

LEADERSHIP ROLE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE CEOS IN THE STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF
COLLEGE-WIDE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AGENDA

by

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This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Ferris State University

May 2021

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are facing challenges in their current social and cultural environments to consider strategies to become more welcoming and inclusive of the diverse populations they serve. The burden weighs heavily on community colleges to respond to the need for strategies that embrace diversity, equity, and inclusion because their mission establishes them as the providers of access to education beyond secondary school regardless of educational background, gender, handicap, culture, or economic status.

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact community college chief executive officer (CEO) has in establishing a campus culture that embraces a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The problem this study addresses is that, although the populations served by urban and suburban community colleges are known for diversity, equity, and inclusion, there is a lack of documented evidence to determine the role, if any, played by CEOs in achieving this condition. It is the hope of the researcher that this study will inform and possibly improve the practices, strategies, and outcomes of urban and suburban community colleges' CEOs in developing a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. Findings might be relevant but may not be generalized because the study focus is limited to urban and suburban institutions in the state of Michigan.

This qualitative study investigates the critical role played by community college CEOs in providing executive leadership for the strategic development of their college's diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The study participants are CEOs of suburban and urban community

colleges in the state of Michigan that are either public suburban-serving associate's degree awarding institutions, or public urban-serving associate's degree awarding institutions.

KEY WORDS: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); Chief Executive Officer (CEO); Leadership Role

DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my loving family, my patient friends and colleagues, and everyone in the education community who supported me continuously.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES	vii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY	1
Introduction	1
Context of the Study	3
History of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Colleges.....	13
Recent Efforts to Broaden Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Community Colleges.....	16
Definition of Key Terms.....	19
Statement of the Problem.....	20
Purpose of the Study.....	21
Study Population	22
Research Questions.....	24
Goals of the Study	24
Study Limitations.....	25
Organization of the Study	25
Summary	26
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	27
Introduction	27
Components of a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Agenda.....	27
Leadership of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	27
Measures and Assessment.....	32
Mission and Vision	33
Strategic Plan	36
Social Constructs Related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	37
Religious Issues	37
Racial and Ethnicity Issues.....	38
Multiracial Democracy	39
Ethnicity	40
Gender	40
Inclusion vs. Understanding of Differences.....	41
Institutional Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	42
Faculty Support and Involvement	42
Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research.....	43
Staff Engagement and Involvement	44
Student Support and Involvement	44

Administrative Leadership and Institutional Support	45
Resource Allocation.....	48
Constituency Relationships	49
Chapter Summary	50
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	52
Introduction	52
Purpose and Research Questions.....	52
Study Participants and Demographics	53
The Sample.....	53
Basic Qualitative Study Methodology	54
Elite Interviews.....	54
Data Collection Methods	55
Data Analysis Methods.....	56
Thematic analysis	56
Chapter Summary	61
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS	62
Introduction	62
CEO Nesbary.....	64
CEO Pink.....	66
CEO Quartey.....	68
CEO Sawyer	69
CEO Cerny.....	71
CEO Kavalhuna	72
CEO Ivery	74
Key Themes tied to AACC Competencies	76
Personal Traits and Abilities	76
Student Success.....	76
Institutional Leadership	77
Governance, Institutional Policy, and Legislation	77
Chapter Summary	78
CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	79
Introduction	79
Discussion of Key Themes and Findings	79
Relationships	80
Connection to Local Community	80
Commitment/Passion.....	81
Conclusion	81
Research Question #1: Role of the College President.....	82
Conclusions	83
Research Question #2: Responsibility for Communicating the DEI Plan.....	87
Conclusions	88

Research Question #3: Challenges in Advancing DEI Agenda	91
Conclusions	92
Implications of the Study	96
Summary of Recommendations for CEOs	98
Limitations of this Study.....	100
Change in Methodology	100
Effect of Non-participating Presidents	101
Interviewer Influence	102
George Floyd’s Death	102
COVID-19 Pandemic	103
Delimitations of this Study.....	104
Colleges Located in Michigan	104
Size, Setting, and Geographical Classifications	104
Recommendations for Future Research	105
Geographic Diversity	106
Size, Setting, and Geographical Classification	106
Participant Characteristics	107
Personal Reflections.....	108
Conclusion.....	109
REFERENCES	111
APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL	121

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1: AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders.....	4
Table 2: BOOST Grantee Partners	17
Table 3: Carnegie Classifications for Higher Education Institutions.....	22
Table 4: Michigan Community Colleges included in this Study.....	23
Table 5: Michigan Community Colleges excluded from this Study	23
Table 6: Study Participants.....	53
Table 7: Coding Themes	57
Table 8: Participating Community Colleges.....	58
Table 9: AACC Focus Areas Referenced by Community College CEOs	64

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

INTRODUCTION

The American community college is a critical component of the U.S. education system because it enrolls 45% of all U.S. undergraduates, enabling them to have a significant impact on higher education outcomes (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2012). With industry-driven programs and a commitment to operating as a community resource, community colleges are uniquely positioned to respond to the needs of a diverse society.

The U.S. community college mission has been to provide access to education beyond secondary school, regardless of educational background, gender, handicap, culture, or economic status. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2017), early community colleges originated from an amalgamation of rapidly growing public high schools seeking to respond to community needs for higher education programs and small, private colleges distinguished by their small classes, student-faculty rapport and programs that emphasized academics and extracurricular activities. The resulting early community colleges, which rarely enrolled more than 150 students, offered programs that were academically solid with campuses that encouraged a variety of student activities (AACC, 2017). Community colleges experienced a period of exponential growth in the early part of the 20th century after legislation was passed that allowed their operating costs to be subsidized by state funding

which afforded community colleges the opportunity to be responsive to the needs of the local communities they served (Robinson-Neal, 2009).

Community colleges serve high-density large metropolitan regions anchored by major urban hubs and related neighborhoods (Myran & Parsons, 2013). According to Pierce (2010) all large cities face a paradox whereby on one hand they are defined by poverty, criminal activity, drug addiction, family disintegration, failed schools, and yet on the other hand they are defined by economic opportunity, cultural, and social purpose. The community college environment demands that its chief executive officer (CEO) recognize these unique operating conditions and therefore design a suitable diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) strategy. According to Rodriguez (2015), community college CEOs:

will need to address why equity matters and be specific about what can be done to create, nurture, and sustain a campus culture that can ultimately lead to improving student success, to diversifying the ranks of faculty and administrators, and to facilitating meaningful engagement concerning the critical issues of diversity and equity. (p. 18)

The current social environment is such that diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts on college campuses are under constant scrutiny. The responsibility to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion is incorporated into the core of all community college operations falls solely on the institution's leadership (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006). Thus, in this growing presence of change, there arises a need to have a framework for guiding the actions of institution-wide leadership in its effort to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2013) uses a broad definition of *diversity, equity, and inclusion* that incorporates a variety of factors such as race, color,

religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, citizenship status, veteran status, genetic information, or disability. This definition is critical because community colleges are considered to be open-access postsecondary institutions for people in their local communities (Clay, 2012). As open-door institutions, community colleges in the United States of America (U.S.) accept all learners, from all ages, at any point in their lives, many needing to overcome skills gaps in literacy and numeracy to compete for 21st century jobs in the knowledge-based economy (Rodriguez, 2015). According to national statistics, community college enrollment is comprised of 56% female students, 52% non-White students, 51% students under 21, 12% students with disabilities, and 7% non-U.S. citizens (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017).

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

In 2004, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) developed a list of *Competencies for Community College Leaders* designed for the purpose of developing emerging leaders and assisting colleges with the selection of qualified leadership candidates. The competencies allow individuals to assess whether their skills and experience align with the requirements for being a community college CEO. In 2018, assisted by community college CEOs and vice presidents, the AACC revised their *Competencies for Community College Leaders* to reflect the skills necessary for advancing a student success agenda, spearheading organizational change, and showing progress for taking on roles with broader responsibility. The AACC Competencies for community college CEOs is a list of 59 competencies that are categorized into the following 11 focus areas: organizational culture; governance, institutional policy and legislation; student success; institutional leadership; institutional infrastructure; information and analytics; advocacy and mobilizing/motivating others; fundraising and relationship

cultivation; communications; collaboration; and personal traits and abilities. The entire list of Competencies for *Community College Leaders* is contained within these focus areas are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
<i>Focus Area 1: Organizational Culture</i>	
1. Mission, vision, and values of the community college	Continue to be the spokesperson for community college values locally, at the state level, and nationally.
2. Culture of the institution and the external community	Find meaningful ways to highlight the institution’s history and past achievements while ushering the college into a new era focusing on the enhancement of its operations and priorities.
<i>Focus Area 2: Governance, Institutional Policy, and Legislation</i>	
3. Organizational structure of the community college	Periodically review the institution’s organizational structure, identify opportunities to gain efficiency, and ensure that resources are appropriately allocated to support the various institutional functions, most notably instruction.
4. Governance structure	Continue to embrace your institution’s governance structure. Seek ways to promote meaningful engagement between the internal and external stakeholders and the college in appropriate discussions around the future of the institution.
5. College policies and procedures	Establish a process of periodic review of institutional policies and procedures which engages appropriate internal stakeholders. Be willing to advance changes to policies to make them relevant in supporting current operations and federal guidelines (as applicable) and eliminate policies that are no longer relevant.
6. Board relations	Have a focus on ongoing professional development for the board. Continue to seek ways that allow board members to add value to the governance and policy processes, while allowing you to lead the institution.
<i>Focus Area 3: Student Success</i>	
7. Student success	Have in-depth understanding of what is happening in the college classroom. Continue to have open, honest engagement with members of faculty as a means to support student success. Be willing to consider the effect of new policies on faculty members’ ability to impact student learning.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
8. Consistency between the college's operation and a student-focused agenda	Keep the student success agenda at the forefront of decisions regarding the college's operations. Be willing to make changes to programs and services that are incongruent with the success agenda and that place barriers in the pathway of students.
9. Data usage	Continue to strengthen your use of internal and external data in decision-making.
10. Program/performance review	Inspect what you expect and ask the right questions of members of your leadership team regarding program/performance review. Support decisions for improvement based upon data.
11. Evaluation for improvement	Be introspective and willing to self-assess your performance. Rely on a trusted confidant as a sounding board regarding areas where you need to improve. Seek professional development opportunities that allow you to continue to grow and to remain updated on trends and issues impacting community colleges.
<i>Focus Area 4: Institutional Leadership</i>	
12. Be an influencer	Embrace the role of influencer in your internal and external community. Be willing to speak publicly about matters that have greatest impact for students.
13. Support team building	Relationships must be nurtured over time, so continue to engage with your staff through team building activities as a way to strengthen the bonds.
14. Performance management	Always be aligned with your board or chancellor/president related to their expectations for your performance. Likewise, ensure that you have clearly communicated with members of your team your expectations of them in relation to the performance management process.
15. Lead by example	Exhibit integrity and ethics in leadership and decision-making. Do not take actions that would embarrass the board, the institution, or yourself.
16. Problem-solving techniques	When approaching a problem, seek to learn what attributed to the problem, use all resources available to develop alternate solutions, choose and implement a solution and evaluate its effectiveness.
17. Conflict management	When appropriate, be willing to resolve conflicts between direct reports and definitely between the college and the external community.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
18. Advocate for professional development across the institution	Find ways to invest in and advocate for professional development for people at all levels within the institution. Failure to do so could result in the institution regressing instead of progressing. Also invest in professional development for yourself.
19. Customer service	Always have your customers in the forefront of your agenda. Be willing to speak with all institutional stakeholders and get their thoughts. Assist in expediting a solution to a problem when appropriate.
20. Transparency	Always be open, honest, and forthright. Do not harbor a hidden agenda. Be clear about your motivation.
<i>Focus Area 5: Institutional Infrastructure</i>	
21. Strategic and operational planning	Provide leadership in the development and/or revision of the college's strategic plan. Clearly articulate your goals for the institution related to student and operational success. Routinely request status reports/dashboards on the institution's plans and convene groups to discuss strategies for improvement when performance is lacking.
22. Budgeting	Have extensive knowledge of the institution's budget, including the funding sources that comprise it. Be aware of your state's performance-based funding model. Review the overall budget monthly and hold routine meetings with your chief financial officer to discuss any concerns that you might have. Be prepared to address any projected deficit(s) with your board or CEO in a timely manner.
23. Prioritization and allocation of resources	Keep the overall goals that the college is trying to achieve at the forefront of all discussions related to the allocation of resources.
24. Accreditation	Have strong knowledge of your regional accreditor's standards. Understand the steps to take to notify the accreditor of any institutional issue. Empower bright and talented individuals with leading the day-to-day efforts in assembling materials for accreditation or reaffirmation of accreditation.
25. Facilities master planning and management	Understand the college's facilities master plan and any state requirements for new construction and renovation. Understand the process and be familiar with the schedule for facility maintenance and upkeep.
26. Technology master planning	Actively engage in the college's technology master plan to ensure that planning is aligned to current and future needs in the classroom and operations of the institution.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
<i>Focus Area 6: Information and Analytics</i>	
27. Qualitative and quantitative data	Continue to embrace the use of different types of data to inform you as you work to improve student success. Be willing to try new approaches that have demonstrated promising results.
28. Data analytics	Rely on sound processes for data analysis to make better informed decisions related to the college's operational efficiency and applicability of programs and services to students.
<i>Focus Area 7: Advocacy and Mobilizing/Motivating Others</i>	
29. Community College ideas	Continue to be a passionate advocate for the community college ideals. Be willing to engage with the college community and external constituents about the value of the college and the difference that it is making in the lives of people in the community.
30. Stakeholder mobilization	Take opportunities to welcome constituents to the college to celebrate accomplishments and to recognize them for their contributions to the institution. Be willing to be vulnerable in expressing your need for their support, recognizing that all support is needed to advance the mission of the institution.
31. Media relations	Continue to engage with members of your local press, and take opportunities to communicate with trade publications when the college is doing new and innovative work. Understand the power of the press in disseminating your message to local and national audiences.
32. Marketing and social media	Always seek ways through various marketing and social media channels to engage with current and potential students, as well as supporters to keep them updated on new and great things taking place at the college.
<i>Focus Area 8: Fundraising and Relationship Cultivation</i>	
33. Fundraising	Continue to build relationships that support the college's entrepreneurial efforts. Seek new opportunities to support the college's future directions.
34. Alumni relationships	Support the college's alumni engagement efforts. Participate in activities designed to engage alumni of the college in advocating on behalf of current and future students.
35. Media relationships	Do not lose sight of the importance of media relationships to the college. Consider scheduling quarterly meetings with members of your newspaper's editorial board and be as transparent as possible.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
36. Legislative relations	Continue to strengthen your relationships with state and congressional leaders. Be proactive by ensuring that their staffs are kept up to date on the impact that specific legislation could have on the institution. Likewise, be available to speak to the merits of good legislation and how it would support student success.
37. Public relations	Embrace the role of CEO as the chief spokesperson for the college. Take opportunities to advance the good work that the college is doing in settings where it is appropriate.
38. Workforce partnerships	Always seek to build relationships with the industries and government agencies in your community. Focus on supporting their efforts to build a skilled workforce. Be willing to provide responsive programming for businesses being recruited to the region.
<i>Focus Area 9: Communications</i>	
39. Presentation, speaking, and writing skills	Always exude confidence in presenting, speaking, and writing about the college. There is always room for improvement. Take opportunities to sharpen your skills, and periodically make presentations at state and national meetings to ensure that your skills remain sharp.
40. Active listening	Continue to practice active listening in all dialogues. Many issues are complex, and it is important to unpack them before weighing in with a solution, especially when all of the facts may not have been presented.
41. Global and cultural competence	Be an advocate for global and cultural competence so that individuals can be well-rounded to compete in the global economy.
42. Strategies for multi-generational engagement	Keep abreast in the changing characteristics of the generations of individuals you are working with and those who attend the college. Seek ways to engage with them that reflect what you know about their learning and communication styles.
43. Email etiquette	Be cognizant of email etiquette and rules governing communications in writing. In cases where tone and message can potentially be misinterpreted, speak directly to the individual you are addressing.
44. Fluency with social media and emerging technologies	Tweak the implementation of your social media presence if needed. Continue to work closely with your public relations team to determine ways to communicate the great things happening at the college. Always keep an eye on new technologies and how they can support process improvement at the college.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
45. Consistency in messaging	Always maintain consistency in messaging so that the internal and external community knows what the college stands for and the efforts that it supports.
46. Crisis communications	Continue to seek ways to create a safe campus environment. Be prepared to address crises in accordance with the college's plans. Ensure that all units within the college understand their roles in responding to a crisis.
<i>Focus Area 10: Collaboration</i>	
47. Interconnectivity and interdependence	Continue to stress the importance of the various roles within the community college. Ensure that faculty are engaged in discussions to identify solutions that have a direct impact on classroom instruction. Develop a high-functioning team by empowering leaders from across the organization to work hand-in-hand to address emerging trends and issues that the institution is facing.
48. Work with supervisor	Following each annual evaluation, engage with your board chair or district CEO to establish priorities for the coming year. Ensure that you are clear about the expectations that he/she has for you. Engage in quarterly reviews of your progress with your supervisor so that you may adjust your approach as needed
49. Institutional team building	Continue to seek opportunities that strengthen trust and comradery between members of your team. Periodically reassess the needs of the organization and deploy leaders with appropriate strengths to address them.
50. Collective bargaining (for employees in collective bargaining states)	Keep to the schedules to review collective bargaining agreements impacting your college. Where possible, continue to work toward establishing good working relationships with the designees of the organizations at the collective bargaining table. Always represent the best interest of the college in the negotiations.
<i>Focus Area 11: Personal Traits and Abilities</i>	
51. Authenticity	Always be true to yourself but recognize that the positive aspects of your authentic self must be harnessed to continue to advance the priorities of the institution.
52. Emotional intelligence	Always maintain control of your emotions. Be level-headed even when situations escalate. Keep your overall goals in the forefront of discussions or situations that can cause tempers to flare.

