Changing of the guard: Community colleges shift strategies to survive, thrive

Camden County College President Raymond Yannuzzi (right) and Rutgers-Camden Chancellor Phoebe A. Haddon shake hands after signing an agreement that allows any student that finishes at CCC to automatically be accepted at Rutgers University, Monday, Sept. 29, 2014. (Lori M. Nichols | For NJ.com)

By Michelle Caffrey | For NJ.com
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The news Camden County College President Raymond Yannuzzi will be stepping down from the helm of the Blackwood-based school later this year after 10 years as its leader marks another wave in a changing tide for community colleges in the state.

The "old guard" that got their career start in the community college educational system during it's boom in the 1970s, and who took on leading roles in the past decade, are now reaching retirement age and passing off the baton, Yannuzzi said.

In the past year, the presidents of community colleges in Salem, Morris, Mercer and, most recently, Cumberland counties have announced they'd be moving on.
"It's time to have a new generation come in," said Yannuzzi, who will return to teaching English classes at the school for the next two years before retiring.

The next leaders in line will be tasked with how to adapt their schools' overall strategies to the shift in community college's role in the system and a changing economy that at first gave the schools a bump in enrollment during the recession, followed by recent declines.

Along with expanding their health, science and technology offerings, many have linked up with four-year universities to create easy post-graduation transfer policies and duel-degree programs.

Just last month Burlington County College adopted a new identity as Rowan College at Burlington County, a year after Gloucester County College became Rowan College at Gloucester County, name changes that signal the weight of their partnerships with an expanding Rowan University. Camden County College has a similar relationship and agreement with Rutgers-Camden, which was formalized last year.

Many are also beefing up their certification and job training programs, with an eye on the reality highlighted by President Barack Obama when he launched an initiative early last year to help make community college as "free and universal" as high school — people need some kind of post-secondary training to make it in this economy.

"Everybody has to get some sort of credential post high school," said Yannuzzi. "It's very difficult for someone with just a high school diploma to get job."

When he first started in education, and throughout the 70s and 80s, he said that wasn't the case. People could find jobs in factories or industry with a high school degree, and then-expanding community colleges were chock full of adults, many of whom worked full-time, looking to move up.

"There was a great, untapped need ... At night, the parking lots used to be full," said Yannuzzi, adding full-time students now fill the spaces throughout the day as a larger percent of their students come right out of high school.

"The institution [of community colleges] is still so well established as a part of the educational system, we'll be as responsive as we've always been to a changing of the economy and student population's needs," he said. "It's clear we're a definite part of higher education that's here to stay."

When it comes to the school he's steered for the past 10 years, Yannuzzi sees good things as well, despite a decline in their numbers and dozens of layoffs last year. The Gloucester Premium Outlets, a 170,000 square foot shopping center set to open across the road from their Blackwood campus in just over a month, has drawn
interest in the area and will hopefully be a shot in the arm for the college's home base of Gloucester Township. They've made moves to improve their campus with a 10-year, $2 million transformation, and the school has more than 150 acres just waiting to be developed, he said.

"It's prime for something, we don't know what, but we hope it'll be something that'll attract more students," he said. "The future of the college is bright."

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Retrieved from:
Few board decisions are more important than selecting a new president or chancellor. Done correctly, the appointment of a new CEO impacts positively on the institution’s health and future success.

Before launching a presidential search, the board and search committee should analyze the institution’s mission and goals, and thoroughly review the institution’s financial health, the relevance and strength of academic program and curriculum offerings, and the quality and strength of its personnel.

A well-run search can be an occasion for community renewal and partnership between the board and campus, as well as an opportunity to elevate expectations about an institution’s future.

As search consultants, both of us have seen boards, confronted with the need to find a new president, veer off in mistaken directions -- sometimes diametrically opposed mistaken directions. We have seen boards that turn the whole matter over to a search committee, only to find at the end that the candidates brought forward weren’t the kind the trustees had in mind. We have also seen boards that retreat into themselves and come up with the presidents they want, only to find their choices frustrated or rejected by important constituencies. Both types of outcomes -- having to start a new search or appointing someone unwanted or likely to fail -- are ones every board wants to avoid. Care and thought beforehand are the remedies.

