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Perceptions of Trustees and Presidents of the Competencies Essential  
for Successful 21st-Century Community College Leadership

by

Cliff Davis

March 2018

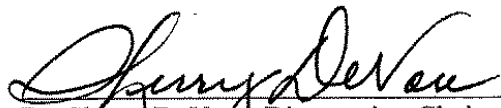
A Dissertation submitted to the Education Faculty of Lindenwood University in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
School of Education

Perceptions of Trustees and Presidents of the Competencies Essential  
for Successful 21st-Century Community College Leadership


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Cliff Davis

This Dissertation has been approved as partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education  
Lindenwood University, School of Education

  
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March 23, 2018  
Date

  
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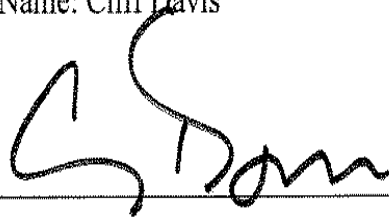
March 23, 2018  
Date

Declaration of Originality

I do hereby declare and attest to the fact that this is an original study based solely upon my own scholarly work at Lindenwood University and that I have not submitted it for any other college or university course or degree.

Full Legal Name: Cliff Davis

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cliff Davis", written over a horizontal line.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3/23/18

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## **Abstract**

An imminent wave of community college president retirements is well-documented in the literature, which will likely contribute to a serious leadership void on American community college campuses (American Association of Community Colleges [AACCC], 2013; Eddy, 2013). To address this impending leadership crisis, governing boards must focus on how to develop leaders prepared to meet the unique and increasingly complex challenges of community colleges. In keeping with Katz's (1955) three-skill conceptual framework, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe trustees' and presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency. In addition to data collected from in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participants ranked a list of 16 common duties of the community college president that occupy the majority of the president's time. Based on interviews with 15 trustees and eight presidents serving at Missouri community colleges, themes were identified specific to technical, human, and conceptual competencies. Trustees and presidents similarly ranked two common presidential duties: enrollment management and state and federal relations. However, noteworthy differences in trustees' and presidents' perceptions were found with six common duties: budget and finance matters, faculty and academic issues, fundraising and alumni relations, governing board relations, personnel and human resources, and strategic planning. Implications for practice were discussed specific to the trustee-president relationship, community college president competencies, institutional fit, succession planning, and the impact of underprepared trustees on the 21st-century president's success and the institution's effectiveness.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

American community colleges are viewed as critical avenues for educating the public through enhanced affordability and easy accessibility to higher education (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Ma & Baum, 2016). The uniqueness of community colleges as postsecondary institutions is evident in their focus on access, transfer, workforce development, and community development (Cohen, Brower, & Kisker, 2014; Royer & Latz, 2015). Recent findings on community college enrollments are inconsistent. For example, Price, Schneider, and Quick (2016) reported community college enrollments are increasing; however, Ma and Baum (2016) and Jaschik and Lederman (2017) reported enrollment declines in recent years.

Regardless, the populations served by community colleges remain significant in the post-great recession of 2007-2009 (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2017), more than 12 million students are enrolled in the nation's 1,108 community colleges. The pivotal role of the community college was evidenced in the AACC's (2017) reporting that 41% of all U.S. undergraduate students attend community colleges; community college undergraduate attendance is higher among Native Americans (56%), Hispanics (52%), and Blacks (43%). Community colleges also serve as the point of entry for most first-generation college students, minority students, and nontraditionally aged students as well as those with limited financial means (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2017).

Moreover, the transition of America's workforce from an industrial economy to a post-industrial economy has impacted the minimum education required for workers to

compete for good jobs (Carnevale, Strohl, Sheah, & Ridley, 2017). This transition “has resulted in a shift from an economy rooted in high school-level skills to an economy anchored in postsecondary education and training” (Carnevale & Rose, 2015, p. 17). The nation’s community colleges fill an important role in educating and training the workforce to meet the complex needs of the 21st-century economy (Dougherty, Lahr, & Morest, 2017).

Tekniepe (2014) described community colleges as “integral partners in the well-being of local service communities” (p. 2). Beyond the historical role of preparing students for the rigor of postsecondary education by providing the first two years of a four-year degree, community colleges serve the local community by contributing to economic stability and providing vocational education and workforce development (Tekniepe, 2014). Meier (2013) referred to the “multiple missions and multiple identities” inherently designed into the community college model (p. 16).

The milieu of American higher education is in a state of transformation, facing extraordinary challenges as it strives to produce an educated citizenry (Aspen Institute, 2017; Brown, 2012). The number of community college campuses has grown by nearly 1,000 institutions since 1947 (Brown, 2012). However, the system is also facing a critical issue – the significant number of presidents who will be retiring (Selingo, Chheng, & Clark, 2017; Travis & Price, 2013). In its most recent chief executive officer (CEO) compensation survey, the AACC reported 80% of CEOs anticipate retiring within 10 years, and 35% are planning to retire within five years (Phillippe, 2016). Yet, the scholarly literature suggests there is a lack of qualified leaders to replace the imminent wave of retiring community college CEOs (Freeman & Forthum, 2017). Increases in

presidential retirements and the shortage of qualified candidates to replace them have been identified as among the greatest challenges facing the 21st-century community college system (Freeman & Forthum, 2017; Jaschik & Lederman, 2017).

In addition to study of the phenomenon of voluntary retirements among community college presidents, scholars are examining shifts in the tenure of community college presidents caused by both voluntary and involuntary departures (Cooper, Kurlaender, & Travis, 2016; de los Santos & Milliron, 2015; Gluckman, 2017). Findings from an annual survey of 280 community college CEOs revealed a shift in the tenure of presidents over the last 18 years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). For the 2015 survey, more than 40% of 280 CEOs reported they had been in their present positions between one and five years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). In comparison, findings from the 1997 survey revealed the tenure of presidents ranged from 11 to 15 years, and the 2007 survey findings revealed the tenure of presidents ranged from six to 10 years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). Moreover, specific to California's community college leadership tenure compared to that of four-year universities, Cooper et al. (2016) reported, "The median job tenure of community college presidents has been just three and a half years, half that of their counterparts at four-year institutions" (p. 1).

Leading efforts to strengthen the nation's community college system in light of these challenges is the AACC (2018). The AACC (2018) has been recognized as the foremost advocacy organization for community colleges. The community college president works under the direction of the college's board of trustees (Brown, 2012). The leadership succession planning process facing the community college system requires oversight by the board of trustees; therefore, the AACC has partnered with the

Association of Community College Trustees and other constituents to focus efforts on broader presidential leadership and community college board and trustee governance issues (AACC, 2013).

The 2012 AACC report, *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community Colleges and the Nation's Future*, gauged the challenges and opportunities facing two-year colleges in the next decade (AACC, 2013). The AACC (2018) represents almost 1,200 community colleges who serve over 12 million students nationwide. Leadership shortages could affect community college campuses nationwide due to the planned and unplanned retirements predicted to occur (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017; Jones & Johnson, 2014). Because of these anticipated vacancies, the AACC (2013) has placed particular emphasis on helping community college boards and presidential candidates identify the leadership competencies deemed to be most important for successful leadership in a community college setting. Researchers have consistently found strong agreement among trustees and community college presidents for using the AACC competency guidelines as a resource for identifying presidential qualifications and recruiting presidential candidates (Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2009; Plinske, 2008).

This chapter is comprised of seven major sections. First, contextual background is provided, followed by the study's conceptual framework. Next, the statement of the problem and the purpose of the study are presented. Fifth, key terms are defined. Lastly, the study limitations and assumptions are stated, followed by a chapter summary.

### **Background of the Study**

As previously noted, the AACC (2013) predicted a surge in retirements for most community college presidents over the next 10 years. Impending retirements due to the



aging of the college president population are expected to occur en masse and may result in a leadership crisis due to community college president vacancies (Freeman & Forthum, 2017; Jones & Johnson, 2014; Price et al., 2016). As a result of the imminent retirement of community college presidents (Phillippe, 2016), succession planning is increasingly essential (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). Moreover, Stripling (2013) reported boards of trustees use different means of assessing presidential candidates. Presidential turnover and a dynamic educational environment require community college leaders to take a multipronged approach to ensure effective succession planning (Aspen Institute, 2017; Benard & Piland, 2014; Rivas & Jones, 2015). Presidents with requisite skills to lead community colleges are urgently needed to ensure effective leadership in coming years (Aspen Institute, 2017).

Given the impending retirements and competition for high-quality leaders expected to follow, trustees and administrators must work together to establish an effective leadership succession planning process, which captures and communicates the unique challenges and opportunities of the community college campus both today and in future years (AACC, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2017; Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). Historically, there has been a seemingly natural ascension from community college faculty to college dean to the vice presidency for academic affairs and ultimately to the role of community college presidency (Brown, 2012). However, traditional pipelines for grooming and recruiting future community college presidents through senior administrative and academic routes may be shrinking due to retirements within these ranks (Jones & Johnson, 2014; McNair, 2014). Moreover, the pathway to the presidency is changing in that the provost, for example, is no longer considered the “stopover point on the way to

the presidency” (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 3). Evidence indicates current provosts no longer aspire to the presidency, and responsibilities of the provost position have shifted toward academics and internal issues, making it less of a preparatory role for the presidency (Selingo et al., 2017).

Brown (2012) addressed the importance of the relationship between the board and the community college president and emphasized, “The president is critically important to the success of any college, and as a rule, boards must take seriously their responsibility to recruit, interview, hire, and support the president” (p. 43). With the growing complexity of the position of president, trustees are expected to develop equally diverse skillsets to fulfil their roles effectively (Brown, 2012). Legon, Lombardi, and Rhoades (2013) noted the increasing requirements for engagement and oversight required by trustees. Brown (2012) asserted the need for trustees to promote recruitment to fill president vacancies.

The primary purpose of the community college governing board remains the selection and support of the college president (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Brown (2012) purported, “Trustees are charged with leading efforts aimed at candidate recruitment, orientation, hiring, and support of the selected community college president to ensure that the individual selected to serve as president can lead successfully” (p. 39). Because of the importance of filling presidency roles with strong candidates, these efforts may be the most onerous responsibilities of trustees, especially the hiring process that requires substantial time and resources to ensure president-institution fit (Harris & Ellis, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018).

The challenges facing 21st-century community college leaders today are complex and interconnected with the overarching goal of enhancing student learning outcomes (Aspen Institute, 2017). The assumed responsibility of tackling these challenges falls predominantly on the community college president (Brown, 2012). The president oversees public affairs, fundraising, finances, operations, and fulfillment of the college mission and vision (McNaughtan, 2017, 2018; Price et al., 2016). Moreover, the president must use insights from years of leadership experience to manage an increasingly complex higher education landscape (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017).

High-performing community colleges are staffed with highly effective presidents (Aspen Institute, 2017). These presidents have diverse skills required to promote student and institutional success (Aspen Institute, 2017). Brown (2012) emphasized increased organizational intricacies demand new skillsets not previously required of college presidents. Community college presidents today are expected to competently raise funds, address competition from other providers of educational services, and act as liaisons between academic and governmental bodies (Brown, 2012). Qualities commonly found among effective community college presidents include a deep commitment to student access and success, willingness to take significant risks to advance student success, the ability to create lasting change within the college, a strong strategic vision for the college, and the ability to allocate resources in ways aligned with student success (Aspen Institute, 2017). In addition, boards of trustees are now focused on an expanded set of presidential candidate skillsets including fundraising, government relations, financial acuity, and strategic planning (Bastedo, Samuels, & Kleinman, 2014; Brown, 2012). Brown (2012) further posited skills a community college president should master: “strategic planning,

resource management, strategy formulation, navigation of new technologies, adopting rapidly changing leadership styles, understanding the importance of regulations and reporting requirements, accountability and outcomes assessment, and other skills focusing on specialized knowledge and its application” (p. 85).

From a study of community college presidents, Brown (2012) found competencies in financial management, infrastructure oversight, communication, collaborative leadership, and entrepreneurship are some of the highly valued skills required. Acknowledging the traditional characteristics required of successful community college presidents, Price et al. (2016) focused on the financial challenges facing the 21st-century presidency. Based on their review of the literature, Price et al. (2016) identified six financial challenges community college presidents must be prepared to address:

1. lowering costs without damage to academic quality,
2. maintaining student access,
3. maintaining compliance with federal and state laws,
4. maintaining technology,
5. managing increasing compensation costs, and
6. managing enrollment increases. (pp. 511-512)

Moreover, Brown (2012) noted leaders expressed the wish they had been better prepared to handle challenges of the 21st-century presidency. More recently, Freeman and Forthum (2017) conducted a review of the research literature specific to community college leadership training programs that prepare future presidents “for the day-to-day, real-world challenges they will face in the community college system” (p. 15). They

found differences between community colleges and four-year colleges in terms of institutional cultures and student populations that should be considered when designing either internal or external leadership programs to prepare future presidents with the necessary skillsets to be successful (Freeman & Forthum, 2017).

### **Conceptual Framework**

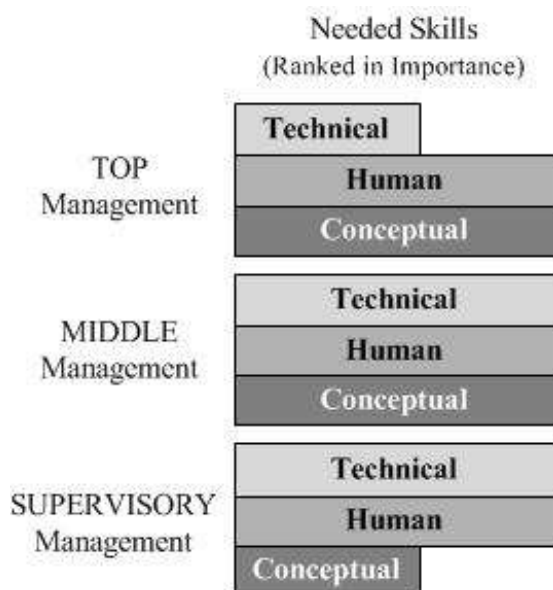
To strengthen the leadership succession planning process, it is essential to compare and contrast the perspectives of trustees and community college presidents regarding essential skills of a successful 21st-century community college president. Northouse (2013) defined leadership skills as the ability, knowledge, and capability to achieve goals. The conceptual framework for this study was based upon perspectives of both trustees and presidents about the importance of traditional organizational leadership competencies. Prior researchers contrasted perspectives of trustees and community college presidents as to the competencies deemed important for successful community college leadership, yet the 21st-century leader needs additional skills not examined in previous studies (Brown, 2012; Hassan et al., 2009; Plinske, 2008; Turner, 2005).

The conceptual framework undergirding this study was based on the skills approach to leadership. Both the skills approach and the trait approach take a leader-centered perspective (Northouse, 2013). Yet, unlike the traits approach that focuses on innate and mostly fixed personality characteristics, the skills approach emphasizes leadership skills and abilities which can be learned and developed (Northouse, 2013).

The specific conceptual framework utilized for this research study was Katz's (1955) three-skills approach, which is hierarchical in nature. In his seminal work to address the problems of trait leadership models, Katz (1955) developed the skills

approach to leadership. Based on his research on administration and observations of executives in the workplace, Katz (1955) identified three basic skill types of effective leaders: technical, human, and conceptual (Northouse, 2013). Northouse (2013) specified the descriptive nature of the skills approach in that it “describes leadership from a skills perspective” (p. 57). Northouse (2013) further explained, “Rather than providing prescriptions for success in leadership, the skills approach provides a structure for understanding the nature of effective leadership” (p. 57).

According to Katz’s (1955) framework, the three types of leadership skills – technical, human, and conceptual – vary in importance depending upon a leader’s position within the management hierarchy (e.g., top management, middle management, or supervisory management). Technical and human skills are most important to lower-level supervisory leaders, while all three skill types are important for middle managers to possess (see Figure 1) (Northouse, 2013). Northouse (2013) explained, “At the upper management levels, it is paramount for leaders to exhibit conceptual and human skills” (p. 57).



*Figure 1.* Study conceptual framework. Adapted from “Skills of an Effective Administrator,” by R. L. Katz, 1955, *Harvard Business Review*, 33(1), pp. 33-42. Copyright 1955 by Harvard Business Publishing.

Central to Katz’s (1955) three-skill framework is the differentiation between traits or qualities that describe who leaders are and skills that are “what leaders can accomplish” (Northouse, 2013, p. 44). The three types of leadership competencies are described in the following sections.

**Technical competencies.** The technical skillset was the first leadership competency identified by Katz (1955). Northouse (2013) explained technical skills are essential to produce a company’s products. Technical skills are identified as specialized domains, analytical skills, and the abilities to employ pertinent techniques and tools (Katz, 1955). Technical skills are not as important for top-level managers (e.g., chief executive officers, presidents), because technical assignments are best handled by skilled subordinates (Northouse, 2013).

**Human competencies.** The second competency skillset identified in Katz's (1955) three-skills approach includes human skills, which entail "being aware of one's own perspectives on issues and, at the same time, being conscious of the perspectives of others" (Northouse, 2013, p. 45). Human skills include cooperative and conflict resolution abilities (Northouse, 2013). Unlike technical skills that involve working with things, human skills require the ability to work effectively with people including subordinates, peers, and superiors (Northouse, 2013). A top-management leader needs human skills to establish trust among colleagues and subordinates in order to create a comfortable working environment (Katz, 1955). According to Katz (1955), human skills are needed at all levels of management. Top-level leaders, such as community college presidents, need sufficient personal skills to engage subordinates, academic leaders, and trustees (Northouse, 2013).

**Conceptual competencies.** The third leadership competency in Katz's (1955) three-skills approach involves conceptual skills, which are deemed most desirable among chief executive officers. Conceptual skills involve the ability to work with ideas (Northouse, 2013). According to Katz (1955), conceptual skills are critical for middle- and top-level management leaders. A community college president needs conceptual skills to communicate the goals and strategic mission of the college (Northouse, 2013).

### **Statement of the Problem**

As previously discussed, the imminent wave of community college leadership retirements projected in upcoming years could present a serious leadership void on community college campuses nationwide (AACC, 2013; Brown, 2012; Eddy, 2013). Development goals of community colleges will be impossible to meet if presidency



vacancies are not sufficiently resolved (Brown, 2012). To address this impending crisis, community college boards of trustees need to devote time and resources to plan for retirements and fill vacancies with skilled leaders (Brown, 2012).

Brown (2012) recognized the increasing complexity of the challenges facing today's community college leaders. Furthermore, Brown (2012) acknowledged the increasing difficulty of mastering new skills required of academic leaders in dynamic higher education organizations. The responsibilities required of community college presidents are demanding and complex (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017). McNaughtan (2017) described the demanding and complex expectations of the 21st-century community college president: "to oversee fundraising, manage budgets, interact with their local community, mediate campus conflict, engage in strategic planning, and lobby on behalf of their institutions to the state and federal government" (p. 77).

Brown (2012) noted clear expectations are required to shape leadership talent and to identify the right person for any vacancy. Identifying and communicating the unique characteristics, competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences trustees expect a presidential candidate to possess will aid the leadership succession process (Luna, 2013). Problematic, however, are statements made by newly-elected presidents who claim they were not made aware of the unique institutional challenges facing the community college campus when they were interviewed or after they were hired to lead the campus (Brown, 2012).

Charan (2005) found criteria used to announce and recruit college presidential vacancies too often reflect only the minimum requisite qualifications and expectations for presidential candidates. Community college boards of trustees must understand and fully

communicate the traditional and emerging characteristics, competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences deemed essential for community college presidents selected to lead 21st-century community college campuses (Charan, 2005). This study included an investigation based upon the technical, human, and conceptual competencies described by Katz (1955) in his skills-based conceptual framework for leaders.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Plinske (2008) conducted a quantitative survey research study to measure community college trustees' agreement with the use of AACCC core competencies as indicators of presidential qualifications. This study built upon Plinske's (2008) research by using a qualitative approach. The aim of this basic qualitative study was to broaden Plinske's (2008) focus to include the perspectives of both trustees and community college presidents relative to required presidential competencies. Specifically, in keeping with Katz's (1955) three-skill conceptual framework, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

Leadership succession planning processes must be strengthened by recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and supporting the 21st-century community college leader (Plinske, 2008; Plinske & Packard, 2010). Selingo et al. (2017) argued presidential search committees need a better understanding of the president's job, and transition teams should be established to onboard newly hired presidents. This qualitative study was designed to compare and contrast perceptions of trustees and presidents about the need for community college presidents to possess traditional and emerging characteristics,

competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences to successfully lead the 21st-century community college.