COMPETENCY	BEHAVIOR
53. Courage	When approaching difficult situations, make sure you are armed with data and research that support your decisions regarding a solution. Have the courage to implement, or empower others to implement, the change and be willing to support those individuals doing the work.
54. Ethical standards	Lead with the highest moral code in interactions with people and in decision-making. Follow policies and obey laws in decision-making.
55. Self-management and environmental scanning	Engage in routine environmental scanning to determine what threats and opportunities exist for the college. Be sure to manage your emotions in response to these factors.
56. Time management and planning	Continue to find balance in your life, ensuring that your priorities shift as needed. Carve out adequate time to plan for the rollout of major initiatives.
57. Familial impact	Always be cognizant of the role of CEO, and as the role changes, understand how the demands of the position can impact your family.
58. Forward-looking philosophy	Celebrate accomplishments, but always keep your focus on the future trends and issues that may impact community colleges so that you can plan appropriately
59. Embrace change	Always be willing to look at change as a way to improve the organization. Utilize data, human resources, and other important research to inform you of the potential success of new initiatives

Source: AACC, 2018, p. 81

The AACC's *Competencies for Community College Leaders (2018)* provides a context for this study on determining the leadership role of the CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide DEI agenda. Institutionalizing DEI is complex and requires that community college leaders possess qualities that allow them to “shift from focusing only on student and employee demographics to transforming attitudes, behaviors, policies, and practices” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 83). The AACC's *Competencies for Community College Leaders (2018)* provides a comprehensive framework for the role of community college CEOs charged with institutional transformation. The Competencies prepare CEOs to be “capable of

spearheading change at all levels within the institution” (p. 3). Additionally, the Competencies reflect skills necessary for CEOs to evolve the institutional mission for the purposes of “preserving access, enhancing quality, and eradicating attainment gaps associated with income, race, ethnicity, and gender” (p. 3).

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2019) designates 154 institutions in the U.S. as urban community colleges with 123 of those being recognized as multicampus districts. These institutions received this classification from the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching’s 2005 Basic Classifications (*The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2019*). The Carnegie nomenclature divides associate degree granting colleges into public, private, and special-use institutions. The public category is divided into rural, suburban, and urban-serving colleges based on the physical location of the campus. Rural community colleges serve towns with a population of 25,000 or fewer and are often close to wilderness and farm areas, while suburban community colleges serve towns with a population of 200,000 or fewer that border large cities (Hardy & Katsinas, 2007). Urban community colleges are distinguished from suburban and rural community colleges by their setting, clientele, and importance to the communities they serve (Smith & Vellani, 1999). According to Hirose-Wong (1999) urban community colleges are typically located in, or close to, major cities and are “comprised of individuals with one or more of the following characteristics: income below the poverty line, immigrant status, first-generation college student, a member of an ethnic minority group, in need of remediation, or whose first language is not English” (p. 2).

Urban community colleges operate in demographic environments characterized by underserved and underprepared minority groups who experience persistent and entrenched racial, educational, economic, and social inequities (Myran & Parsons, 2013). Community colleges are on the leading edge of societal efforts to overcome these persistent and entrenched inequities. These conditions demand that urban community college CEOs play a critical role to “ensures that diverse populations of students get what they came for: knowledge and skills that will afford them a better life than they would have had otherwise” (Wyner, 2014, p. 5).

The urban community college is positioned to unite its diverse population to bring about social equality, which is a concept defined in depth as a multiracial democracy. According to Myran and Parsons (2013), “A multiracial democracy is a society in which people of all races, religions, classes, and genders unite in support of principles of social justice and racial and civic equality” (p. 8). This study is inspired by the notion that “leaders of the nation’s urban community colleges are hard at work replacing the ‘pathology of despair’ with a college and career success model founded on the objectives of a multiracial democracy” (Ivery & Bassett, 2011, p. 11). The objective of a multiracial democracy is to serve as a platform that encourages the community college’s top leadership to integrate planning and evaluation strategies with the purpose of “advantaging the disadvantaged” (Myran, 2009, p.82). At the forefront of the multiracial democracy stands the community college serving as the educational training center for individuals from a variety of backgrounds. With an emphasis on combining individual educational needs with addressing the economic and social needs of the community, most

community college mission statements embrace the multiracial democracy construct (Myran & Parsons, 2013).

The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education (2019) currently classifies 206 institutions in the United States as associate degree awarding public suburban community colleges with 99 of those being recognized as multicampus districts. Located between large cities and farming communities, suburban community colleges have features that resemble both their rural and urban counterparts such as access to recreation and entertainment in nearby cities, a culture that fosters a close-knit campus community, and a geographic location that allows for travel to nearby large cities for job/internship opportunities. According to Katsinas (1993), suburban community colleges differ from their rural and urban counterparts by enrolling fewer students and offering a curriculum more oriented to liberal arts/transfer education and community services. Suburban community colleges tend to benefit from suburban property being assessed at higher values, thus affording students to be exposed to better equipment and facilities (Katsinas, 1993).

HISTORY OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The diversity movement in higher education can be traced to the mid- to late-nineteenth century when supporters of the Civil Rights movement demanded greater access for underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups (Johnson, 2014, p. 22). Civil Rights advocate Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was able to inspire a shift in the American consciousness with his iconic “I Have A Dream” speech delivered on the steps of the Capital Mall in 1963 (Rodriguez, 2015). Dr. King’s speech functioned to convince the nation that equity and inclusion were necessary components of democracy and was followed by the signing of the landmark

federal Civil Rights Act and the Voting Rights Act. This legislation served as the foundation that paved the way for higher education leaders to reconsider opportunities for diverse faculty previously turned away (Johnson, 2014). Inspired by the social movement climate, “students and faculty from underrepresented groups demanded entrance and full acceptance into colleges and universities across the country” (Johnson, 2014, p. 23).

Higher education institutions were facing new challenges in their social and cultural environment. Leadership at traditionally white institutions were forced to consider strategies to become more welcoming and inclusive as the student population became ethnically and culturally diverse (Sutton, 1998). Yet, higher education’s early attempts at diversification “were often criticized as a symbolic appeasement to protesting minority groups and others demanding infrastructure for newly admitted minority populations and campus change” (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2006, p. 1). To address these criticisms, many institutions responded with the creation of offices of minority affairs. The primary role of office of minority affairs was to provide services that included academic advising and counseling for minority students in addition to serve as a formal liaison between African American students and the university administration (Sutton, 1998). Sutton (1998) asserts, “while minority affairs professionals contribute greatly to the social and academic development of minority students outside the classroom, they additionally confront campus racial issues including discrimination and hate speech” (p. 34). Whether it is referred to as the office of minority affairs or the office of multicultural affairs, the overall function of fostering cultural diversity remains consistent for each of these diversity units.

The creation of the diversity units above resulted from the need to support the cultural, academic, political, and social interests of African American and eventually other underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups (Williams, 2005). These diversity units represent the social justice rationale. To reduce the effects of racism, sexism, and homophobia and to ensure that all students succeed, Wade, Bean and Teixeira-Poit (2019) recommend that colleges and universities use social justice as a rationale. However, Williams (2005) argues moving from a social justice rationale to a valuing diversity rationale so that the diversity units can be optimized to support all students.

The emphasis on valuing diversity offers a foundation for the development of an office that focuses on diversity and inclusion. According to the Clauson and McKnight (2018), centers for diversity and inclusion were formed in response to specific episodes of discrimination or diversity on campus. Diversity and inclusion centers began as a collection of student organizations and later developed into elaborate operations with office space and multiple professional staff members. Diversity and inclusion centers often offer programs in collaboration with other campus departments like student services. These programs provide qualitative and quantitative feedback that help administration promote diversity. The diversity and inclusion centers also collaborate with faculty to develop curricular initiatives (Clauson & McKnight, 2018).

Some institutions rely on executive level administrators to direct their diversity agendas. Titles given to these individuals are very formal and include assistant provost, vice provost, dean, associate provost, vice chancellor, vice president, or special assistant to the president for multicultural, international, equity, diversity, and inclusion. For this study, these individuals will

be referred to as chief diversity officers. Williams and Wade-Golden (2006) assert, “chief diversity officers have responsibility for guiding effort to conceptualize, define, assess, nurture, and cultivate diversity as an institutional and educational resource” (p. 1). The span of the chief diversity officer’s duties and responsibilities have no boundaries; therefore, these individuals must be amendable to collaborating on all levels of the institution. According to Williams and Wade-Golden (2006), “chief diversity officers are best defined as ‘change management specialist’ because of the importance that they place on strategies designed to intentionally move the culture of their institutions” (p. 3).

At many colleges and universities, the chief diversity officer is a highly regarded administrator who holds a seat on the president’s council and participates in the strategic planning process. The chief diversity officer’s position on the executive leadership team “conveys the message that the diversity and inclusion office is equally as important as other units on campus, such as development and finance” (Educational Advisory Board, 2011, p. 12).

RECENT EFFORTS TO BROADEN DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Current initiatives to broaden diversity, equity, and inclusion in community colleges seek to capitalize on the community college’s open-door philosophy, diverse culture, and community involvement. In 2019, the Kresge Foundation awarded \$3.7 million in grant funding for the purpose of strengthening partnerships between community colleges and human services nonprofits. Known as Boosting Opportunities for Social Economic Mobility (BOOST), this initiative functioned to connect students with low incomes to human services nonprofit

agencies and educational pathways that will help them achieve social and economic success.

The 2019 BOOST grantee partners are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2: BOOST Grantee Partners

HUMAN SERVICES NONPROFIT	COMMUNITY COLLEGE	LOCATION
Catholic Charities Archdiocese of Hartford	Capital Community College	Hartford, CT
Center for Urban Families	Baltimore City Community College	Baltimore, MD
Food Service Corporation	Northeast Wisconsin Technical College	Green, Bay WI
PEACE, Inc.	Onondaga Community College	Syracuse, NY
Albina Head Start	Portland Community College	Portland, OR
Common Point Queens	LaGuardia Community College	New York, NY

Source: The Kresge Foundation, 2020

In 2020, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation awarded \$20 million in grant funding to 12 organizations that will serve as the intermediaries between pre-determined partner groups and community colleges and public, four-year institutions. According to Fain (2020) the foundation selected intermediaries that were trusted by the colleges and “demonstrated commitment and experience by race and income; promoting continuous learning and improvement through the use of data; and identifying, implementing and evaluating significant campus-level changes in policy and practice” (p. 2).

In 2004, the Lumina Foundation and seven founding partner organizations established a nonprofit, evidence-based organization committed to improving student success in higher education. Thus, Achieving the Dream (ATD) was created with a belief that community colleges would give access to high quality education to students who dream of a better tomorrow. In 2009, President Barack Obama announced the American Graduation Initiative which sought to invest \$12 billion in community colleges over 10 years with a goal of increasing the number of college graduates by 5 million (Palmadessa, 2017). ATD was able to be a mechanism of support for the AGI due to its commitment to reducing achievement gaps among students. In 2018, a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation was awarded for enabling ATD coaches to increase their knowledge of best practices in building community colleges' diversity, equity, and inclusion. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Organizational Effectiveness grant assisted ATD with developing curriculum that enabled the ATD coaches to build DEI capacity.

In 2018, Austin Community College and Big Sandy Community and Technical College were established as Truth, Racial Healing & Transformation (TRHT) Campus Centers supported through funding from Newman's Own Foundation and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. According to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2018) "the TRHT Campus Centers will engage and empower campus and community stakeholders to uproot the conscious and unconscious biases and misbeliefs that have exacerbated racial violence and tension in American society" (p. 1). The TRHT is "based on techniques such as racial healing circles, which were adapted from the practices of indigenous communities, the TRHT framework prioritizes relationship building and narrative change" (AACU, 2018).

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Terms used in this study are general; however, this section will provide clarity to ensure that the intentions of the study and its outcomes are unambiguous.

Completion rate – The definition of this term is dependent on the student’s stated outcome for attending college. While most students attend college to earn a degree or a certificate, others attend to take courses for transfer purposes. When students achieve their stated objective in college, they are considered to have completed (Phillips & Horowitz, 2013).

Diversity – This is a broad term that can be used to describe a multitude of individual circumstances. The study recognizes Watson’s contemporary perspective, which describes diversity as:

a wide array of demographic and situational characteristics of the general population, such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, physical and mental ability, family history of college attendance, academic intentions, academic preparation, marital status, veteran status, parental status, motivational level, socioeconomic background, learning style, part-time versus full-time enrollment status, commitments and obligations outside the college, and English-speaking ability. (Ender, Chand, & Thornton, as cited in Watson, 2009, p. 13)

Diversity agenda – This is the blueprint used for institutionalizing diversity into organizational culture. The diversity agenda contends that higher education must undergo a transformational change to adapt the values needed to forge a diverse public (Aguirre & Martinez, 2006).

Open door – this expression is defined as follows:

the community college open door can best be defined as a philosophy founded on the faith that everyone can, through education, achieve their academic, career, and other life goals...It is also an expression of all the ways community college professionals value, empower, and motivate students who bring to the college unique racial, ethnic, national, gender, age, socioeconomic, geographic, educational, cultural, religious, physical, lifestyle, and other perspectives. (Myran, 2009, p. 2)

Equity – In higher education equity is defined by Bensimon and Polkinghorne (2003) as the state of equal access to and success among student populations that are underrepresented.

Equity agenda – the commitment to closing the achievement gap by assuring that each individual student has a fair and just access to the resources and opportunities he or she needs to be successful (Myran, 2009).

Equity gap – As used in this study, a resulting condition whereby there is a persistent disparity in the distribution of resources among races, religions, classes, genders, and disabilities (Malcom-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017).

Inclusion agenda – In this study, the term inclusion agenda is used to refer to the provision of services that function to create an environment that is welcoming, accepting, belonging, and open to all students, faculty, and staff (Myran, 2009).

Urban community college student profile – The conditions experienced by urban community college students characterized by their lack of financial resources, basic literacy, good study habits, time management, and other college-related skills. These students require at least one developmental course to become college-ready in addition to balancing personal responsibilities such as family and work (Myran, 2013).

Urban community college – The distinction of urban community college is a designation found under the publicly controlled subcategory of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's 2005 Basic Classifications for colleges offering the associate degree. Myran and Parsons (2013) recognize urban community colleges not only as institutions that serve large metropolitan regions anchored by urban hubs, but also for their role as primary delivery systems for "increasing the number of persons from low-income and minority backgrounds who participate in a knowledge-based economy requiring highly educated and talented workforce" (p. 9).

Underserved group – This term is used to describe minority-group, low-income, first-generation college students who experience a problematic transition to college (Green, 2006)

Underprepared – This term is used in this study to describe community college students who must enroll in developmental education classes and typically have lower persistence and graduation rates (Barbatis, 2010). Underprepared students are typically racial and ethnic minorities who were served poorly by public education and therefore do not have the skills to do college-level work (Bolden, 2009).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a lack of research regarding the role of CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda in the community college setting. This study provides community college CEOs with a framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion

development and implementation strategies and will make a significant contribution to the literature on community college leadership.

Community colleges are on the leading edge of societal efforts to overcome these persistent and entrenched inequities. These conditions demand that community college CEOs play a critical role to “ensures that diverse populations of students get what they came for: knowledge and skills that will afford them a better life than they would have had otherwise” (Wyner, 2014, p. 5). To play this critical role, community college CEOs must be apprised of the strategic framework that will support their goal of giving diverse populations actually “get what they came for...” (Wyner, 2014, p. 5). Establishing this strategic framework will prove to be beneficial to leadership at these colleges.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study is to determine the leadership role of the community college CEO in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. For the purpose of this study, Dr. Christine McPhail (2018) defines the role of the community college CEO in leading the diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda as those college-wide efforts to progress toward a state in which:

1. Students, faculty, and staff, regardless of socio-economic, racial, and ethnic groupings, have fair and just access to the resources and opportunities needed to thrive,
2. Historically underrepresented student groups have access to and participate in programs that are capable of closing the opportunity/achievement gap in student success and completion,
3. Executives identify the causes of equity gaps and close them through the redesign of policies and practices (in areas such as inclusion in mission and goals statements, policy statements, leadership practices, staffing, program structure, specific

diversity, equity, and inclusion programming, student support services, constituency relations, allocation of resources, etc.),

4. Decision-making and accountability for progress in closing the student opportunity/achievement gap is evidence-based, and
5. The college partners with other community organizations to address equity-based community issues such as poverty, racial isolation, poor schools, and high levels of illiteracy and unemployment. (McPhail, 2018)

STUDY POPULATION

For this study, the 2010 edition of the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education to identify community colleges in the state of Michigan that meet one of the criteria identified in table 3. Last updated February 13, 2019, the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education 2010 data file provides spreadsheets showing frequencies of institutions and enrollment distributions across classification categories. For this study, the use of urban and suburban community colleges that meet the above definition provide a richer view of the possible similarities and differences in the approaches of these institutions with very similar populations and challenges.

Table 3: Carnegie Classifications for Higher Education Institutions

VALUE	LABEL
3	Assoc/Pub-R-L: Associate's -- Public Rural-serving Large
4	Assoc/Pub-S-SC: Associate's-- Public Suburban-serving Single Campus
5	Assoc/Pub-S-MC: Associate's--Public Suburban-serving Multicampus
6	Assoc/Pub-U-SC: Associate's--Public Urban-serving Single Campus
7	Assoc/Pub-U-MC: Associate's--Public Urban-serving Multicampus

Source: The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2010

The following institutions were included in this study, based on their Carnegie classification.

Table 4: Michigan Community Colleges included in this Study

CARNEGIE "VALUE"	NAME	CITY	FALL 2017 ENROLLMENT
6	Grand Rapids Community College	Grand Rapids	14,269
5	Henry Ford College	Dearborn	12,786
5	Macomb Community College	Warren	21,014
4	Monroe County Community College	Monroe	3,109
6	Muskegon Community College	Muskegon	4,311
5	Oakland Community College	Bloomfield Hills	17,116
4	Schoolcraft College	Livonia	10,558
4	St Clair County Community College	Port Huron	3,601
6	Washtenaw Community College	Ann Arbor	12,335
7	Wayne County Community College Dist.	Detroit	14,806

Source: *The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2010*

The following institutions were omitted from this research because they are designated as rural.

Table 5: Michigan Community Colleges excluded from this Study

CARNEGIE "VALUE"	NAME	CITY	FALL 2017 ENROLLMENT
3	Delta College	University Center	4,976
3	Jackson College	Jackson	2,881
3	Kalamazoo Valley Community College	Kalamazoo	4,574

CARNEGIE "VALUE"	NAME	CITY	FALL 2017 ENROLLMENT
3	Kellogg Community College	Battle Creek	2,378
3	Lansing Community College	Lansing	7,461
3	Mott Community College	Flint	3,911

Source: The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education, 2010

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by one overarching question: How to determine the leadership role of community college CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda? This primary question is supported by four questions to guide the inquiry:

1. Should a community college CEO play a role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan?
2. What role should a community college president have and what responsibilities should a community college CEO have in developing an institutional DEI plan?
3. What role and responsibilities should a community college CEO have in communicating and advancing the DEI plan?
4. What challenges may a community college CEO face in advancing a DEI agenda and how should he/she address these?