What is the right amount of board involvement in a presidential search and how much responsibility should the board delegate to a search committee? Can we agree that there are few decisions a board makes that are more important than the selection of a new president or
chancellor? And can we also agree that, if done correctly, the appointment of a new chief executive can have a positive impact on the health and future success of the institution? The point of an upcoming search is to found a successful next presidency, and how the search is done can be important to that success.

In academic life (as in law firms, medical practices, engineering, and architecture partnerships), the "consent of the led" can be important to a new leader’s effectiveness, which implies consultation and listening by everyone involved. However, unlike other groups of professionals, all parties should know that in higher education, the naming of a president rests entirely with the board.

GUIDED BY MISSION AND GOALS

When a board of trustees assumes the responsibility of launching a presidential search, among the first steps prior to the actual search should be a review of the institution’s mission statement, approved goals, and the current strategic plan. This step is often overlooked, but it can, in fact, provide a great deal of information for the board and search committee and lead to important conversations about direction, priorities, and, ultimately, the attributes sought in the next president. The full board should set aside time for a thoughtful, extended discussion of what the college or university needs from its president over the next three to five years. From that discussion, supplemented by "town meetings" or listening sessions involving a wide range of the institution’s constituencies, should emerge the "preferred qualifications" that will guide the process and assist in the recruitment, screening, and ultimate appointment.

At the same time, the board should decide its role in the search process and answer a few key questions: Will it charge a search committee to conduct the search and, if so, how many board members will sit on the committee and what other stakeholders will serve? Throughout the search, how often will the committee provide the board with updates? How will confidentiality be maintained and guaranteed? And following vetting of the final candidates and the interview process, will the search committee present a ranked or unranked list of candidates to the board?

Answering these questions prior to the beginning of a presidential search will clarify the role of the board for all constituents. It will also ensure that the full board will be engaged in the process as well as in determining the characteristics and attributes sought in the next president and in helping the search committee understand what is expected.

As the search committee begins its work, a great deal of attention is focused on a strategy for recruiting outstanding candidates to the pool. This can be a dangerous time in a search, as the board and search committee may be tempted or "wowed" by the "name candidate" or a candidate from the more highly visible institution down the road. While some of those
candidates may be ready to lead, many are not prepared for the institution’s specific challenges or do not fully grasp its distinctive culture.

That is why we recommend, in addition to "town meetings" and the analysis of mission and goals, that the board and search committee commit themselves to a thorough review of the institution’s financial health, the relevance and strength of academic program and curriculum offerings, and the quality and strength of its personnel. Thinking about what the college or university needs next from its president -- and developing a preliminary statement of preferred qualifications -- can provide the search committee, and the search consultant, if one is used, with important information to help focus the search and recruit the most appropriate candidates.

Once drafted and approved by the search committee, this profile or prospectus, outlining the priorities of leadership and preferred attributes for the next president, will be disseminated to a network of potential nominators, prospective candidates, and others who may have interest in the search. Typically, it will also be posted on the college or university Web site and the Web site of the search firm, if one is used. It becomes, in essence, the lead document in the recruitment process and can provide nominators and prospective candidates with an entry-level primer about the institution and its leadership needs. In addition, the profile will guide the committee as it reviews each candidate's application materials and will help identify a short list of applicants for more in-depth screening and interviews.

A "TRANSITION PLAN" FOR THE SEARCH

The board's executive committee should oversee development of a "transition plan" for board-initiated communications and events over the course of the search and into the initial tenure of the new president. The transition plan should address everything from the announcement of the retirement or resignation of the current president to the inauguration of his or her successor. At the point of the current president's announcement, and for his or her remaining time in office, the board might promulgate a "charge" aimed at avoiding "lame duck" status for the sitting president (e.g., conclude current capital campaign and donor cultivation; complete master-plan development, etc.).

The executive committee should next bring to the full board a plan, budget, and timeline for the search; nominations for the search chair, committee membership, and a search secretary; and a formal charge to that committee. The full board is an important constituency of the process; board members should know their composing a presidential search committee can be an art in itself and should be carefully weighed. Some institutions are guided by a collective-bargaining agreement in the selection of the search chair and committee members; others select the chair and committee independent of an agreed-upon process, but can rely on tradition and community expectations. The committee is the public face of the institution
before candidates are recruited and will make a string of important decisions before recommending candidates to the board.