**Research questions.** Katz's (1955) skills-based conceptual framework provides a description of effective leadership based on three types of skills: technical, human, and conceptual. Katz's (1955) framework provides a structure for understanding community college trustees' and presidents' perspectives of effective leaders and served as the foundation for the study's research questions. In keeping with basic qualitative research, the research questions were descriptive in nature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The following research questions provided guidance for this study:

1. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how technical competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?
2. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how human competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?
3. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

### **Definition of Key Terms**

For the purposes of this study, the following terms are defined:

**Board of trustees.** The board of trustees is a management group charged with supervising, investigating, and advising leaders in community colleges (AACC, 2013).

The board of trustees is the hiring authority for presidential vacancies in higher education (Scott, 2018).

**Community college.** Community colleges are higher education institutions designed to provide two years of post-secondary education, often leading to the awarding of an associate degree (AACC, 2013).

**Competencies and skills.** Competencies and skills referenced in this study are the technical, human, and conceptual abilities required of trustees and presidents of community colleges (Katz, 1955).

**Conceptual competencies.** Conceptual competencies involve the ability to work with ideas (Northouse, 2013). According to Katz (1955), conceptual competencies are critical for middle- and top-level management leaders. A community college president needs conceptual skills to communicate the goals and strategic mission of the college (Northouse, 2013).

**Human competencies.** Human competencies entail “being aware of one’s own perspectives on issues and, at the same time, being conscious of the perspectives of others” (Northouse, 2013, p. 45). Human competencies include cooperative and conflict-resolution abilities (Northouse, 2013).

**President.** The president is the identified executive appointed by trustees to lead a community college (AACC, 2013).

**Technological competencies.** Technological competencies are specialized domains, analytical skills, and the abilities to employ pertinent techniques and tools (Katz, 1955).

## **Limitations and Assumptions**

Leedy and Ormrod (2015) explained limitations are potential weaknesses that can be related to the study sample, data-collection environment, measurement techniques, and personal biases. In the case of qualitative methodology, researchers must be mindful of the highly contextual nature of findings that are case-dependent (Patton, 2015).

Typically, three types of sampling limitations are found in qualitative studies: (a) limitations in situations, (b) limitations from the time period, and (c) limitations based on participant selectivity (Patton, 2015).

This study was situation-limited, because the focus was on the perceptions of trustees and presidents about Katz's (1955) three categories of competencies of effective community college presidents. Thus, the study's data collection instrument, a semi-structured interview guide based on Katz's three-skills framework, was also a limitation in situation (Patton, 2015). Although the literature includes a variety of theories on leadership styles and attributed numerous other factors to successful community college presidents, this study was limited to the skills-based categories identified in Katz's (1955) conceptual framework: technical, human, and conceptual.

A third limitation of this study was related to Patton's (2015) limitation of time. Interviews with community college trustees and presidents were conducted over a period of weeks, which limited the findings to a time-specific period. Fourth, the purposeful selection of a small sample—eight presidents and 15 trustees from community colleges in Missouri—limits the generalizability of findings to other populations. However, generalization is not the goal of qualitative research; rather, a small, nonrandom, purposeful sample is studied in order to understand a particular phenomenon in greater

depth (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, this research was geographically limited, because only community college trustees and presidents located in Missouri were recruited to participate in the study.

In addition to these stated limitations, several assumptions were accepted. An assumption is “a premise that is taken for granted without confirmatory evidence” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2015, p. 367). The following two assumptions were accepted:

1. The interview responses of each participant were given in an open and honest manner.
2. The participants’ backgrounds and adequate knowledge and experiences of the community college presidency enabled them to engage in meaningful discussion of the research topic and to answer the interview questions.

### **Summary**

Scholars have warned of an impending leadership shortage on the nation’s community college campuses due to the imminent retirement of community college presidents and other administrative leaders, which is predicted to occur en masse in the coming years (AACC, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2017; Brown, 2012). Given the imminent community college leadership retirements projected, college trustees must understand and communicate the traditional and emerging characteristics, competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences essential for presidents selected to lead 21st-century community colleges (AACC, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2017; Brown, 2012). The purpose of this study was to explore and describe board trustees’ and community college presidents’ perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

In this chapter, emerging issues facing the community college campus were explored and the role of the board of trustees in the critical leadership succession planning process was identified. Effective leadership succession planning is strengthened by trustees able to identify and communicate the characteristics, competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences sought in a new community college leader (Luna, 2013). Traditionally, trustees were encouraged to use tools such as the AACC competency guidelines in the candidate identification and recruitment process (Luna, 2013). However, given the complexity of challenges facing community college campuses today, it is vital to understand areas of agreement between trustees and community college presidents regarding the need for new and emerging competencies identified as important for 21st-century community college presidents.

This chapter included an introduction to the part the AACC has played in supporting the role of the board of trustees charged with leadership succession planning. Chapter Two contains a review of research conducted with trustees and community college presidents. In particular, areas of agreement between trustees and presidents about the usefulness of the AACC core competencies to the leadership succession planning process are described.

In addition, Plinske's (2008) research is included specific to trustee perspectives regarding the competencies, knowledge, and experiences deemed important for presidents. The review of the literature is organized according to five areas: (a) critical challenges facing the 21st-century community college, (b) succession planning from the

perspectives of both community college presidents and trustees, (c) organizational leadership characteristics of community college presidents, (d) trustees' and presidents' perceptions about leadership competencies, and (e) the leadership capability model.



## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

The research literature presented in this chapter indicates an imminent wave of community college leadership retirements may contribute to leadership shortages in the coming years (AACC, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2017; Brown, 2012; Travis & Price, 2013). Community college leaders and trustees will face critical challenges in filling these positions during the 21st century (Luna, 2013). Therefore, planning for and overseeing effective leadership succession planning is critical for community colleges (AACC, 2013).

This chapter is organized according to five major areas of the literature. First, critical challenges facing the 21st-century community college are reviewed. The importance of succession planning, from the perspectives of both trustees and community college presidents, is the next topic presented. Third, the organizational leadership characteristics of community college presidents are explored, followed by a review of the literature specific to the perceptions of both trustees and community college presidents about the skills and competencies of 21st-century college presidents. Lastly, a discussion of the leadership capability model is presented for understanding of the conceptual framework used for this study, Katz's (1955) three-skill model of technical, human, and conceptual skills and competencies for higher education leaders. The chapter concludes with a summary.

### **Critical Challenges Facing the 21st-Century Community College**

Significant challenges face the community college campus leader in providing an attractive alternative to other higher education institutions, including a changing student demographic, funding uncertainties, and growing stakeholder demands for accountability

(Davis, Dent, & Wharff, 2015; Tekniepe, 2014). Alfred (2012) examined a decade worth of research on community college leadership and predicted forces likely to present significant challenges over the next decade, including a lagging economy, changes in funding for public colleges, increased public oversight, reduced public support, and rising costs. Today's community colleges must compete for students in terms of cost, convenience, open access, and inclusiveness (Cejda & Jolley, 2013). Significant challenges face the community college campus leader in providing an attractive alternative to other higher education alternatives, and colleges are not necessarily meeting the challenges of a 21st-century mission (Cejda & Jolley, 2013).

Plinske (2008) conducted a comprehensive review of findings from studies relative to trustee expectations for organizational leadership competencies of community college presidents. Study results revealed significant challenges facing the community college, including increased competition, growth in technology-driven curricula, funding limitations, and shifting mission demands (Plinske, 2008). Moreover, the growing need for ongoing assessment and restructuring of academic programs and services to meet the changing demands of the workplace has become a major challenge for 21st-century community college presidents (Awan, 2014; McClenney, 2013; Plinske, 2008).

In addition to the challenges facing community college presidents, governing boards of these institutions must address the leadership void expected to occur on college campuses that could threaten the nation's ability to meet the goals set by the White House and the Lumina Foundation (AACC, 2013). These goals address the need to increase the number of college graduates by the year 2020 (AACC, 2013). Community colleges will play a key role in providing education to meet President Obama's 2020 challenge

(AACC, 2013). However, the flux in college governing boards is contributing to the problem of a leadership void (AACC, 2013). Rotation and re-composition mean a high number of board members are new to their roles and have not yet mastered the responsibilities and demands needed for efficacy (AACC, 2013). Moreover, Johnson (2015) noted most board members' expertise lies outside the field of education, which can "constrain their ability to effectively govern a complex education organization" (p. 11).

### **Importance of Leadership Succession Planning**

Leadership succession planning has been identified as one of the top challenges facing higher education executives in the coming years (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Long, Johnson, Faught, & Street, 2013; Selingo et al., 2017). The board of trustees is responsible for succession planning (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Plinske & Packard, 2010; Selingo et al., 2017). However, when a presidential vacancy occurs, college boards are rarely prepared to conduct a search for a new leader (American Council of Trustees and Alumni [ACTA], 2004). In haste, college trustees oftentimes react to the leadership vacancy by appointing a search committee and contracting an executive search firm (ACTA, 2004). Search firm services include helping the board structure the position announcement, determine presidential qualities and characteristics, recruit and evaluate candidates, and hire the president (Kelderman, 2017; McDade, Dowdall, Polonio, & Hamos, 2017; McNaughtan, 2018).

The frequent use of search firms by community college governing boards is evidenced in findings from the most recent American College President Study (Gagliardi, Espinosa, Turk, & Taylor, 2017). More than half of acting community college presidents

reported being hired by search firms or consultants (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Additionally, Kelderman (2017) explained there is evidence suggesting approximately 70% of college president searches are conducted with the help of outside search firms or consultants.

Scholars, however, are questioning the use of search firms and consultants to conduct searches for college presidents (Kelderman, 2017; McNaughtan, 2018). Kelderman (2017) explained, “In recent years questions have been raised about the costs and quality of outsourcing searches and whether it can undermine shared governance at the expense of secrecy” (para. 11). Scholars have debated the associated high costs of using search firms (Kelderman, 2017; McNaughtan, 2018). Kelderman (2017), for example, reported on a 2016 study of public college contracts with search firms. The average cost of the 61 contracts examined was \$79,000 (Kelderman, 2017). The highest search firm contract fee was \$160,000 (Kelderman, 2017). Moreover, almost half of the contract agreements included added indirect expenses between \$2,000 and \$30,000 (Kelderman, 2017).

Howells (2011) explained using executive search firms can be expensive, “but hiring the wrong executive can also have serious and expensive repercussions” (p. 26). One serious and expensive repercussion is short president tenures (Howells, 2011). For example, Howells (2011), in her study of the relationship between the presidential search process and position longevity in community colleges, reported the type of presidential search process most often utilized by community colleges was the national search using a professional search firm. However, when measuring the relationship between mean length of tenure and the type of search process used for current presidents, Howells

(2011) found, “The most often used process and the processes producing the highest longevity are not the same” (p. 52).

Addressing questionable results of searches conducted by executive search firms, Kelderman (2017) provided examples. Kelderman (2017) pointed to search firms’ failures to uncover questionable behaviors of candidates during the vetting process. Additionally problematic is criticism that search firms fail to identify women and underrepresented minority candidates for presidential positions (Kelderman, 2017). Moreover, Kelderman (2017) cited the problem when search firms “recycle the same safe group of candidates, usually sitting presidents, for each search, rather than considering who will actually be the best person to lead the institution forward” (para. 32).

In an article focused on the benefits of using outside firms due to their expertise and experience in the presidential search process, McDade et al. (2017) discussed reasons why searches can fail. One reason for failure deals with the lack of clarity about candidate qualifications and the particular challenges of the position (McDade et al., 2017). Another reason for failed searches is related to divisions within the search committee about the profile of the candidate they wish to attract to the position (McDade et al., 2017).

Regardless of the type of presidential search process used, governing board members are charged with the ultimate responsibility for developing the recruitment announcement, designing and facilitating the candidate interview process, and supporting the newly hired president in leading the community college (Luna, 2013). More than resulting in the hiring of a new president, a well-planned search strategy can be an opportunity for a governing board to set a new direction for the college (Channell, 2013).

Therefore, it is imperative the governing board predetermine the leadership qualities of the institution's next leader (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c).

Plinske and Packard (2010) maintained the board of trustees must have a clear understanding of the qualifications required of college presidents. Determining the qualifications and ideal characteristics of a presidential candidate is one of the key roles the board of trustees plays in the presidential selection process (Channell, 2013; Scott, 2018). Effective preparation for president replacement requires a keen understanding and communication by trustees of the essential leadership competencies they want in a community college president (Channell, 2013).

Brown (2012) developed the first complete picture of community college trustees across the country through "The Citizen Trustee Project," a longitudinal study of 6,600 trustees who govern the nation's community colleges (p. 37). Brown (2012) found trustees play an important role in presidential selection and presidential success. According to the literature, one of the most pressing challenges facing the board of trustees is the need for effective leadership succession planning to prepare for the imminent retirement of community college presidents and the leadership void to follow (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Selingo et al., 2017; Travis & Price, 2013). This imminent retirement trend is supported by the literature (Aspen Institute, 2017; Gagliardi et al., 2017; Phillippe, 2016). For example, Phillippe (2016) reported 80% of community college CEOs plan to retire within 10 years (35% within five years), while Gagliardi et al. (2017) reported the average age of current presidents is 62 years, compared with an average of 52 years when the first American College President Study was published 30

years ago. Additionally, a contributing factor to the reduction in qualified applicants for the presidency is that college chief academic officers are not interested in becoming community college presidents (Brown, 2012; Selingo et al., 2017).

Higher education governing boards are responsible for assuring the college is adhering to its mission and achieving stated goals (Scott, 2018). The governing board of each community college system is comprised of citizens from within the community in which the college is located (Legon et al., 2013). Community colleges promote access and opportunity for students, and the board is tasked with oversight and responsible representation (Legon et al., 2013). For the community college president to be successful, governing boards must select the best candidate and take steps to retain the president once hired (Brown, 2012). However, Plinske and Packard (2010) found discrepancies:

Despite the fact that presidential openings are often advertised with a published position statement that includes desired characteristics and minimum qualifications of applicants, these statements often include generic descriptions that are broad and ambiguous and that are subject to a number of interpretations by the members of the board of trustees. (p. 294)

The community college president can best convey first-hand knowledge about day-to-day experiences leading the college; however, community college presidents experience pressures to perform the job from numerous stakeholders, including the governing board and local and state political leaders (Jones & Johnson, 2014). Therefore, to be successful in their role, community college presidents require guidance, oversight, and support from

the board of trustees to effectively lead faculty, staff, and students toward a shared mission of enhancing student outcomes (Legon et al., 2013; Morris & Miller, 2014).

Also of importance to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency are leadership development programs (Freeman & Forthum, 2017). These programs take the form of graduate degrees and grow-your-own (GYO), or in-house trainings (Freeman & Forthum, 2017). However, Freeman and Forthum (2017) explained more research is needed to expand the graduate-degree programs and to support university efforts to assess, evaluate, and optimize these programs. Shortcomings of the GYO and in-house training programs include a lack of infrastructure and rigorous program evaluation (Freeman & Forthum, 2017). Although community college leadership development programs are not required, the AACC (2013) recommended adherence to the following five competencies based on existing leaders' skills and abilities essential to success: organizational strategy; institutional finance, research, fundraising, and resource management; communication; collaboration; and community college advocacy. Information to guide the use of these competencies in community college leadership programs is presented according to three stages of the CEO's career: (a) emerging leaders, (b) new CEOs within the first three years on the job, and (c) new CEOs who have been in their positions for three or more years (AACC, 2013).

Rural community colleges may feel the impact of presidential retirements more than other similar institutions (Eddy, 2013). Eddy (2013), author of *Community College Leadership: A Multidimensional Model for Leading Change*, noted the unique challenges of finding qualified presidents in remote areas with fewer resources than metropolitan locales. She also predicted, "Rural community colleges will be particularly hard-hit by



changes in leadership as they represent the majority of two-year colleges and they face unique challenges given their location” (Eddy, 2013, p. 20).

The principles of succession planning have been utilized for decades in business and industry to address institutional employment planning with strategies focused on internal and external candidates (Long et al., 2013; Luna, 2013). Institutions of higher education, however, have been slower in thinking about how to approach succession planning (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Long et al., 2013). Three planning steps are critical to succession planning: (a) identifying organizational goals, (b) understanding workforce development requirements, and (c) identifying institutional needs (Luna, 2013). Eddy and Mitchell (2017) cited the literature relevant to best practices for succession planning in community colleges:

- incorporating succession planning into strategic planning and performance reviews,
- offering leadership education and leadership opportunities for potential leaders,
- mentoring potential leaders,
- creating more mid-level leadership positions, and
- sharing decision making throughout the institution. (p. 134)

Successful succession planning results in alignment of the recruitment, selection, and hiring of community college presidents who are keenly aware of and committed to serving the institution’s core mission and values (Luna, 2013). Succession planning can involve developing the talents and skills of current employees for when advancement

opportunities occur (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017), as well as external searches (Selingo et al., 2017).

One of the challenges of governing board search committees is to find a strong pool of presidential applicants (Channell, 2013). Although focused at the university level, Selingo et al.'s (2017) five strategies for improving the pipeline to the presidency also apply to community colleges:

1. develop intentional training and leadership development opportunities aimed at prospective college presidents,
2. align short-term tactics and long-term strategies,
3. gain a better understanding of the role of presidents among committees and set up a transition team to onboard the president,
4. develop a willingness to look beyond traditional backgrounds, and
5. build relationships with various stake-holders both on- and off-campus.

(Selingo et al., 2017, pp. 21-22)

One potential candidate pool is academia, specifically those in other administrative roles (Hammond, 2013). Hammond (2013) found that prior to their presidential appointments, college and university presidents were often employed as provosts, college vice presidents, and deans. Therefore, exposing administrative leaders at every level of the college to the president's role and responsibilities helps develop the talent pool to fill future vacancies (Plinske & Packard, 2010). However, recent shifts in administrative roles indicate some administrative positions may not be the best preparation for the presidency (Selingo et al., 2017). For example, the modern provost has become primarily involved with academics and internal issues, which are not the focus of the presidency

(Selingo et al., 2017). Moreover, Jones and Johnson (2014) explained traditional pathways to the presidency through administrative positions such as dean or vice president may no longer be the best. According to Jones and Johnson (2014), “This traditional on-the-job training does not prepare a president for working with external constituents” (p. 307). Three areas are critical for community college leadership succession planning: (a) clearly communicated expectations for the leadership position, (b) good president and trustee relations, and (c) the current president’s perspectives of the leadership skills and competencies required for a successful tenure.

**Clearly communicated expectations.** The AACC (2013) has been recognized for its work in identifying competencies deemed important by trustees for successful community college presidential leadership. An inventory of six essential competencies was developed, which were identified as critical for college president development and leadership (Brown, 2012). Essential competencies include skills in organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism (Gross & Shapiro, 2013; McFadden, Miller, Sypawka, Clay, & Hoover-Plonk, 2013). These competencies were adopted by the AACC Board of Directors (Hassan et al., 2009) and endorsed by Eddy (2013) as key during the recruitment and interview process.

To support the leadership succession planning process, training on the growing list of experiences and skills needed by presidents should be provided to trustees and others involved in executive searches (Aspen Institute, 2017). Comprehensive job descriptions provide an important operational foundation for newly hired presidents (Legon et al., 2013). In order to develop job descriptions, the board of trustees should

identify the constraints of duties for community college presidents (Brown, 2012). The interview process should be structured to ensure the candidate possesses the necessary competencies (Hassan et al., 2009). Succession planning in higher education should be an ongoing process that includes the identification, training, evaluation, and mentoring of promising internal candidates (Long et al., 2013; Selingo et al., 2017).

A lack of involvement by boards of trustees in deciphering and clarifying the unique characteristics, competencies, and experience required for presidential candidates can lead to a disconnect between the expectations of newly hired presidents and the board of trustees entrusted with their oversight (McNaughtan, 2018; Tekniepe, 2014). This board clarification is especially needed if the job requires skills beyond the traditional leadership skills noted in Katz's (1955) early research (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Without clear expectations of requisite presidential skills, succession efforts will be undermined (Charan, 2005).

Published position and candidate requirements for presidential openings are often broad and ambiguous (Plinske & Packard, 2010). A disconnect between the posted requirements and the board of trustees' expectations can be problematic (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Charan (2005) found trustee boards struggle while searching for community college leadership when using broad criteria to guide their search. Moreover, Charan (2005) also found precise indications of skills, talents, and experiences lead to more effective job and candidate matches. Because of numerous challenges associated with overseeing the leadership succession planning process for the community college, governing boards of trustees should give critical attention to the process (Plinske & Packard, 2010).

**Good president and trustee relations.** Principles that demonstrate a good board-president relationship include a strong sense of trust between the president and board of trustees (Cooper, Kurlaender, & Travis, 2017). Absent such trust in combination with short president tenures, the community college becomes instable and performance and progress are impeded (Cooper et al., 2017). Additionally, good communication is a characteristic of strong board-president relationships, and such relationships “foster cultures in which change can take place, initiatives can be sustained and growth can occur” (Cooper et al., 2017, p. 1). Moreover, Legon et al. (2013) stressed the importance of collaboration based on mutual respect between trustees and presidents. The researchers described a shared governance model “that is collaborative and forward-looking, engaged and aware, open and transparent, inclusive and forceful” (Legon et al., 2013, p. 25).