GOALS OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study is to produce new knowledge that will deepen the understanding of the leadership role of the community college CEO in the development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda by identifying elements of a strategic framework and developmental factors. Community colleges with a successful diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda are best suited to serve as models for other community colleges. Community college

leaders will value the findings of this study because it can be used as a template for leading a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda.

STUDY LIMITATIONS

Because this study aims to identify the leadership role of the CEOs at community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda, a delimitation of this study is that it focuses on a limited number of community colleges in the state of Michigan. Therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to other community college settings.

Since the data collection for this study relies on interviews of CEOs, it is possible to assume that the interviewer and interviewee could have influenced each other during discussions. Under ideal conditions, interviewers and interviewees are expected to develop a partnership; however, the challenge in this study was to avoid situations where an interviewee caused an emotional reaction or influenced which questions were asked (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Additionally, for this study, it is assumed that linear causality can be ruled out because the development of the proposed strategic framework was not the direct result of a single event.

ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the national context of the diverse environment in which American community colleges exist and defines the urban community college in relationship to suburban and rural community colleges and introduces the purpose of the study, which is to identify the leadership role of the CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and

inclusion agenda. Chapter 2 focuses on leadership of diversity, equity, and inclusion agendas in community colleges. A historical context is used to drive the discussion of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the community college. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research design and the instrument used for data collection. Chapter 4 presents the objective results and outcomes of this study, and Chapter 5 reflects on the results and implications of this research data.

SUMMARY

Our nation's community college is challenged to develop a strategic framework for the executive leadership of a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The community college environment demands that the CEO recognize its unique operating conditions and therefore design a suitable diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic framework. Little, if any, scholarly research exists on identifying the role of the CEO of community colleges in the development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. This study examines the role of CEOs in leading strategies in the development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda at community colleges.

This dissertation makes the following contributions to the existing research: this study seeks to identify (1) the leadership role of the CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda, (2) the elements of a strategic framework for the development of a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda for community colleges, and (3) the developmental factors (momentum points and loss points) that contribute to the advancement of the diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to review theoretical and empirical literature related to the leadership role of CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda (DEI). This examination of the literature focused on a review of three major areas of inquiry. The first area of inquiry is a review of the literature on the components of a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The second area of inquiry is an examination of the relevant literature related to organizational change, which includes an analysis of various leadership style paradigms. The third area of inquiry is an examination of the relevant literature on leadership role of the social constructs related to DEI.

COMPONENTS OF A DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION AGENDA

Leadership of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The components of a diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda are numerous with many determining and inhibiting factors. The literature provides that during the civil rights era, landmark federal and statewide legislation established for the provision of educational benefits to “communities who had been historically and systematically marginalized from reaping the full benefits of our American democracy” (Rodriguez, 2015, p. 18). Rodriguez (2015) makes the case that community college leadership’s role in managing diversity, equity, and inclusion is “imperative in bolstering institutional graduation rates and student learning outcomes that are

equitable” (p. 18). Furthermore, Rodriguez contends, “a lack of consensus and leadership on issues of equity and diversity has affected the performance of underrepresented students, as their outcomes remain largely unchanged for 3 decades (p. 19). A Georgetown University study (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013) found that the nation’s selective colleges spend two to almost five times as much on instruction per student as community colleges suggesting that the lack of progress in diversity and equity is tied to funding.

The literature finds that the CEO must serve in a specific role in order lead the strategic development of a sustainable college-wide (DEI) agenda. According to Rodriguez (2015) the college president must serve as the stalwart champion of the DEI agenda ensuring that campus efforts are “aligned, intentional, and supported by a cross-section campus community and governing board” (p. 21). According to Achieving the Dream and The Aspen Institute (2013), successful champions of the DEI agenda must also possess “a deep commitment to student access and success; a willingness to take significant risks to advance student success; an ability to create lasting change within the college; a broad strategic vision for the college and its students, reflected in external partnerships; and the ability to raise and allocate resources in ways aligned with student success” (p. 5).

Diversity is a matter of strategic importance at many American colleges and universities. Williams (2013) asserts that institutions recognized this importance and therefore developed policy statements known as diversity agendas. According to Anderson (2008) there is no agreed-upon format for a plan that introduces the campus diversity agenda. Kezar and Eckel defined the diversity agenda as encompassing “efforts to change the campus to be more inclusive” by integrating “diversity into the structure, culture, and fabric of the institution so

that it is truly institutionalized” (2008, p. 401). Iverson (2008) offered greater specificity to diversity agendas by suggesting that they are policy documents for universities to outline their commitment to equal access in addition to creating an inclusive environment for the entire campus community. According to Williams (2013), diversity agendas are a blueprint for action and include the following elements: diversity definition, rationale, goals, recommended actions, assignments, timelines, accountability process, and a budget.

Williams (2013) described the rationale for broad areas of challenge and opportunity diversity agendas as the social justice rationale, the educational benefits rationale, and the business rationale. The social justice rationale is driven by the imperative that higher educational institutions reflect current demographic trends and address past and present social inequities. The educational benefits rationale is the result of research finding outlining the benefit of attracting and retaining students from diverse backgrounds. The business rationale recognizes the need for higher education institutions to become more inclusive to compete for students, faculty, and staff and also to prepare students for a globalized economy and diverse workforce (Williams 2013).

The strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda (DEI) requires organizational change. Aguirre and Martinez (2006) introduced a strategy for leadership at institutions of higher education seeking to implement social, educational, and cultural change in an effort to become inclusive organizations. This strategy, known as the diversity agenda, identifies co-optation and transformation as strategies employed by leadership seeking to change the organization by incorporating diversity into the institutional culture (Aguirre & Martinez 2006, p. 56). Adserias et al. (2017) writes that organizational

change may occur as either a first- or second- degree order function. According to Aguirre and Martinez (2006) co-optative change strategies are considered to be first order in that they do not result in a change in the underlying structure of the organization as outlined by its mission or values. Co-optation strategies are characterized as a rational-bureaucratic approach that seek to change diversity to acquiesce to the dominant culture's interests, while transformation strategies seek to incorporate diversity by changing the organizational culture (Aguirre & Martinez 2006, p. 57).

Other research analyzes the impact of a deeper cultural change known as transformational change. Transformational change strategies are considered to be second order because they tend to occur over time and result in the restructuring of organization culture but fall short of changing the whole organization (Adserias et al. 2017). Successful examples of transformational change are infrequent due to the complexity of most organizations (Adserias et al. 2017). However, transformational change related to diversity is possible when leaders facilitate a structured approach that outlines a shared vision of the organization's future (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). According to Aguirre and Martinez (2002) higher educational institutions can achieve the goal of establishing a diversity agenda by targeting the organizational culture using transformational change.

Another approach to organizational change seeks to embed equity into the institutional norms, practices, and policies. According to Felix et al. (2015) the Equity Scorecard is a theory-based strategy developed by Estela Bensimon that establishes practitioners (e.g., faculty, staff, leaders) as agents of their own change. Practitioners of the Equity Scorecard focus on three aspects of learning: collaborative learning, double-loop learning, and equity minded learning.

Collaborative learning is a format whereby two or more people work together to acquire knowledge mediated by cultural tools and artifacts. Loes, Culver, and Trolan (2018) found that exposure to a collaborative learning environment was responsible for influencing students' openness to diversity. In double-loop learning, Felix et al. (2015) asserts, "participants are encouraged to pull apart the problem and get to the underlying ideology or theory of the practice that underpins it" (p. 2). Paul (2003) purported that in a double-loop learning environment, practitioners seeking to increase campus diversity and multiculturalism must look beyond simply increasing enrollment of persons of color and re-assess actual causation factors such as prejudice, racial discrimination, and bias. According to Malcom-Piquex and Bensimon (2017) equity-minded learning is, "an alternate framework for understanding the causes of equity gaps in outcomes and the action needed to close them characterized by being (1) race conscious, (2) institutionally focused, (3) evidence based, (4) systematically aware, and (5) action oriented" (p. 6).

The literature recognizes that there are challenges to organizational change. Kezar (2009) points out that institutions of higher education experience challenges to implementing meaningful change resulting from: "initiative-overload, including too many stakeholders, a lack of synergy among similar efforts, an inability to prioritize, turnovers in leadership, and institutional isomorphism" (p. 2). Kezar (2014) asserts that organizations not focused on informal social networks will not understand how change occurs beyond organizational boundaries.

Measures and Assessment

The institutional indicators of effectiveness identified in this study as established by Alfred et al. (2007) measure how well the institution is functioning. Institutional indicators of effectiveness provide stakeholders with evidence to justify how resources are committed. According to Alfred et al. (2007), community colleges are expected to provide the public with a return on taxpayer and student investment through a demonstration of operations that reflect accountability. Alfred et al. (2007) establish accountability expectations as the incentive for driving institutional performance.

A method for assessing an institution's commitment to diversity is necessary for determining the success of the overall DEI strategy. The literature finds that Ng et al. (2013) developed the ACES instrument to assess four factors: (a) Attitude towards diversity; (b) Career activities and professional norms; (c) Environment conducive to diversity; and (d) Social interactions with diverse groups. While this instrument is designed for use by faculty at a research university, the four factors it measures are transferrable to the community college environment. The items for this instrument were conceptualized from a framework identified by Terenzini et al. (2001) that includes three approaches: (a) a structural approach, (b) an *in situ* contextual approach, and (c) an approach "that addresses programmatic initiatives and faculty activities" (Ng et al., 2013, p. 31).

The literature recognizes other approaches to assessing DEI. Klymyshyn, O'Neil Green, and Richardson (2010) highlight the following assessment instruments related to DEI: (a) Application and enrollment trends; (b) Persistence and graduation rates; (c) Customer satisfaction surveys; and (d) Participation in events and programs; (e) Hiring practices; and (f)

Staffing. These approaches are representative of the typical instruments generated at many colleges by the offices of institutional research. According to Klymyshyn, O'Neil, Green, and Richardson (2010) surveys and quantitative data can be analyzed to assist with managing change. Klymyshyn, O'Neil, Green, and Richardson (2010) assert "assessment efforts are essential to continual monitoring of institutional and unit activities that support the creation of an inclusive environment" (p. 141).

Mission and Vision

The literature on policy development in higher education identifies the 1980s as the time when the federal government relinquished its responsibility for providing leadership for public policy to promote equity in education to the states (Callan 1994; Hurtado et al., 1999). There was some irony to this transition since historically states promoted policies that gave little attention to addressing the educational needs of African American, Latino, and American Indian youth (Callan and Finney, 1988; Hurtado et al., 1999). As the 1990s approached, states recognized that having a skilled labor force was necessary to remain economically competitive (Callan & Finney, 1988). Callan and Finney (1988) reported, "the need to close the gaps between historically underrepresented groups and other student became apparent" thus fostering the need "to facilitate students' movement through the educational pipeline, improve undergraduate education, and improve requisite skills for a changing workplace with attainment of a baccalaureate degree" (p. 58).

During the late 1980s a variety of state policy reports were published paying particular attention to participation and achievement of minority students (Hurtado et al. 1999). A report by the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) which established The Task Force on

Minority Achievement acknowledged the importance of federal government's role yet recommended that states assume a larger leadership responsibility. A few years later the National Task Force for Minority Achievement in Higher Education (1990) sponsored by the Education Commission of the States recommended that every state embrace the goals of equitable representation in enrollment and comparable graduation rates for all student groups (Hurtado et al., 1999).

The literature on policy development at community colleges explains the role played by the conditions that exist within the communities they serve. To that end, the cultural heritage of governing board members at community colleges is a critical factor in confronting community issues (Gillet-Karam, 2013). According to Gillet-Karam (2013) when trustees are members of the college community they are invested because "they know its history, experiences, students, businesses, and economic conditions" (p. 38). In the late 1990s boards became influential in the improvement of the urban quality of life due to the efforts of James Gollattscheck, Ervin Harlacher, and Patricia Cross who advocated for an emphasis on educational programming and community services (Gillet-Karam, 2013). The following ten recommendations are offered by Gillet-Karam (2013) to board members of community colleges in urban settings:

1. Ensure the mission–vision is integrated into the fabric of the institution. In an urban setting, this usually means the broadest possible scope of board–community–business relations.
2. Explain and affirm institutional values around the urban mission, its foci in the community and among students. In some urban institutions, as many as 90% of students are urban poor and in need of developmental (remedial) coursework that is critical to their lifelong success and therefore should be a cornerstone of the college mission.

3. Ensure that the board is the outreach arm of the president of the institution. Urban colleges in particular must have a face and identity throughout the often-distrustful or unfamiliar community. Boards must monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the college and the college president among all constituencies.
4. Audit and study the business of the board—budgets, real estate, hiring, everything.
5. Maintain the macro view of the college internally and externally to all constituencies. Compare to benchmarks at other similar institutions.
6. Manage change for the institution. In an urban setting, this process does not happen overnight. The job of the board is to maintain a macro view of the college and its environment.
7. Keep diversity as a board identity—involve state, regional, and local interest groups. Urban representativeness is essential.
8. Use research as an underpinning for board involvement and action, as advised by legendary management consultant Peter Drucker (2001).
9. Understand the politics of colleges, boards, and elected officials.
10. Maintain a thorough and continuing evaluation of board protocol, which may well include an ongoing assessment of the effectiveness of boards. (p. 43)

The community college mission is a formal document designed to articulate the institution's purpose and direction (Ayers, 2002). The community college mission should reflect established history and values resulting from leadership's commitment to the institution's philosophy and objectives (Ayers, 2002). There is debate surrounding community college mission because institutional roles and priorities can vary from time to time and place to place (Ayers, 2002).

The literature on the development of mission and value statements suggests that an emphasis be placed on a "dual commitment to individual educational needs as well as the larger economic and social needs of communities served" (Myran & Parsons, p.12, 2013).

Furthermore, recent missions and value statements for community colleges have evolved to incorporate a community development dimension to realize the synergy between economic success and human capital (Myran & Parsons, 2013).

According to Vaughan (1997), the community college mission statement is intentionally designed to be flexible to meet the needs of the college's constituents. Vaughan (1991) asserts that this assimilation property of the community college mission allows it to be reshaped to respond to community needs. The community college mission statement's assimilation property allows for the incorporation of a focus that addresses broad-based social issues such as lack of diversity (Vaughan, 1997). Ivery (2007) contends that the mission statement delineates the various functions of the college, which includes the articulation of its social role.

Strategic Plan

Scholarship on diversity in higher education recommends that, in addition to communicating the value of diversity to internal and external constituents, a diversity strategic plan establishes a requirement for the allocation of resources (ASHE Education Report, 2007). The ASHE Education Report (2007) determined that "diversity strategic plans are a preeminent best practice because they draw attention to the importance of diversity and establish measurable goals... A diversity strategic plan communicates the importance of diversity to both external and internal constituencies and helps ensure that diversity has a place in institutional resource allocation and prioritization" (p. 91). Diversity plans must focus on broad issues such as changes in campus administrative practices, progress toward student learning goals, and the enhancement of intellectual diversity in order for cultural transformation to occur (Humphreys,

2000). The ASHE Higher Education Report (2007) provided this list of key elements of a diversity strategic plan:

1. Values, vision, or mission statement that identifies the importance and value of diversity and inclusion and establishes links to strategic institutional goals in a broader regional, national, and global context.
 2. A conceptual framework that provides an overarching rationale for diversity.
 3. Input from constituencies and councils or commissions, and governance councils in plan development.
 4. Objectives and milestones presented in a multiyear format.
 5. Accountability for fulfillment of goals for departments, divisions, and executive positions or the collaboration needed to achieve objectives.
 6. Incentives and recognition for hiring or other diversity-related initiatives.
 7. Assessment and mechanisms such as surveys or other diversity assessment tools to monitor progress and provide data.
 8. Infrastructure, budgetary, and staffing resources necessary to implement the plan.
- (p. 92)

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS RELATED TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Religious Issues

A review of the literature on religion is essential to this study on the leadership role of community college CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The origin of American higher education institutions dates back to the founding of Harvard in 1636 with its primary purpose of educating clergy (Harold, 2004). However, the 20th century “witnessed a dramatic shift as religion as a core element of the curriculum and the church as a predominant influence in mission, governance, and campus ethos became increasingly marginalized in the academy” (Harold, 2004, p. 112). According to Marsden (1994) this process of secularization of higher education in America, which began

around 1800 and ended around 1940, was influenced by the advance of scientific inquiry and changes in the academic curriculum.

Harold (2004) asserts that during the mid- to late 20th century “a resurgence of scholarly activity regarding religion and higher education characterized by the questioning of exclusive claims of the scientific method created a new opportunity for religion and the church to re-engage the academy in a significant manner” (p. 114). During this time, Pascarella and Terenzini’s research (1991) found that college graduates’ attitudes were more secularized than young adults with some college or no college due to normal maturation and college influence. Harold (2004) reports that “decades of campus neglect of, or at least disinterest in, students’ religious development may suggest that the academy remains an inhospitable environment for fostering spiritual growth.” (p. 125).

Racial and Ethnicity Issues

Literature on racial issues in education plays a significant role in informing this study. Racial issues are rooted in the American higher educational system’s reliance on the Eurocentric worldview for transmitting knowledge, which caters to the dominant group and neglects inclusion of the voices of people of color (Aragon & Brantmeier, 2009). Aragon and Brantmeier, (2009) assert that institutions of higher education perpetuate a Eurocentric epistemology such that “students outside of the western Eurocentric perspective are often excluded from institutional mobility because they experience significant institutional barriers,” therefore; “the cultural capital of people of color is devalued and viewed as a deficit rather than as a potential asset for institutional and societal flourishing” (p. 42).