Presidential search committees today almost universally engage the assistance of a search firm. Responsibility for selecting the firm typically falls to the executive committee of the board, the search committee, or a subcommittee led by the board chair. The process begins with the issuing of an RFP, followed by interviews with principals from selected search firms and reference checks. Once appointed, the search firm and assigned consultant will work closely with the search-committee chair and the search committee in determining the search timeline, process, and recruitment strategy. An important reminder here: confidentiality is crucial to any presidential search and must be a central theme and reminder for the committee and search firm. Aside from "sunshine states," where full disclosure is mandated by law, the names of candidates should not be shared in public, or anywhere outside of the committee's deliberations, until authorized by the candidates. Responsibilities and how they will participate in the search.

Presidential search can be a lot of work, raise stress levels, and tax relationships. But a well-run search can also be an occasion for community renewal, for board and campus partnership, and for elevating expectations for an institution’s future. The board itself should feel energized by the process and should, at the end, embrace a new president with enthusiasm.

ATTRACTION OUTSTANDING PEOPLE

With the assistance of the search consultant, a public announcement of the search (advertising in numerous education-media outlets, with national associations, and at peer institutions) is generally the first step in telling the world that your institution is seeking a president. If done well, in addition to generating a pool of highly competent and interested candidates, the institution can use this public announcement as a positive marketing strategy—informing the greater education community of the quality of your institution, its programs, and its faculty. This is also the time for the search firm to initiate a call for nominations that spans a network of presidents, vice presidents, and deans, as well as a select group of prospective candidates from outside of the academy with skills and experiences that appear to match those identified in the pre-search review. In addition, the search consultant and committee should begin to identify prospective candidates not necessarily seeking a presidency, but whose work and reputation could be a fit for the institution and add significant strength to the pool should they agree to enter the search.

Upon receipt of applications, the committee begins the laborious and confidential task of screening each candidate's letter of interest, vita, and any preliminary reference feedback available at this point. The committee will spend time discussing candidate strengths, perceived weaknesses, and fit with the institution's mission and goals and its leadership
needs for the future. A short list of candidates, typically 12–15, will emerge, and following autho- rization from each candidate, more extensive due diligence will be completed by the search consultant and, at times, members of the search committee. After a review of references and additional research (Google is a likely tool, among other electronic-research outlets used by the search firm and committee), six to eight candidates are selected for off-site interviews.

Then following off-site interviews and confidential committee deliberations, a small number of candidates (typically three or four) are selected, and each is invited to visit the campus for the final phase of the search process. This final phase can vary considerably, depending on the culture and expectations of the board, search committee, and the campus community, as well as the tolerance for exposure that each candidate indicates. Many boards prefer an "open" final visit in which candidates are asked to meet with senior administrators, faculty leadership, students, staff, and alumni. This may also include an "open-forum" session for those not scheduled or unable to meet with candidates in smaller group sessions. Often candidates' vitas are posted on the institution's Web site, and open social gatherings are scheduled to allow stakeholders to meet the candidate, and spouse or partner, as appropriate.

While "open" final visits are the norm, some institutions and, in particular, those whose finalists include sitting presidents at other institutions, can opt for a more restricted or "closed" final phase of the process. In this situation, candidates are invited to meet with a limited number of representatives of the campus community, typically off site and with a commitment to maintain complete confidentiality about the identity of the candidates and what was discussed. In both types of circumstances, members of the board of trustees will have an opportunity to meet with individual candidates, and spouses or partners, usually in executive session prior to a final decision and appointment.

Regardless of the format selected for campus interviews, feedback from those involved in the interview process is channeled to the search committee for review, and the search committee prepares a final report with recommendations and sends it to the board. The search committee meets with the board to discuss all the input it has received. Often boards will ask the committee for its feedback on each finalist, but many prefer that no ranking of candidates accompanies this information.