Furthermore, presidential success requires trustees to select the best candidate, establish duties and responsibilities, and provide detailed and ongoing feedback regarding job performance (Brown, 2012; Smith & Miller, 2015). Despite research on this topic, community college boards have been slow to adopt succession planning (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). Additional challenges are related to the voluntary nature of the governing board, including trustees’ difficulty allotting time for official meetings (Legon et al., 2013).

More recently, McNaughtan (2017, 2018) addressed the topic of the president-trustee relationship from the perspective of institutional fit. More specifically, he included the supplementary component in his conceptual model of institutional fit for colleges and universities (McNaughtan, 2017). Supplementary fit deals with the college

president's relationship with multiple distinct groups (e.g., executive team, faculty, and governing board) (McNaughtan, 2017). According to McNaughtan (2017), "The supplementary conceptual component is based on the idea that individuals and organizations have specific values, goals, and personalities that, when congruent, lead to higher fit and positive outcomes" (p. 85).

**Current president's perspectives on leadership requirements.** Because of the intimate knowledge the community college president has of the actual job demands, he or she is uniquely qualified to identify future leadership talent, especially when succession planning is lacking (Selingo et al., 2017). Based on survey responses from 1,546 presidents, chancellors, and CEOs of American colleges and universities, Gagliardi et al. (2017) identified the critical issues their successors must have competencies to overcome: state and federal government funding decreases, tuition and fee increases, budget and financial management, fundraising, enrollment management, diversity, and equity issues. Furthermore, leaders must maintain a commitment to the community college's mission of open access for students while dealing with increasing pressures for accountability amidst decreases in funding (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017).

The changing landscape of higher education is presenting new challenges for 21st-century community college presidents. Since the Great Recession, higher education institutions have become increasingly vulnerable economically, politically, and legislatively (Luna, 2013). In this new landscape, colleges have encountered greater limitations on resources, increased stakeholder scrutiny, and concerned voices about the success of academic institutions (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). Community college leaders are faced with the need for greater innovation to find better ways of delivering services,

addressing efficiency and cost, and improving outcomes (Alfred, 2012). To survive in the highly competitive higher education arena, community college leaders must address the implications of simultaneous growth and reduction (Alfred, 2012). Alfred (2012) described the need to simultaneously cope with “the effects of deceleration fueled by a lingering recession and diminished resources... [and] forces of acceleration fueled by burgeoning learner demand and intensifying calls for accountability” (p. 112). As for the increased demand, more than 12 million students are enrolled in the nation’s 1,108 community colleges (AACC, 2017), which is an increase over the 8.2 million students enrolled between 2007 and 2010 (Aspen Institute, 2017). Modern-day learners want more and better service, while policymakers are demanding evidence of better outcomes (Alfred, 2012).

Presidents have reported feeling underprepared for the challenges of community college leadership (Brown, 2012; Halter, 2015; Inside Higher Education, 2015; Tunheim & McLean, 2014). While some presidents quickly develop the needed skills to survive in the leadership role, others may succumb to voluntary or involuntary departures because of a lack of fit or misunderstandings about the job requirements of the presidency (McNaughtan, 2017, 2018; Mellow & Heelan, 2014). If a president resigns shortly after appointment to the role, it may be an indicator of insufficient disclosure about the requirements, expectations, skills, or challenges of the job (Denton & Moore, 2009).

New community college presidents are often unaware of the unique challenges at the institutions they are hired to lead (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). Oftentimes, presidents perceive they were not provided with key insights about the problems facing their colleges during the hiring process (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). Commonly omitted details

about the position pertain to financial issues, low faculty morale, tensions among trustees, litigation, or delayed infrastructure repairs (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). Numerous factors lead to a lack of full disclosure during the hiring process (Jones & Johnson, 2014; Selingo et al., 2017). Because of trustees' focus on hiring the best person to fulfill the complex role of president (Denton & Moore, 2009), the job description is often presented to attract top prospective candidates. Also, trustees and academic leaders may not have a full understanding of the daily duties of the president (Jones & Johnson, 2014; Legon et al., 2013; Selingo et al., 2017). One of the most common causes of disengagement of newly hired presidents is the perception the job is not what was described during the recruitment process, and presidents experience disillusionment when expectations of the position do not align with the realities of the job (Legon et al., 2013).

Beyond the stages of recruitment, interviewing, selection, and hiring and appointment, a new community college president must be perceived as successful in his or her new role (Denton & Moore, 2009; Smith & Miller, 2015). A reasonably smooth transition and entry to the new job, the cultivation of key relationships, and the establishment of thoughtfully bold – but perhaps not too bold – initial priorities are indicators a new president has begun a successful tenure (Denton & Moore, 2009). There are also early indicators of an unsuccessful presidency, which begin with the outcomes of the search process itself (Denton & Moore, 2009). Unfavorable outcomes can result when there is disagreement within the search committee about the process (Denton & Moore, 2009; McDade et al., 2017).

Community college search committees are encouraged to develop a presidential profile that describes the unique characteristics of the college and relevant institutional



issues to aid the recruitment and selection process (Brown, 2012; Luna, 2013). The profile should include information on the college budget and financial health, student enrollment and demographic trends, faculty composition, campus facilities and operational infrastructure, and characteristics of the community and region served (Brown, 2012; Elliot & Paton, 2014; Fowles, 2014; Luna, 2013). Brown (2012) maintained the candidate profile is key to recruiting a community college president; however, too often the profile is nondescript and overly generic (Plinske, 2008). Therefore, it is imperative community college presidential candidates be well-informed of the unique challenges and opportunities facing the community college system during the recruitment, interview, and hiring process (Plinske, 2008; Plinske & Packard, 2010).

### **Organizational Leadership Characteristics of Community College Presidents**

Eddy (2012) reported the goal of the AACC *Leading Forward* project was to provide a template of skills needed by higher education administrators and executives. This research-based competency framework was intended to help emerging leaders chart their professional development; provide leadership development programs with current guidelines; and guide college human resource development departments and boards of trustees in recruitment, hiring, and professional development (Eddy, 2012, 2013; Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). The first competency needed by college presidents is to facilitate long-range planning to benefit the organization (Eddy, 2012). In addition, resource management, including knowledge about funding opportunities and participation in fundraising activities, is also included (Eddy, 2012). Strong verbal, nonverbal, and technology communication is another skill needed by 21st-century college presidents (Eddy, 2012). Eddy (2012) described the fourth and fifth competencies as leading others

to achieve goals through collaborative efforts and serving as a community college advocate in a professional manner. The last competency entails cultural appreciation and commitment to diversity and cultural differences (Eddy, 2012). It is important to note the framework was expected to serve as a work-in-progress (Hassan et al., 2009).

Building upon the work-in-progress framework, Eddy (2012) developed a holistic approach to understanding how the AACC competencies function in action.

Acknowledging the importance of environment, which was missing from the original AACC competencies, Eddy (2012) added “contextual competency,” which she defined as the competency to understand the college’s culture and read the “context of what is valued” (p. 32). Royer and Latz (2015) later expanded upon Eddy’s (2012) contextual competency to include the institution’s historical mission. In the holistic model, contextual competency is viewed as a core element within which four clusters are situated: inclusivity, framing meaning, attention to the bottom line, and systems thinking (Eddy, 2012). The original AACC competencies are utilized in each of the clusters (Eddy, 2012).

According to Eddy (2012), the inclusivity cluster utilizes communication and collaboration, while the framing meaning cluster utilizes collaboration, communication, advocacy, and organizational strategy. Resource management, organizational strategy, and advocacy are utilized by focusing attention to the bottom line cluster (Eddy, 2012). Last, the systems thinking cluster utilizes communication, professionalism, and organizational strategy (Eddy, 2012). Eddy (2012) contended a broader holistic approach to the AACC competencies could expand the definition of leadership in community

colleges and open opportunities for persons of color and women to ascend to presidential positions.

Davis et al. (2015) later expanded upon Eddy's systems thinking approach with a leadership model that included three processes for enhancing organizational performance: discovery, framing, and action. The discovery process entails exploring and justifying boundaries for including stakeholders and issues (Davis et al., 2015). The objective is to reveal stakeholder values and assumptions and to identify marginalized groups (Davis et al., 2015). Framing involves mapping behavior patterns and modeling feedback loops, diagramming relationships and points of leverage, and structuring interventions and change frameworks (Davis et al., 2015). Lastly, the action process involves engaging stakeholder participation, promoting communication, collaboration, and network coordination while aligning institutional support and resources (Davis et al., 2015). The original AACC community college leadership competencies set the foundation for other frameworks and are relevant to this study designed to expand prior research findings by examining the perspectives of trustees and presidents regarding the skills and competencies needed for community college presidents to successfully lead in the 21st-century higher education environment (AACC, 2013).

### **Trustees' and Presidents' Perceptions about Leadership Competencies**

Researchers have described widespread support from board trustees and community college presidents for the use of the AACC six competencies (Brockbank, 2017; Hassan et al., 2009; Plinske, 2008; Turner, 2005). Hassan et al. (2009) examined the level of agreement between responses of community college presidents and trustees in relation to the importance each group placed on the AACC competencies for community

college leadership success and reported strong support and agreement in stated perspectives across most areas. All six competencies (professionalism, communication, organizational strategy, community college advocacy, resource management, and collaboration) were rated “very important” or “extremely important” by board chairs surveyed in the study (Hassan et al., 2009, p. 84). When applying statistical analysis to the findings, no significant differences were found, indicating a very high degree of agreement on the critical competencies (Hassan et al., 2009). Consistent with Hassan et al.’s (2009) findings were Brockbank’s (2017) conclusions of sitting presidents’ and board trustees’ agreement regarding the AACC’s skillset as a leadership development framework for community college presidents.

Hassan et al. (2009) established the AACC competencies are significant for effective leadership. Bumpass (1998), Turner (2005), and Plinske (2008) studied the perspectives of community college boards of trustees and community college presidents to identify essential competencies, characteristics, and experiences for 21st-century community college leadership. Bumpass (1998) surveyed 671 community college presidents to identify factors important for their leadership role. Findings from this seminal research revealed the majority of community college presidents reported factors essential for their leadership role included experience at the collegiate level in both teaching and administration (Bumpass, 1998). Holding presidential positions was also considered valuable (Bumpass, 1998). In addition, pursuing personal professional development, including advanced degrees, was noted (Bumpass, 1998).

Because the role of the collegiate president has evolved, knowledge of successful fundraising, involvement in public policy, and collaboration with state legislators were

also key findings in Bumpass's (1998) seminal research. Moreover, personal qualities attributed to presidential leadership included the ability to articulate a leadership style and college vision; familiarity with the dynamics of CEO-board relations; as well as personal appearance, self-confidence, communication skills, and a sense of humor (Bumpass, 1998). Lastly, community college presidents should be knowledgeable of the community by serving and participating in organizations and clubs while being committed to gender equality and diversity issues (Bumpass, 1998). Furthermore, competencies deemed extremely important for future presidents included relationship-building, personal responsibility, moral conduct, team leadership, excellence, effective decision-making skills, and a student-centered purview (Plinske, 2008).

Community college leaders have identified specific qualities and skills important for the community college president of the 21st century (Boswell & Imroz, 2013; Huffman, Hipp, Pankake, & Moller, 2014; Turner, 2005; Vargas, 2013). Turner (2005) examined the qualities Texas community college boards of trustees, chancellors, and presidents perceived as important to leading a community college. Today's president requires expanded skills not needed by previous leaders (Turner, 2005). Required presidential skills include the ability to support professional learning communities focused on leadership, effective decision-making, and professional development (Huffman et al., 2014).

Boswell and Imroz (2013) conducted a descriptive survey study of 57 leaders among 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania, including three community college presidents, 20 vice presidents, and 34 deans. In this study, participants most valued the AACC communication competency (Boswell & Imroz, 2013). However, Vargas (2013)

found, in research conducted with 12 Oklahoma community college presidents, a predominant overarching theme relative to the political nature of the role. Participants most stressed the importance of community college presidents being aware of the political nuances of the role and being skilled “political beings” (Vargas, 2013, p. 478).

Turner (2005) evaluated whether perceptions of community college chancellors, presidents, regent chairs, and boards of trustees differed according to the most important leadership qualities that could be taught or learned. A Likert-type scale was used to measure areas of significant difference in the survey responses of trustees, chancellors, and presidents (Turner, 2005). The areas measured included essential traits, skills, training, and temperaments as well as areas of agreement about a common set of characteristics needed to be successful as a community college president (Turner, 2005).

Turner (2005) identified few significant differences in the perceptions among groups of community college presidents and members of boards of trustees about those qualities identified as important to leading a community college. The competencies examined by Turner (2005) included the president’s physical well-being, intelligence, confidence, courage, resoluteness, ability to accept responsibility, and ability to make sound judgments. Also found to be important were the president’s abilities in dealing with people, including understanding constituents’ needs and motivating and managing people while earning their trust (Plinske, 2008; Turner, 2005). Furthermore, the president should be adept in completing tasks, decision making, and setting priorities (Turner, 2005). Overall effective leadership characteristics include adaptability and flexibility, assertiveness, and willingness to acquire necessary training to fulfill leadership responsibilities (Plinske, 2008; Turner, 2005). Furthermore, 16 qualities and

characteristics were identified by these groups as important for an aspiring president to possess (Turner, 2005). The qualities identified as essential by 70 of the 94 respondents included an ability to lead, build trust, work ethically, influence others, make difficult decisions, promote learning, build consensus, assist students, communicate, delegate authority, and be consistent (Turner, 2005).

Plinske (2008) examined perspectives of boards of trustees who ultimately make community college presidential hiring decisions and found a gap in their perceptions. Plinske (2008) expanded knowledge of the essential competencies and characteristics recommended for community college presidents by trustees of community college boards. Building on existing research findings, Plinske (2008) led a three-phase Delphi study with a sample of 41 trustees of community colleges to identify and rate the importance of 68 personal attributes, competencies, communication skills, leadership skills, professional experiences, and educational backgrounds essential for community college presidents. Plinske's (2008) findings also included the results of face-to-face interviews with 21 trustees.

Plinske (2008) examined the critical characteristics, competencies, and professional experiences of the next generation of community college presidents tasked with leading the nation's community college systems in the 21st century. Plinske (2008) expanded on Turner's (2005) examination of essential elements of community college leadership. Plinske (2008) identified nine critical elements for successful community college leadership from the perspective of trustees, including a passion for education and championing of community colleges. Also identified as important were moral character, honesty, integrity, and trustworthiness in a college leader (Plinske, 2008). Like other

scholars, Plinske's (2008) report from trustees listed the importance of professionalism and clarity in written and oral communications. Advanced and terminal degrees obtained were also noted by trustees as important for a college president (Plinske, 2008). Personal characteristics such as dependability and the ability to be a good listener who can effectively read body language were also rated as valuable skills by college trustees (Plinske, 2008). The last three critical elements of a successful community college leader, from the perspective of board members, are the ability to establish trust, the ability to function as a team member while understanding the value of teams, and the capacity to articulate the status of the college as well as a future vision while generating buy-in for the vision (Plinske, 2008). Plinske (2008) identified additional competencies and characteristics deemed important by boards of trustees for community college presidents. These presidential qualities are extensive, including leadership, communication, and budgetary skills (Plinske, 2008). Plinske (2008) also noted the importance of judgment, vision, integrity, trustworthiness, knowledge, flexibility, excellence, control, commitment, persistence, motivation, perspective, and patience.

After eliciting views from college board trustees, Plinske (2008) shared insights gained from a survey of community college chief academic officers that assessed the skills and competencies identified as most important for community college leaders to possess. Effective listening skills, ability to provide feedback, superior verbal and written communication skills, and time management abilities were among the highest-ranked (Plinske, 2008). Furthermore, Plinske and Packard (2010) identified additional characteristics important for future community college presidents including passion, dependability, energy, calmness, charisma, organization, presence, self-awareness, tact,



balance, kindness, and family-orientation. Communication skills such as public speaking abilities, media savvy, and networking abilities are also seen as vital for effective presidents (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Finally, leadership skills are requisite for future leaders (Plinske & Packard, 2010). These skills are often learned on-the-job, rather than through educational training (Sullivan & Palmer, 2014). Plinske's (2008) findings were significant to this study that expanded knowledge about trustees' and community college presidents' similar and different perspectives on the skills and competencies essential for presidents to successfully lead the 21st-century community college campus.

### **The Leadership Capability Model**

Another skills-based framework, the Leadership Capability Model, mirrors Katz's (1955) earlier work by allowing for an examination of the relationships between a leader's knowledge and skills (Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishman, 2000). Mumford et al. (2000) expanded the analysis of leadership by comparing skills to the leader's performance, concluding that not only should leaders have the capability to lead, they should be able to demonstrate effective performance. Mumford et al. (2000) expanded Katz's (1955) technical, human, and conceptual skills to include leadership, career experiences, and environmental influence as leadership performance outcomes.

**Leadership outcomes.** According to Mumford et al. (2000), leadership outcomes are interrelated with competencies such as problem-solving skills and social judgment skills, as they influence the outcomes of a leader's efforts. Effective problem-solving skills include the ability to offer logical and unparalleled solutions to problems (Northouse, 2013). Moreover, performance is a characteristic of leadership outcomes in that it demonstrates the leader's capability to fulfill his or her duties (Northouse, 2013).

**Career experiences.** Mumford et al. (2000) asserted the accumulation of personal and professional experiences gained over time influences a leader's knowledge and skills. According to Mumford et al. (2000), this accumulation of experiences can strengthen a leader's competencies in dealing with organizational problems more effectively. Professional abilities are developed through experiences gained as the leader ascends to higher levels of management or administration within the organization (Mumford et al., 2000). These abilities provide the necessary foundation for effective leadership (Brown, 2012).

**Environmental influences.** Mumford et al. (2000) recognized internal and external factors that influence leadership performance outcomes. As summarized by Northouse (2013), internal factors may include old technology or outmoded infrastructure that cannot meet today's performance standards. External factors could include financial constraints, governmental regulations, political pressures, or emergencies that affect the organization but cannot be controlled by the leaders (Northouse, 2013). Although Mumford et al.'s (2000) work is helpful for understanding the skills-based leadership model, it is beyond the scope of this present study. This study was based on Katz's (1955) three-skill hierarchical leadership model that includes technical, human, and conceptual skills.

### **Summary**

Clarification of the expectations and requirements, as well as the unique challenges and opportunities facing each community college, is essential for effective leadership succession planning. Members of the board of trustees are charged with overseeing the recruitment, interviewing, hiring, and orientation process for new

community college presidents (Brown, 2012; Luna, 2013). The Association of Community College Trustees maintained outlining qualifications for president vacancies is a key role for trustees (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Trustees have commonly used the AACC (2013) competencies framework to identify the characteristics, competencies, and experiences they seek in a community college presidential candidate.

Researchers have found strong agreement among trustees and community college presidents about the AACC competencies important for community college presidents to possess (AACC, 2013; Brown, 2012; Plinske, 2008). Yet, given the evolving dynamics, challenges, and opportunities facing the 21st-century community college leader (Aspen Institute, 2017; Eddy & Mitchell, 2017), further research is needed to compare and contrast the perspectives of trustees and community college presidents relative to traditional and emerging skills and competencies presidents need to be successful (Plinske, 2008; Plinske & Packard, 2010). This study utilized Katz's (1955) framework to investigate trustees' and presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills to a successful presidency. The study's methodology is presented in Chapter Three, including a description of the research design, population and sample, and data collection and analysis methods.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

In this chapter, the study's methodology is described. An overview of the problem addressed is presented. In addition, the purpose of the study, the research design, and the process of selecting the population and the sample of study participants are identified. Lastly, data collection methods and data analysis techniques are described.

#### **Problem and Purpose Overview**

Leaders face unprecedented challenges and unlimited opportunities as they direct the 21st-century community college system, including growing student enrollment, increased competition from other providers of educational services, and the threat of leadership retirements, which could disrupt the community college system's ability to successfully meet the challenges and opportunities faced (Eddy, 2013; Leslie, 2015). Prudent organization leaders recognize the dire need for an effective leadership succession plan, overseen by the board of trustees, which can better ensure organizational stability through periods of leadership transition (Garza-Mitchell & Maldonado, 2015; Lambert, 2015). In keeping with Katz's (1955) three-skill conceptual framework, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

**Research questions.** In keeping with basic qualitative research, three research questions were posed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The following three questions provided further focus for the study:

1. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how technical competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?
2. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how human competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?
3. What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

### **Research Design**

This qualitative study was designed to allow for the gathering of perspectives of trustees and presidents regarding the 21st-century community college leadership skills required to promote effective succession planning for impending presidency vacancies (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). While there have been studies conducted to separately examine trustees' and presidents' perceptions, previous researchers have not gathered the perceptions of these two leadership factions in community colleges to determine if common themes emerge (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014; Plinske, 2008; Travis & Price, 2013; Ullman, 2015). As such, this study provided additional information regarding 21st-century leadership competencies needed to effectively oversee higher education at the community college level.