Multiracial Democracy

This study reviewed literature relating to the multiracial democracy to ascertain the impact of social climate on the leadership role of CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. Glasper (2013) recognizes the community college as accountable for the social contract and civic obligation to provide opportunity for those born into less favorable social and economic positions. Thus, the notion of the multiracial democracy originated as a way to address unresolved racial inequities by dismantling the impact of legalized discrimination (Myran & Parsons, 2013). According to Myran and Parsons (2013), “a multiracial democracy is a society in which people of all races, religions, classes, and genders unite in support of principles of social justice and racial and civic equality” (p.8). Multiracial democracy is relevant to this study because it “can also enhance our understanding of race itself as a social construction and the historical processes by which racial hierarchies/regimes have developed and influenced contemporary practices of segregation” (Ivery & Bassett, 2011, p. 134).

The concept of the multiracial democracy challenges contemporary views that, while flawed, the American democracy is color-blind and inclusive to all races, instead advancing the position that “the United States has severely limited the access of its populations on the basis of race to participation in a democratic government and society” (p. 134). Multiracial democracy is relevant for this study because it “represents an improvement over the contemporary color-blind discourse for “its opposition to race conscious practices that are necessary to redress historical structural racial inequalities and, indeed, disavowal that such inequalities are today linked to race” (Ivery, 2011, p. 133). Ivery (2013) contends that

community colleges are positioned to advance the multiracial democracy in key areas such as:

(a) The philosophy of governing boards; (b) Institutional leadership; (c) Community and educational partnerships; (d) Workforce development; (d) Curriculum; (e) Student services; (f) Voter registration; and (g) The development of multicultural programs.

Ethnicity

This study is informed by research on ethnicity as it relates to the strategic development of a college-wide DEI agenda. Ethnicity is often confused with race. The U.S. Census Bureau describes race as self-identification with one or more social groups and ethnicity as the determination of whether a person is Hispanic or not. Garcia (2017) argues that the epistemic criteria for race and ethnicity make it difficult to distinguish them. According to Garcia (2017) race is a social construct that is somewhat contextual while ethnicity is highly contextual.

The literature finds studies that provide conflicting insight on ethnicity. The contact hypothesis popularized by Gordon Allport found that contact between racial and ethnic groups will have the impact of reducing prejudice (Shammas, 2015). According to Shammas (2015) “the integrated threat theory posits that cross-ethnic contact might not reduce discrimination if negative conditions prevail” (p. 69). Negative conditions are defined as group anxiety, group ignorance, or perceived threats to a group. Social dominance theory posits that hierarchies with an ethnic group often result in conflict and power struggles (Stewart & Tran, 2018).

Gender

The literature on gender bias makes a noteworthy contribution to this research. Townsend (2008) found that the community college has achieved parity on the fronts of pay

equity and equal opportunity for career advancement, however, some focus is still needed in the area accommodating women's special needs. For females, there remains to be a need "for comprehensive family leave policies, institutional childcare, stopping of tenure clocks for pregnancy or family care needs, and acknowledgement of women as mothers by providing rooms for pumping breast milk" (Townsend, 2008, p. 13). According to Lester and Klein (2017), a 2011 report published by the Georgetown University Center for Education and Workforce found that women and individuals in historically underrepresented groups tend to select programs of study with lower paying prospects, and even when they select programs with higher wages, they are still paid 30% less than males.

The recognition of gender inequities in community colleges is also a focus of this study. Lester and Klein (2017) assert, "the landscape of gender inequity in community colleges has significantly broadened to include men, race, ethnicity, masculinity, performance, LGBTQ ..." (p. 13). According to Lester and Klein (2017), the community college is a good fit for men of color due to their need for part-time and evening availability, vocational course offerings, and convenient locations. However, Sutherland (2011) found that men of color at community colleges described experiencing "social incongruence" whereby they were made to feel like outsiders (p. 275). Wood (2014) found that Black men were often reluctant to engage their faculty out of fears of being labeled as academically inferior.

Inclusion vs. Understanding of Differences

Inclusion is a shared focus of this study, therefore, a review of literature on inclusion offers a foundational perspective on this research. Whitelaw (2016) defines inclusion "as a sense of belonging, having the ability to participate in the social, economic and political lives of

one's communities and having all contributions to the community acknowledged" (p. 34). This study is also informed by the understanding of differences. According to Martin et al. (2020), an increased understanding of "different viewpoints and cultural differences" (p. 4) can influence one's appreciation for inclusion.

INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Faculty Support and Involvement

The American Council on Education (ACE) (Griffin, 2019) recommends four strategies for increasing diversity among faculty. First, ACE recommends that programs be tied to the recruitment and retention of minority faculty link to programs that focus on recruiting undergraduate and graduate students. Another recommendation is for institutions to recruit from external sources such as business, industry, and government. A third strategy requires that the search process be thorough in an effort to increase the candidate pool. Finally, ACE recommends that institutions offer support mechanisms that function to improve the likelihood an individual will have long-term success.

The American Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act established the legal mandate for providing accommodations to students with disabilities. While faculty play a critical role in reducing barriers to college success for students with disabilities, the literature finds "there is no universal policy regarding inclusion that all postsecondary institutions must enforce" (Wynants & Dennis, p. 33). According to Wynants and Dennis (2017) students with disabilities are plagued with low retention and graduation rates resulting from factors such as lack of self-determination, an unsupportive campus climate and poor instruction. Barnard,

Stevens, Siwatu, and Lan (2008) assert that a common institutional barrier encountered by students with disabilities in higher education is faculty who do not understand their challenges. Wynants and Dennis (2017) found that “instructors who viewed a disability from a social constructivist point of view reported using more inclusive teaching practices than those who viewed students with disabilities as defective learners” (p. 34). According to Wynants and Dennis (2017) “the social constructivist viewpoint acknowledges that students with disabilities experience challenges that change with alterations in tasks, environments, and instructional methods and accepts that such students’ needs are within the continuum of needs shared by all learners” (p. 34).

Curriculum, Pedagogy, and Research

Curriculum, pedagogy, and research program structures provide the underlying foundational for addressing the educational inequalities found in high-density centers. These initiatives function to close the educational gaps that separate groups based on their classifications. Diversity initiatives enhance the presence of an institutionalized structural component that advocates collaboration. At Maricopa Community College “an advisory council and its individual coordinators interface with other areas of the organization to provide information, consultation, research, and reports that promote diversity and inclusiveness in support of student success” (Glasper, 2013, p. 78).

The community college curriculum is the institution’s commitment to providing access to college and has evolved in response to changes in the local community. Schuyler (1999) asserts that the fundamental elements of the community college curriculum; general education, vocational education, and remedial or developmental education, are in response to

the distinct goals of students: preparation for transfer to four-year institutions, education for employment, and improvement of basic skills not mastered in high school. The curriculum at a community college addresses the needs of an ethnically diverse community as well as reflects “the college’s awareness of the economic and personal challenges of a primarily low-income urban community” (Pardron, 2013, p. 65).

Staff Engagement and Involvement

ACE (1989) recommends the following strategies for colleges seeking to develop staff for the purpose of diversity, equity, and inclusion engagement and involvement. First, there must be commitment from the president and governing board. The next step is to examine recruitment and selection procedures to ensure they will yield the desirable pool of candidates. During the interview process, ACE recommends providing an opportunity for candidates to engage other members from diverse groups already on campus. Finally, ACE recommends that the institution review its policies in an effort to ensure that new hires are afforded the opportunity for job growth and professional development.

Student Support and Involvement

Institutional and program structures exist in the form of programs, partnerships, and measures taken by an institution to expand student support and involvement of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness. Developmental education is the community college’s response to accommodating the need for open access to higher education in along with declining scholastic abilities of high school students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Community colleges refer students to developmental education courses when they do not have the skills to perform at college level.

While they are not accepted for credit toward a degree, development education courses teach underprepared students the essentials of reading, writing, and arithmetic (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Other forms of institutional and program structures are found in the variety of campus services and programs. Financial aid is considered a campus-wide diversity initiative because it can be used to promote diversity when tuition costs are not offset by grants (St. John, Paulsen, & Carter, 2005). Community colleges also employ internal and external constituency groups for the purpose of advancing an inclusive culture. In addition to groups that support various ethnic groups, some campus diversity initiatives are designed to support constituency groups representing lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees. Glasper (2013) contended that internal and external constituency groups play an essential role in infusing diversity into the campus climate.

Administrative Leadership and Institutional Support

The governance model in place at any given community college has the ultimate objective of conducting operations in accordance with the institution's mission statement. To be effective, this model for the leadership of a comprehensive diversity program for community colleges must demonstrate that it is supported by the college's governance structure. In this study selected community colleges will be surveyed to assess the role of governance in establishing the model community college diversity program. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO), who reports to the institution's governing board, is responsible for being the chief caretaker and driver of the institution's mission and vision (Moriarty, 1994).

The college governing board is a public corporation; therefore, they are legally responsible for all college affairs (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Under optimal conditions, “the community college governing board and the president form the partnership that ensures that the community college is responsive to the changing education needs of the citizens in the college’s service area” (Myran, 2003, p. 5). The board functions as a “bridge between college and community, translating community needs for education into college policies and protecting the college from untoward external demands” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 138).

According to Boggs and McPhail (2016) leaders of community colleges should employ the following five strategies for management and institutionalization of DEI policies: (1) build an inclusive campus environment, (2) develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan, (3) practice broad-based engagement, (4) conduct professional development training, and (5) redesign structures, policies, and practices.

The first strategy for management and institutionalization of DEI policies as identified by Boggs and McPhail (2016) is build an inclusive campus environment. Achieving an inclusive work environment requires that “college leaders need to work from a well-documented plan of action, complete with goals, objectives, and many small, manageable tasks to help realize change” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 97). College leaders should “strive for equity and inclusion instead of equality” because equity is the result of transforming the campus community (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 97).

The second strategy for management and institutionalization of DEI policies as identified by Boggs and McPhail (2016) is develop a diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. According to Boggs and McPhail (2016) “diversity and equity can lead to inclusion, but inclusion is a value

that must be practiced throughout all sectors of the college” (p. 97). College leaders should incorporate diversity principles into the institution by making diversity principles a curricular requirement (Boggs & McPhail, 2016).

The third strategy for management and institutionalization of DEI policies as identified by Boggs and McPhail (2016) is practice broad-based engagement. To create an environment where employees are culturally competent “college leaders should work to create campus climates that encourage faculty, administrators, and staff members to participate in the development of college-wide policies around diversity, equity, and inclusion” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 98).

The fourth strategy for management and institutionalization of DEI policies as identified by Boggs and McPhail (2016) is conduct professional development training. According to Boggs and McPhail (2016) “building a culture of inclusion requires education through programs that focus on diversity in age, race, religion, culture, social class, gender, sexual orientation, degree of disability, and physical abilities” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 98).

The fifth strategy for management and institutionalization of DEI policies as identified by Boggs and McPhail (2016) is redesign structures, policies, and practices. Boggs and McPhail (2016) determined that DEI “must be supported by all sectors of the college” therefore, “community college leaders are encouraged to identify ways to understand and embrace the diversity in the student population beyond special events-diversity must be imbedded into the policies and practices at the college” (Boggs & McPhail, 2016, p. 99).

Resource Allocation

A successful resource development strategy is necessary to sustain all college operations. Wyner (2014) contended that the community college executive leadership must serve as effective stewards of the budget ensuring that resources are consistently allocated in ways that align with the student success mission. Since the 2007 economic downturn Lassiter (2013) reports that states spent 28% less per student in 2013 than they did in 2008 based on the annual Grapevine study by Illinois State University (Oliff, Palacios, Johnson, and Leachman, 2013). Ross, Yan, and Johnson (2015) report that massive job losses during the 2008-2009 Great Recession resulted in lower property collection in urban areas. Community colleges dependent on local property taxes as a source of revenue suffered substantial losses.

The business and finance plan is a roadmap for how the college will support its mission while achieving the goals outlined in its strategic plan (Myran, 2013, p. 96). Effective community college business and financial plans must demonstrate their ability to be performance-based. Effective business and financial plans are crafted by business and finance administrators with input from the college's executive leadership. Business and finance administrators contribute to the success of the institution by managing the college's fiscal resources to ensure that there exists a proper balance between assets and liabilities (p. 95). According to Lorenzo (1994) business and financial administrators utilize their exposure to academic and nonacademic environments to help the institution achieve its stated purpose. In a community college environment, business and finance administrators must address the disparities in income, employment and educational opportunities brought on by the pre-existing unfinished multiracial democracy (Myran, p. 94).

As discussed above, the literature reviewed in this study found that community college business and finance strategies must be designed to address the conditions that plague urban settings. One such strategy suggests that “high-performing organizations ‘jump the S-curve’ to a new business model before the old one starts to stall” (Myran, 2013, p. 95). A second strategy known as the business and finance model is a comprehensive approach with four interlocking elements designed to add value for students, the community, and the college itself. A third strategy involves basing business and financial decisions solely on data and analytics. A fourth strategy recommends that colleges adapt a multitiered tuition matrix that offers greater financial aid for low-income students.

Constituency Relationships

Community and educational partnerships are essential to establishing a diversity platform. Community colleges are highly involved in community and educational partnerships through their contract services. Contract services are defined as “instruction that is provided for occupational purposes, usually outside the college-credit program” (Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 328). Community colleges engage their communities in a variety of endeavors that often result in lasting partnerships. External entities cultivate partnerships with community colleges because “the college’s closeness to the students and communities they serve makes them more approachable and more attractive to potential partners than most four-year institutions” (Spangler, 2002, p. 78).

Career education and workforce development initiatives function to provide an educational pathway to sustainable employment for diverse groups. Career education and workforce development “includes economic and social equity initiatives, college and career

readiness programs, dual enrollment in cooperation with school districts, and the building of corporate and community partnerships” (Myran & Ivery, 2013, p. 46). To demonstrate their commitment to career education and workforce development, community colleges have upgraded services such as orientation, advising, and first year experience to align with the knowledge and skill requirements desired by the ever-changing workplace. Additionally, community colleges offer training partnerships for local K-12 school districts and community organizations.

With many urban residents endeavoring to find substantial employment that will better prepare them to assimilate into the American labor force; community college leadership will need to define how they respond to economic and social equity issues in terms of participation by disadvantaged groups in career education and workforce development. In this study selected community colleges will be surveyed to assess the role of career education and workforce development in establishing the model community college diversity program.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has examined the literature and research pertaining to the leadership role of CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. This strategy will give leadership at community colleges a blueprint for institutionalizing their diversity and inclusion programs. Research associated with developing strategies for advancing campus diversity at four-year institutions of higher education is readily available. Research associated with community college leadership is also available. However, little research exists to address the core purpose of this project which requires combining

leadership's role in advancing a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda at community colleges.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 stated the purpose of this qualitative basic study was to determine the leadership role of the CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. Chapter 2 reviewed literature and research on the components of a DEI agenda, social constructs related to DEI, and the institutional commitment to DEI. Chapter 3 will provide sample demographic information, timeline, data collection approaches, and data analysis methods. The researcher's role in Chapter 3 will be to outline a design methodology that functions to yield verifiable results as well as protect the participants.

PURPOSE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to identify the leadership role of the CEOs of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. This study is guided by one overarching question: What is the leadership role of community college CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda? This primary question is supported by the following questions to guide the inquiry:

1. Should a community college CEO play a role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan?
2. What role should a community college president have and what responsibilities should a community college CEO have in developing an institutional DEI plan?
3. What role and responsibilities should a community college CEO have in communicating and advancing the DEI plan?

4. What challenges may a community college CEO face in advancing a DEI agenda and how should he/she address these?

STUDY PARTICIPANTS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

The Sample

The collection of data process used for this study was purposive sampling. Michigan community college CEOs have been identified based on the researcher’s personal knowledge of their ability to establish their institution’s strategic priorities related to DEI. The study included interviews with seven institutional representatives. The researcher initially used the 2018 edition of the Carnegie Classification spreadsheet file to identify the CEOs of Community Colleges in the state of Michigan that meet one of the following criteria:

- Public Suburban-serving associate’s degree-awarding single-campus institution
- Public Suburban-serving associate’s degree-awarding multicampus institution
- Public Urban-serving associate’s degree-awarding single-campus institution
- Public Urban-serving associate’s degree-awarding multicampus institution

Table 6: Study Participants

PRESIDENT #	STUDY NAME / PSEUDONYM
1	CEO Nesbary
2	CEO Pink
3	CEO Quartey
4	CEO Sawyer
5	CEO Cerney
6	CEO Kavalhuna
7	CEO Ivery

BASIC QUALITATIVE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Elite Interviews

The research methodology for this project were conducted using online meeting room interviews of individuals in key positions at community colleges. Recognizing that access to key individuals would be limited due to the nature of their responsibilities at the institutions, interviews were conducted based on the “elite interview” format. Elite interviewing is a research methodology that evolved in the sociology and political science disciplines characterized by extensive analysis of documents and background work prior to conducting interviews (Kezar 2007; Dexter 1970; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Elite interviews are more open-ended than traditional structured interviews, allowing leadership to focus on contributing their specific knowledge to the data gathering process (Kezar, 2006; Dexter, 1970). The use of elite interviews in this project functioned to give substance to prior analysis of institutional structure, policies, and procedural controls (Hochschild, 2009). The interviews themselves were designed to give interviewees freedom to shape the direction of the discussion to ensure that the interview remained focused (Kezar, 2007).

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using an electronic videoconferencing software and were digitally recorded. The researcher asked participants to share their experiences and strategies by responding to a series of open-ended interview questions related to the CEO’s leadership role in the strategic development of the college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. The researcher used follow-up questions during the interview to encourage elaboration and clarification. Interviews were digitally recorded for accuracy, and the researcher had the interviews professionally transcribed. After the transcripts were

transcribed, they were sent to the participants in a follow-up email, giving them the opportunity to review transcripts for accuracy and clarification. Additionally, the researcher had the opportunity to review the full transcripts and clarify their responses.

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

The interview protocol developed by Kezar et al. (2007) for determining the role played by presidents in advancing DEI on campus was applied to this research that

focused on examining the main strategies and activities that presidents believed helped to advance the diversity agenda, the specific role of the presidents in advancing diversity on campus, the leadership style or approach they used, lessons they have learned about leadership in advancing institutional diversity, how they handled situations of conflict and controversy, how the campus context shaped the advancement of the diversity agenda and politics they faced. (p. 76)

Establishing rapport with each of the interviewees was important because it could potentially impact the degree to which individuals would share information about the success or failure of strategies used by community college leadership for moving a diversity agenda forward (Holstein and Gubrium 1995; Kezar et al., 2007; Merriam 1998; Seidman 1991). To establish rapport and garner trust, background information was gathered on the interviewees from websites, published literature, and press releases. Only participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study were contacted.