Following this final committee report from the search committee, the board typically moves to an executive session and deliberates, with assistance and counsel from the search consultant. Once the full board determines who will be offered the position, the executive committee, or a designated subcommittee, will offer the position to the chosen candidate, and, if he or she accepts, negotiate a contract and prepare for the public announcement.
This announcement, and the steps planned earlier to help both the old and new presidents' 
transition, are crucial to the success of a new president and equally important to the board of 
trustees and campus community. If done well and with proper support, the transition can 
celebrate the successes of the outgoing president and also provide the president-elect, the 
board, and the campus with time to establish a working relationship and understand the 
board's priorities. The president-elect can gain valuable knowledge about fund-raising targets 
and expectations, academic programs and faculty needs, alumni relations, advancement and 
development, athletics, and community partnerships.

Boards need to get presidential search right. By charging the search committee appropriately, 
identifying the attributes and priorities required of new leadership, engaging the college 
community in discussions about expectations and aspirations, and communicating a united 
message, the board can help attract a pool of highly qualified candidates and select a 
candidate with the right leadership qualities needed for the next phase of the institution’s 
advancement.

Retrieved from: http://www.agbsearch.com/resources/increasing-odds-successful-
presidential-searches
The Pick and the Process: Leading a Presidential Search in the Digital Age

Investing in both the presidential pick and the process will prepare institutions for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

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By Celeste Watkins-Hayes

The most important job of a board of trustees is selecting a president. When Beverly Daniel Tatum, Spelman College’s ninth president, announced her retirement after 13 years of outstanding service, the Spelman board launched an extensive process to identify her successor. The board chair, Rosalind Brewer, appointed me, an alumna and vice chair of the board, to lead the effort. The following are my insights on the search process.

Presidential searches should have two main goals. The ultimate goal, of course, is to select a leader who will move the institution in the right direction. But many overlook the second goal: to design and execute a leadership selection process that bolsters rather than undermines the institution’s strength. As campus stakeholders weigh in and search politics unfold, the symbolic importance of the journey becomes just as critical as its practical execution. Therefore, when searching for your next president, it is wise to invest heavily in both the pick and the process.

A well-conceived and effectively executed presidential search begins with instilling confidence in the institution’s stakeholders, which facilitates the search team’s work by establishing credibility. A controversial search process sets up what might be an otherwise exceptional hire for a difficult introduction to the campus community, saddling her with the task of mending fences that were damaged before she even took office. Ultimately, a presidential search process that is rocky, opaque, or exclusionary—in either perception or reality—fails to serve the brand well.

In this wired age, the dynamics around a presidential search have changed. Copious information about candidates—from online speeches to press appearances to authored publications—is now at our fingertips. Unfortunately, people can also very quickly share speculation and negative views, creating the potential for information that harms the search to go viral. However, by following some important principles, you can minimize these risks and lead a presidential search process that positively engages your campus community and successfully transitions your college or university into its next chapter.
PLAN THE PROCESS

Careful thought and meticulous execution were the cornerstones of our search. As search chair, I became a student of presidential searches. AGB’s 2013 book A Complete Guide to Presidential Search for Universities and Colleges was very helpful. It was also important to understand how Spelman had conducted presidential searches in the past. What worked well? What didn’t? What was the political history of presidential searches at the college? I spoke to all of the chairs of Spelman’s previous presidential searches as well as some former trustees, faculty, staff, and alumnae with deep institutional memory. I was struck by how clearly people remembered the searches for the last three presidents and had lessons to impart. From those conversations, we gleaned ideas to be replicated, pitfalls to avoid, and areas of sensitivity for our stakeholders that we took into account during the process planning. The talks also opened a two-way channel of communication between the search chair and some of the institution’s most valuable stakeholders.

LESSON: Doing the research on your institution’s presidential-search history will help you identify aspects of a standard search process that you can adjust to fit your institution’s culture.

Once I understood the search process and its history at Spelman, I began sketching out a timeline with the board chair, using AGB’s recommended timeline as a baseline and shaping it to our institutional context. We presented a draft to the board during a retreat a few weeks prior to the president’s official retirement announcement, and we led an executive session in which board members talked about the items that should be on the agenda of the next president.

The board thought a great deal about the end game, specifically whether we intended to bring one or multiple finalists to campus to meet the college community. We knew that sunshine laws require many public institutions to release the names of all finalists. However, private institutions increasingly run closed searches, presenting only one candidate, often after the official board vote has taken place.

