will record the information, to ensure accuracy and allow the researcher to review the information following the interview. Your personal information (name and institution) will not be included during the interview; instead the researcher will assign a pseudonym for you and your institution. The information you provide on both surveys and from the interviews will be stored in password protected files and locked cabinets. The researcher will retain the data for 3 years following her Dissertation Defense, after which time the researcher will dispose of your data by standard state-of-the-art methods for secure disposal. The data will not be made available to other researchers for other studies following the completion of this research study.

Note that there are some reasons why people other than the researchers may need to see the information you provided as part of the study. This includes organizations responsible for ensuring the research is conducted safely and properly, including Ferris State University.

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

The researcher conducting this study is Tammie Y. Mahoney a doctoral student at Ferris State University. If you have any questions you may email her at mahonet@ferris.edu or call 847.925.6166 (office) or 847.331.8916 (cell). You may also contact her faculty advisor, Dr. Sandra Balkema (sandrabalkema@ferris.edu; 231-591-5631).

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a subject in this study, please contact: Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for Human Participants, 1010 Campus Drive, FLITE 410G, Big Rapids, MI 49307, (231) 591-2553, IRB@ferris.edu.

## SIGNATURES

**Research Subject:** I understand the information printed on this form. I understand that if I have more questions or concerns about the study or my participation as a research subject, I may contact the people listed above in the "Contact Information" section. I understand that I may make a copy of this form. I understand that if my ability to consent for myself changes, either I, or my legal representative may be asked to re-consent prior to my continued participation.

**Signature of Subject:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Information: email -** \_\_\_\_\_ **phone -** \_\_\_\_\_

**Principal Investigator (or Designee):** I have given this research subject (or his/her legally authorized representative, if applicable) information about this study that I believe is accurate and complete. The subject has indicated that he or she understands the nature of the study and the risks and benefits of participating.

**Printed Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to identify successful leadership development and training programs available to women leaders at community colleges in Illinois, thus providing them the opportunity for advancement into senior-level positions.

1. What skills do you feel are most important for women leaders to have and/or develop?
2. From your background, could you tell me what prepared you for your current position?
3. In your opinion, do you believe that leaders are born or can they be made/developed?
4. What was the 'trigger' that told you "this is the time to pursue a leadership position"? Was it a mentor, courses, gut feeling, etc.?
  - a. Did you have any mentors that helped you in your leadership progression?
5. Were there any particular leadership or training programs that prepared you for your current position?
6. What type of succession planning or leadership development courses does your college, offer to prepare future leaders?
7. If you were asked to give other women one piece of leadership advice, what would that advice be? Why?
8. Is there anything you would like to add or anything I did not ask you that you believe would help in my research?

## APPENDIX D: DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

NOTE: PARTICIPANTS ACCESSED THIS AS AN ONLINE SURVEY, USING THE LINK PROVIDED IN THE SURVEY REQUEST EMAIL

**Instructions:** Before completing this online survey, please review the Participant Consent form (attached to the email). Your completion of this survey indicates your agreement with the conditions of the study as described in that Consent form and your willingness to participate.

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Participant Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please complete demographic questionnaire below for this dissertation research.

1. **Gender:**  Male  Female

2. **Age Group:**

- under 40 years
- 40 – 44 years
- 45 – 49 years
- 50 – 54 years
- 55 – 59 years
- 60 – 64 years
- 65 years or older

3. **Ethnicity:**

- Asian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaskan
- Black, non-Hispanic
- Hispanic
- White, non-Hispanic

4. **Education:**

- Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., etc.)
- Masters
- JD
- Other

5. **Current Position**

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been in this position: From (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

To (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

Annual Student FTE: \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Previous Position**

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State: \_\_\_\_\_

How long were you been in this position: From (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

To (month/year) \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Are you a Community College President or do you report directly to the college president?**

Yes

No

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. Your careful responses will provide substantive depth and clarity to this study and will aid in providing necessary context.

Tammie Y. Mahoney  
Doctoral Student @  
Ferris State University  
tmahoney@harpercollege.edu  
847.331.8916