The open-ended interview questions included a two predetermined probing questions relating to the president's personal opinions on their job satisfaction and overall alignment with the institution. While one of the interview questions sought to determine whether the institution has an existing DEI plan, another question addressed the challenges associated with advancing DEI at the institution. Instrumentation questions were designed to determine the

role of the CEO and the board of trustees in championing DEI initiatives. Finally, instrumentation questions were designed to determine whether the institution achieved any success with advancing DEI and how the institution assessed that success.

DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

Thematic analysis

For this project, thematic analysis of the participant responses was used to analyze the interview results. Thematic analysis is a systematic, replicable process used for highlighting which themes are relevant to the phenomenon under study (Daly et al., 1997; Joffe, 2012). Thematic analysis focuses on a specific pattern of themes found in the data. Joffe contends that a thematic analysis “can contain *manifest* content — that is something directly observable such as mentions of stigma across a series of interview transcripts... alternatively, it can contain more latent content, such as references in the transcripts which refer to stigma implicitly, via mentions of maintaining social distance from a particular group” (Joffe, 2012, p. 2).

The qualitative research conducted in this study uses Boyatzis’ (1998) thematic analysis by introducing a system of coding themes as either deductive or inductive. Deductive themes are those ideas which are introduced by the researcher while inductive themes are those which are found in the raw data itself (Joffe, 2012). The deductive and inductive codes established in this study were determined by Kezar et al. (2007) and are described in Table 7. Kezar et al. (2007) outlined the criteria for identifying the themes and subcategories as being based on “(1) the number of different individuals who brought up the code/theme and (2) the amount of

time they discussed the concept and the level of significance they placed on a code/theme” (Kezar et. al, 2007, p. 76-77).

Table 7: Coding Themes

DEDUCTIVE CODES	INDUCTIVE CODES
Literature on campus-wide diversity initiatives	Strategies that had not been identified in previous literature
Examples: mission statement, vision statement, strategic planning	Examples: working closely with students, partnering with student affairs professionals, obtaining board support

Source: Kezar et al. 2007

Triangulation was used in this study to validate that the variance experienced is the reflection of the trait and not the experimental method. Triangulation is also important in an effort to address the completeness, convergence, and dissonance of key themes introduced in the data. Campbell and Fiske (1959) who are responsible for developing “multiple operationism” argued that researchers should employ more than one source of data, methods, investigators, or theories in the validation process (Campbell & Fisk 1959; Jick 1979).

The following cross-validation of the content analysis findings of this project is built into the design (see Table 8):

- The institution’s mission and vision statements were analyzed to determine the degree to which it emphasizes the development of a DEI agenda.
- The website and other documents published by the institution were also analyzed to determine the degree to which it emphasizes the development of a DEI agenda.

Table 8: Participating Community Colleges

INSTRUMENT	CONTENT
Grand Rapids Community College	
Mission	GRCC is an open access college that prepares individuals to attain their goals and contribute to the community.
Vision	GRCC provides relevant educational opportunities that are responsive to the needs of the community and inspires students to meet economic, social and environmental challenges to become active participants in shaping the world of the future.
Website DEI Reference	The Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion will lead institutional objectives that move forward principles of access, equity, and inclusion in every facet of campus policies, practices, and culture. At the forefront of ODEI’s rigorous pursuit of cultural literacy are training and development, and the initiatives offered through the Woodrick Center Social Justice Consortium.
Henry Ford College	
Mission	Henry Ford College transforms lives and builds better futures by providing outstanding education. As a student-centered, evidence-based college, our success is measured by the success of our students. We empower learners through the development of independent, critical, and creative thinking, and we foster diversity, inclusion, understanding, and acceptance to prepare learners to succeed in a global society. We anticipate and respond to the needs of our stakeholders, exceed their expectations, and serve the public good.
Vision	First Choice, Best Choice
Website DEI Reference	<p>HFC provides a welcoming, supportive environment for YOU. This includes all students, staff, faculty, alumni, visitors, suppliers, and community members. No matter where you are from; what you believe; what your abilities and talents are; what your gender, identity or expression is; what your sexual orientation is; how you look; how you dress; how smart you are; how old you are; what your socioeconomic status is; or any other aspect of the human experience:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are dedicated to LIVING the values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. • We invite and appreciate all HFC community members who join us in a spirit of mutual respect, as we actively foster connection, openness, courageous dialog, understanding, and acceptance. These can be challenging goals in an environment of so much human diversity. We embrace the challenge! <p><i>We Stand with You</i> HFC’s long-standing commitment to welcoming a diverse community is woven throughout its College Mission Statement, values, policies, services, and daily practices.</p>
Macomb Community College	
Mission	Transform lives and communities through the power of education, enrichment and economic development.

INSTRUMENT	CONTENT
Vision	Macomb Community College will be a leader in higher education, improving society through innovative learning experiences that create pathways for personal advancement and drive economic vitality.
Website DEI Reference	The Macomb Community College Board of Trustees reaffirms our commitment to diversity and inclusion, which are underscored in the college's core values and organizational philosophy. As a community-based institution, Macomb is committed to providing comprehensive education, enrichment and economic development experiences designed to promote student success, individual growth, and social advancement. We recognize that engaging as members of a multicultural world, that fostering awareness and understanding of varied cultural perspectives, and that cultivating a welcoming environment is important to enhancing the resiliency and vibrancy of our community. Macomb Community College remains firmly dedicated to these tenets of diversity and inclusion.
Monroe County Community College	
Mission	<p>Monroe County Community College enriches lives in our community by providing opportunity through student-focused, affordable, quality higher education and other learning experiences. MCCC accomplishes its mission through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-secondary pathways for students who plan to pursue further education • Occupational programs and certificates for students preparing for immediate employment upon completion • Curriculum that prepares students to effectively communicate, think critically, and be socially and culturally aware • Comprehensive student support services • A wealth of opportunities for intellectual, cultural, personal and career enhancement • Training and retraining to meet the needs of an evolving economy • Key partnerships to enhance educational services and opportunities
Vision	Monroe County Community College will be recognized for our student-focused service, academic excellence, affordability, innovation, community responsiveness and student success.
Muskegon Community College	
Mission	Muskegon Community College, dedicated to equity and excellence, prepares students, builds communities, and improves lives.
Vision	An educated inclusive community
Website DEI Reference	<p>We believe . . .</p> <p>We believe everyone will benefit from the work of our dedicated students, faculty, and staff in making our campus and community the best it can be. Attend our programs, events and use the services and resources that will support your needs. Commit to participate.</p> <p>Diversity: Diversity encompasses complex differences and similarities in perspectives, identities, and points of view among members of an institution as well as among individuals who make up the wider community. Diversity includes important and interrelated dimensions of human identity such as race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, socio-</p>

INSTRUMENT	CONTENT
	<p>economic status, nationality, citizenship, religion, sexual orientation, ability and age. Source: https://www.luther.edu/ed-accreditation/assets/Standard_4_IR_3_10_13.pdf</p> <p>Equity: Fairness or justice in the way people are treated. (Merriam-Webster)</p> <p>Inclusion: “The achievement of an environment in which all individuals are treated fairly and respectfully, have equal access to opportunities and resources, and can contribute fully to the organization’s success”. (Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) http://www.talentintelligence.com/blog/bid/377611/inclusion-and-the-benefits-of-diversity-in-the-workplace</p> <p>Disability Support Services – Room 2046A (231) 777-0309 Disability Support Services is an important part of the broad range of services offered at Muskegon Community College. Our goal is to provide effective services, materials, and resources that enable students with disabilities to be successful.</p> <p>Title IX – Room 2109 (231) 777-0350 Muskegon Community College is committed to developing and sustaining a healthy and diverse learning and working environment that recognizes the value of each individual. MCC advances a safe, pleasant and respectful culture for all, free from sexual violence and sexual harassment as well as dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking. At MCC such behaviors are forms of sexual discrimination that are not tolerated and are prohibited by College policy and the law. For more Title IX resource information, call Counseling and Advising at (231) 777-0362 or Human Resources at (231) 777-0350.</p>
Schoolcraft College	
Mission	Schoolcraft is a comprehensive, open-door, community-based college. The mission of the College is to provide a transformational learning experience designed to increase the capacity of individuals and groups to achieve intellectual, social, and economic goals.
Vision	The College wishes to be a first-choice provider of educational services, a competent organization, functioning with integrity, behaving strategically, and providing value beyond expectations.
Website DEI Reference	<p>Scholars Taking off Academically & Rising to Success (S.T.A.R.S.) Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion (DEI) Leadership Program is an opportunity at Schoolcraft College that offers unique experiences to develop students as scholars and leaders. This program also prepares students as professionals entering into a global and diverse workplace.</p> <p>The four pillars of the program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership • Academic Success • Service Learning • Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

INSTRUMENT	CONTENT
	Three ways to get involved: become a mentor, mentee, or a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) Scholar. Participants in the program will be awarded a scholarship for engaging with the program for the semester.
Wayne County Community College District	
Mission	Wayne County Community College District’s mission is to empower individuals, businesses, and communities to achieve their higher education and career advancement goals through excellent, accessible, culturally diverse, and globally competitive programs and services.
Vision	Wayne County Community College District will be known as a premier community college and innovator in the areas of high quality academic and career education, talent development in support of regional economic growth, diversity and inclusion, and technological advancement.
Website DEI Reference	<p>Wayne County Community College District is committed to providing the highest standard of educational services to all of our students by creating an environment that is conducive to personal growth and enrichment. Pluralism is the core of a healthy educational and work environment, and our goal is to give students the opportunity to learn about themselves through exposure and by embracing other cultures.</p> <p>WCCCD offers various programs and events that help build bridges among people. Through our unique Study Abroad Program, students are educated outside of the classroom and beyond pages in history books and travel to Africa, Australia, Mexico, and other countries. Our Distance Learning Programs have opened our doors to the world and we now have students in other countries who take our classes online. All five campus locations also regularly celebrate ethnic and cultural festivals such as Islam and America and the Hispanic Heritage Festival.</p> <p>At WCCCD we celebrate all ethnic heritages and view them as learning opportunities. Learning is seeing something in more than one dimension and appreciating its uniqueness and we are committed to providing an education that helps our students build a better world for everyone.</p> <p>We all share a common bond of communication, music, dance, art, architecture, and food. WCCCD strengthens the common threads that bind all of us.</p>

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided the rationale in support of qualitative research that emphasized utilizing thematic analysis of elite interviews with the participants. Despite limitations in sample size and geographic scope, the study design enabled the researcher to engage in robust dialog and data collection.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research was to examine the leadership role of chief executive officers (CEOs) of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. A qualitative design was used for this study because it allowed the researcher and participants to engage in an interactive dialogue resulting in an informed discussion. This study was guided by the Carnegie Classification spreadsheet file to identify community colleges in the state of Michigan that meet one of the following criteria:

- Public Suburban-serving associate's degree awarding single campus institution
- Public Suburban-serving associate's degree awarding multi-campus institution
- Public Urban-serving associate's degree awarding single campus institution
- Public Urban-serving associate's degree awarding multi-campus institution

Ten email invitations were sent to potential participants, and seven agreed to participate in the study. The presidents, while coming from different backgrounds and serving different geographic and demographic populations, articulated common themes that influence their leadership role in the strategic development of a college-wide DEI agenda.

The following sections present a review of the themes articulated by the seven participants on their application of the AACC *Competencies for Community College Leaders*. This study is guided by one overarching question: What is the leadership role of community college

CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda?

This primary question is supported by the following questions to guide the inquiry:

1. Should a community college CEO play a role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan?
2. What role should a community college president have and what responsibilities should a community college CEO have in developing an institutional DEI plan?
3. What role and responsibilities should a community college CEO have in communicating and advancing the DEI plan?

The study is significant because it contributes to the lack of research regarding the role of CEOs in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda in the community college setting. In addition, the study provides community college CEOs with a framework of diversity, equity, and inclusion development and implementation strategies and will make a significant contribution to the literature on community college leadership. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) *Competencies for Community College Leaders*, which informs this study, asserts that “while no one is born with an innate endowment of experience in every competency, at one time or another experience with or knowledge of each competency is needed” (AACC, 2018, p. 4).

The AACC *Competencies for Community College Leaders* offer a rubric of the requisite leadership skills required for leaders as they champion institutional goals and objectives. The *AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders* are composed of 11 specific categories, called Focus Areas, that are significant to the internal and external operations of the community college. The 11 Focus Areas provide a foundational matrix for describing and understanding the common themes emphasized by the study participants. These themes illustrate the significant values that influence the leadership role of each CEO in the

development of a college-wide DEI agenda. Table 9 below illustrates the focus areas referenced by each CEO.

Table 9: AACC Focus Areas Referenced by Community College CEOs

FOCUS AREA	STUDY PARTICIPANTS							TOTAL
	NESBARY	PINK	QUARTEY	SAWYER	CERNEY	KAVALTHUNA	IVERY	
Organization Culture					√	√		2
Governance, Institutional Policy, and Legislation	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	7
Student Success		√	√			√	√	4
Institutional Leadership	√	√	√		√	√	√	6
Institutional Infrastructure	√				√			2
Information and Analytics	√	√		√				3
Advocacy and Mobilizing/Motivating Others		√		√		√		3
Fundraising and Relationship Cultivation								
Communications							√	1
Collaboration	√	√						2
Personal Traits and Abilities	√		√	√		√		4
Total	6	6	4	4	4	6	4	

CEO Nesbary

This section summarizes the key Focus Area themes that were reflected by CEO Nesbary’s interview. As the CEO of an urban single-campus community college, Nesbary’s responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his commitment to the institutional

infrastructure, and collaboration. According to Nesbary, “bringing collaborative efforts, bringing constituent groups together to move forward, I mean, you can’t do it all by yourself.” When asked, “What do you enjoy most about being a college president?” Nesbary commented:

That more than any other position I have held along the way, it’s very gratifying to be able to set a concept and have input into what would require that concept to come to fruition, put the process in place, and then seeing the product at the end of the process.

Nesbary’s recognition of his own personal traits and abilities contributed to his effectiveness as a leader. When asked, “What makes you a good fit for this institution?”

Nesbary responded:

I was born about 15 miles from where I sit right now. There are some people here who remember my family and a couple of them remember me from high school, I guess. So, it was nice to come back and have some friendly faces there to help in a place like Muskegon, which is really not that much different than a lot of places I have lived.

CEO Nesbary acknowledged the importance of governance, institutional policy, and legislation along with institutional leadership. When asked, “Please discuss the role of the president in championing institutional initiatives?” he revealed, “One of the things that I’ve learned as being president — unlike again, any other position I have held — is that while you may not be able to do what you’d like to do yourself, you can be the exponent or the catalyst for any number of successes along the way.”

Nesbary indicated that before his arrival, his institution had a plan that emphasized diversity and inclusion but left out equity. Nesbary remedied the omission by making diversity, equity, and inclusion part of the institution’s strategic plan. According to Nesbary:

Equity, specifically, has been added to our institutional mission. Before, we were a diversity and inclusion institution primarily and equity was not a part of the mission statement, so we added that. We now have what I’d call a matured diversity, equity, and inclusion process on campus with a fully populated committee.

Nesbary also emphasized his role of involving the community at large adding, “Roughly quarterly we bring in speakers from either local, or nationally renowned, to have conversations with our students and with our broader community.”

Nesbary continued to emphasize the significance of governance, institutional policy, and legislation in advancing DEI. In discussing his board, Nesbary asserted:

They want to see the community do some real work, which there’s just a lot of lip service going on right now, so their thinking is that we’re going to ask you every single year to create a position or create more positions to support this so that we can do – I’ll say reasonably respected work in DEI. So, their role is to make sure that we’re doing the right thing.

For Nesbary, the use of information and analytics was critical in determining institutional trends or issues. Speaking about his institution’s assessment of the DEI strategy, Nesbary observed:

Well, we run the numbers. So, are metrics trending in the correct direction, meaning are we retaining our students of color? Are we retaining our students with disabilities or students with various barriers to success? Are we increasing the percentage of our faculty and staff comprising people of color or people who are underrepresented in our institution historically?... we discuss these issues openly, so that we can recognize what the problem or the issue is and seek solutions to those problems or ways to resolve the issues. So, in my mind, that’s primarily how we roll out doing business in the DEI space and moving things forward.

CEO Pink

This section summarizes the key Focus Area themes that were reflected by CEO Pink’s views. As the CEO of an urban single-campus community college, Pink’s responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his commitment to being relevant and responsive. Pink articulated his commitment to institutional leadership along with governance, institutional policy, and

legislation. When asked, “What do you enjoy most about being a college president?” Pink responded:

I think the thing I would say I enjoy the most is the duality of having effects on the campus community and the outside community at large. So, the role of being here on campus as president, to truly be able to do things to steer the institution in directions that we feel are the most effective and appropriate, the most relevant.

Discussing the role of his institution’s board of trustees, Pink declared:

Yeah, our trustees are awesome because they come behind us, work in their support in lending their ear and lending their voice, and our trustees have that role in the community as well of voicing and championing what this college is all about. Our trustees also stay abreast. We update them on a regular basis about what our DEI work looks and sounds like on campus, and they typically come behind us on those things as well in good ways, and so we’ve got a group of folks who understand, and I believe in the work that happens here.

Pink expressed his commitment to student success claiming that, “If I can affect the community of West Michigan in a positive way, it’s for the sake of our students because our students are the community.”

Pink created a leadership structure that emphasized collaboration. Pink indicated that his institution recently formed an Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. According to Pink, “DEI is an office of four people and they oversee the DEI initiatives and our Chief serves as a consultant really to our campus community when it comes to these different processes or questions or issues that come up.”

Pink stressed the importance of advocacy and mobilizing/motivating others. Specifically, Pink highlighted the president’s role within the larger community adding:

The influence that a college president has on and off campus can be very helpful and impactful to the community at large or into the campus community, like I mentioned earlier. I say that because I also chair and lead some efforts here in Grand Rapids around DEI.

Pink also shared:

I think the biggest challenge here is helping people understand the issue, helping people understand what lived experiences are all about, and helping them understand why we are focused on this work.

Pink recognized advancing DEI as a long-term commitment requiring the use of information and analytics. Discussing his strategies to advance DEI, Pink asserted:

I think that what's been good about what we do here is I think people have now grown over years and years to understand what our college is all about when it comes to DEI and in many cases look to this college for some of the supports and some of the information that they can gather on what this DEI looks, sounds, and needs to be.