An in-depth understanding of these competencies has proven elusive in prior quantitative studies (Plinske, 2008). However, the quantitative research literature indicates college trustee and president perceptions may differ qualitatively (Plinske,

2008). Therefore, a qualitative research design was a proper fit for exploring and describing trustees' perceptions and those of presidents, as well as describing the differences between these two groups relative to the competencies of a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

In educational research, a basic qualitative study is focused on adding to the general knowledge base about a particular situation or phenomenon (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A basic qualitative study is interpretive in nature (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The aim is to understand a situation or phenomenon from the perspective of those who experience it (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Basic qualitative research is also constructivist in nature because meanings are constructed by individuals interacting with aspects of the situation or phenomenon of inquiry (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The overall goal is to “understand how people make sense of their lives and their experiences” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 24). Participants' meaning is mediated through the researcher, who is viewed as an instrument in the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Patton (2015) stressed the importance of trustworthiness and authenticity in qualitative research to enable the reader to determine meaning, value, and utility of results. The qualitative researcher can achieve trustworthiness and authenticity by being balanced and fair when presenting findings (Patton, 2015). Moreover, the researcher should be mindful to consider other perspectives, interests, and realities (Patton, 2015). In this study, data were collected using semi-structured interview guides based on Katz's (1955) three-skills conceptual framework for leadership. When using a semi-structured interview guide, the qualitative researcher's aim is to ask respondents to “provide basic descriptive information about the phenomenon of interest” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.

125), which in the case of this study was community college presidents' and trustees' perceptions about competencies impacting the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency.

### **Population and Sample**

When identifying the study's population, an accessible or otherwise convenient population was used instead of a target population. Whereas a target population is the one to which a researcher would ideally like to generalize the study findings, an accessible population is the one from which the researcher can realistically select participants (Creswell, 2014). Because this study involved a small purposeful sample, generalizing to a target population is not possible (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained a purposeful sample is "based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (p. 96). For this study, the final accessible sample was eight presidents and 15 trustees who served at Missouri community colleges.

A purposeful sampling technique referred to as convenience sampling was used to recruit study participants (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This sampling technique is based on accessibility and availability of participants, time, money, and location (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Convenience sampling is appropriate when the intent of the research is to elucidate a particular phenomenon rather than generalizing information to a larger population (Creswell, 2014). In the case of this study, the aim was to explore and describe the perceptions of trustees and presidents about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual skills (Katz, 1955) to the success of the

21st-century community college presidency. The goal was achieved to acquire a stratified sample representing the geographic area.

### **Instrumentation**

The study's data collection instruments were two semi-structured open-ended interview guides used to conduct one-on-one interviews with community college presidents (see Appendix A) and board trustees (see Appendix B). The first section of the interview guide included questions about participant demographics such as age, experience, and education level, and the second section of the guide was comprised of questions specific to the category of human competencies of community college presidents (Katz, 1995). The third section of the guide included interview questions about technical competencies of the president, while the fourth section was comprised of interview questions focused on conceptual competencies. Katz's (1955) skills-based framework for effective leadership guided the development of the interview questions. In the final section of the interview guide, the participants identified common duties that occupy the majority of the community college president's time.

**Validity.** In qualitative research, there are several ways to ensure quality including (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (e) reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Yin (2014) suggested internal validity requires the researcher to ascertain causal relationships between conditions or other factors. As a result, internal validity is not threatened in descriptive or exploratory studies and was not a concern for this research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Construct validity refers to accurately identifying operational measures (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016 Yin, 2014). External validity refers to the ability of the study to be generalized to a



broader population (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Both of these threats were mitigated by using perspectives of both boards of trustees and presidents (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014).

**Reliability.** Reliability is a key factor in study replicability (Merriam, 2009). The field testing of an instrument prior to use in a research study helps establish reliability (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Both semi-structured interview guides used in this research study were field tested by presidents and trustees of community colleges for feedback on alignment with the study's research questions and ease of understanding the focus and direction of the interview questions. Based on the reviews, revisions needed to improve the interview guides and clarify questions were made prior to the data collection phase of the study.

### **Data Collection**

Data collection did not begin until approval was received from the Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix C). Next, permission from the Missouri Community College Association was obtained to access contact information for community college trustees and presidents in order to recruit participants for this study (see Appendix D). Once IRB approval and institutional permission were granted, participant recruitment efforts began. The first step in participant recruitment was to identify community college trustees and presidents who were interested in being interviewed for the study. To accomplish this, the researcher accessed mailing addresses for trustees and community college presidents through database access provided by the Missouri Association of Community Colleges. Once the researcher identified potential participants, an email invitation to participate in the study was sent. The invitation stated

the purpose of the study, described what was required of participants, and explained the voluntary nature of participation as well as efforts to maintain confidentiality (see Appendix E). The researcher's contact information was included in the email. One week after sending the initial invitation email, the researcher emailed a reminder invitation to potential participants who had not yet responded. Recruitment efforts continued until the target of 10 to 20 community college trustees and seven to 12 community college presidents was achieved.

After the target number of community college trustees and presidents was reached, the researcher contacted each participant to schedule a one-on-one interview at a time and location convenient for the interviewee. Each participant was given the option of an in-person or phone interview. The researcher followed up by email with each participant to confirm the date, time, and location of the scheduled interview. Included in the confirmation email was an informed consent form (see Appendix F) that explained how the findings from survey respondents would be kept confidential utilizing coding mechanisms to protect the identity of the participants and the community colleges with which they were affiliated. The participants were asked to sign and return the informed consent form to the researcher. Signed informed consent forms were collected from each participant before interviews were conducted. The researcher also attached the interview guide to the confirmation email, so participants had the opportunity to preview the open-ended questions prior to their scheduled interviews.

With the participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes. All study participants opted for phone interviews, instead of face-to-face interviews. FreeConferenceCall.com (Morris, 2015) was utilized

to facilitate the phone interviews, because the service includes an audio-recording feature that produces a digital recording for later transcription and analysis purposes.

### **Data Analysis**

Qualitative research is interpretive by nature, involving the researcher's background, values, and biases that may shape the interpretive process (Creswell, 2014). In the literature on qualitative research, the researcher is described as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this study, the professional awareness, knowledge, and skills the researcher brought to the study were valuable when conducting analysis of the qualitative data. However, it is important researchers inform readers about how background may influence data analysis; this process is referred to as researcher reflexivity (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Merriam and Tisdell (2016) addressed the importance of maintaining integrity in the investigative process and recommended the qualitative researcher identify his or her position (or reflexivity), which was described as the "critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation" (p. 259). In keeping with these recommendations, this study's researcher informed readers about how his background might influence the study by including a "Researcher Reflexivity" section in Chapter Four of the dissertation (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 259).

Prior to data analysis, the audio-recorded interviews were prepared by being transcribed and saved as Microsoft Word® documents. To ensure participant confidentiality, all transcribed documents were labeled with numerical identifiers. Next, the transcribed interview data were uploaded into the qualitative data analysis software

program ATLAS.ti (atlasti.com), which was used as a tool to organize and analyze the data.

The data were compared to determine if there were differences in the responses between the two groups (trustees and presidents). Thematic analysis, a method for analyzing qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2013), was used to analyze the data.

This method provides guidance for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes within the data as well as interpreting aspects of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Braun and Clarke's (2013) six phases of thematic analysis were followed: (a) becoming familiar with the data, (b) generating initial categorical codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, (e) defining and naming themes, and (f) reporting the findings in the dissertation.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Numerous ethical considerations were made to ensure the protection of participants as well as to assure confidentiality and anonymity. Prior to being interviewed for the study, each participant received and signed an informed consent form (see Appendix F), which detailed the purpose of the research, any possible risks, and the opportunity to opt out of the study at any time without negative effects. Participant anonymity was addressed by assigning a distinct numerical identifier to each participant. The participant numerical identifiers were used on all electronic and printed documents and files, including the written transcripts and qualitative data analysis files. To ensure confidentiality, all data, documents, and interview audio recordings were secured in a locked file cabinet accessible only to the researcher. All electronic documents and files

were saved using a protected password on the researcher's personal computer. All documents and files will be destroyed three years after completion of the study.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, a review of the methodology for this research study was presented. A basic qualitative research design was used to explore and describe trustees' and presidents' perceptions about the competencies of effective 21st-century community college presidents and to describe differences between these two groups. A small purposeful stratified sample of 15 trustees and eight community college presidents representing Missouri were recruited from an accessible sample frame. The accessible sample frame was comprised of a total population of approximately 12 presidents and 72 members of boards of trustees who served at Missouri community colleges.

The study's data collection instruments were two semi-structured open-ended interview guides used to conduct one-on-one interviews with community college presidents and board trustees. The qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti was utilized to support the use of thematic analysis techniques to answer the study's research questions. Throughout the data collection and analysis processes, the confidentiality of each respondent was maintained using a coding system. Additional information is provided in Chapter Four relative to the data findings collected for each research question posed in the study.

## Chapter Four: Analysis of Data

Leaders face unprecedented challenges and unlimited opportunities as they direct the 21st-century community college system (Eddy, 2013; Leslie, 2015). Issues of importance include growing student enrollment, increased competition from other providers of educational services, and the threat of leadership retirements, which could disrupt the community college system's ability to successfully meet the challenges and opportunities faced (Eddy, 2013; Leslie, 2015). Prudent organization leaders recognize the dire need for an effective leadership succession plan, overseen by the board of trustees, which can better ensure organizational stability through periods of leadership transition (Garza-Mitchell & Maldonado, 2015; Lambert, 2015).

Clear expectations are required to shape community college leadership talent and identify the right person for any vacancy (Brown, 2012; Plinske & Packard, 2010). Problematic, however, are newly-elected presidents' claims they were not made aware of the unique institutional challenges facing the community college campus when they were interviewed or after they were hired to lead the campus (Brown, 2012). Community college trustees must identify, understand, and effectively communicate the unique characteristics, competencies and skills, and personal and professional experiences they expect a 21st-century presidential candidate to possess (Brown, 2012; Luna, 2013; Plinske & Packard, 2010). By doing so, trustees will aid leadership succession planning, recruitment, hiring, and the performance evaluation process of the selected presidential candidate (Luna, 2013).

In keeping with Katz's (1955) three-skill conceptual framework, the purpose of this study was to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents'

perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency. Three research questions provided guidance for this study. Qualitative data were collected using two semi-structured interview guides designed for the gathering of perspectives from a purposeful sample of both trustees and presidents regarding 21st-century community college leadership competencies. Audio recordings of study interviews were prepared for analysis and transcribed into written documents. Two phases of analysis were conducted using the qualitative data analysis program ATLAS.ti to organize and examine the data. The data were first analyzed using open-coding techniques to identify categories of information within the transcribed interviews of trustees and presidents. Next, Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis methods were followed to identify, analyze, and report themes within the open-coded data and to interpret aspects of the research topic.

This chapter is organized according to seven major sections. First, a discussion of how the researcher's background may have influenced the study is presented. Next, demographic data collected from the study participants are presented. The following section presents thematic data and representative participant quotes relative to answering the study's first research question about technical competencies. The fourth section is comprised of thematic data and representative participant quotes for answering the study's second research question dealing with human competencies. Next, thematic data and representative participant quotes for answering the third research question about conceptual competencies are presented. In the sixth section, trustees' and presidents' rankings of selected presidential duties according to importance are reported. The chapter concludes with a summary and a preview of Chapter Five.

## **Researcher Reflexivity**

It is imperative qualitative researchers maintain integrity in the investigative process by identifying their position (or reflexivity), which Merriam and Tisdell (2016) described as the “critical self-reflection by the researcher regarding assumptions, worldview, biases, theoretical orientation, and relationship to the study that may affect the investigation” (p. 229). In keeping with Merriam’s recommendations, this section is a first-person account of the researcher’s background as it relates to the study.

As this study’s researcher, my background and expertise in higher education were helpful for gaining access to potential study participants. Specifically, I drew from my nearly 30-year background in higher education and expertise in student affairs, research and strategic planning, advancement, fundraising, governmental relations, and board relations to gain access to Missouri community college presidents and trustees. Positions I have held in higher education include President, Ozarks Technical Community College (OTC) Table Rock Campus; Vice Chancellor for Advancement, Student Affairs, and Strategic Planning, and Executive Director of the OTC Foundation at Ozarks Technical Community College; Assistant to the President and Lecturer of Communications at Missouri State University; Adjunct Professor for Higher Education Administration for Lindenwood University; Adjunct Instructor for Drury University; member of the Missouri Department of Higher Education Coordinated Plan Steering Committee; and Chair of the Missouri Community College Association Presidents and Chancellors Council. Additionally, I have served as a member of the Ozarks Technical Community College Board of Trustees and as liaison to the Missouri State University Board of Governors.



My professional background was advantageous for this study. In addition to connections in the field of study that were helpful for gaining access to potential study participants, my professional experience with Missouri's community college presidents and trustees served to put interviewees more at ease, allowing them to be more forthright in their discussions about competencies essential for successful 21st-century community college leadership. Moreover, my background contributed to my effectiveness as an interviewer, enabling me to know when and how to augment the semi-structured interview guide with additional prompts and probes to ensure robust datasets that represented the perceptions and experiences of community college presidents and trustees.

### **Study Participants**

For this study, 23 community college leaders were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide: 15 trustees and eight presidents. Table 1 shows participant education levels and the nature of the community colleges at which they served.

Table 1

*Participants' Educational Level and Institutional Type*

Variable	Category	Trustees ( $n = 15$ )		Presidents ( $n = 8$ )	
		$n$	%	$n$	%
Educational Level					
	Doctoral degree	2	13.33	7	87.50
	Master's degree	6	40.00	1	12.50
	Bachelor's degree	6	40.00	0	0
	Some college	1	6.67	0	0
Institution Type					
	Metropolitan	3	20.00	1	12.50
	Rural	10	66.67	4	50.00
	Rural/Metro	2	13.33	3	37.50

Community college presidents had a higher level of education than trustees, with 87.5% of presidents holding doctoral degrees. The majority of college campuses represented by the study participants are located in rural areas. Over half of the trustees (66.67%) characterized their community colleges as rural, while half of presidents described their colleges as rural. Of note are the number of community colleges that have multiple campuses and were characterized as being both rural and metropolitan by trustees (13.33%) and presidents (37.50%).

In addition to the community college presidents' higher levels of education than that of the trustees, their fields of study were more aligned with education, including higher education leadership, educational leadership/policy analysis, higher education

administration, and community education. Trustees' fields of study were generally more aligned with their professional practices, including business administration, communications, law, engineering, medicine, and public policy. In addition to the community college presidency, the presidents reported having served in multiple positions in higher education, including vice presidents of academic affairs, administration, finance, and student services; and deans of academic affairs, campuses, and enrollment management.

Table 2 shows participants' years of experience as community college leaders. Specifically, the trustees reported on their years of experience as members of each college's governing board ( $M = 8.8$ ). The trustees reported a low of two years as a board member and a high of 20 years. For the presidents, the average tenure serving in the community college presidency was 7.63 years, with a low of three years and a high of 13 years.

Table 2

*Participants' Years of Community College Leadership Experience*

	Trustees ( $n = 15$ )			Presidents ( $n = 8$ )		
	$M$	Low	High	$M$	Low	High
Years of Community College Leadership Experience	8.80	2.00	20.00	7.63	3.00	13.00

### **Research Question One**

What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how technical competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes related to technical competencies and the community college presidency: *delegating/outsourcing abilities* and *institutional finance acumen*. Each theme is described and representative excerpts from the interview transcripts are provided.

**Delegating and outsourcing abilities.** When discussing the technical competencies important to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency, both trustees and presidents expressed the importance of the president's ability to delegate or outsource technical aspects of their leadership role to competent college administrative personnel, trustees, and other outside professionals. Among the types of technical competencies, both groups referred to technology literacy acumen (e.g., computer, Internet, Intranet, communication devices, and social media), legal acumen, and marketing acumen. First, representative excerpts from the trustee interviews about technical competencies are presented, followed by representative excerpts from the president interviews.

When asked about general technical competencies, Trustee 5 asserted the community college presidents should "hire the staff of professionals and let them do the job that the board is letting you do." Trustee 5 also explained that other than being involved in marketing, the president should not be involved in administering other technical aspects of the college because to do so would be "getting away from what

[they] need to be doing and that's managing the college and running the college.” Like Trustee 5, Trustee 10 addressed general technical competencies of the community college president: “I don't have to know that he has all of these competencies, [but I expect him] to go out and find the right person that is the expert and kind of lead that area.” Trustee 15 also referred generally to technical competencies as the least expectation for a community college president, because “you can hire people for technical.” He further explained:

I think it's more important [for the president] to have the ability to surround himself with those people that have those more specific [technical] backgrounds... [because] you cannot have a 10 skillset in each of those...

There's some things you cannot do and you've got to know your limits.

However, of the 15 trustees interviewed for this study, two described the need for the community college president to have a broad knowledge base about specialized technical areas. Trustee 11 expected the community college president to have a broad knowledge base about specialized technical aspects so “they can ask the questions of the people who maybe have more technical training in those areas.” Trustee 12 expressed similar expectations of the president's broad range of specialized technical competencies: “I think he has to [have technical competencies] even though other people may be in charge of it; it's important that he has an understanding of what's involved.”

Regarding specific technical competencies, Trustees 2, 4, and 5 identified the need to delegate or outsource legal responsibilities. For example, Trustee 2 explained:

I know when we come up against something that might have some legal ramifications, I mean we have a lawyer that we call in to ask about anything that is questionable and, of course, the president of the board is also a lawyer.

Trustee 4 explained the role of the community college staff lawyer as the one who handles potential lawsuits, reviews contracts, and advises the president or chancellor.

Trustee 5 explained his college utilizes outside legal counsel, because “the last thing you want is a president who thinks he’s an attorney. That’s the quickest way to get into a problem.”

Several trustees addressed two areas of technical competency that in addition to being delegated or outsourced to internal and external experts, require the community college president’s involvement: marketing and finances. Trustees 4, 5, and 13 stressed the importance of the president’s involvement with marketing efforts. Trustee 4 explained his president provides active oversight of the college’s marketing experts: “He’s looking at what they’re doing. He’s asking them to compare our marketing to five or six benchmark similar colleges around the country.” Trustee 5 compared the community college president to a corporate CEO and explained the president needs to be involved with marketing to address state-wide declining student enrollments. Trustee 13 also explained the importance of the president being involved in marketing efforts addressing declining student enrollment.

Trustees 2, 4, 5, and 14 specifically addressed the community college president’s financial competencies in terms of delegating or outsourcing this vital area to financial experts. Trustee 2 believed the community college president’s financial acumen should be limited to the ability to understand the annual financial audit done by outside experts.

Trustee 4 described how the community college has had a “good string of CFOs [chief financial officers]” who handled the finances “pretty conservatively” to the extent he did not believe the president should be required “to serve as the CFO.” Trustee 5 explained, “As far as financial, I mean I’ve got an accounting-finance degree and I’ve got a CPA do my taxes, so am I going to hold a college president to having CFO knowledge? No.”

Trustee 14, too, explained his community college has an outstanding CFO who handles budgetary and financial matters. However, he added that although the financial matters do not fall under the job description, the president is responsible:

He is the president of the school, you know, he’s the man in charge and if the numbers don’t work out it lands at his feet whether it’s technically his fault or not; so [he’s] just got to make sure the books balance and things look good and stay in the black.

All of the presidents expressed the importance of delegating to staff leadership or outside experts in technical areas, especially those related to legal and financial issues. For example, President 1’s comments paralleled those of Trustee 15 in that he aims to surround himself with those individuals who have a “much deeper understanding” of technical competencies than he has. Moreover, like Trustee 15, President 1 asserted:

I don’t think any individual has to have the highest level of [competency] in all those [technical] areas. I think you have to be what you are and play upon your strengths, and then those areas where you need additional information, make sure you’re organized in a way that you have strong people in those positions.