A plan to present only one finalist to the campus community offers several advantages. First, we knew that, in this digital age, many high-profile prospects would not participate in an open search for fear of jeopardizing their current positions or signaling leadership instability in their organizations. Moreover, we understood that some would be leery of potentially compromising their “brand” should they be publicly unsuccessful in their pursuits. Finally, we recognized that the search committee, charged with recommending one candidate to the board after a thorough vetting process, would have the most information about the candidates and the most informed perspective on the pool as a whole. Campus stakeholders attending one event would be forming opinions based on limited information. If Candidate A performs the best during a one- or two-day visit, but Candidate B is actually the best fit for the job, how will Candidate B be viewed by the campus when she gets the job over Candidate A? How will that hamstring her initial efforts as president?
Nevertheless, given the high-engagement culture of the Spelman community, we knew that adopting a completely closed process would generate considerable but understandable resistance. We therefore chose a hybrid approach: invite only one finalist to campus, postponing the board vote until after the campus visit. This allowed the campus community to meet the finalist and provide feedback before any official action was taken. We shared this plan from the beginning and reiterated it throughout the search to attract candidates and give stakeholders time to digest the strategy, ask questions, raise concerns, and understand this as the approach that would build the best possible applicant pool. Should the invited finalist prove not to be a good fit during the campus visit, we could invite another person to campus.

The search committee, however, viewed the need to invite another candidate as highly unlikely given the extensive vetting process that took place prior to the campus visit. We sent strong signals to the invited finalist and discussed the preliminary terms of a contract as a show of confidence and to ensure that all parties were on the same page. We recognized that this hybrid approach carried some risk: the candidate’s name would go viral, but without a formal job offer. However, we believed that this was a reasonable risk if it meant running an inclusive process that the campus community could trust.

LESSON: Message your search strategy early and often so that stakeholders know what to expect well before you arrive at the end game.

BUILD THE TEAM

The next step was to mobilize the search team. (A separate entity, the transition group, focused on planning and executing the thank-you and farewell events for Dr. Tatum and organizing the on-boarding process for the incoming president.) A smooth process depends on forming a highly competent group that has the savvy, experience, vision, and interpersonal skills to plan and execute it optimally.

For the presidential search committee, it is important to assemble a group that brings excellent skills to the task at hand, instills trust and credibility among the institution’s constituent groups, works together cohesively, and can sell the opportunity to candidates through enthusiasm and professionalism. It is also very important to appoint people who will attend all meetings, read all assigned materials, and bring their A-games to the conversation. We knew that many people would desire or even expect a seat on the presidential search committee, which is typically appointed by the board chair or other nominating body. We sought to be as inclusive as possible, but we tried to avoid “obligatory” appointments. Here are some key questions to ask when selecting search committee members:

- What technical expertise can this person bring to the table? We had specialists in finance and budget, law, human resources, fundraising, and higher education, among other areas.
- Are all of the institution’s constituencies (students, faculty, staff, alumni, parents, trustees, and friends of the college) represented in some meaningful way?
- Do we have the right mix of personalities? It is critically important to bring together smart, discerning people, but it is just as important that they know how to disagree
• without being disagreeable. The search chair should not be bogged down mediating intra-group conflicts.
• Is there diversity on the committee in terms of race and ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic background, sexual orientation, religion, length of tenure with the institution, etc.?
• Do you have confidence in each person’s ability and willingness to keep the proceedings confidential?

Keeping the committee to a reasonable number will be challenging, as there will be many highly qualified people who care deeply about the institution and would be honored to serve. Some institutions create separate search advisory boards. With a fairly large 15-member search committee, we opted not to do this. Instead, I set up monthly one-on-one calls with key members of the college community to update them on the search and hear their ideas, many of which we adopted. We enlisted people to help us engage with their particular constituency groups. When the finalist visited campus, we invited these individuals to attend small “preview” events the day before the formal visit to provide opportunities for more intimate interaction.

LESSON: There are many options for meaningfully engaging stakeholders in a search; search committee membership is not the only tool.

In our meetings, we used the “round robin” technique, asking each member to offer his/her comments (and starting with a different lead person each time) to ensure that no one would dominate the conversation and to create a space for respectful disagreement. This also helped to level the playing field insofar as search committee members came into the process with a range of titles, expertise, and search experience.