Additionally, Pink's institution identified specific "college action projects" that focused on issues relating to DEI, and then gathered data on these projects. Using this data, Pink's institution was able to determine how they would move forward addressing these issues.

CEO Quartey

This section summarizes the key focus area themes that were reflected by CEO Quartey's views. As the CEO of a suburban single-campus community college, Quartey's responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his desire to build and sustain relationships. Quartey emphasized his desire to influence student success by building confidence. When asked, "What do you enjoy most about being a college president?" Quartey responded:

Taking those students who not only may not be able to go somewhere else and taking them and shaping them and getting them to believe first and foremost in themselves, so I emphasize that constantly and consistency with our faculty and staff here.

To emphasize his student-centered orientation, Quartey's approach recognized the importance of institutional leadership. Quartey indicated that prior to his arrival, a consultant performed an inventory of the diversity efforts at his institution resulting in the establishment of a college-wide diversity committee. After Quartey's arrived he established Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday as a holiday and launched a speaker series called the *Diversity and Current Affairs Series*. According to Quartey, Monroe is currently developing a diversity and inclusion space on campus "where students of a diverse nature can go and meet, interact...."

Continuing on the theme of institutional leadership, Quartey highlighted the need to incentivize individuals to embrace DEI. To incentivize his staff and the Monroe community at large, Quartey initiated a diversity committee, recommended implicit bias training, and reestablished the local National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

Quartey's approach understood the importance of governance, institutional policy, and legislation. Recognizing the governing board as the policy-making entity, Quartey asserted, "They hire the president to do a job, but they do enact policy."

In discussing his DEI strategy Quartey focused on personal traits and abilities. In his remarks, Quartey articulated:

Yeah, it's getting individuals on campus to buy in. It's being very intentional about setting the overarching goals and the purpose in terms of where we need to go as an institution, tying that into where – and I always talk about well, we need to be a reflection of America. Monroe doesn't reflect America.

CEO Sawyer

This section summarizes the key focus area themes that were reflected by CEO Sawyer's views. As the CEO of a suburban multi-campus community college, Sawyer's responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion

agenda was primarily influenced by his desire to positively influence lives. Sawyer highlighted his individual personal traits and abilities as his source of inspiration, and shared the following:

To be blunt, I never aspired to be a college president. I want to be a president here, at this institution in my community. That's key to me. I wasn't about to be traveling around the country trying to build a career in education. For me, it's about serving my local community and hopefully making a difference close to home. And I think that's one of the attributes I bring to the institution, that commitment to the community, I think.

While discussing campus initiatives, Sawyer expressed his commitment to advocacy and mobilizing/motivating others. According to Sawyer, Macomb had a faculty-led initiative called the Macomb Multicultural International Initiative made up of 20 people who attended meetings and organized events for students and the community. Sawyer acknowledged, "as President, I'm the one driving these councils and the creation of the IDEA Council. Again, with my leadership, I am much more of a participative leadership/servant leadership-type style and do so."

Sawyer acknowledged the role governance, institutional policy and legislation plays in his overall success. Speaking about his board in strategic planning process, Sawyer observed, "So the board by supporting me, the board is really supporting these initiatives."

Sawyer revealed, "I think just voicing my support and, you know, participating when I can. I mean, these are more — I would argue symbolic in some cases, but never underestimate the importance of symbolism..."

Recognizing the value of information and analytics in developing strategic goals, Sawyer asserted:

I'll have to ultimately decide on what we do and what we don't do; but I'm looking for input to help drive those decisions. And I think as we do that, we're going to have to have measurables in mind.

CEO Cerny

This section summarizes the key Focus Area themes that were reflected by CEO Cerny's views. As the CEO of a suburban single-campus community college, Cerny's responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his desire to work collaboratively toward the establishment of a strategic plan. Cerny valued the institutional infrastructure, sharing:

The biggest thing I enjoy is collaboratively working with faculty, staff, students, business partners, industry, and community to develop strategies that will benefit all the constituencies and to be able to move those strategies into very distinct operational programs or plans so that you can actually see the outcome. And then being able to assess the outcome to try to continue to improve, you know, what your mission and your vision is and what your goals are.

Cerny continued, declaring:

I've got an innovation background. I believe strongly in collaboration and partnering, that it's one of the cores at the institution is to be able to make sure we are a part of the community or part of the industry in our region, and that we're not developing programs for them; we're developing programs with them.

Cerny believed that governance, institutional policy, and legislation was essential, stating:

If the CEO or the president is not on board or not involved, that sends a huge message to the staff, a huge message to the faculty, that this is not something I really need to be interested in, because obviously the president is not interested in it, because they're not involved, they're not aware of it, or they're not championing it.

Upon his arrival, Cerny confronted a DEI plan that had not been championed by the CEO. Cerny's approach to establishing a DEI Committee was grounded in institutional leadership as he explained:

...when I became president in August, the first thing I did was I reached out and did a survey across the campus, both staff and faculty, and let that survey sit out for about a month and a half because obviously during Covid and we're at the start of classes. In

that survey and in our town halls that I did with our faculty and staff I said, 'We're going to reconstitute the DEI Committee, call it a task force. It's going to be reporting directly to the President's Office and we're going to identify individuals that are across campus that want to be a part of that.'

In his effort to institutionalize DEI, Cerny gave the taskforce the directive, "You make your own charge and then you bring back when you want to discuss, because we're going to incorporate what you're doing as part of our strategic plan." Cerny emphasized that HR must have a role that is embedded in the institution's DEI strategy. Cerny also indicated that the approach has to be "transparent, very upfront, and make sure that people understand it's a priority."

Cerny's approach to assessing a successful DEI strategy relies on the institution's organizational culture. Speaking about his campus culture Cerny, revealed:

I think the success of the institution's DEI strategy is when it's actually embedded, so that your campus is richer because your campus looks like your students... you experience it when you see more students coming to your community, to your campus, that are diverse.

CEO Kavalhuna

This section summarizes the key Focus Area themes that were reflected by CEO Kavalhuna's views. As the CEO of a suburban multi-campus community college, Kavalhuna's responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his appreciation for the process of learning. Kavalhuna articulated his regard for student success declaring, "...one of my passions is connecting students to meaningful careers, and I see our college as being particularly good at that and meeting a little bit of a push to connect with employers."

Discussing his role related to advancing DEI, Kavalhuna recognized institutional leadership as essential, sharing:

You can't affect change on everything all the time, and so most presidents will figure a handful or even less of things that they want to be a champion of because they have a rare opportunity actually to institute policy, devote resources, hire people to move on those things, and you can actually move the needle on whatever things you champion.

Kavalhuna also asserted, "The infrastructure that we have currently to support this is a diversity committee that is headed up by our Executive Director of HR, who is an expert in DEI." Kavalhuna continued, adding "This is a work in progress, because it always will be, and those are some of the things that we're doing right now to continue that work and hopefully to make improvements."

Describing his support for advocacy and mobilizing/motivating others Kavalhuna, revealed:

I asked for feedback about what it is on the ground, what our diversity, equity, and inclusion feeling is on the ground, and I invited a diverse group of citizens and students and stakeholders to participate in that... we are going to be rolling out this survey and I committed at that town hall and I stand by it and continue to do it, that I would be personally involved and personally responsible for this activity, and so I am still the one who is heading up this work.

When asked, "What are the challenges associated with advancing DEI at your institution?" Kavalhuna took an approach that embraced the organizational culture offering, "Let's go back to the founding of the country and the issues that diversity, equity, and inclusion have confounded leaders, and you'll see it here at community colleges." Kavalhuna determined, "in today's environment the president of a community college has to be actually involved on the ground dealing with these issues." Additionally, Kavalhuna shared:

Anyone who really studies this stuff gets down to the basic principle, and that is when you get humans to focus on what is common among them — and by the way, that is the

majority of things about humans is that we're mostly similar to each other — and focus less on differentiating each other for the negative.

Examining the role of governance, institutional policy, and legislation at his institution, Kavalhuna pointed out that, not only is his governing board “completely unanimous in supporting me taking on this difficult thing (DEI)” they are also representative of diversity in their makeup.

Kavalhuna emphasized his focus on his individual personal traits and abilities to describe his approach to assessing the success of his institution's DEI strategy, pointing out:

We are going to get closer to success when we get more information, and we get a better idea of where we are strong and where we are weak. But I don't think we will ever get to success, because success is when you have complete harmony and humans working together to their fullest potential at all times, and that's what the challenge of leadership is in anything, but certainly DEI.

CEO Ivery

This section summarizes the key Focus Area themes that were reflected by CEO Ivery's views. As the CEO of an urban multi-campus community college, Ivery's responses indicated his role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda was primarily influenced by his passion for developing talent within people. Emphasizing his commitment to student success, Ivery shared:

I have a peculiar appreciation for the students, and I love being able to make a difference knowing that I'm touching lives and I can see that, and I can see the difference almost immediately.... I know that I'm growing talent and citizens, people will be in leadership positions later in life professionally.

In his discussion on student success, Ivery also stressed:

Oftentimes people — they have this notion that we live in a colorblind society and that you don't see color, you don't see ethnicity, you don't see gender.... When students can

walk into your institution and they can appreciate that you appreciate them because they're different...

Acknowledging the importance of his role in utilizing strategic communications in institutional operations, Ivery shared:

I want to know what other institutions are doing. What are the best practices? I don't want to recreate the wheel. I mean, if someone's out there with a better idea, and they're already doing what it is we're trying to do, I don't mind borrowing those ideas and creating my own hybrid of what it is they're doing.

Ivery also explained how institutional leadership influenced his role in developing a DEI plan. According to Ivery:

I really didn't have to have one because diversity has always been something that I've raised since day one as part of my DNA, and everything I do is about diversity, whether I'm doing commercials — if you look at the commercials we do, you look at how I hire people, the decisions I make. I mean, diversity has always been a part of how I see the world and inclusion, because that's something that particularly in higher education, that's something you want to promote. You recognize the diverse populations as soon as you have. So, if you're doing that and you do everything in your power to advance diversity, and it's not a complicated proposition. You're either committed, or you're not committed to it.

Ivery also claimed, "The institution takes on the personality of its leader, so that if I'm preaching and embracing and talking about diversity, then others automatically will assume that that's important and they will embrace it as well."

Respecting the value of governance, institutional policy, and legislation, Ivery acknowledged:

They have to hire a CEO committed to diversity and then hold them accountable for the notion that diversity and inclusion is important. So, hold them accountable but hire them and say, "Hey, we want a diverse institution. We want an institution that's about inclusion and about equity."

KEY THEMES TIED TO AACC COMPETENCIES

This section summarizes Focus Area themes shared by four or more, over half, of the participants.

Personal Traits and Abilities

According to the AACC, “An effective leader possesses certain personal traits and adopts a focus on honing abilities that promote the community college agenda” (AACC, 2018, p. 89). Four of the seven participants reflected on their personal traits and abilities during their interview. Nesbary reflected on his appreciation for his family for hindering the efforts of an individual who attempted to distract him from his duties. Quartey discussed the courage required for championing a DEI agenda in a community that did not embrace DEI.

Student Success

According to the AACC, “An effective leader supports student success across the institution, and embraces opportunities to improve access, retention, and success” (AACC, 2018, p. 81). Four of the seven participants reflected on student success during their interview. Kavalhuna was one of two to incorporate social purpose into his response saying, “my passion is to draw closer connections between the college and employers to benefit students for what I call ‘the community college serving as the gateway to the middle class.’” Also crediting his social purpose role, Ivery declared:

I try to encourage people to sit with people that, you know, that may look different from who they are. I mean, it drives me crazy when I see all Black people sitting on one side of the room and Whites on another, or Hispanics on another. I will deliberately get involved in trying to create the diversity mix...

Institutional Leadership

An effective leader understands the importance of interpersonal relationships, personal philosophy, and management skills to creating a student-centered institution” (AACC, 2018, p. 82). Six of the seven participants reflected on institutional leadership during their interview.

Advocating for a robust dialog on DEI, Pink articulated:

What it’s all about is gathering groups together on campus and sitting and talking about some of the hard subjects around DEI, and that effort as a college action project has been interesting to get some of those faculty and staff. That’s who’s involved in it. Faculty and staff coming to the table, some folks who you never would have thought would come to that table...

Discussing his role in championing initiatives, Cerny observed:

...as a president, you know, the things that you put your time and effort into are going to be noticed. That gives you an opportunity to set the bar; it sets the culture, and that’s one of the pieces that I’m very interested in is developing a culture of engagement, making sure that people know they have a voice, making sure they are a part of something bigger, and they are part of it because they have a voice.

Governance, Institutional Policy, and Legislation

According to the AACC, “An effective leader is knowledgeable about the institution’s governance framework and the policies that guide its operation” (AACC, 2018, p. 80). All seven of the participants reflected on the importance of governance, institutional policy, and legislation during their interview. Speaking about his board’s role in advancing DEI, Sawyer shared:

At the board meetings I’m providing updates on our most recent efforts. The board was very involved in the overall strategic planning process and through that process — I already shared with you we had priorities that we’re trying to address equity gaps. One of the values that came out — and the values were really driven by the employees of the institution. One of the values was inclusion, so I mean there’s a recognition internally of the importance of those things.

Highlighting the CEO's responsibility to the board, Cerny declared:

...the board is going to have to come along with the administration and the staff, and obviously it's the president's role to make sure that the training and the awareness and kind of the discussions are taking place, you know, within the board... the president has to be very conscious of how to incorporate them in because if they're not part of the plan or the process, it becomes a problem. They have to buy in just as much as the president does and they have to champion it just as well. But it's the president's role to help make sure that that happens.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented findings from interviews with seven Michigan community college CEOs on their role in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. This study was guided by research questions that resulted in rich qualitative data. The analysis in this chapter focused on the themes that emerged from the CEOs' interview responses. Actual quotes from the interviews were selected from the transcriptions to authenticate the participant's responses.

Chapter 5 will provide a conclusion to the analysis presented in this chapter. The chapter will also offer implications for developing best practices, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5: IMPLICATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

This research examined the leadership role of the chief executive officers (CEOs) of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda. This chapter discusses implications from the results and offers recommendations for future research. The analysis presented in Chapter Four is used as the foundation for the study findings and analysis and recommendations for future research.

DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES AND FINDINGS

The goal of this study was to identify the perceived role of educational leaders at community colleges in advancing the institution's DEI plan. Research findings are presented in alignment with the study research questions and the data analysis in Chapter 4. This research question was addressed by several interview questions that focused on the colleges' existing DEI plans, the development of those plans, and how the plans have changed over time.

The CEO responses also indicated the role they played in advancing the institution's DEI plan. The findings of this study suggest that all seven participants felt that they should play a role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan. Three main themes emerged from this research question: relationships, connection to local community, commitment/passion.

Relationships

Building and maintaining relationships is a pivotal aspect of a college CEO's role in advancing their institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. Cultivating strong connections with diverse stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community leaders, is essential for creating an inclusive campus environment. These relationships also enable the CEO to harness the collective energy and expertise necessary to implement effective DEI initiatives. Furthermore, by building a network of support and trust, the CEO can encourage a sense of belonging and inclusion among all members of the college community. This interpersonal approach not only enhances the CEO's ability to advocate for diversity and equity but also contributes to the overall success and reputation of the institution as a welcoming and inclusive place for learning and growth. Four out of seven CEOs indicated that their relationships were the inspiration for their desire for an institution that can sustain DEI.

Connection to Local Community

All CEOs declared their connection to the local community plays a crucial role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. This connection allows the CEO to tailor DEI initiatives to address the specific challenges faced by the local community, ensuring that the college's efforts are both relevant and impactful. Moreover, a strong personal bond with the community fosters mutual trust and collaboration, enabling the CEO to leverage external resources and support for DEI initiatives. Two CEOs indicated that they grew up in the local area and believed that the success of the institution had a historical context. Five out of

seven CEOs developed a connection to the local community through employment at their institutions.

Commitment/Passion

A college president's unwavering commitment and passion for the overall success of the institution are integral to advancing its diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. This commitment serves as a driving force behind the implementation of comprehensive DEI initiatives, influencing policy changes, resource allocation, and campus culture. Two CEOs indicated that their commitment and passion for the overall success of the institution drove their desire to play a role in advancing the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion plan.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a college president's multifaceted approach, encompassing unwavering commitment to institutional success, a strong personal connection to the local community, and a genuine desire to build and maintain relationships, collectively form the bedrock for the advancement of the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda. The president's commitment serves as the driving force, infusing passion into the pursuit of inclusivity, while the personal connection to the local community ensures that DEI initiatives are tailored to address the unique needs of the surrounding area. Simultaneously, the cultivation of relationships with diverse stakeholders establishes a collaborative foundation that allows for the implementation of effective and sustainable DEI policies. Together, these factors not only reflect the president's dedication to fostering a more inclusive environment within the institution but also position the college as a beacon of diversity and equity in the broader

educational landscape. From their interviews, the CEOs indicated direct, or indirect, involvement with the institution's DEI strategy.

RESEARCH QUESTION #1: ROLE OF THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT

What role should a community college president have and what responsibilities should a community college CEO have in developing an institutional DEI plan?

As the interviews delved into the individual's specific actions regarding the college's DEI plan, the participants articulated they should take a leadership role in championing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), actively participating in the development of institutional DEI plans. This includes establishing a vision for diversity, setting measurable goals, and crafting policies that promote equity and inclusivity throughout the campus community (Bensimon, 2007). The president's commitment to DEI is instrumental in creating an environment where all individuals, irrespective of background, feel valued and supported in their educational pursuits. Additionally, effective communication and engagement with stakeholders are vital components of successful DEI implementation, requiring the president to foster collaboration among faculty, staff, students, and external partners (Smith, 2010). Through their leadership, community college presidents play a central role in ensuring that DEI initiatives become integral to the institutional fabric, fostering an environment conducive to academic success and personal growth for all members of the college community. This study's findings imply that all seven participants acknowledged their role and responsibility in shaping an institutional DEI plan, but the specific contribution of each CEO was shaped by their individual experiences and personal factors.

All CEOs in this study serve in urban or suburban locations, the importance of community engagement takes on a very public emphasis. According to Williams (2013), the public emphasis of community engagement for CEOs at urban and suburban community colleges often involves navigating the complexities of densely populated areas, fostering partnerships with a diverse array of organizations, and addressing the unique challenges faced by urban and suburban communities. These CEOs may focus on initiatives that directly impact the local population, collaborating with businesses, non-profits, and civic groups to address pressing issues.