Additionally, several presidents explained the importance of the president having general technical competencies. President 2’s views on technical competencies were similar to

those of Trustee 10, who explained presidents must be able to hire and lead the people with needed technical expertise. President 2 explained community college presidents can survive with limited technical competencies when they have “the right people with the right skills, especially in the leadership team.” However, he also described the importance of the president having general technical competencies, because the team leaders responsible for specific areas “could be going down kind of a wrong road,” in which case a president with an understanding of the “big picture” and general technical knowledge and skills could make necessary adjustments. President 4 agreed a president should possess general technical competency knowledge, but he or she must make sure experts are accessible in each of the technical areas. According to President 4, “It’s really the selection of the people that you put in charge of those areas” that matters the most. He further explained, “If you don’t have the ability to have the right people in place and assess all the technical competencies that are there, your institution can get in trouble real quick.” Although President 5 expressed confidence in his general technical competencies, he stated, “I am a firm believer that where you lack specialized technical competencies, as the senior leader, you should always be a student, a constant learner in those competencies.”

**Institutional finance acumen.** Among the technical competencies discussed by both trustees and presidents, only one type was identified as critical for the 21st-century community college president to possess: institutional finance acumen. The study participants described financial acumen as including a general understanding of accounting and finance. More specifically, they referred to the abilities to read a financial statement and understand a budget.



Some trustees interviewed for this study provided background information on why institutional financial acumen is important for a community college president. For example, Trustee 15 explained the importance of the president being astute in financial matters and budgeting to prepare for economic shifts:

In the community college world, as I've learned since my time on the board, we are a direct derivative of the economy and we live in the opposite direction of the economy. If the economy is good, enrollment is bad and that's because people are not looking for work. So, you've got to be able to realize as the president, okay we are growing right now because we're in an election year. The economy is good, but everything is propped up falsely. Be prepared. We're going to be down this year and I think that's a huge, huge concern.

In addition to maintaining an awareness of economic trends, Trustee 8 discussed the need for presidents to understand the specific financial situations of their institutions:

No matter whether you're in a larger community college, whether you're in a smaller community college, you need to understand the financial situation of that institution... A good example is [our community college]; we're a small tax base so, you know, okay I only get so much money from the local taxes. I've got to be able to supplement. How do I do that? How do I make this work, you know, and still make the college viable? So you've really got to understand your finances and those types of things.

Of the 14 trustees who identified institutional financial acumen as an important competency for the community college president, only Trustee 3 focused his interview discussion on his college's president. Trustee 3 explained that in his more than 39 years

serving as a faculty member and governing board member, only the current president actively sought information needed to address the financial issues of the college:

She came in there without an understanding of the way that our budget worked because she moved in from out of state. So she met with the executive team and they went through every single line item of the budget so she could understand what all of that meant. She asked key questions, and then her understanding of that [information] and the people's ability to relay to her what it really meant were really key to, well first of all, getting that team together and [establishing] an understanding that the [new] president wasn't just going to go in there and say, "Okay, that's close enough." She wanted to know [how the budget worked] and so they really respect her for that.

Six of the eight community college presidents interviewed discussed the importance of institutional finance competencies to their success as leaders. Like Trustee 8, President 3 stressed the importance of understanding how the local tax base impacts a community college's budgeting process. Moreover, President 3 related the president's competencies with reading and understanding budget sheets to the "concept of public trust" and explained he commits a lot of time to financial matters and the budgeting process:

To me, budgets are all about how you get things done. It's not about telling somebody "No." It's trying to figure out how you can say "Yes." So I spend a great deal of time massaging the budget, trying to understand what we're spending money on and, since most of our money involves personnel, it's really important that I reinforce our priorities with budget importance. I spend a lot of time really looking at that.

President 4 and President 8 referred to their relationship with their chief financial officers in addressing finances. For President 4, it is of critical importance the president knows enough about the college's finances to determine the competencies of the CFO and "to know enough to be able to spot issues and problems." President 8 described the budget in terms of "all of the decision making that goes into setting priorities, deciding where resources are going to be deployed, constant evaluation of the financial condition of the college, [and] looking at financial statements." Furthermore, he explained the responsibilities of the CFO and president in these matters:

Those are responsibilities that originate elsewhere and especially with the CFO, but the ultimate responsibility is the president. So you're never away from your budget and where you are at any one time, good or bad. It's both setting the budget and monitoring the financial health of the institution, both short-range and long-range. And that takes a great deal of time.

### **Research Question Two**

What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how human competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed five themes related to human competencies and the community college presidency: *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, *president-internal relationships*, *president activities*, and *institutional attributes*. Each theme is described and representative excerpts from the interview transcripts are provided.

**President personal attributes.** When discussing the human competencies important to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency, both trustees and presidents identified personal attributes. These attributes included the ability to develop and maintain relationships, communicate, and negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups. Trustee 3 provided an example of how his community college's president developed and maintained relationships in the community by becoming known for baking gooseberry pies and giving them to people. According to Trustee 3, "It's things like that that people don't forget... those personal touches." Trustee 4 provided a list of people skills critical for developing and maintaining relationships: "articulate, good listener, trustworthy, team player, persuasive, consensus builder, networking, tactful." Trustee 4 further discussed the importance of a college president being able to develop trusting relationships. He told a story of a particular college president who was smart and capable but never was able to develop trusting relationships and how this president's inability "really limited and held the college back." He explained the importance of human relationships and how "good negotiating comes out of building trusting relationships."

When talking about her community college president's interactions with people and ability to develop long-standing relationships, Trustee 10 described the president's "one-on-one communication style that makes the person that's sitting across from him feel like they're the most important person in the world." Trustee 13 described her college's president as "trustworthy" and a "team player." She explained, "He doesn't do anything by himself. He always includes everyone. He's a great consensus builder. His network ability is unbelievable and he has great tact."

All 15 trustees interviewed for this study commented on the president's communication abilities as an important human competency. Specifically, trustees described the importance of the president effectively communicating with various stakeholders such as trustees; federal, state, and local agencies and legislators; faculty and staff; students; the media; local business and civic leaders; and other community stakeholders. Trustee 1 stressed the need for "a strong communication level between the president and trustees" because of the importance of setting and enforcing policies. Yet, Trustee 1 also explained he does not expect the president to communicate with him about daily operational matters:

I don't think that I need to be informed of every detail of what's going on at the campus... Now if there's something important, if there's some type of a disaster or... an event... of consequence for the school, I think that is perfectly fine. But I've looked at the job [description], and one of the major roles of the trustees is to hire the right person in the presidency and then give them the ability to function.

Trustee 7 described how her community college president discerns when and how to communicate with trustees:

If there is an issue of any kind, whether it's something that is likely to be a public issue, if it is a bond issue that's going to be coming up or a building, if it's something that the public is going to be interested in or if the budget is not going to be feasible... anytime there is a problem or an issue, then I think communication [with the trustees] becomes more important, more critical, and needs to be more detailed and more timely. Now what [Dr. "president's name"] has done I think works very well, and that is he sends out Monday morning email

updates if it's just something routine. If it's something that is going to be a personnel issue, if it's a legal issue, if it's something that has time sensitivity, then he will make phone calls. I think that's a good balance. You know, if it's just a routine thing, I think the weekly email updates are fine. He always gets out a packet of information at least several days before the meetings, which has a letter from him that expands upon what is in the agenda... There will be a separate attachment that has a list of all the events coming up within the next month at the college. There will be other attachments as needed. If it's something related to [a] contract that we need to be aware of... we always have several days to look through that [information] and ask questions, make comments, or whatever so that the agenda will be laid out.

The trustee participants discussed various modes of communication and different ways of communicating with stakeholders, including the use of verbal and written communications via the phone, email, texting, and social media. However, regardless of the mode of communication or the stakeholder, some trustees discussed the importance of *how* the president communicates. For Trustee 7, the president must have the "ability to openly communicate" with stakeholders and then allow them enough time to think about the information that has been communicated so it can "register in their minds," and they can "make suggestions as to how that might be improved, or altered, or made more workable." Trustee 7 emphasized the president's willingness to initiate communication with all stakeholders and be "open to hearing both positive and negative comments from the faculty and staff [and] from the community." For Trustee 7, to be an effective communicator, the president needs to be a "good listener" and be able to articulate his or

her position on an issue. Additionally, Trustee 8 stressed the importance of open communication and active listening on the part of the president when connecting with faculty, staff, students, and the community, “especially when you’re in a small community because you know how stories get started.”

Trustee 2 explained that for college faculty and staff to have trust in their president, he or she “needs to be extremely articulate both in written skills and oral skills to be able to get across what’s important, and being a good listener is also extremely important.” Trustee 9 explained how a president who is a good communicator can make different constituent groups “feel like they’re all part of the team.” Like Trustee 9, Trustee 10 described how the president’s communication can contribute to team building and explained how her community college president makes the trustees feel “that we’re still continuing to head in the same direction with the same goals.”

When discussing the community college president’s ability to negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups, the trustees interviewed for this study referred to trustees; faculty and staff; student government groups; employee unions; national, state, and local elected officials; and community stakeholder groups. Trustee 3 stressed the importance of the college president’s ability to negotiate contracts with various community organizations and businesses as well as with employee unions. For Trustee 4, the president’s genuineness is important in negotiations:

You’re not manipulating. You’re not working behind the scenes. You’re working maybe even slower than you would like to on purpose in order to have people believe that the changes or the improvements or the new union agreement

or whatever you're working on is done in a thoughtful, careful way, listening to all the parties.

Trustee 4 explained his college's president demonstrates this genuineness and ethical behavior that contribute to his ability to develop trusting relationships, and as a result, the president has "the consensus really of the board constantly."

Almost half of the trustees described important personal attributes in terms of being innately related to the president's personality. For example, Trustee 1 explained how a community college president will be "much more successful" if others perceive him or her as having a personality "that's going to work for me or for the college as opposed to someone [who is] cantankerous... or has a personality that's a little defensive." Trustee 1 further explained, "Personality is just key to [the president's] ability to move forward, to get along, and to look at what's out there." Some of the trustees interviewed for this study described their college presidents' personalities in terms of "humble," "genuine," "not overbearing or forceful," "pleasant," "soft-spoken," "even-keeled," "not excitable," "dynamic," "gentlemanly," "welcoming," "engaging," "people-centered," and "comfortable." Trustee 15 described a former president of his community college who was "aloof" and explained how this personality trait "created a chasm between the faculty and staff and the leadership." He further explained, "If you come off as aloof – better than anybody else – then you're not going to be able to negotiate with anybody."

Like the trustees, the presidents interviewed for this study described specific relationship attributes critical to the success of the 21st-century community college president. These attributes include being trustworthy, available or accessible, a good



listener, unselfish, compassionate, empathetic, friendly, an open and timely communicator, personable in interactions with diverse people or groups, persuasive, passionate about the college's mission, discerning, accepting of criticism, appreciative of others, and engaged with or concerned about the community. Many of these relationship attributes are conveyed in the following interview excerpts.

When discussing communication as an important relationship attribute, President 3 focused on his relationship with the college trustees:

[With] community college presidents... you've got to remember they're still the boss, but you're always trying to make sure you've got good communication with them. Keep them well-informed while balancing the line between what they need to know as overseers and what you need to be worried about as a manager. Do not let them feel like you're playing games or keeping them out of the loop... It really is hard work to communicate with them. It really is about building that large or strong community trust with them so they know that when you're telling them something important that they're getting the straight story; or if they have a question, they know they can reach out to you; or if there's a time when you need to be harsh as a president, they understand why. [There is] a time to be compassionate that comes into play as well.

President 4, however, chose to talk about communication in terms of "creating pathways" that enable listening to all constituents:

Being a really good listener is also critical because if you're not paying attention to all of the communications coming back at you, then your communication is just going to break down. One of the things that I've done as president is tried to

really create pathways for me to hear from students, faculty, and staff, community, my board, everybody on what they're thinking about [and] what's going on. Some of the ways that I've done that is I have advisory groups, and so I have an advisory group with my faculty, one with my staff, and then I have them with students. Those groups meet twice a year, and they come in and essentially there's no agenda other than for me to listen. The representatives of these advisory councils have been told when they're invited to participate, "Your job is to talk to your colleagues and see what are the things that they want me to know."

President 4 also explained he compiles the information gathered from the various advisory councils, selects issues he can address, and then reports back to the entire college "so people can see that they're not wasting their time by sharing that information with me." Another mechanism for communicating with various campus locations is what he refers to as "Pizza with the President," which occurs every spring semester. Separate pizza gatherings are planned for faculty, staff, and students. Lastly, President 4 described his campus walk-arounds:

I just try to hit offices on occasion with nothing on my agenda other than just to interact and give people a chance to talk with me about whatever they may want to, and I really try to use those as opportunities to thank people for the work that they do.

President 3 talked at length about how being engaged in and concerned about the community is critical to the success of the community college presidency:

Communicating with the general public is also a big part of what the president does. You're the external face of the college. I'm on seven chambers. I attend

numerous civic and other organizations' [meetings]. I'm on a public speaking tour. It's critical that you get out there and represent the college, but in doing so, you also interact with a lot of community leaders, county leaders, business leaders. They (1) really don't necessarily understand the educational world and (2) they look at the college as an entity maybe something supported with tax dollars, foundation or gift dollars, sent children to, perhaps attended themselves... It's really important that they have faith in you and know that the institution is in good hands, but what often happens, I find, is that because we're in quick meetings – you go to a chamber meeting and it's an hour long, you get up and make a quick announcement, and everybody runs back to work – you don't get the time to cultivate the strong relationships that you might need down the road. So you really have to go out of your way to get involved in other activities that are important to your community leaders to show them that you care about what they care about. It can be tricky at times, particularly when you have a large or a very diverse district, to make sure that everybody in that district understands that you're concerned about their worries and that you support what they're trying to do as community leaders.

Of particular note is that seven of the eight presidents discussed the impact of being confident in their professional leadership identities on their effectiveness as community college presidents. For example, President 3 talked about his realization of the need to adapt to the reality of his role as the college president, because “the day-to-day activities of a college sometimes don't fit an ideal leadership model and so you have to have some

degree of adaptability.” For President 2, adapting to her role as college president involved perceiving herself differently:

When you move into a presidency, you’re still yourself. I think the biggest thing for me is that when you’re the president, it’s like how do you take that step of really seeing that this is the person in charge? That has sometimes been difficult, especially if you’ve been very collaborative and involving others.

**President-external relationships.** Study participants identified the president’s relationships with external stakeholder groups as important to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency. These external groups include trustees, donors, and other community stakeholder groups such as parents and families; local business leaders; civic leaders; local, state, and federal elected officials; educational organizations such as accrediting agencies, local university or college or school boards, faculty and administrator professional groups, and student and parent advocacy groups; media outlets; and cultural institutions. For both the trustee group and the president group, all study participants identified the president-trustee relationship as being an external relationship critical to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency.

When discussing the importance of the president-trustee relationship, Trustees 3 and 4 referred to the professional employer-employee interaction in that the trustees oversee and evaluate the president’s job performance. Trustee 3 explained, “It’s absolutely vital, if the president wants to keep their job, to communicate with the board of trustees because they are the employee that we have.” He added, “The rest of the people are not our employees, although we do approve their contracts, but that is just protocol. So the president is our only employee.” Trustee 4 reported in a recent annual

evaluation, the college's trustees said the president develops trust with them because "he's ethical and just totally clear about what he's trying to do."

However, several trustees discussed their more personal interactions with the college's president and how that interaction impacted their relationship with the president. For example, some described social interactions with the president, including ballgames, receptions, open houses, holiday gatherings, pre-board meeting dinners, lunch meetings, and downtime group gatherings when traveling to visit elected officials in Washington, DC. Yet other trustees described social interaction that occurs between trustees and the college president during shared community engagements such as regular attendance at Rotary Club luncheons.

Trustee 5 described how social interactions between board members and the college president are a regular part of life in a rural community. Board members and the president encounter each other while moving about the community as neighbors and as business professionals. Trustee 5 explained, "We all know each other. We don't have to go on a retreat. We don't go on a retreat. That maybe startles some organizations. But we see each other a lot anyway." Trustees explained these social interactions are helpful for forging understanding of trustees' roles, responsibilities, community involvement, passions, abilities, and skills, as well as developing relationships between the president and new trustees and relationships between existing trustees and new trustees.

Trustee 6 described the social aspect of these relationships in terms of "the foundation" of belonging to a team, emphasizing, "Teamwork is what's important here and not individuals trying to make somebody do something... When we all work together as a team, we can accomplish many things." However, Trustee 11 explained the

need to draw a line between professional and social interactions. Although social aspects of the board-president relationship are important, Trustee 11 stressed the importance of “remembering that the president is responsible to the board and so you have to make sure that you’re not taking it across a line that’s going to interfere with your doing your job as the board member.”

All of the community college presidents discussed the critical importance of their relationships with governing boards, and almost all (except President 6) explained they spend most of their time developing and maintaining relationships with board members. Presidents 1, 4, and 6 asserted having a poor relationship with trustees leads to a community college president’s failure. President 2 asserted, “Working with the board of trustees is probably the most important thing that a president has to do.” The trustees are “the ultimate decision makers regarding how you’re moving forward with initiatives and with policy, so it is very important to listen to them and to establish a relationship of trust.”

Additionally, trustees and presidents discussed the importance of the president’s relationship with donors. President 3 explained how fundraising is relatively new for community college presidents:

When I started in community college administration, [fundraising] was not as big a deal as it is now. Not only do we have to raise money to overcome shortcomings from state funding, we have to explain to many agencies and entities why community colleges, as state-supported institutions, have to raise money. If I’m going to get a project done at the college, we’ve got to find funding sources and that means spending time making friends and telling the

college story and acting in ways that previously were only privy to the university president.

Like President 3, Trustee 14 stressed the critical involvement of the college president in community-based fundraising:

Anything we can do to boost support from the community, from our business people, the foundation for our booster club... anything extra above what we normally receive or can budget on is important [as well as the president] being visible and being able to go out and meet, greet, intermingle, network, whatever you want to call it.

Trustee 14's comments were repeated by other trustees who referred to the president's community role as the public face of and advocate for the community college in interactions with stakeholders. For example, Trustee 7 explained, "The president is the face of the college and particularly in times of declining enrollment, which all community colleges are facing right now." She provided examples of ways to be the public face of and to advocate for the college by "participating in community events, clubs like the Rotary Club, serving on a fair board or United Way, even being active in church groups." Trustee 1 described how the president is going to be "the face of the college" in both good and bad situations and how he or she should be "at the forefront" of all types of situations.

**President-internal relationships.** Study participants also discussed the president's competencies in relating to faculty members, staff members, and students. Several of the trustees discussed the president's relationship with faculty and staff members in terms of the benefit to students. For example, Trustee 7 explained faculty

and staff members are “the ones directly interacting with students, so I think the president has to listen to their concerns and suggestions.” Trustee 12 provided a specific example about how faculty and staff responded negatively to a discussion about charging students additional fees for online classes. In this case, the faculty and staff approached the president with their disagreement with the plan because it was “too drastic of an amount” for students. The president had a “good rapport” with faculty and staff members. Trustee 12 explained the president listened and changed his mind, explaining what they would do instead is “charge a technology fee for all our classes and that includes the online classes and our regular classes so we can recoup some computer system expenses for all our classes in the college.” In yet another example of cooperation and collaboration, Trustee 12 described how the president reached out to faculty and staff to help address an enrollment problem. Faculty and staff members responded positively to the president’s request to voluntarily phone former students and encourage them to return to the college.

Presidents referred to faculty and staff members as team players and colleagues. President 2, for example, explained, “You can only accomplish anything through your people and having a good relationship with the individuals that work at the institution is critical.” She further described, “Seeing them as team players and that they are central to getting the mission of the institution accomplished is very important.” President 6 discussed the importance of being perceived by faculty and staff as an “unselfish leader.” He expanded upon the importance of being an empathetic and trustworthy partner who listens to his faculty and staff and integrates their feedback into the decision-making process. President 6 referred to his faculty and staff as colleagues in that his relationship



with them is characterized by “a level of familiarity and a level of respect and expectation for them to behave in a certain way.”

Presidents differentiated relationships with students from those with faculty and staff members. For example, President 3 discussed the unique needs and desires of students:

Students, particularly community college students, come to us with a lot of different needs and wants and oftentimes we have to spend more time understanding what the students are really looking for and oftentimes they don't know how to express that themselves. They may have a career goal but not really understand what they're saying. You help support them along the way and help them sort of explore and understand who they are and what they mean. A couple of things that really jump out at me are (1) students generally need a great deal of encouragement and perhaps more so than faculty and staff from the standpoint that this is all new to them, and (2) when you're working with students, it's important to find a way to give them a voice and oftentimes those vehicles are not real clear to them.

Given the unique dynamics of the president-student relationship, President 8 stressed the importance of meeting with students on a regular basis in both formal and informal settings. When discussing informal settings, he explained how he attends “all kinds of student events and activities.” He not only attends sporting events, he makes himself available to talk to student athletes after their games. He also described his interactions with students when attending concerts and other campus social activities. As for formal

settings, President 8 described meeting with student government officers on a monthly basis and participating in campus-wide student forums on a semester basis.