Three other entities can play significant roles in the search process:

First, through a competitive RFP process that resulted in strong proposals from several excellent firms, we hired a search firm shortly after Dr. Tatum’s retirement announcement. In addition to considering the strength of the firm’s proposal, its reputation, the quality of references given, and the interview performance, we found it wise also to consider the institutions with which the firm had previously worked and the diversity of the proposed team. The firm’s network will become your search’s network, so ideally you will select a firm that has worked with both peer and aspirational peer institutions. Open, positive communication between search consultants and the search chair is critical. I talked extensively with our search consultants and encouraged them to provide their candid perspectives. While never overstepping, the consultants offered invaluable context.

Second, we appointed a dedicated executive-search administrator (ESA) to assist us throughout the process. An ESA can help the search chair finalize the search timeline and facilitate its execution, draft correspondence and other documents, plan search-related events, manage search accounting and expense reimbursements, liaise with the search firm, and staff the search committee during and between meetings.
Some institutions appoint an employee to do this work. Given the magnitude of the commitment involved, and depending on your search design and the scope of your outreach efforts, it is wise to consider bringing in an outside party. This can help safeguard the confidentiality of the process, relieving a current employee of the burden of having information that attracts so much curiosity. We were fortunate to be able to engage a former employee of the college as our ESA. This person knew the institution well and knew how to move the right levers to get things done but was able to offer a fresh perspective from beyond campus. A lawyer by training who understood well the importance of process and confidentiality, she became a trusted adviser.

LESSON: For the search administrator role, consider engaging a former employee who left the institution on favorable terms or an individual who has served as a consultant to the institution.

Finally, we convened a synergy group, made up of three campus officials, the ESA, another search committee member, and myself. The synergy group assisted with stakeholder communications, compiled primer materials for candidates and the search firm, assisted with search-related events, and helped devise internal strategy. Although the synergy group did not have access to confidential candidate information, members drew on their in-depth knowledge of the college to advise on how best to engage the campus community throughout the process.

EXECUTE WISELY

With a clear and collaborative process plan and an outstanding team to implement it, you are ready to operationalize your vision for the search process. As search chair, I created a daily plan of action, informed by the search timeline, my weekly work plan, and emerging issues. On a typical day, I engaged in scheduled and unscheduled calls, crafted and polished emails and documents, and reviewed candidate dossiers. Running a presidential search entails a sustained commitment that can be taxing but profoundly rewarding.

LESSON: No matter how well you plan or execute, there will be challenges. You will make mistakes and perhaps even step on a few political landmines. You can recover.

As we executed our plan, we constantly emphasized confidentiality. Some might argue that confidentiality in such a search is unattainable in this wireless age. Information that slips out can cause promising candidates to pull out of the process if they don’t trust the professionalism of the players, and stakeholders may respond disruptively to leaked information. We understood that we were dealing with people’s livelihoods and wanted to be respectful and careful. As in many aspects of the search, the search chair sets the tone and therefore must develop a very strong and disciplined filter, having substantive conversations with stakeholders while nevertheless protecting confidential information.
ENGAGE THE CONSTITUENTS

We reminded stakeholders that the ultimate authority to select the next president lies with the board. But we nevertheless recognized the intense interest in the search and knew that “opening the tent” would be extremely valuable. So how do you engage stakeholders without undermining the confidentiality of the process or inviting too many cooks into the kitchen? How do you create an appropriately inclusive and appropriately transparent process?

We viewed the search process as an opportunity to strengthen the board’s relationships with campus stakeholders and to create a collective moment of reflection on Spelman’s future.

We sought to establish transparency and encourage inclusion early on by educating people about the presidential selection process. Providing stakeholders with an approximate timeline of the search and sharing some of the logic driving decision making allowed people to understand the systematic method by which the next president would be selected. We presented a slide show to groups of faculty, student leaders, alumnae, administrators, parents, and staff leaders about the search and encouraged people to ask questions and give feedback.

Stakeholders were offered four ways to participate in the search: attend a listening session hosted by the search committee and facilitated by the search consultants (we held several on campus and in four cities with large alumnae presence), complete an online survey about the college and its future direction, nominate candidates or sources that should be solicited for nominees, and attend events to meet the finalist during the campus visit.