In contrast, Katsinas (2007) found that CEOs at rural community colleges may place a stronger emphasis on building connections within a more tightly-knit community, involving themselves in local events, and tailoring engagement efforts to meet the specific needs of a rural demographic, often involving agriculture or other predominant industries in the region. The nature of community engagement thus varies based on the distinct characteristics and challenges associated with urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Conclusions

The American Association of Community College's Competencies for Community College Leaders served as a foundation for determining the roles and responsibilities in developing an institutional DEI plan. Of the seven CEOs, six defined their role as an institutional role, focusing on tailoring strategies that address the unique diversity dynamics of both urban and suburban settings. As outlined by Aguirre and Martinez (2006), this involved implementing targeted outreach programs to connect with diverse communities, fostering partnerships with local organizations, and adapting curricula to reflect the diverse backgrounds of students.

Additionally, these CEO prioritized creating inclusive spaces on campuses that resonated with the urban and suburban contexts, ensuring that the institutional DEI plan is effectively integrated into the specific sociocultural fabric of each community, adhering to the framework defined by Kezar and Eckel (2008).

CEO Quartey emphasized that while he believes that a leader's role is to champion DEI initiatives, it is also important to "let others take ownership." CEO Quartey's acknowledgment that a leader's role involves championing DEI initiatives aligns with the individual's likely experiences of recognizing the significance of leadership in promoting inclusivity. However, the emphasis on letting others take ownership reflects a nuanced understanding of the value of collective engagement and diverse perspectives in shaping DEI efforts. The CEO's approach seems to recognize that true progress in DEI requires a collaborative effort, reflecting a perspective that values inclusivity and the empowerment of others in the pursuit of shared goals.

CEO Cerny embodied the structured approach articulating that in addition to creating an overall environment that embraced DEI, he believes that his role in developing the institutional DEI plan involves providing executive leadership oversight. While CEO Cerny's mention of creating an overall environment that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is acknowledged, the emphasis on providing executive leadership oversight may raise questions about the president's level of direct involvement and the potential impact of this oversight. There could be questions about the effectiveness of executive leadership in driving tangible changes, considering past experiences where leadership commitment did not necessarily translate into substantial improvements. There could be a desire for more detailed actions and

measurable outcomes, as well as a cautious approach to ensuring that executive oversight translates into meaningful changes in the day-to-day experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds within the community college.

CEO Kavalhuna also reflected a structured approach expressing his appreciation for the existing welcoming college statement, mission, and vision statements; nevertheless, he felt the need to host a virtual town hall to get a ground-level analysis of how people feel about DEI. CEO Kavalhuna's expression of appreciation for existing welcoming statements and mission/vision statements could be seen as recognizing the need for more than just symbolic gestures. However, the decision to host a virtual town hall to gather ground-level analysis on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is questionable, depending on whether this is a genuine effort to understand and address the concerns of the community or merely a public relations move. There should be caution about the effectiveness of virtual town halls in truly capturing the nuanced experiences and challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Four of the seven CEOs took a more personal view of his role, revolving around personally connecting with the diverse communities within these settings. This transformative approach, as outlined by Aguirre and Martinez (2002), involved personally engaging with stakeholders, understanding diverse perspectives, and implementing initiatives that address the unique needs of underrepresented groups.

CEO Nesbary emphasized the personal aspect of his role, indicating that, in addition to restructuring administrative responsibilities, he felt that his role was to develop financial support for DEI initiatives. While CEO Nesbary's acknowledgment of restructuring administrative responsibilities for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives is a positive

step, the emphasis on personally developing financial support may raise questions about the extent of commitment and potential implications.

CEO Ivery took a transformative approach indicating that he believed his role in developing an institutional DEI plan was to reflect diversity in his cabinet members, provide DEI professional development training for staff, and require that all college publications reflect diversity. While CEO Ivery outlines actions such as reflecting diversity in the cabinet, providing DEI professional development, and requiring diversity in college publications, the depth and sincerity of these acts can be questionable. The skepticism could stem from past experiences where similar promises were made without substantial follow-through or tangible impact on the experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds. There will be a need for concrete evidence of how these actions will lead to meaningful change and whether they signify a genuine commitment to addressing the underlying issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion within the institution.

CEO Pink determined that, in addition to restructuring his campus DEI so that it reports directly to him. Additionally, he emphasized the collaborative function of his role, allowing his service on the boards of a local economic development office and a learning lab to influence the institution's DEI strategy. While CEO Pink's commitment to restructuring the campus DEI and having it report directly to him may be seen as a positive step, there is the potential that a conflict of interest might arise regarding the CEO's involvement with external entities.

CEO Sawyer defined his role by outlining his Strategic Plan 2025, which created the Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Council for the purpose of promoting broad engagement on DEI. CEO Sawyer's mention of a Strategic Plan 2025 and the creation of an Inclusion,

Diversity, Equity, and Access Council triggers skepticism about the sincerity and effectiveness of these initiatives. The question is whether these plans are merely symbolic gestures or will they genuinely translate into meaningful actions and changes within the institution. This skepticism stems from a history of witnessing promises without substantial follow-through or concern that institutional initiatives may lack tangible impact on the daily experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

RESEARCH QUESTION #2: RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNICATING THE DEI PLAN

What role and responsibilities should a community college CEO have in communicating the DEI plan?

The role of a community college CEO in communicating the DEI plan is pivotal, requiring both leadership and transparency. As argued by Rodriguez (2015), the CEO should serve as the primary advocate for the plan, articulating its importance, goals, and anticipated outcomes to various stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, and the broader community. Effective communication involves ensuring that the entire college community understands the purpose and benefits of the DEI plan, fostering a sense of shared responsibility. Additionally, the CEO should actively engage in open dialogues, addressing concerns, and seeking feedback to promote a collaborative and inclusive approach. Responsibilities encompass creating a communication strategy that utilizes multiple channels, such as town hall meetings, newsletters, and digital platforms, to disseminate information and reinforce the institution's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Regular updates, progress reports, and a visible leadership presence in DEI initiatives contribute to building trust and maintaining momentum for lasting positive change.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the findings of this study shed light on the multifaceted roles and responsibilities that college CEOs attribute to themselves in the communication of their institution's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) plan. The identified key elements as identified by Kezar and Eckel (2008) include the commitment to removing barriers that hinder progress, actively listening to diverse perspectives, communicating and encouraging constituents, spearheading efforts while involving others, personally engaging in communication, constructing a supportive framework, and sharing their visionary outlook for the college. These insights underscore the intricate and pivotal nature of the college president's role in fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment. As institutions continue to prioritize DEI initiatives, understanding and embracing these diverse responsibilities can contribute significantly to the successful implementation and long-term impact of such plans.

CEO Nesbary indicated that he believes his role is to communicate by removing barriers that impede progress on DEI. There might be skepticism about the effectiveness of CEO Nesbary's commitment to breaking down barriers and whether this involves addressing systemic challenges that individuals from diverse backgrounds often face. The CEO may be looking for tangible initiatives that actively dismantle barriers and foster a more inclusive environment within the community college, ensuring that the commitment to DEI is reflected in substantive actions.

CEO Pink asserted that he believes his role is to communicate by listening to positions held by others. While CEO Pink's emphasis on listening is appreciated, the skeptical individual may approach this with caution, wanting to ensure that active listening translates into concrete

actions that address the diverse perspectives within the community college. There might be skepticism about whether this commitment to listening will result in meaningful changes or if it remains more of a symbolic gesture. The individual may be looking for evidence of how the president plans to incorporate the diverse positions into the DEI plan and how this listening process will actively contribute to fostering a more inclusive environment within the institution.

CEO Quartey stressed that he believes his role is to communicate and encourage his constituents. While CEO Quartey's acknowledgment of the communication aspect is noted, the skeptical individual may approach this with caution, questioning the depth of commitment and the effectiveness of encouragement without tangible actions. There might be skepticism about whether this role involves more than just verbal support and if it translates into concrete strategies and initiatives that actively address DEI challenges within the community college. The individual may be looking for evidence of how the president's communication efforts go beyond rhetoric, actively contributing to a more inclusive environment and addressing systemic issues faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds.

CEO Sawyer revealed that he believes his role is to communicate by spearheading the effort and getting others involved. While CEO Sawyer's acknowledgment of a proactive approach is noted, the skeptical individual may approach this with caution, wanting to see tangible actions and evidence of active involvement. There might be skepticism about the effectiveness of spearheading efforts without clear strategies for meaningful inclusion and active participation from a diverse range of individuals. The individual may be looking for specific initiatives and a detailed plan that demonstrates the president's commitment to

fostering genuine involvement and engagement in the DEI plan within the community college, ensuring that the efforts go beyond surface-level involvement.

CEO Cerny declared that he believes his role is to communicate through his level of involvement on a project. While CEO Cerny's acknowledgment of involvement is noted, the skeptical individual may approach this with caution, questioning the depth and impact of the president's engagement. There might be skepticism about whether the president's involvement genuinely translates into effective communication and tangible outcomes in advancing the DEI plan. The individual may be looking for concrete actions and specific initiatives that demonstrate a meaningful commitment to communication and engagement within the community college, ensuring that the president's involvement actively contributes to fostering a more inclusive environment.

CEO Kavalhuna defined his role as communicating by building a structure of support around an initiative. While CEO Kavalhuna's acknowledgment of building support structures is noted, the skeptical individual may approach this with caution, wanting to understand the specific nature and effectiveness of the support structure being created. There might be skepticism about whether this approach translates into concrete actions that address systemic issues faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds within the community college. The individual may be looking for clear strategies and initiatives that actively contribute to fostering a more inclusive environment, ensuring that the president's role goes beyond creating structures and extends to meaningful and tangible support for DEI initiatives.

CEO Ivery articulated that he believes his role is to communicate through the sharing of his vision for the college. While CEO Ivery acknowledges the importance of vision, the skeptical

individual may approach this with caution, questioning whether the president's vision aligns with tangible actions that address the specific challenges faced by individuals from diverse backgrounds within the community college. There might be skepticism about the effectiveness of communication solely through the sharing of a vision without clear strategies and initiatives that actively contribute to fostering a more inclusive environment. The individual may be looking for concrete evidence that the president's vision translates into meaningful and measurable changes in support of DEI initiatives within the institution.

RESEARCH QUESTION #3: CHALLENGES IN ADVANCING DEI AGENDA

What challenges may a community college CEO face in advancing a DEI agenda and how should he/she address these?

Advancing a robust Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda in community colleges is often met with challenges that require strategic leadership and innovative solutions. A critical challenge lies in the diverse composition of the student body, where individuals may vary widely in terms of socioeconomic status, cultural backgrounds, and educational preparedness (Ivery, 2011). According to the ASHE Higher Education Report (2007), advancing diversity necessitates a tailored approach to address the specific needs of various groups, potentially placing a strain on already limited resources within community colleges. The financial constraints and resource scarcity prevalent in these institutions can hinder the implementation of comprehensive DEI initiatives. To navigate this challenge, community college presidents should leverage evidence-based practices and seek external funding opportunities, such as grants and partnerships, to bolster their DEI efforts (ASHE Higher Education Report, 2007).

Resistance to change among faculty and staff represents another significant obstacle. Faculty members, accustomed to traditional teaching methods and established curricula, may be hesitant to adopt new approaches that emphasize inclusivity. Overcoming this resistance requires skillful communication, involving stakeholders in the decision-making process, and providing robust professional development opportunities (Boggs & McPhail, 2016). Engaging in open and transparent dialogue is crucial for building a shared understanding of the importance of DEI and ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued (ACE, 1989). Creating a culture of continuous learning and fostering a sense of ownership among educators can contribute to the successful implementation of DEI initiatives in the academic environment.

Conclusions

In conclusion, community college CEOs aiming to advance a DEI agenda must navigate the complexities of diverse student populations, limited resources, and resistance to change. By employing strategic planning, fostering inclusive dialogue, and investing in professional development, these leaders can address these challenges and promote a more equitable and inclusive educational environment in community colleges. The collaborative efforts of all stakeholders, along with external partnerships, can further amplify the impact of DEI initiatives in these crucial educational institutions.

CEO Kavalhuna stated that DEI challenges have confounded leaders since the founding of the country. Discussing his role in mitigating this challenge, Kavalhuna shared the following, “I think that in today’s environment, the president of a community college has to be involved on the ground dealing with these issues.” The statement acknowledges the current challenges related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and suggests that active involvement on the

ground is necessary for addressing these issues. While there is an appreciation of the recognition of the need for direct engagement, there should also be a need to see concrete actions rather than just verbal acknowledgment. There might be skepticism about whether the president's involvement will lead to tangible improvements or if it's more of a rhetorical stance.

CEO Sawyer pointed out his challenge is aligning students with the resources that will help them be successful. Discussing his role in mitigating this challenge, CEO Sawyer declared, "I make the budget commitments to enable those things to happen." While acknowledging the challenge of aligning students with resources for success is appreciated, this should be approached with caution, depending on whether this challenge is being genuinely addressed or is merely acknowledged as a common issue. Some concerns may be raised about the effectiveness of the strategies employed to address this challenge, especially under circumstances where past situations related to resource alignment were not adequately met. There will be a need for specific, concrete actions and initiatives to ensure that the commitment to improving resource alignment is more than just rhetoric, leading to tangible improvements for students from diverse backgrounds within the community college.

CEO Pink argued that the challenge with DEI is that people cannot relate to the lived experiences of others. Discussing his role in mitigating this challenge, CEO Pink articulates the importance of "helping people understand what lived experiences are all about and helping them understand why we are focused on this work." The acknowledgment of the challenge that people cannot relate to the lived experiences of others may resonate with the CEO's own experiences of navigating a society where understanding and empathy for diverse experiences can be lacking. Some doubt may surface in assessing how the CEO plans to address this

challenge effectively. There may also be a question of whether this acknowledgment will lead to tangible initiatives that foster a greater understanding of diverse experiences within the community college. The result could be a desire for concrete actions and programs aimed at bridging the empathy gap, ensuring that the DEI agenda translates into meaningful efforts to cultivate a more inclusive and empathetic educational environment.

CEO Ivery argues that people believe they are in a colorblind society and therefore do not see diversity. Discussing his role in mitigating this challenge, CEO Ivery explained, “You have to send messages that signals how serious you are when we look at the budget.” The mention of invoking the budget to affirm seriousness may be viewed skeptically, raising the question of whether financial allocations truly reflect a commitment to addressing the colorblind perception. There also might be the existence of doubt regarding the effectiveness of using the budget as a symbolic gesture without concrete actions that challenge and reshape perceptions within the community college. Ideally, the CEO will implement tangible initiatives and educational programs that actively engage with and dismantle the colorblind narrative, ensuring that budget allocations lead to substantial changes in fostering a genuinely inclusive environment.

According to CEO Cerny, he encounters two challenges: (1) community members who are determined to drive the college’s approach to advancing DEI and (2) those who are oppositional to DEI. Discussing his role in mitigating these challenges, CEO Cerny’s approach is to ensure that the determined group maintains the proper focus while making sure the DEI oppositional group understands the college’s position as articulated in its mission and vision statements. The mention of community members determined to drive the college’s DEI

approach may be viewed cautiously, with the CEO questioning the motivations and potential biases of those leading the initiative. Simultaneously, the acknowledgment of oppositional voices within the community may resonate with skepticism, reflecting an awareness of potential resistance to DEI efforts. The CEO should approach this with a critical eye, wanting to ensure that the college's approach is balanced, transparent, and genuinely inclusive, considering the diverse perspectives within the community.

CEO Quartey explains that residents in the geographical region surrounding his college cannot relate to the life experiences of minorities; therefore, his role is to constantly remind them, "All of us matter." The president's challenge, as stated, is to constantly remind them that "all of us matter." There may be a question of the effectiveness of this approach. It will be difficult to determine whether repetitive reminders alone can foster a genuine understanding of diverse life experiences. The CEO must look for concrete actions, educational initiatives, and engagement strategies that go beyond verbal reminders, actively fostering empathy and awareness within the community surrounding the college.

CEO Nesbary points out that the challenge with DEI is that the people who can help solve the problem are not at the table. Discussing his role in mitigating this challenge, CEO Nesbary advocates for the representation of non-blacks at DEI events and forums. In this situation, the CEO must be concerned about whether this acknowledgment will translate into tangible actions to bring these voices to the table and actively involve them in problem-solving. The CEO must develop specific strategies and initiatives to ensure meaningful inclusion, going beyond mere acknowledgment of the problem to concrete steps that address the absence of crucial perspectives in advancing the DEI agenda within the community college.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The goal of this study was to deepen our understanding of the leadership role of the community college CEO in the development of a college-wide DEI agenda. The contextual framework for this study is provided by the AACC *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (2018) along with Boggs' and McPhail's *Practical leadership in community colleges: Navigating today's challenges* (2016).

This study found that strategies for the role of CEOs in advancing the institution's DEI plan requires that these values be embedded into the culture of the college. Based on the study findings, the CEOs determined that their role is to chart their institution's future while acknowledging its past. Each CEO recognized their role required embracing the institution's mission, vision, and values to affect organizational change. During each interview, the CEOs maintained that student success was the impetus for their college's existence; therefore, their role was to focus on strategies that improved access, retention, and completion. CEOs revealed that they were appointed by the board of trustees to utilize the institution's resources and infrastructure in addition to their personal philosophy and management skills to overcome challenges. Finally, this study discovered the significance of CEOs assessing their institution's success in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) through the use of measurable goals and objectives.

The study's finding that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) must be embedded into the culture of the college holds several implications for deepening our understanding of the leadership role of community college CEOs in the development of a college-wide DEI agenda:

- **Leadership Commitment to Cultural Integration**

The study underscores the imperative for community college CEOs to demonstrate unwavering commitment to cultural integration of DEI principles. This commitment should be evident in their actions, decisions, and communication, setting the tone for the entire institution.

- **Focus on Student Success**

CEOs must identify student success as the catalyst for the college's existence to reinforce the centrality of student outcomes. The study implies that DEI initiatives should be intricately linked to fostering an environment that supports and enhances the success of a diverse student body.