**President activities.** When describing aspects of the community college president's human competencies, both groups of study participants (trustees and presidents) provided examples of specific activities through which the president engages stakeholders, including strategic planning and consensus building. Both the trustees and presidents described strategic planning in terms of human competencies as well as conceptual competencies. Trustees 3, 4, 6, and 10 emphasized the importance of the president's human competencies, which are needed to involve other stakeholders in implementing the strategic plan. For Trustee 3, strategic plans are not meant to be left on the shelf and only accessed when some regulatory agency representative asks to review them. He praised his college's president who refers to the strategic plan as a "living document" and engages stakeholders in implementing it.

According to some of the presidents interviewed for this study, the human competency of consensus building is an activity critical for the success of the 21st-century presidency. President 3 explained how being an effective consensus builder is helpful when negotiating labor contracts with service unions. According to President 6, who has been in higher education for more than 25 years, "The role of the president is still about building consensus, sharing vision, and moving the institution forward for the benefit of its community." President 7 maintained that without consensus-building skills, "I just don't see how a president can be successful."

**Institutional attributes.** According to both participant groups, another facet of human competencies important for the success of the 21st-century community college

president is the ability to adapt to institutional variations related to organizational identification and culture. For example, presidents and trustees discussed how different types and sizes of colleges would necessitate variations in how the president interacts with stakeholders (e.g., a small close-knit rural college vs. a large multi-campus metropolitan college). Trustee 1 discussed how geographical variations can influence how community college leaders interact with students and communities. For example, presidents in rural areas are more likely to engage with constituents interested in technical fields that impact the local economy (e.g., those related to agriculture), while presidents in major metropolitan areas are more likely to engage with constituents interested in the performing arts and transfer degree programs.

President 6 explained the critical importance of considering institutional variations when hiring community college presidents so as to achieve a good fit between board members' perceptions of requisite competencies for leading their college and the actual competencies of candidates. President 2 emphasized the importance of understanding the particular institutional culture of a community college that differs from that of four-year universities:

As community colleges, we're an open door. We believe that we're here to help students get both technical skills and transfer skills. So this undergirds your whole concept of where you're going to move and how you're going to empower this organization to serve those individuals in your community better.

### Research Question Three

What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes related to conceptual competencies and the community college presidency: *vision and mission* and *strategic planning*. Each theme is described and representative excerpts from the interview transcripts are provided.

**Vision and mission.** When discussing conceptual competencies critical to a successful 21st-century presidency, both groups (trustees and presidents) referred to the president's ability to cast vision and lead or inspire with a sense of mission. Trustee 1 commented students, faculty, and staff suffer when a community college president lacks forward-looking abilities. He explained a successful community college president must be a visionary who is "not hung up with 'We've always done 'X' and 'O' or we've always done it this way and so this is the way we're going to do it on this particular campus or at this particular school.'" Trustee 7, too, addressed how the president's conceptual abilities impact the faculty, staff, and community. She described how the president leads stakeholders through the strategic planning process, emphasizing the process "begins with the president having the vision and then working to pull it together."

Trustee 2 explained, "The ability to see and articulate the mission and the vision of an institution is the basis for all of the decision making that goes on." She further clarified, "If we can always, all of us, keep in mind what's our vision and what's our

mission, then I think we can have some pretty decent decision making going on.”

Trustee 8 commented on the importance of strong vision:

It’s important for a community college president to have a strong vision, vision of what they see for the college as far as here’s the college now and here’s where we’re going. If you don’t have a vision, you just kind of move with the status quo and really nothing gets done. Nothing really gets done. You’ve got to have somebody that got some vision and understands what our next step is and how we are going to get there... If you don’t understand that, your college isn’t going to do anything.

Several of the presidents addressed the president’s ability to communicate the college’s vision and mission. For example, President 3 explained, “If you have the vision but you don’t have the communication skill to lay it out there, you’re not going to be successful.” Additionally, President 5 commented on the community college president’s ability to “articulate that vision in a way that people get it and understand it.” For President 3, staff size and institutional variables impact the president’s ability to effectively communicate the college’s vision and mission:

When you have a smaller school and you have more direct communication, you have more opportunities to lay out your vision. In a larger school, oftentimes you have to rely on how things get filtered through processes to make sure everybody hears your vision and it becomes a little bit different kind of challenge.

**Strategic planning.** In addition to discussing strategic planning as an important conceptual competency in terms of a specific activity through which the president engages stakeholders, study participants also identified strategic planning as a conceptual

competency closely linked to vision and mission. Trustee 12 described strategic planning as the framework for achieving the college's mission and vision. Of note in their discussions of vision, mission, and strategic planning, several trustees conflated or confused these three conceptual competencies. For example, Trustees 4, 6, and 15 referred to the college's strategic plan as the vision.

The presidents articulated clearer and more practical understandings of strategic planning as it relates to vision and mission than did the trustees. For example, President 2 explained the strategic plan is the "road map" for the institution and described how she involves stakeholders in creating "a strategic plan that communicates [the college's] mission and vision." President 1 discussed the importance of faculty and staff having a practical understanding of the college's strategic plan. He described devoting an entire day of professional development on various aspects of strategic planning: "What is the role of strategic planning in an organization? How do you fit into this role and how do we hope to use strategic planning to move our organization forward?" He further described his college's strategic plan as a "living document" that guides the budgeting process as well as the evaluation of administrative personnel and faculty members. President 1 explained the critical importance of all faculty and staff members having a role in the strategic planning process and knowing "if they are fully committed to the plan, we were going to find the resources to achieve those goals."

### **Presidential Duty Rankings**

At the conclusion of the interview, study participants were provided an alphabetized list of 16 common duties of the community college president substantiated by the research literature (AACC, 2013; Aspen Institute, 2017; Boswell & Imroz, 2013;

Cejda & Jolley, 2013; Eddy, 2012, 2013; Elliott & Paton, 2014; Hassan et al., 2009; Legon et al., 2013; Plinske, 2008; Plinske & Packard, 2010; Turner, 2005). The presidential duties list included academic issues, assessment of student learning, athletics, budget or financial matters, community relations, enrollment management, faculty issues, fundraising or alumni relations, governing board relations, legal issues, media relations, personnel or human resources issues, state and federal governmental relations, strategic planning, student life, and technology planning. After reviewing the list, study participants selected four duties they felt occupied the majority of the community college president's time. Additionally, participants were asked to provide examples of the selected duties. Of the total 16 common presidential duties, participants selected 11 they perceived occupy the majority of the community college president's time.

The perceptions of the two groups (trustees and presidents) were similar for the presidential duties of enrollment management and state and federal relations. However, noteworthy differences in perceptions were found with six of the presidential duties: budget and finance matters, faculty and academic issues, fundraising or alumni relations, governing board relations, personnel or human resources, and strategic planning. Table 3 provides an alphabetical listing of the 11 common duties study participants perceived as occupying the majority of the community college president's time.

Table 3

*Presidential Duty Rankings*

Presidential Duty	President Ranking (N=8)						Trustee Ranking (N=15)					
	1	2	3	4	Total (n/%)		1	2	3	4	Total (n/%)	
Assessment of Student Learning	1	0	1	0	2	25.0	1	0	0	1	2	13.33
Budget/Finance Matters	1	2	0	0	3	37.5	2	6	2	1	11	73.33
Community Relations	0	0	1	2	3	37.5	2	2	2	1	7	46.67
Enrollment Management	0	1	0	0	1	12.5	0	1	1	1	3	20.0
Faculty/Academic Issues	0	1	1	0	2	25.0	3	2	0	4	9	60.0
Fundraising/Alumni Relations	0	1	0	3	4	50.0	0	0	0	1	1	6.67
Governing Board Relations	2	1	1	1	5	62.5	1	0	1	1	3	20.0
Legal Issues	0	0	0	0	0	0.00	0	1	0	0	1	6.67
Personnel/Human Resources	1	2	0	2	5	62.5	1	0	1	1	3	20.0
State/Federal Relations	2	0	2	0	4	50.0	1	1	3	3	8	53.33
Strategic Planning	1	0	2	0	3	37.5	4	2	5	1	12	80.0



## Summary

The chapter's introduction was followed by a reporting of participant demographic information. Next, thematic data and representative participant quotes were presented according to the study's three research questions about how technical, human, and conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency. As for technical competencies and the presidency, analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes: *delegating or outsourcing abilities* and *institutional finance acumen*. Five themes emerged from the data analysis specific to human competencies and the community college presidency: *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, *president-internal relationships*, *president activities*, and *institutional attributes*. Two themes emerged from the trustee and president interview transcripts specific to conceptual competencies and the community college presidency: *vision and mission* and *strategic planning*.

Following the presentation of themes that emerged from the analysis of participant interviews, trustees' and presidents' rankings of selected presidential duties were reported according to those that occupy the majority of the community college president's time. An alphabetized list of 16 common duties of the community college president substantiated by the research literature was provided to the participants for their review. Of the total 16 common presidential duties, participants selected 11 they perceived occupy the majority of the community college president's time.

In Chapter Five, a summary of the study is presented along with conclusions. First, an overview of the study findings is provided. Next, conclusions are drawn from the findings specific to the study's research questions. This discussion includes an

interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the study results relative to the research literature. Third, implications of the study results for practice are discussed. Lastly, recommendations are presented for future research.

## Chapter Five: Summary and Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency. The conceptual framework undergirding the study was Katz's (1955) skills-based model that provides a description of effective leadership based on three types of skills: technical, human, and conceptual. This chapter is organized according to four major sections. First, an overview of the study findings is presented. Next, conclusions are drawn based on the research literature and organized according to the study's three guiding research questions. Third, implications for practice are discussed specific to community college president competencies, institutional fit, succession planning, and underprepared trustees. Recommendations for future research are presented, and the chapter concludes with a summary of the study.

### Findings

The findings reported in the previous chapter are briefly reviewed. This review is organized according to the same sequence of reporting utilized in Chapter Four, which adhered to the order of the study's research questions. Findings specific to the community college president's technical competencies are presented first, followed by human competencies, and conceptual competencies.

**President technical competencies.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how technical competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes related to technical competencies and the community college presidency. The two technical competency themes were *delegating or outsourcing abilities* and *institutional finance acumen*. Both trustees and presidents expressed the importance of the president's ability to delegate or outsource technical aspects of their leadership role to competent college administrative personnel, trustees, and other outside professionals. Among the types of technical competencies, both groups mentioned technology literacy acumen (e.g., computer, Internet, Intranet, communication devices, and social media); legal acumen; and marketing acumen. However, trustees and presidents identified only one type of technical competency as being critical for the 21st-century community college president to possess: institutional finance acumen. Trustees described financial acumen as a general understanding of accounting and finance and referred more specifically to the president's abilities to read a financial statement and understand a budget.

**President human competencies.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how human competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed five themes related to human competencies and the community college presidency. The five human competency themes were *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, *president-internal relationships*, *president activities*, and *institutional attributes*. Participants described personal attributes important for the community college president to possess, including the ability to develop and maintain relationships, communicate, and negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups; trustworthiness;

persuasiveness; and tactfulness. Additionally, study participants identified external stakeholder groups with which the president should develop and maintain good relationships, including trustees, donors, and other community stakeholder groups such as parents and families; local business leaders; civic leaders; local, state, and federal elected officials; educational organizations such as accrediting agencies, local university, college, and school boards, faculty and administrator professional groups, and student and parent advocacy groups; media outlets; and cultural institutions. As for internal relationships of importance to an effective community college presidency, participants identified faculty members, staff members, and students.

**President conceptual competencies.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes related to conceptual competencies and the community college presidency. The first theme was *vision and mission*. The second theme was *strategic planning*.

**Presidential duty rankings.** Following the interviews, study participants reviewed a list of 16 common duties of the community college president. Of the total 16 common presidential duties, participants selected 11 they perceived occupy the majority of the community college president's time. Trustees' and presidents' perceptions were similar for the presidential duties of enrollment management and state and federal relations. However, noteworthy differences in perceptions were found with six of the presidential duties: budget and finance matters, faculty and academic issues, fundraising

and alumni relations, governing board relations, personnel and human resources, and strategic planning.

## **Conclusions**

Conclusions about the study findings are presented. Herein, study results are analyzed, synthesized, and interpreted. The conclusions are presented in order of the three research questions about trustees' and presidents' perceptions of the impact of technical, human, and conceptual competencies on the success of the community college presidency.

**Research question one.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how technical competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Analysis of the interview data revealed two technical competency themes: *delegating or outsourcing abilities* and *institutional finance acumen*. Most of the trustees (12 out of 15) expressed the view community college presidents should delegate technical aspects of their job to appropriate college personnel or outsource to external professionals. This view aligns with the trustees' reported backgrounds in business administration, communications, law, engineering, medicine, and public policy as these professionals would generally be accustomed to delegating or outsourcing technical aspects of their jobs outside the purview of their specialization.

Additionally, seven of the eight presidents discussed how many of the technical aspects of the president's role should be delegated to staff leadership, and the president's involvement should be limited to providing oversight. These findings are consistent with the literature. For example, Turner (2005) examined the qualities important to leading a

community college as perceived by community college trustees, chancellors, and presidents in Texas. Of the 94 study participants, 70 identified the ability to delegate authority as an important competency for 21st-century community college presidents (Turner, 2005).

Some trustees explained the president, as the college's leader, should have a broad knowledge base about specialized technical areas in order to provide necessary oversight of employees, committees, and external professionals providing these technical services. The presidents' views paralleled those of the trustees regarding a balanced approach wherein the president is capable of properly delegating or outsourcing specialized technical responsibilities to the experts, and as the college's senior leader, either possessing or acquiring the general knowledge required to provide necessary oversight of the experts' efforts. As President 5 explained, "I am a firm believer that where you lack specialized technical competencies, as the senior leader, you should always be a student, a constant learner in those competencies." Similarly, Brown (2012) found college presidents ranked highly the ability to provide appropriate operational oversight as well policy oversight among the competencies of effective 21st-century community college presidents. Yet, Brown (2012) also noted these skills are often omitted from job postings for community college presidents.

During the study interviews, both trustees and presidents identified a single technical competency critical to the president's success: institutional finance acumen. For the trustees interviewed for this study, financial acumen was generally understood as the president's ability to read financial statements and understand the budgeting process. The presidents, on the other hand, related financial competencies to specific challenges,

such as personnel compensation, enrollment management, and decision-making about funding priorities. Similarly, Price et al. (2016) reviewed the literature and identified six financial challenges confronting modern-day community college presidents: lowering costs without damage to academic quality, maintaining student access, maintaining compliance with federal and state laws, maintaining technology, managing increasing compensation costs, and managing enrollment issues. Moreover, the community college presidents who participated in Price et al.'s (2016) study ranked three top critical financial challenges they faced: "maintaining student access during times of increasing educational costs, managing enrollment during times of decreasing state funding, and lowering costs without damaging academic quality" (p. 518). Jones and Johnson (2014) provided a possible explanation for why trustees interviewed in this study did not expand their discussion beyond financial statements and the budgeting process to include specific financial challenges the community college president encounters: "Oftentimes, board members are business owners or corporate leaders and do not fully understand the academic organization and its operation" (p. 307).

There were notable differences in how the two groups who participated in this study ranked budget and finance matters and the related common presidential duties of fundraising and alumni relations. When asked to rank 16 common presidential duties according to those they perceived occupy most of the community college president's time, 11 of the 15 trustees (73.33%) identified budget and finance matters among the top four time-consuming presidential duties (second in ranking only to strategic planning). Only one trustee (6.67%) ranked a related duty, fundraising and alumni issues, among the top four time-consuming presidential duties.



In contrast, only three of the eight presidents who participated in this study (37.5%) identified budget and finance matters among the top four duties that occupy their time, while half (50%) of the presidents reported fundraising and alumni relations occupy a substantial amount of their time (following governing board relations and personnel and human resources, 62.5%, respectively). The presidents' lower ranking of budget and finance matters as duties occupying their time can be understood in light of Participant 1's explanation that he surrounds himself with people with "a much deeper understanding" of those matters.

As for the presidents identifying fundraising and alumni relations as occupying half their time, this finding is consistent with the recent literature. Selingo et al. (2017) studied the effectiveness of the contemporary college presidency as well as the skills and capabilities required for future presidents. Their findings were based on 150 current presidents' survey responses, in-depth interviews with 24 presidents and trustees, and analysis of more than 800 presidential curricula vitae (Selingo et al., 2017). Presidents who completed the survey, regardless of their tenure and the size of their institution, ranked fundraising and alumni and donor relations as a responsibility that occupied most of their time (Selingo et al., 2017).

The lack of congruence in this study between trustees' perceptions and presidents' actual experiences relative to the amount of time committed to budget and finance matters and fundraising and alumni relations is problematic. Like Jones and Johnson (2014), Selingo et al. (2017) commented on governing boards' lack of understanding about the college president's job: "The group responsible for hiring presidents often lacks deep understanding of the job" (p. 21). Oftentimes board members do not fully disclose

details about the college's financial issues during the hiring process (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). Researchers have examined reasons for the governing board's lack of full disclosure about institutional finances during the processes of recruiting and hiring a new president. One reason is board members willingly withhold information about financial problems in order to attract top prospective candidates to fulfill the complex role of the president (Denton & Moore, 2009). Additionally, governing boards do not fully disclose critical information such as the college's finances during recruitment and hiring processes because trustees may not have a full understanding of the daily duties of the president (Jones & Johnson, 2014; Legon et al., 2013; Selingo et al., 2017). An implication of board members not having a full understanding of the daily duties of the college president is that newly hired presidents may experience disillusionment when expectations of the position do not align with the realities of the job, which is one of the most common causes of disengagement among newly hired presidents (Legon et al., 2013).

**Research question two.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how human competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

Both participant groups discussed the impact of human competencies on the community college presidency substantially more than the impact of technical competencies and conceptual competencies. Of the five human competency themes revealed during data analysis, three were predominant among both trustees and presidents and are herein discussed in relation to the research literature: *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, and *president-internal relationships*.

*President personal attributes.* Both trustees and presidents identified personal attributes, including the ability to develop and maintain relationships, communicate, and negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups. Trustee 4 provided a list of people skills critical for developing and maintaining relationships: “articulate, good listener, trustworthy, team player, persuasive, consensus builder, networking, tactful.” Some trustees discussed the importance of a college president being able to develop trusting relationships. Trustee 2, for example, explained both written and oral communication skills are critical to the president’s ability to develop and sustain relationships of trust with faculty and staff. Findings among this study’s trustees relating trustworthiness and communication competencies to key stakeholder relationships are consistent with Plinske’s (2008) study of trustees’ perceptions about critical competencies of the community college president.

All trustees commented on the president’s communication abilities as an important human competency, which is consistent with the research literature about communication as an essential competency for community college presidents (Gross & Shapiro, 2013; McFadden et al., 2013). Specifically, trustees interviewed for this study described the importance of the president having effective communication with various stakeholders such as trustees; federal, state, and local agencies and legislators; faculty and staff; students; the media; local business and civic leaders; and other community stakeholders. Regardless of the mode of communication or the stakeholder, some trustees discussed the importance of *how* the president communicates, stressing the need for genuine concern for others’ perspectives, active listening, and openness to receiving both positive and negative comments. As Trustee 9 explained, a president who is a good

communicator can make different constituent groups “feel like they’re all part of the team.” Additionally, trustees related the president’s trustworthiness and communication competencies to being able to negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups, including trustees; faculty and staff; student government groups; employee unions; national, state, and local elected officials; and community stakeholder groups.

The presidents interviewed for this study also described specific relationship attributes critical to success of the 21st-century community college president, including being trustworthy, a good listener, an open and timely communicator accepting of criticism, personable in interactions with diverse people and groups, and engaged with or concerned about the community. When discussing the importance of being an effective communicator, presidents focused on their relationships with trustees, faculty and staff, and students, as well as individual community members and civic or business groups. These findings are consistent with the results of Boswell and Imroz’s (2013) study of leaders from 14 community colleges in Pennsylvania who placed a high value on communication competencies. Moreover, Harris and Ellis (2017) discussed the implications of presidents intentionally fostering good relations with trustees as well as faculty, staff, and students. The authors explained how such relationships build what they referred to as “social currency,” which can be beneficial when navigating various crises that plague institutions of higher education (Harris & Ellis, 2017, p. 16).

***President-external relationships.*** While being interviewed, study participants identified president-external stakeholder group relationships as important to the success of the 21st-century community college presidency. Of the numerous external groups identified by study participants, all trustees and all presidents agreed the president-trustee

relationship is critical to the success of the community college presidency. Yet during the in-depth interviews, the two groups perceived this relationship differently.