The search chair, board chair, search consultants, and several search committee members invested considerable time in campus outreach, calling or meeting with members of the campus community in order to solicit their feedback, gather their nominations, and connect them to the process. We “worked the phones,” proactively reaching out to deeply networked members of the campus community to address any concerns.

Being inclusive also involved keeping the sitting president and trustees informed. We invited the president to offer a state-of-the-college presentation to the search committee at its first meeting, ensuring that committee members had current information with regards to college fundraising, enrollment, budget, academic affairs, operations, etc. As search chair, I spoke regularly with Dr. Tatum about the process. The board received regular updates through email and during our board meetings. While we could not share the names of candidates outside of the search committee, we could gather nominations and listen to endorsements. The board chair and I also sent regular email updates to the campus community, and the presidential search website included the search timeline, the schedule of search-related events, instructions for nominations, bios of search committee members and search firm consultants, and the leadership profile.

LESSON: Set a tone of collaborative and constructive dialogue through your outreach strategies. Try to be as open-minded as possible and recognize that great ideas will come through exchanges with the campus community.
LISTEN TO FEEDBACK

Campus stakeholders typically offer a great deal of feedback during a search. Having a systematic and efficient way to collect and review that information, packaged by the ESA for the search chair’s review, proved to be very helpful. We could identify in real time the ideas, suggestions, and areas of concern that were most frequently offered and adjust accordingly. We included an FAQ page on the presidential search website, addressing areas that had generated the greatest number of queries. Inevitably, tensions arose between the internal workings of the search and the desires and external perceptions of campus constituents. When they did, we tried to be as forthright as possible about our constraints so that stakeholders could have some sense of why we were unable to adopt a proposed strategy. Adjusting our approach when possible increased the overall level of inclusivity and transparency in the search; it is the role of the search chair to strike that balance between flexibility and firmness.

LESSON: In such a moment of institutional change, it is important to recognize that stakeholder anxiety will sometimes be expressed unconstructively. Assume the best intentions from all involved.

ENCOURAGE AN ISSUES-DRIVEN SEARCH

From the beginning, we entertained many different ideas about the profile of the person who should be Spelman’s next president and spiritedly floated candidate names. We considered several talented people, so we knew that we needed clear rubrics to determine who would be the best person to lead Spelman at this moment in the institution’s history.

We promoted the concept of an issues-driven search, leading a dialogue about the key issues facing the college now and into the future and the strategic direction of the institution. We felt that if we encouraged the campus community to debate a desired biographical profile (academic vs. non-academic; a background in the for-profit vs. nonprofit vs. public sector; established figure vs. growing profile), we might make it more difficult to build consensus. We would also be speaking in the abstract, evaluating unnamed candidates with one defining characteristic rather than taking a holistic approach to candidate assessment.

Our issues-driven approach allowed us to ultimately focus on identifying the strategic challenges and opportunities that we believed would require the next president’s attention. We collected ideas through the listening sessions, the search website, and one-on-one conversations with key stakeholders. Some wanted very specific issues addressed; others identified broader strategic concerns on the landscape of higher education. This process helped us identify strengths and opportunities that we could articulate in the leadership profile. Thus we wanted candidates—through past and proven experience, leadership style, and forwardthinking vision—to fit the leadership profile and demonstrate how they would move Spelman forward. The profile provided our campus community with a clearly articulated statement of aspiration, helping the search committee marry campus needs with candidate backgrounds, skills, and expertise.
BUILD THE POOL

Building the pool of candidates requires a dynamic and collaborative process that leaves no stone unturned. Candidates move in and out of the pool, so it is critical to continue engaging prospects until you form the right group. Using the leadership profile as a guide, we explored “aspirational” candidates with the background and experience that would be a windfall for the college, “strong” choices with excellent credentials, and “stretch” candidates with excellent skills but less experience in roles of this magnitude. Interviewing a range of candidates created a diverse pool that encouraged the search committee to imagine several models of leadership for the college.

LESSON: Some unexpected, but not ideal, candidates will enter the search. Other candidates who seem ideal will drop out. The pool will shift frequently. Your job as search chair is to help build the best pool possible so that the search committee has excellent options.