- **Strategic Visioning and Planning**

CEOs need to engage in strategic visioning and planning processes that deliberately incorporate DEI as a foundational element. This involves aligning institutional goals, strategies, and initiatives with a commitment to fostering a diverse and inclusive culture.

- **Inclusive Decision-Making Processes**

The study suggests that CEOs should adopt inclusive decision-making processes that solicit input from diverse stakeholders. This inclusivity extends to faculty, staff, students, and other community members, ensuring that a variety of perspectives contribute to shaping the institution's DEI agenda.

- **Educational Initiatives for Stakeholders**

Community college leaders should prioritize educational initiatives for stakeholders to enhance understanding and buy-in for DEI values. This may involve workshops, training sessions, and ongoing communication to promote awareness and cultural sensitivity.

- **Resource Allocation in Support of DEI**

CEOs must recognize they have been appointed by the board of trustees to allocate resources strategically to support the integration of DEI into the college culture. This includes investing in faculty development, student programs, and institutional infrastructure that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Measurement and Accountability Mechanisms**

Establishing clear metrics and accountability mechanisms is essential. CEOs should implement systems to measure progress in embedding DEI into the college culture and hold themselves and the institution accountable for achieving defined goals.

- **Community Engagement and Partnerships**

CEOs should foster community engagement and partnerships that reflect a commitment to DEI. Collaborating with local organizations and communities can contribute to a broader and more inclusive perspective in shaping the college's cultural ethos.

In summary, the study's emphasis on embedding DEI into the culture of the college underscores the transformational role of community college CEOs. It requires visionary leadership, strategic planning, and a holistic approach that permeates all aspects of the institution, fostering a culture where diversity, equity, and inclusion are not merely principles but integral components of the college's identity and mission.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CEOS

CEOs of Community Colleges aiming to formulate a comprehensive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda across their institutions should acknowledge the critical nature of their leadership role. This involves leveraging the following principles outlined in the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders as a foundation for their initiatives.

- **Using college mission and vision statements to guide the institution's DEI strategy**

Community college presidents play a pivotal role in advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies within their institutions, and utilizing the college mission and vision statements as a guiding framework is imperative for effective leadership. Research emphasizes the importance of aligning institutional goals, including DEI initiatives, with the mission and vision statements to create a cohesive and purposeful organizational culture (Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). By grounding their efforts in these foundational documents, presidents can ensure that DEI strategies are integral to the institution's overarching objectives, fostering a sense of shared commitment among stakeholders (Milem, Berger, & Dey, 2000). This approach not only enhances the clarity of the DEI agenda but also reinforces its integration into the institutional fabric, promoting sustained and meaningful change.

- **Being transparent in their support of DEI**

In the advancement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies at community colleges, transparency in the leadership approach of college presidents is paramount. The research underscores the significance of transparent communication in fostering trust and commitment to DEI initiatives among various stakeholders within an institution (Chun, Mooney, & Duffy, 2016). Community college presidents need to actively communicate their support for DEI efforts, emphasizing the alignment of these strategies with institutional values and goals. Transparent leadership, characterized by open communication, clear goals, and accountability, has been associated with positive organizational outcomes, including enhanced commitment to diversity and inclusivity (Van Wart, 2017). By openly expressing their commitment to DEI, community college presidents can create a culture of trust and collaboration, ensuring that all members of the college community are aware of the institution's dedication to fostering diversity and equity.

- **Allocating resources to support DEI initiatives**

In the pursuit of advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies at community colleges, the allocation of resources by college presidents becomes a critical factor in the success and sustainability of these initiatives. Research emphasizes the importance of financial and human resource commitments to support DEI efforts (Bensimon & Sandoval, 2017). Community college presidents need to prioritize and allocate resources strategically, ensuring that there is tangible support for initiatives such as faculty and staff training, inclusive curriculum development, and outreach programs to underrepresented communities. A lack of resources can hinder the effectiveness of DEI strategies, making it essential for leaders to advocate for and allocate the necessary funding and personnel to drive meaningful change (Harper, 2017). By demonstrating a commitment to resource allocation, community college presidents can signal the institution's dedication to fostering an inclusive environment.

- **Gaining support from the college board of trustees on the DEI strategy**

In the endeavor to advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies at community colleges, gaining support from the college's Board of Trustees is a crucial aspect of effective leadership. Research underscores the significance of collaborative governance and partnership between college presidents and boards in championing DEI initiatives (Birnbaum, 1988). Community college presidents must actively engage with their boards, providing clear communication on the rationale, goals, and expected outcomes of proposed DEI strategies (Huang, 2017). A supportive board can contribute to the allocation of necessary resources, policy development, and advocacy for inclusive practices within the institution (Birnbaum, 1988). By fostering a shared understanding and commitment to DEI goals, community college presidents can establish a collaborative foundation with their boards, ensuring

sustained support for the institutional advancement of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- **Focusing on building and maintaining community partnerships that support the college's DEI efforts**

In the pursuit of advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) strategies at community colleges, community college presidents must prioritize building and maintaining community partnerships. Research highlights the importance of forging external collaborations to enhance DEI efforts (Milem, 2016). Community partnerships offer valuable resources, expertise, and diverse perspectives that can significantly contribute to the success of DEI initiatives (Bensimon & Sandoval, 2017). Engaging with local organizations, advocacy groups, and community leaders fosters a sense of shared responsibility and promotes a collective approach to addressing DEI challenges (Milem, 2016). By actively seeking and sustaining these partnerships, community college presidents can tap into external networks that can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of their institution's DEI efforts.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

As with all research studies, this study encountered some shifts in the intended methodology, participant pool, and results. These limitations are described and addressed here.

Change in Methodology

A change in methodology, specifically transitioning from in-person interviews to online meeting rooms, can potentially impact the kinds of comments provided by respondents in a research study. The shift in the mode of interaction may influence the depth and nature of participant responses due to the altered dynamics of virtual communication (Dennis, Fuller, & Valacich, 2008). Online interviews may introduce a level of perceived distance or anonymity, potentially affecting the level of participant disclosure or the richness of responses (Gaiser, 2012). Additionally, factors such as technical issues, the absence of non-verbal cues, and the virtual setting may influence the rapport between the researcher and the respondents, potentially impacting the overall quality of the data collected (MacFarlane & Zhang, 2014). To

minimize the effect of the change in methodology, the researcher in this study maintained an awareness of these potential effects when interpreting findings from online interviews and considered strategies to mitigate any drawbacks associated with the change in methodology.

Effect of Non-participating Presidents

The absence of participation by two out of nine community college presidents in a research study examining the leadership role of the community college CEO in the development of a college-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda raises several intriguing considerations. The decision not to participate could stem from various factors, such as time constraints, conflicting priorities, or skepticism about the study's relevance to their leadership roles. However, the additional observation that both non-participating presidents are female introduces a gender dimension that warrants careful analysis.

Research on women in leadership, such as the work by Eagly and Karau (2002), indicates that women in leadership roles may experience unique challenges, including time constraints due to additional responsibilities or societal expectations. The fact that both non-participating presidents are female might suggest that gender-related factors influenced their decision to abstain from the study. It is crucial to approach this observation with sensitivity, recognizing that individual decisions may be shaped by a complex interplay of personal, professional, and societal factors.

To delve deeper into this dynamic, future research could explore the specific challenges faced by female community college presidents in participating in studies related to DEI initiatives. Investigating potential barriers or systemic issues that disproportionately affect women in leadership roles could contribute valuable insights to the broader discourse on

diversity, equity, and inclusion within educational leadership. Understanding the reasons behind non-participation among female leaders in this context can inform strategies to enhance their engagement in research initiatives that are crucial for advancing equitable practices and policies within community colleges.

Interviewer Influence

The data collection for this study relied on elite interviews of CEOs. Taking into consideration that the interviewer and interviewee could have influenced each other during discussions, the challenge in this study was to avoid situations where an interviewee caused an emotional reaction or influenced which questions were asked (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). To counteract these influences, the researcher implemented methodological safeguards. Open-ended questions were used to encourage more genuine responses, and a neutral and non-judgmental demeanor from the interviewer created a comfortable space for participants to share unbiased information (Maynard, 2002; Fontana & Frey, 2005). Additionally, the interviewer established a rapport through pre-interview communication to foster an environment conducive to candid responses (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

George Floyd's Death

The controversial death of George Floyd in 2020 has had profound societal implications, particularly in the realm of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). In the context of this research study, Floyd's death could have influenced both the research landscape and the responses of participants. The event brought heightened awareness to issues of systemic racism and social injustice, prompting a renewed emphasis on the importance of DEI initiatives in educational

institutions (Harper, Patton, & Wooden, 2019). However, the impact of this study may be twofold. On one hand, it may have increased the willingness of the CEOs to engage in discussions on DEI, recognizing the urgency of addressing racial disparities. On the other hand, it might have introduced a potential for social desirability bias, with participants aligning their responses with the prevalent discourse surrounding racial equity. To navigate these challenges, the researcher acknowledged the broader sociopolitical context in the study design and data analysis, thus, allowing for a nuanced interpretation of participant responses (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on a research study examining the leadership role of community college CEOs in developing college-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agendas extends beyond institutional priorities to the CEOs' willingness to participate, especially given the potential for political consequences. The pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges for community college leaders, requiring a reevaluation of priorities and resources (Vanek et al., 2021). Amidst these challenges, CEOs may have been cautious about engaging in a study with political implications, as DEI initiatives often intersect with broader sociopolitical contexts. Institutional leaders may have been navigating diverse stakeholder opinions on DEI, potentially affecting their willingness to participate in a study that could have political ramifications (Kezar & Maxey, 2014). To minimize the impact of COVID-19 on this study, the researcher acknowledged this context, emphasizing confidentiality and the depoliticized nature of academic inquiry to mitigate potential reluctance in responses.

DELIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

Colleges Located in Michigan

A research study conducted exclusively on community colleges in the state of Michigan can be classified as employing a delimitation, as the choice of this specific geographic location introduces constraints on the study's scope.

The state of Michigan, like any other geographical area, is characterized by a unique political and social climate. Michigan's political landscape is diverse, encompassing a mix of urban and rural regions with distinct political affiliations and policy priorities. By focusing solely on community colleges within the state, the study is delimited to the political context of Michigan, potentially excluding insights and perspectives that might be found in community colleges in other states with different political dynamics.

Moreover, Michigan's social climate includes a range of demographic factors, economic conditions, and cultural influences that shape the experiences of students, faculty, and administrators within community colleges. The decision to study community colleges exclusively in Michigan as a delimited approach narrows the investigation to the specific social dynamics of this state, limiting the generalizability of findings to community colleges in other regions with different social characteristics.

Size, Setting, and Geographical Classifications

The selection of urban and suburban community colleges as the focus of a study aimed at advancing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda stems from the recognition that these institutions operate within more intricate and potentially challenging demographic

environments when compared to their rural counterparts. Urban and suburban community colleges often serve diverse populations with varied socioeconomic backgrounds, ethnicities, and cultural identities. The sheer density and diversity of the student body in these settings present a unique set of challenges and opportunities for fostering inclusivity and equity.

In urban areas, community colleges may grapple with issues such as economic disparities, language barriers, and the integration of students from different cultural backgrounds. The urban landscape often exacerbates these challenges, making it imperative for institutions to develop comprehensive DEI strategies that address the specific needs of their diverse student body. On the other hand, suburban community colleges may face a different set of complexities, with demographic shifts, evolving community dynamics, and socio-economic disparities presenting distinct obstacles to achieving inclusivity.

By choosing urban and suburban community colleges for the study, researcher's aim to explore the nuanced dimensions of DEI efforts in environments characterized by greater demographic heterogeneity. Understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by these institutions will contribute to the development of more effective and tailored strategies for advancing DEI agendas in community colleges, ultimately fostering a more inclusive and equitable educational environment for all students.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study examined the leadership role of the chief executive officers (CEOs) of community colleges in the strategic development of a college-wide DEI agenda. Considering the defined boundaries and limitations of this study, the researcher suggests exploring the following areas for future research.

Geographic Diversity

The inclusion of participants from geographic areas outside of Michigan in a study initially limited to Michigan community colleges holds the potential for enriching the research findings and contributing to a broader understanding of the role of college presidents in advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives. Research has shown that regional and cultural variations can significantly influence the approaches and challenges faced by higher education leaders in promoting diversity and inclusion (Smith & Aveling, 2017). By expanding the participant pool beyond Michigan, the study can capture a more diverse range of perspectives, experiences, and strategies employed by college presidents in different contexts. This approach aligns with the recognition that DEI efforts are nuanced and context-dependent, influenced by local demographics, historical factors, and institutional contexts (Bensimon & Sandoval, 2017). The inclusion of participants from various geographical areas could also enhance the external validity of the study, providing insights that may be applicable to a broader spectrum of community colleges and fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted challenges and opportunities in advancing DEI at the leadership level.

Size, Setting, and Geographical Classification

A valuable avenue for future research could involve expanding the investigation into the leadership role of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) in community colleges concerning the strategic development of a college-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda. To enhance the comprehensiveness of the study, it would be insightful to include private and rural colleges, entities that were intentionally excluded in the current research. Examining the

leadership dynamics in these settings could provide a more holistic understanding of how CEOs in diverse institutional contexts contribute to and shape DEI initiatives. This extension would contribute to a richer exploration of leadership practices, challenges, and successes in the broader landscape of higher education, allowing for a more nuanced and inclusive perspective.

Participant Characteristics

The non-participation of 2 out of 9 community college presidents in a research study on the leadership role of the community college CEO in the development of a college-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) agenda raises notable considerations. While the absence of two participants may impact the study's comprehensiveness, it is essential to approach this aspect with sensitivity to potential reasons for non-participation. Research on leadership participation in studies often emphasizes the importance of factors such as time constraints, competing responsibilities, and institutional priorities influencing leaders' decisions to engage in research endeavors (Kezar, 2018). It is crucial to consider these factors in understanding the non-participation of community college CEOs.

In future research endeavors, addressing barriers to participation and considering strategies to enhance engagement, especially among underrepresented groups, could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership role in advancing DEI in community colleges.

In addition, the effect of tenure on a college president's view of their leadership role in the strategic development of the institution's diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) agenda is a nuanced aspect of higher education leadership. Research suggests that the tenure of a college president can significantly influence their approach to institutional change and DEI initiatives.

Long-serving presidents may bring stability and institutional knowledge but might face challenges in fostering innovative approaches to DEI due to entrenched organizational cultures (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). On the other hand, newer presidents might have a fresh perspective but could encounter resistance when implementing DEI initiatives without a thorough understanding of the institution's historical context (Birnbaum, 1988). The impact of tenure on a president's view of their role in DEI strategic development underscores the need for an adaptive leadership approach that balances institutional traditions with a commitment to fostering inclusive and equitable practices.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

For an African American man aspiring to become an executive leader in higher education, having faith in college presidents to drive an agenda that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice is essential for fostering a supportive and inclusive environment. Research emphasizes the critical role of leadership in shaping the campus climate and promoting diversity and inclusion initiatives. College presidents, as the highest-ranking leaders in institutions, play a key role in setting the tone for inclusive practices (Huang, 2017). They have the power to influence policies, allocate resources, and create a culture that values diversity and equity.

Evidence suggests that when college leaders prioritize diversity, it positively impacts the institution's commitment to inclusivity. Bensimon and Sandoval (2017) argue that having a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO) at the executive level can catalyze change, indicating a commitment to addressing systemic inequalities. The presence of such leadership positions signifies an institutional commitment to fostering diversity and inclusion, and the CDO can

collaborate with the college president to drive initiatives that promote justice and equity (Bensimon & Sandoval, 2017).

Moreover, a college CEO's dedication to these principles can serve as a beacon of hope and inspiration for African Americans pursuing leadership roles in academia. It demonstrates that there are leaders at the highest levels of higher education who are genuinely committed to dismantling systemic barriers and creating a more inclusive and just educational landscape. This commitment can motivate aspiring leaders to continue their journey, knowing that they have allies and mentors who share their vision for a more equitable future. By placing diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice at the forefront of the college's work, college presidents not only enhance the educational experience but also empower future leaders to drive meaningful change in higher education and society as a whole.

CONCLUSION

The community college is recognized as an open-door institution of higher education that accepts all learners, of all ages, at any point in their lives, many needing to overcome skills gaps in literacy and numeracy to compete for 21st-century jobs in the knowledge-based economy (Rodriguez, 2015). The community college expects to be at the forefront of educational options for the growing enrollment of non-white students. Therefore, community college institutions will need to embrace operational strategies that support DEI initiatives.

The purpose of this study was to determine the leadership role of the community college CEO in the strategic development of a college-wide DEI agenda. The contextual framework for this study is provided by the AACC *Competencies for Community College Leaders* (2018) along with Boggs' and McPhail's *Practical Leadership in Community Colleges: Navigating*

Today's Challenges (2016). A review of literature related to the role of the CEO is presented in this study. In addition, it has described the research methods and design, and conclusions from participant responses to the electronic interviews. The study findings were summarized and the implications for practice were presented. Although this study does not make any significant changes to the role of the CEO, it does support McPhail's (2018) recommendation that the role of CEOs is to provide direction to offer fair access to resources, recognize equity gaps, and close opportunity/achievement gaps. The researcher hopes that this study has created opportunity and interest in future research on the role of the CEO in the development of a college-wide diversity agenda.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL



FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECT RESEARCH

1010 Campus Drive FLITE 410 Big Rapids, MI 49307 | (231) 591-2553 | www.ferris.edu/irb

Date: September 9, 2020

To: Susan DeCamillis, EdD, Andrew McQueen

From: Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph.D, IRB Chair

Re: IRB Application *IRB-FY19-20-212 The leadership role of the community college CEO in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda*

The Ferris State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) has reviewed your application for using human subjects in the study, *The leadership role of the community college CEO in the strategic development of a college-wide diversity, equity, and inclusion agenda (IRB-FY19-20-212)* and approved this project under Federal Regulations Expedited Review Approved 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Your protocol has been assigned project number IRB-FY19-20-212. 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.

This project has been granted a waiver of consent documentation; signatures of participants need not be collected. Although not documented, informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and participant rights, with the assurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must be provided, even when documentation is waived, and continue throughout the study.

As mandated by Title 45 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 46 (45 CFR 46) the IRB requires submission of annual status reports 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.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Wellman', enclosed in a rectangular box.

Gregory Wellman, R.Ph, Ph. D, IRB Chair
Ferris State University Institutional Review Board