When interviewed, trustees described the trustee-president relationship in terms of employer-employee interactions as well as social interactions. Some trustees discussed the trustees' role to oversee and evaluate the job performance of their only employee – the president. Other trustees, however, focused on the more personal and social interactions they have with the president, especially given the rural area in which their community college was located (66.67% of trustees and 50 % of presidents identified their institution type as rural). Social interactions cited by the trustees included ballgames, receptions, open houses and holiday gatherings, pre-board meeting lunch or dinner meetings, downtime gatherings while traveling as a group, and civic organization luncheon meetings. Additionally, Trustee 5 explained social interactions are a regular part of life in a rural community in that board members and the president encounter each other as neighbors and business professionals. While some trustees described social interactions with the president as being helpful for team building, Trustee 11 explained the need to draw a line between professional and social interactions, stressing the critical importance of “remembering that the president is responsible to the board and so you have to make sure that you’re not taking it across a line that’s going to interfere with your doing your job as the board member.”

During their interviews, all of the community college presidents discussed the critical importance of their relationship with the governing board in terms of the success of the presidency. However, rather than describing the relationship as employer-employee in nature as did the some of the trustees, the presidents regarded the board's

critical role in terms of being the ultimate decision-makers when initiatives and policy are concerned. As President 2 explained, working with the board “is probably the most important thing that a president has to do.”

Differences between the two groups in the area of president-trustee relationships were further evidenced in how the study participants ranked the amount of time presidents commit to governing board relations. Only three of the 15 trustees (20%) perceived governing board relations as one of the top four duties occupying the majority of the community college president’s time. Yet five of the eight presidents (62.5%) reported they spend most of their time developing and maintaining relationships with board members.

There are two possible explanations for this discrepancy between trustees’ perceptions and presidents’ actual experiences. First, when considering how presidents allocate their time, trustees’ perceptions are likely based on their individual board and committee meeting attendance as well as their individual professional interactions with the president, neglecting to attribute social interactions as among presidential duties (especially in rural communities). Yet in actuality, the president’s calendar would include not only regularly scheduled full board meetings, but also various committee meetings and one-on-one meetings with trustees. Presidents would likely consider their social interactions with trustees when calculating the amount of time allocated to governing board relations.

Second, community college presidents know their ability to lead the institution in fulfilling its mission, as well as their personal job security, is based on the quality of their relationships with governing board members. Jones and Johnson (2014) studied

presidential transitions at community colleges during the period of 2006-2009. They found job security was a concern among presidents, enough so that emphasis was placed on the need to invest time in developing and retaining governing board support (Jones & Johnson, 2014).

Regardless of the underlying reasons for this study's finding of trustee-president discrepancy concerning the amount of time presidents allocate to governing board relations, the implications are significant. Researchers have suggested the college president-trustee relationship impacts both voluntary and involuntary presidential departures (Cooper et al., 2016, 2017; Harris & Ellis, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018; Rutherford & Lozano, 2017). Applying the person-organization fit conceptual framework, McNaughtan (2017, 2018) described two fit components: complementary fit and supplementary fit. The conceptual component at play in president-trustee relationships is supplementary fit, whereby "the president's values, goals, and personalities are not singularly connected to one united organization in higher education, but rather many distinct groups, such as the campus community, executive team, and governing board" (McNaughtan, 2017, p. 85). McNaughtan (2017) argued supplementary fit is most often disregarded in higher education, which often results in the departure of presidents, voluntary and involuntary, explained away in general references to a lack of fit.

Furthermore, the research literature is replete with studies about the implications of presidential vacancies and declining tenure among college presidents, including stunted institutional growth (Gluckman, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018; Rutherford & Lozano, 2017; Selingo et al., 2017). McNaughtan (2018) cited the literature relative to

declining tenure among college presidents and the negative impact on the college's stability, employee security, institutional long-term vision, and finances because of increased costs associated with hiring new presidents. Rutherford and Lozano (2017) described the negative implications of presidential departures in terms of "budgetary, personnel, and other strategic decisions" (p. 113) that can ultimately affect student success. Additionally, student success is impacted by the college president's tenure. Joshua Wyner, vice president of the Aspen Institute and executive director of its College Excellence Program explained, "Sustained improvement in student success requires longevity in the presidency" (as cited in Gluckman, 2017, para. 13).

*President-internal relationships.* Study participants also discussed president-internal stakeholder relationships critical to the success of the community college presidency, specifically the president's competencies in relating to faculty members, staff members, and students. Trustees described the importance of the president's relationship with faculty and staff members in terms of benefits for students. Trustees explained because faculty and staff members directly interact with students, they can provide information and feedback critical to the president's decision making.

Beyond considering faculty and staff members' interactions with students, the presidents interviewed for this study discussed the importance of relating to faculty and staff members as team players and colleagues central to accomplishing the college's mission. As President 2 explained, a president's accomplishments are based on "having a good relationship with the individuals that work at the institution." This study's findings are consistent with the research literature emphasizing the importance of the president's



relationship with faculty and staff members and faculty management in general (Legon et al., 2013; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018).

College presidents participating in prior research reported during the hiring process they were not provided with key insights relative to faculty composition (Luna, 2013) and problems related to low faculty morale (Hoppes & Holley, 2014). These findings from the research literature may explain a seeming contradiction in how the presidents who participated in this present study reported they allocate their time. While only two out of eight presidents in this present study (25%) ranked faculty and academic issues as an area in which they spend a majority of their time, five of the eight presidents (62.5%) ranked personnel and human resources issues as an area that consumes a majority of their time (tied with governing board relations as the top issue occupying their time). This finding is consistent with results from a recent survey of 236 community college leaders conducted by Gallup (Jaschik & Lederman, 2017). Jaschik and Lederman (2017) reported 42% of community college presidents identified personnel management and staffing as a major challenge, while 54% described it as a moderate challenge.

A possible interpretation of this present study's findings is that the presidents regard the faculty position as critical to accomplishing the college's mission, and as such, generally consider faculty members to be their academic colleagues. However, it is possible because they were not made aware of issues related to faculty composition (Luna, 2013) or problems related to low faculty morale (Hoppes & Holley, 2014) prior to being hired, these presidents are, in actuality, allocating an inordinate amount of their time to addressing personnel or human resources issues. This interpretation could have

been supported with data about the presidents' length of tenure in their current positions, but these demographic data were not collected when this study was conducted; however, the research literature supports this interpretation.

Findings from the League for Innovation in the Community College's annual survey of 280 community college CEOs showed a shift in the tenure of presidents over the last 18 years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). For the 2015 survey, more than 40% of the 280 CEOs reported they had been in their present positions between one and five years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). In comparison, findings from the 1997 survey showed presidents' tenures ranged from 11 to 15 years, and the 2007 survey findings showed presidents' tenures ranged from six to 10 years (de los Santos & Milliron, 2015). Moreover, Cooper et al. (2016) reported on study findings specific to California's community college leadership: "The median job tenure of community college presidents has been just three and a half years, half that of their counterparts at four-year institutions" (p. 1).

Another noteworthy finding from this study relates to trustees' perceptions about the amount of time community college presidents commit to issues related to personnel and faculty issues, which are counter to presidents' reported experiences. Although 62.5% of presidents ranked personnel and human resources issues as occupying the majority of their time, only 20% of trustees ranked these among the top four issues requiring the president's time. While 25% of presidents ranked faculty and academic issues among the top four issues to which they actually commit their time, 60% of trustees perceived faculty and academic issues occupied a substantial amount of the community college president's time. One possible explanation for this incongruity

between trustees' perceptions and presidents' actual experiences regarding faculty and personnel issues is that most board members' expertise is outside the field of education, and as such, they are not likely to be familiar with the realities of managing personnel in the community college environment (Johnson, 2015; Jones & Johnson, 2014). Trustees interviewed for this study identified their areas of expertise as business administration, communications, law, engineering, medicine, and public policy.

**Research question three.** What are trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about how conceptual competencies impact the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency?

During their interviews, both trustees and presidents discussed two types of conceptual competencies: *vision and mission* and *strategic planning*. Both groups discussed the president's competencies in casting future vision for the community college while leading and inspiring others with a strong sense of institutional mission. Trustees and presidents described strategic planning as a specific activity in which the president engages various stakeholders and as a conceptual competency closely linked to vision and mission. However, while discussing vision, mission, and strategic planning, several trustees conflated or confused these three conceptual competencies. For example, Trustees 4, 6, and 15 referred to the college's strategic plan as the vision. Additionally, when ranking presidential duties, 12 of the 15 trustees (80%) perceived strategic planning as occupying a majority of the president's time. However, only three of the eight presidents (37.5%) named strategic planning as among the top four duties that occupy a majority of their time. Trustees' emphasis on strategic planning was also evidenced in the results of a survey of 95 California community college trustees (Cooper et al., 2017).

When asked about community college CEOs' responsibilities, the majority of trustees (56.84%) prioritized strategic planning as the top responsibility, followed by working effectively with the board of trustees (54.74%) (Cooper et al., 2017).

An understanding of this study's results showing a disconnect between trustees' perceptions (80%) about time committed to strategic planning duties and presidents' (37.5%) actual time committed to strategic planning was not located in the research literature. A possible explanation is that trustees ranked the presidential duties according to their exposure to issues during governing board meetings. Generally, two top agenda items during most board meetings are budget or finance matters and strategic planning, both of which were ranked the highest (73.33% and 80%, respectively) by trustees as occupying the majority of the president's time, even though presidents (37.5% for both items) ranked them as among the duties requiring less of their time.

### **Implications for Practice**

The trustee-president relationship is critical to the success of institutions of higher education (Cooper et al., 2016, 2017; Harris & Ellis, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018; Rutherford & Lozano, 2017; Selingo et al., 2017). If there is uncertainty or disagreement about "the role, scope, and authority of the college president, friction, instability, and immobility of an institution are likely outcomes" (Morris & Miller, 2014, p. 3). Findings from this study indicate community college trustees, whose primary role is to hire and support the president (Luna, 2013), are not wholly knowledgeable of the role and duties of the presidency, which is consistent with the research literature (Johnson, 2015; Jones & Johnson, 2014; Legon et al., 2013; Selingo et al., 2017). Two implications of trustees' lack of knowledge about the presidency are addressed herein. The first implication is

concerned with practical issues related to community college president competencies, institutional fit, and succession planning. The second implication addresses the impact of underprepared trustees on the president's success and the institution's effectiveness.

**President competencies, institutional fit, and succession planning.** Eddy and Mitchell (2017) addressed the uniqueness of community colleges in terms of leadership competencies, institutional fit, and succession planning. According to Eddy and Mitchell (2017), the AACC's (2013) competencies are a starting place for understanding how community college presidents lead their institutions. However, based on her study of community college presidents, Eddy (2012) found an important aspect of leadership was missing from the AACC's list of competencies – the institutional environment. She used the term *contextual competency* to refer to “the understanding [of] college culture and the reading [of] the context of what is valued” (Eddy, 2012, p. 32). Eddy (2012) further explained, “Knowing the culture and context of the campus helps leaders achieve desired changes” (p. 33). More recently, contextual competency was related to the literature on institutional fit and the importance of good leader-institution fit to both current organizational effectiveness and succession planning initiatives (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017).

McNaughtan's (2017, 2018) research expanded the literature on the association between institutional fit and the tenure of college presidents. Utilizing the person-organization fit conceptual model, McNaughtan (2018) provided further “evidence of the importance of the interaction between presidential characteristics, goals, skills, demands, values, and those of their organizations” (p. 11). According to McNaughtan's (2017, 2018) conceptual model, complimentary fit refers to the congruence between the president's specific characteristics, such as aptitudes, skills, and experiences, and the

demands and resources of the college. Moreover, supplementary fit in the higher education environment refers to congruence between the president's values, goals, and personality and those of other members of the campus community, including executive leadership and faculty as well as the governing board trustees (McNaughtan, 2017). The importance of institutional fit cannot be overstated (Harris & Ellis, 2017; McNaughtan, 2017, 2018). Harris and Ellis (2017) studied unsuccessful university presidencies that ended in involuntary turnover. Analysis of data on 1,029 university presidential terms across 256 universities from 1988-2016 revealed poor institutional fit was one of the causes of involuntary turnover (Harris & Ellis, 2017).

Without a thorough knowledge of the role and duties of their community college president, trustees are ill-equipped to support the president, further the institution's goals, and contribute to the development of succession plans for future leaders. The person most qualified to best convey knowledge about the day-to-day experiences of successfully leading his or her community college is the president (Jones & Johnson, 2014). Gagliardi et al. (2017) argued, "Understanding key challenges through presidents' eyes is crucial, as it helps to explain where they spend their time and how they engage with internal and external stakeholders" (p. 41). Presidents are likely to have developed a contextual competency specific to their campuses based on their skillsets, past experiences, and current demands and related challenges (Eddy, 2012). Therefore, trustees should intentionally engage their president beyond the perfunctory monthly board meetings to develop a better understanding of the roles and duties of the president as well as the cultural context of the college.

Legon et al. (2013) addressed the need for achieving sufficient board engagement that does not encroach upon the authority delegated to the president as the chief administrator. Such engagement should be collaborative in nature and aimed at building trust and developing a “solid working relationship” with the president (Legon et al., 2013, p. 26). Trustees can achieve collaborative engagement with the president that builds trust and contributes to the development of a solid working relationship by scheduling informal one-on-one luncheons during which the president can impart information about his or her leadership role and typical duties. Additionally, trustees can extend their engagement beyond regularly scheduled formal board meetings by attending campus functions with the president to gain an understanding of the contextual competency the president has developed, which may help the trustees contribute to current organizational effectiveness and future succession planning initiatives.

Given the leadership crisis in community colleges (Aspen Institute, 2017; Freeman & Forthum, 2017; Gagliardi et al., 2017), it is critical governing boards consider the importance of succession planning (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017). Yet, for the most part, succession planning is absent in institutions of higher education, and search committees are uncertain about where future presidential successors will be found (Selingo et al., 2017). By becoming more knowledgeable about the role and duties of the current president and developing an understanding the president’s contextual competency, trustees can provide valuable guidance for the succession planning process, thereby ensuring future recruitment efforts consider the importance of institutional fit so candidates who best match the college’s needs are hired to lead the college (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017).

**Underprepared trustees.** The hiring of a community college president is one of the most important duties of the board of trustees (Plinske & Packard, 2010). Therefore, trustees must be knowledgeable and prepared to conduct searches and hire presidents as well as plan for leadership succession. However, members of governing boards, whether appointed or elected, come from various professional backgrounds and often lack adequate knowledge and experiences relative to leading and operating institutions of higher education (Johnson, 2015; Jones & Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, little or no training is provided to board members prior to assuming their positions or while in office (Aspen Institute, 2017). According to the Aspen Institute (2017), when trustees do not fully understand the president's role and the dynamic nature of higher education, "they may be underprepared to help set institutional direction and identify and support highly effective presidents" (p. iv). Moreover, Tekniepe (2014) studied 101 community college presidents across 34 states and found governing board member training and knowledge lessened the rate of involuntary turnover among these presidents. Tekniepe (2014) argued, "When a president views board members as having a sufficient amount of training and knowledge to effectively perform their job functions, adversarial tension and mistrust between the two parties wane" (p. 13).

The Aspen Institute (2017) recommended addressing the problem of underprepared trustees by providing boards with "greater and more integrated assistance to set institutional goals and to hire, support, and work with presidents" (p. 19). Findings from this study suggest the need for board development opportunities consistent with the Aspen Institute's (2017) recommendations in the areas of presidential searches, best practices for hiring a community college president, and leadership succession. As Scott



(2018) explained, “A board should be as intentional about leadership development for its members as it is for the president” (p. 122).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the study results and reviewed literature, several gaps were identified worthy of further research. Incongruities between trustees’ and presidents’ perceptions about the nature and importance of the president-trustee relationship suggest the need for further research in this area. Second, the literature on community college succession planning is sparse and some is outdated when it comes to traditional higher education paths to the presidency. Third, the literature on trustee training and the use of external search firms presents challenges and conflicts requiring further research.

**President-trustee relationship.** Findings from this study indicate perceptual incongruities between presidents and trustees about the nature of their relationship and the importance of that relationship to the success of the presidency, which is critical to achieving the institution’s mission. The literature indicates college trustees and governing board structures can play pivotal roles in both presidential success and departure decisions, whether voluntary or involuntary (Cooper et al., 2016; Rutherford & Lozano, 2017; Tekniepe, 2014). Therefore, it is important to pursue research about how to develop and strengthen the president-trustee relationship. McNaughtan’s (2017, 2018) person-organization fit model shows promise in the area of developing a deeper understanding of the president-trustee relationship based on an examination of the level of congruence between the president’s and trustees’ goals, values, and personalities. Findings from the president and trustee interviews conducted in this study provide support for McNaughtan’s (2017, 2018) claim that the person-organization fit model can

be a valuable tool for facilitating critical reflection and discussion on institutional fit, particularly the supplementary fit between the president and trustees.

**Community college leadership succession planning.** Incongruities between the perceptions and experiences of community college presidents and trustees who participated in this study about the duties of the president suggest the need for further research on leadership succession planning specific to the community college environment. Regarding leadership succession, most trustees would likely describe it as an internal process. Because a strong possible future president is evident within the college's internal leadership team, trustees often do not consider leadership succession training as necessary. Yet recent literature is challenging conventional wisdom about the transition of leadership within the internal higher education hierarchy (Aspen Institute, 2017; Jones & Johnson, 2014; Selingo et al., 2017). For example, Selingo et al. (2017) argued the traditional path from provost to president may no longer be the best path. Provosts are increasingly seen as leaders who bring a different skillset than presidents (Selingo et al., 2017). Provosts are believed to be focusing "inward and downward" (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 8), meaning they contend with faculty and student issues specific to academics. Presidents, in contrast, are thought to be looking "up and out," in that they deal more with relationships with governing boards, donors and alumni, the public, and political leaders (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 8).

Although Selingo et al. (2017) reported on findings from a study of four-year college and university presidents and trustees, knowledge can be gleaned that applies to the community college setting. For example, a survey was administered to 150 four-year college and university presidents whereby the presidents were asked to rank the

importance of various skills when they started their jobs (Selingo et al., 2017). These presidents ranked being an academic and intellectual leader last (Selingo et al., 2017). The presidents who participated in Selingo et al.'s (2017) study ranked being a strategist as the top skill, followed by being a communicator and storyteller, being a fundraiser, being a collaborator, and having "financial and operational acumen" (Selingo et al., 2017, p. 9). Several of these four-year college and university presidents' rankings align with the rankings and interview discussions with this study's community college presidents.

Moreover, sitting presidents may discourage leadership succession planning out of concern trustees may accelerate their replacement. Regardless of trustees' and presidents' perspectives, however, the timing of planning is important. Once an opening occurs that necessitates a search, it is too late to begin a quality leadership succession discussion focused on the best interests of the college's mission and all stakeholders.

**Trustee training on presidential searches.** As for presidential searches and the hiring process, community college trustees often rely on search firms or past search experience to structure the position announcement, determine presidential qualities and characteristics, recruit and evaluate candidates, and hire the president (Kelderman, 2017; McDade et al., 2017; McNaughtan, 2018). Based on findings from the most recent American College President Study, Gagliardi et al. (2017) reported more than 56% of current community college presidents were hired using search consultants. Kelderman (2017), however, argued there is some evidence suggesting approximately 70% of college president searches are conducted with the help of outside consultants. The Aspen Institute (2017) recommended drawing from board training resources specific to presidential searches and hiring developed by state and national professional associations

and other organizations such as the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, the Association of Community College Trustees, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, and the Association of Community College Trustees.

However, some argue the use of search firms and consultants to conduct searches and state and national associations and organizations for training resources can introduce possible challenges and conflicts. As for retaining the services of presidential search firms and consultants, some have debated the associated high costs (Kelderman, 2017; McNaughtan, 2018). Kelderman (2017), for example, reported on a 2016 study of public college contracts with search firms. The average cost of the 61 contracts examined was \$79,000 (Kelderman, 2017). The highest search firm contract fee was \$160,000 (Kelderman, 2017). Moreover, almost half of the contract agreements included added indirect expenses between \$2,000 and \$30,000 (Kelderman, 2017).

Addressing questionable results of searches conducted by outside firms and consultants, Kelderman (2017) pointed to search firms' failures to uncover questionable behaviors of candidates during the vetting process, while others pointed to problems with college search committees (McDade et al., 2017). In an article focused on the benefits of using outside firms due to their expertise and experience in the presidential search process, McDade et al. (2017) discussed reasons searches can fail. These reasons for failure dealt with the lack of clarity about candidate qualifications and challenges of the position as well as divisions within the search committee about the profile of the candidate they wish to attract to the position (McDade et al., 2017).

Furthermore, potential conflicts may arise when state and national associations and organizations that provide proprietary higher education governing board training

materials specific to succession planning and recruiting and hiring presidents also market their professional executive search services to colleges and universities (ACTA, 2004). For example, the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) provides extensive board development and support in the areas of “preparing for the presidential search, conducting the search, and preparing the institution for a new president” (McDade et al., 2017, p. 52). The ACCT is also the largest provider of executive search services for community colleges (McDade et al., 2017). One of the contributing authors to the McDade et al. (2017) article on the benefits of using external search firms, Narcisa Polonio, is an expert in “presidential and chancellor searches, having facilitated 180+ searches” (p. 50). Polonio is employed by the ACCT as Executive Vice President for Education, Research, and Board Services (McDade et al., 2017). When discussing the presidential search process, Polonio described working with search committees during the initial screening process to match candidates’ skills and expertise with the qualifications described in the job description (McDade et al., 2017).

Where the potential for conflict comes into play is the search firms who are responsible for identifying, vetting, and recruiting potential candidates are oftentimes involved in the development of the job description, as evidenced in McDade et al. (2017). The ACTA (2004) described the potential conflicts that can arise when contracting professional executive search services:

Often they have a stable of candidates they propose in search after search. They are in a position to tilt the search process in favor of their own candidates, and they sometimes do. They discourage or sometimes undermine candidates suggested by trustees. (p. 7)

The ACTA (2004) offered an alternative to using executive search firms, explaining independent search consultants can facilitate processes with college boards aimed at identifying institutional needs. Utilizing a consultant as a facilitator of processes means boards are limited in the search process to an executive search firm's candidate pool.

Whether executive search services and board training materials are accessed through private search firms, independent consultants, or state and national associations or organizations, evidence suggests outcomes can be improved (Gagliardi et al., 2017). For example, three of 10 presidents who participated in the most recent American College President Study reported they were not adequately and properly informed about their institutions' challenges and financial status prior to their hiring (Gagliardi et al., 2017). Information on the institution's health and well-being should be imparted to presidential candidates, because it is "often critical in determining the success or failure of a college presidency" (Gagliardi et al., 2017, p. 24).

The Aspen Institute (2017) acknowledged numerous higher education actors are needed to provide board development resources and services, including training and coaching, to ensure the integration of such into higher education governing boards. Specific to the community college arena, which represents the largest higher education sector, more specialized services supporting the executive search are needed (McDade et al., 2017). There is a specific need for a best-practices manual devoted to community college presidential search and hiring processes. This manual should be grounded in the real-world experiences of community college trustees and presidents and developed independent of state and national professional associations that offer proprietary presidential searches for colleges and universities.

## Summary

An imminent wave of community college leadership retirements is well-documented in the literature, which will likely contribute to a serious leadership void on American community college campuses (Gagliardi et al., 2017; Jones & Johnson, 2014; Phillippe, 2016). Results from the 2016 American Association of Community Colleges CEO Compensation Survey indicated 80% of CEOs will retire within the next 10 years, with 35% retiring within five years (Phillippe, 2016). To address the impending crisis of voluntary presidential vacancies in higher education, governing boards must focus on how to develop leaders prepared to meet the unique and increasingly complex challenges of the American community college (Eddy & Mitchell, 2017; Price et al., 2016). However, prior research has indicated oftentimes community college trustees lack a full understanding of the skills and competencies that contribute to a successful presidency, which can have negative implications for governing boards' leadership succession planning processes (Johnson, 2015; Jones & Johnson, 2014; Legon et al., 2013; Selingo et al., 2017). Therefore, in keeping with Katz's (1955) three-skill conceptual framework, the purpose of this qualitative study was to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the importance of technical, human, and conceptual competencies to a successful 21st-century community college presidency. Three research questions provided guidance for this study.

Study findings revealed themes related to technical competencies, human competencies, and conceptual competencies impacting the effectiveness of the 21st-century community college presidency. The two technical competency themes were *delegating or outsourcing abilities* and *institutional finance acumen*. Both trustees and

presidents stressed the importance of presidents' ability to delegate or outsource technical aspects of their job to competent college administrative personnel, trustees, and other outside professionals. Additionally, trustees and presidents identified a single type of technical competency as being critical for the 21st-century community college president to possess: institutional finance acumen.

The five human competency themes were *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, *president-internal relationships*, *president activities*, and *institutional attributes*. Personal attributes important for the community college president include the ability to develop and maintain relationships, communicate, and negotiate collaboratively with a broad range of stakeholder groups; trustworthiness; persuasiveness; and tactfulness. Additionally, study participants identified key external stakeholder groups with which the president should develop and maintain good relationships, including trustees; donors and alumni; local, state, and federal elected officials; and educational organizations such as accrediting agencies and other local university, college, and school boards. As for internal relationships of importance to an effective community college presidency, participants identified faculty members, staff members, and students.

Analysis of trustee and president interview transcripts revealed two themes related to conceptual competencies and the community college presidency. The first theme was *vision and mission*. The second theme was *strategic planning*.

In addition to collecting data through in-depth interviews, the researcher had study participants review a list of 16 common duties of the community college president and rank them according to those that occupy the majority of the community college



president's time. When ranking the duties, Participants selected 11 duties as occupying most of the president's time. Trustees' and presidents' perceptions were similar for the presidential duties of enrollment management and state and federal relations. However, noteworthy differences in perceptions were found with six of the presidential duties: budget and finance matters, faculty and academic issues, fundraising and alumni relations, governing board relations, personnel and human resources, and strategic planning.

Drawing from the research literature, key conclusions were discussed specific to the study's three research questions. Of particular note was the single technical competency identified by both trustees and presidents to be critical to the success of the presidency: institutional finance acumen. Although there were notable differences in how both groups understood this technical competency, there were similarities to prior research on the types of financial challenges confronting modern-day community college presidents (Price et al., 2016). The extant research literature was helpful for drawing conclusions about the reasons for the lack of congruence between trustees' perceptions and presidents' actual experiences related to institutional finances.

Conclusions were also put forth specific to the predominant human competency themes: *president personal attributes*, *president-external relationships*, and *president-internal relationships*. Most notable was the discussion about the differences between the two groups in the area of president-trustee relationships. This topic is the focus of much current research literature on succession planning and president-institution fit in higher education. As for conceptual competencies of a successful community college presidency, conclusions were presented about the reasons for the disconnect between

trustees' perceptions about the amount of time presidents commit to strategic planning duties and presidents' reported allocation of time to this duty. Although a comprehensive treatment of this issue could not be located in the extant research literature, possible explanations for this disconnect among the two groups were offered.

## Appendix A

### Community College President Interview Guide

**Introduction (Read Aloud):** Leadership succession planning processes must be strengthened by recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and supporting the 21st-century community college leader. Effective succession planning requires an understanding of the core competencies that are indicators of qualified leader candidates. For this study, I am interested in exploring and describing board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the skills and competencies key to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

#### Demographic Information

1. How many years of experience do you have as a community college president?
2. Is the institution at which you presently serve located in a rural or metropolitan area?
3. How long have you been in your present position as a community college president?
4. How many leadership positions have you held in higher education? What are the different leadership positions you have held?
5. What is your educational level and in what field(s)?

#### Human Competencies

6. Human competencies/skills involve knowledge about people and the ability to work with them. Examples of "people skills" include the following:
  - **articulate:** ability to communicate in written and oral form clearly and professionally;
  - **good listener:** makes people feel like what they're saying is important; is able to effectively read body language;
  - **trustworthy:** ability to establish trust;
  - **team player:** understands the value of a team and is able to recruit and assemble effective teams;
  - **persuasive:** generates buy-in for decisions;
  - **consensus builder:** knows how to listen to all sides and help people collate different ideas and reach a good conclusion;
  - **networking:** skilled at building partnerships and coalitions; and
  - **tactful:** provides constructive criticism diplomatically.
- a. How important do you think human skills are to the community college president's ability to work effectively with **faculty and staff** to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how you use your people skills when interacting with faculty and staff to achieve common goals?
- b. What about **student leaders**? How important do you think human skills are to the president's ability to work effectively with this group to accomplish the

- college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how you use your people skills when interacting with student leaders to achieve common goals?
- c. When thinking about **college trustees**, how important do you think human skills are to the president's ability to work effectively with this group to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how you use your people skills when interacting with trustees to achieve common goals?
  - d. Lastly, how important do you think human skills are to the community college president's ability to work effectively with **community stakeholders** to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how you use your people skills when interacting with community stakeholders?

### Technical Competencies

7. Technical skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity, including specialized competencies, analytic ability, and ability to use appropriate tools and techniques. Examples of "technical skills" include the following:
  - **technology acumen:** possesses technological literacy;
  - **financial acumen:** understanding of accounting and finance and is able to read a financial statement and understand a budget;
  - **legal acumen:** understanding of legal issues facing community colleges;
  - **marketing acumen:** understanding of how to attract customers; and
  - **negotiation acumen:** understanding of negotiations and contracts.
  - a. Do you think there are **specialized technical knowledge and/or competencies** important for a community college president to possess? Describe the knowledge and/or competencies and how you have applied them to fulfill your presidential role.
  - b. What **technical analytic abilities** do you think are important for a community college president to possess in order to lead in the 21st century? Why are these abilities important to the presidency? How does the presence or absence of these analytic abilities impact others (e.g., faculty, staff, students, trustees, community stakeholders)?
  - c. Are there **tools and techniques** that a community college president needs to know how to use/apply in order to be successful? If so, why are these tools and techniques important? How can they best be used/applied?

### Conceptual Competencies

8. A leader with conceptual skills is comfortable talking about the ideas that shape an organization and the intricacies involved. Examples of "conceptual competencies" include the following:
  - **vision:** recognition of where the college is today, ability to articulate where the college should be in the future and generate buy-in for that vision; and
  - **mission:** understanding of the mission of community colleges.

- a. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest level of importance, how do you rank the importance of conceptual skills/competencies to the community college president's ability to successfully lead in the 21st century? What are your reasons for this ranking?
- b. How might strong conceptual skills impact a president's success as a leader in the 21st century? Can you provide me with examples from your own experiences?
- c. How might the absence/weakness of conceptual skills impact a president's success as a leader in the 21st century? Can you provide me with examples?

### Common Presidential Duties

9. Research shows there are some common duties of a president (chancellor). Of the following alphabetical list of duties, select four that occupy the majority of your time and provide examples (Read list aloud).

<b>Presidential Duties</b>	<b>Duty Occupies Majority of President's Time (Select only 4)</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Academic issues		
Assessment of student learning		
Athletics		
Budget/financial matters		
Community relations		
Enrollment management		
Faculty issues		
Fundraising/alumni relations		
Governing board relations		
Legal issues		
Media relations		
Personnel/human resources issues		
State and federal governmental relations		
Strategic planning		
Student life		
Technology planning		

## Appendix B

### Community College Board Trustee Interview Guide

**Introduction (Read Aloud):** Leadership succession planning processes must be strengthened by recruiting, interviewing, hiring, and supporting the 21st-century community college leader. Effective succession planning requires an understanding of the core competencies that are indicators of qualified leader candidates. For this study, I am interested in exploring and describing board trustees and community college presidents' perceptions about the skills and competencies key to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

#### Demographic Information

1. How many years of experience do you have as a community college trustee?
2. Is the institution at which you presently serve located in a rural or metropolitan area?
3. How long have you been in your present position as a community college trustee?
4. What is your educational level and in what field(s)?

#### Human Competencies

5. Human competencies/skills involve knowledge about people and the ability to work with them. Examples of "people skills" include the following:
  - **articulate:** ability to communicate in written and oral form clearly and professionally;
  - **good listener:** makes people feel like what they're saying is important; is able to effectively read body language;
  - **trustworthy:** ability to establish trust;
  - **team player:** understands the value of a team and is able to recruit and assemble effective teams;
  - **persuasive:** generates buy-in for decisions;
  - **consensus builder:** knows how to listen to all sides and help people collate different ideas and reach a good conclusion;
  - **networking:** skilled at building partnerships and coalitions; and
  - **tactful:** provides constructive criticism diplomatically.
- a. How important do you think human skills are to the community college president's ability to work effectively with **faculty and staff** to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how a president uses his/her people skills when interacting with faculty and staff to achieve common goals?
- b. What about **student leaders**? How important do you think human skills are to the president's ability to work effectively with this group to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how a president uses his/her people skills when interacting with student leaders to achieve common goals?

- c. When thinking about **college trustees**, how important do you think human skills are to the president's ability to work effectively with this group to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how a college president has used his/her people skills when interacting with you and other trustees to achieve common goals?
- d. Lastly, how important do you think human skills are to the community college president's ability to work effectively with **community stakeholders** to accomplish the college's goals? Can you provide some examples of how a president uses his/her people skills when interacting with community stakeholders?

### Technical Competencies

6. Technical skill is knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity, including specialized competencies, analytic ability, and ability to use appropriate tools and techniques. Examples of "technical skills" include the following:
  - **technology acumen:** possesses technological literacy;
  - **financial acumen:** understanding of accounting and finance and is able to read a financial statement and understand a budget;
  - **legal acumen:** understanding of legal issues facing community colleges;
  - **marketing acumen:** understanding of how to attract customers; and
  - **negotiation acumen:** understanding of negotiations and contracts.
  - a. Do you think there are **specialized technical knowledge and/or competencies** important for a community college president to possess? Describe this knowledge and/or competencies and how a president would apply them to fulfill his/her presidential role.
  - b. What **technical analytic abilities** do you think are important for a community college president to possess in order to lead in the 21st century? Why are these abilities important to the presidency? How does the presence or absence of these analytic abilities impact others (e.g., faculty, staff, students, trustees, community stakeholders)?
  - c. Are there **tools and techniques** that a community college president needs to know how to use/apply in order to be successful? If so, why are these tools and techniques important? How can they best be used/applied?

### Conceptual Competencies

7. A leader with conceptual skills is comfortable talking about the ideas that shape an organization and the intricacies involved. Examples of "conceptual competencies" include the following:
  - **vision:** recognition of where the college is today, ability to articulate where the college should be in the future and generate buy-in for that vision; and
  - **mission:** understanding of the mission of community colleges.

- a. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest level of importance, how do you rank the importance of conceptual skills/competencies to the community college president's ability to successfully lead in the 21st century? What are your reasons for this ranking?
- b. How might strong conceptual skills impact a president's success as a leader in the 21st century? Can you provide me with examples?
- c. How might the absence/weakness of conceptual skills impact a president's success as a leader in the 21st century? Can you provide me with examples?

### Common Presidential Duties

8. Research shows there are some common duties of a president (chancellor). Of the following alphabetical list of duties, select four that occupy the majority of your community college president's (chancellor's) time and provide examples (Read list aloud).

<b>Presidential Duties</b>	<b>Duty Occupies Majority of President's Time (Select only 4)</b>	<b>Examples</b>
Academic issues		
Assessment of student learning		
Athletics		
Budget/financial matters		
Community relations		
Enrollment management		
Faculty issues		
Fundraising/alumni relations		
Governing board relations		
Legal issues		
Media relations		
Personnel/human resources issues		
State and federal governmental relations		
Strategic planning		
Student life		
Technology planning		



## Appendix C

### Missouri Community College Association Permission to Access Contact Lists

**From:** Rob Dixon [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, February 4, 2016 1:51 PM  
**To:** Ramona Mundwiller <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Cliff Davis

Please send Cliff the most up to date contact list for all trustees. He is working on his dissertation and needs to interview them for his research.

Thanks,

Rob Dixon  
President/CEO  
Missouri Community College Association  
O: [REDACTED]  
C: [REDACTED]  
E: [REDACTED]

---

**From:** Brian Millner <[REDACTED]>  
**Date:** February 25, 2018 at 7:59:14 AM CST  
**To:** Cliff Davis <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Email contact

Cliff -

I am writing to confirm that you had permission to utilize the contact email addresses for Missouri's community college Presidents and Chancellors for your dissertation research study.

-Brian

Brian Millner  
President/CEO Missouri Community College Association  
[mccatoday.org](http://mccatoday.org)

## Appendix D

### Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board Approval

# LINDENWOOD

LINDENWOOD UNIVERSITY ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

DATE: April 26, 2016

TO: Cliff Davis  
FROM: Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board

STUDY TITLE: [891335-1] Perceptions of Trustees and Presidents of the Competencies Essential for Successful 21st-Century Community College Leadership

IRB REFERENCE #:  
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: APPROVED  
APPROVAL DATE: April 26, 2016  
EXPIRATION DATE: April 26, 2017  
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this research project. Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board has APPROVED your submission. This approval is based on an appropriate risk/benefit ratio and a study design wherein the risks have been minimized. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on the applicable federal regulation.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the study and insurance of participant understanding followed by a signed consent form. Informed consent must continue throughout the study via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require each participant receive a copy of the signed consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this office prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported to this office. Please use the appropriate adverse event forms for this procedure. All FDA and sponsor reporting requirements should also be followed.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to the IRB.

This project has been determined to be a Minimal Risk project. Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the completion/amendment form for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of April 26, 2017.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

If you have any questions, please contact Megan Woods at (636) 485-9005 or [mwoods1@lindenwood.edu](mailto:mwoods1@lindenwood.edu). Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with this office.

If you have any questions, please send them to [mwoods1@lindenwood.edu](mailto:mwoods1@lindenwood.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within Lindenwood University Institutional Review Board's records.

## Appendix E

### Participant Recruitment

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a doctoral student at Lindenwood University in St. Charles, Missouri, majoring in Higher Education Administration. I am also the president of the OTC Table Rock Campus and System Vice Chancellor for Ozarks Technical Community College.

For my dissertation, I am conducting research to identify core skills and competencies of community college presidents that should be considered during the leadership succession planning process. The purpose of this study is to explore and describe board trustees' and community college presidents' perceptions about the skills and competencies key to a successful 21st-century community college presidency.

Your participation in a brief in-person or telephone interview would be extremely valuable. If you are willing to participate in this study, please indicate so in a reply to this email message. I will then contact you to determine a date/time and location for the interview that is convenient for you. I will send the interview questions to you for review prior to our scheduled interview.

All information provided during the interview will be kept confidential, and your identity will in no way be revealed. If you have any questions about the process, please do not hesitate to contact me via email at [REDACTED] or phone [REDACTED]. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Rhonda Bishop, at Lindenwood University at [REDACTED]

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Cliff Davis  
Doctoral Student  
Lindenwood University

## Appendix F

### Participant Informed Consent

LINDENWOOD

#### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

“Perceptions of Trustees and Presidents of the Skills and Competencies Essential for  
Successful 21st-Century Community College Leadership”

Principal Investigator: Cliff Davis  
Telephone: [REDACTED] E-mail: [REDACTED]

Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact info: \_\_\_\_\_

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Cliff Davis under the guidance of Dr. Rhonda Bishop. The purpose of this research is to explore and describe board trustees’ and community college presidents’ perceptions about the core skills and competencies of a successful 21st-century community college presidency.
2. a) Your participation will involve participating in a brief in-person or telephone interview during which you will answer questions about your perceptions of skills and competencies required of the community college president. The interview will be scheduled at a time and in a location that is convenient for you.

*I give my permission for the interview session to be recorded.*

Participant’s initials: \_\_\_\_\_

- b) The amount of time involved in your participation will be approximately 20-30 minutes. Approximately 10-20 board trustees and 7-12 community college presidents will be involved in this research. These participants will be from Missouri.
3. There are no anticipated risks associated with this research.
4. There are no direct benefits for you participating in this study. However, your participation will contribute to knowledge about the skills and competencies of successful community college presidents. Study findings may contribute to a better understanding of the core competencies that are indicators of qualified community college presidents, thus strengthening leadership succession planning processes, including recruiting, interviewing, and hiring practices.

5. Your participation is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate in this research study or to withdraw your consent at any time. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. You will NOT be penalized in any way should you choose not to participate or to withdraw.
6. We will do everything we can to protect your privacy. As part of this effort, your identity will not be revealed in any publication or presentation that may result from this study, and the information collected will remain in the possession of the investigator in a safe location.
7. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, or if any problems arise, you may call the Investigator, Cliff Davis, [REDACTED] or the Supervising Faculty, Dr. Sherry DeVore, 636-627-6673. You may also ask questions of or state concerns regarding your participation to the Lindenwood Institutional Review Board (IRB) through contacting Dr. Marilyn Abbott, Provost, at mabbott@lindenwood.edu or 636-949-4912.

**I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I will also be given a copy of this consent form for my records. I consent to my participation in the research described above.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Principal Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Investigator Printed Name

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### **Vita**

Cliff Davis serves as President of the OTC Table Rock Campus and System Vice Chancellor for Ozarks Technical Community College in southwest Missouri. Davis holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication and a Masters of Arts degree in Communication from Missouri State University.

Prior to his current role, Davis served as Vice Chancellor for Advancement | Student Affairs | Strategic Planning at Ozarks Technical Community College. He also served as the Assistant to the Vice President for Students Affairs and Assistant to the President at Missouri State University.