THE INTERVIEWING PROCESS

The search committee conducted two rounds of in-person interviews, using questions designed by a subcommittee. We invited all board members to participate in the second round of interviews with our three semi-finalists, creating the first of multiple opportunities for trustees to engage with the president-elect prior to the board vote. Our interviews covered a wide range of topics, including the candidates’ backgrounds and preparation for the role, experience with college administration, and strategic ideas for higher education. We were deeply grateful to the candidates for their willingness to enter the process and were humbled by their accomplishments.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CAMPUS COMMUNITY

We arranged a three-day campus visit for the finalist. This would involve a grueling marathon of intense engagement with all of our constituency groups, but it would also affirm our commitment to an appropriately inclusive and transparent process. Whether attending an in-person event, reading about the candidate online, or viewing a webcast of her town hall session, everyone in the Spelman community could learn about the recommended finalist prior to the official board vote. We offered an online survey to collect stakeholder feedback, underscoring that survey results would be one of several data points informing the search committee’s final recommendation to the board of trustees.

As we anticipated, the news media reported the finalist’s name within minutes of the college’s releasing it. Her cell phone and email inbox were flooded with messages of support. Because only a fraction of our campus community could attend the in-person campus forums, many gathered their information about the candidate through social media and by exploring her online presence. By the conclusion of the first day of the visit, I had received several voicemails, text messages, emails, and social-media messages. This gave us up-to-the-minute impressions of the finalist, helping us identify topics that stakeholders wanted to learn more about as we structured a forum with the candidate that members of the campus community could access online.
In this sense, the finalist’s biography that is circulated to the campus community is critically important, as it shapes initial impressions of the candidate. It should be tailored to inform both the media and your institution’s stakeholders. If major institutional changes are on the horizon, emphasize the candidate’s prior accomplishments in leading transformation. If the candidate has personal connections to your institution or ones like it (e.g., liberal arts college, women’s college, HBCU), that information should be included. It is also important to present the candidate’s fundraising experience. Through the biographical statement, the search committee is not only introducing the candidate’s credentials but also signaling why she was chosen as a finalist.

THE VOTE

Following the campus visit, the committee reviewed the feedback, which was overwhelmingly positive. We met with the finalist to thank her for an outstanding campus visit and to register our unwavering support. After a unanimous vote, the committee presented the finalist’s name to the board, recommending that she be elected as the tenth president of Spelman College.

During this very special meeting, the motion carried unanimously and enthusiastically, naming Mary Schmidt Campbell as Spelman College’s president-elect. The dean emerita of the Tisch School of the Arts and university professor in the Department of Art and Public Policy at New York University, Dr. Campbell is an accomplished scholar and a recognized leader in both the public and nonprofit sectors. Captivating the search committee and trustees from her first interview, she demonstrated, through her brilliance, vision, creativity, and grace, that she is the right leader at the right time for Spelman.

CONCLUSION

Spelman’s rich history and bright future fuel a highly committed community of students, faculty, staff, alumnae, parents, trustees, and other supporters. Our sense of institutional commitment registers at the highest decibels. We recognize that Spelman has a critical presence in higher education, and its mission is still vitally important as we consider the work that remains to ensure that all individuals, regardless of race, gender, or class, have access to opportunity.

The weight and significance of the search for our tenth president never escaped the many individuals who contributed to the process. We sought to continue our tradition of outstanding executive leadership, honoring the transformative work of Beverly Daniel Tatum and those who came before her. We needed to do justice to the courageous women and men who built Spelman, those who support the college today, and those who will be a part of it in the future. We are truly honored to have Dr. Campbell lead us into this next chapter.

Colleges and universities appointing new presidents over the next several years will do so in the context of dramatic transformation in higher education. Longstanding ideas about the value, necessity, affordability, and quality of a college education are now openly contested. Some institutions will not survive—all will be forced to change. Boards will be tasked with
identifying the best leaders for the times: individuals who can enhance the competitive
advantage of their institutions, offer energetic servant-leadership, and present a vision for
education that is simultaneously global and local, future-oriented and historically rooted,
boldly assertive and pragmatically grounded. Boards must identify and attract presidents
who will provide inspired leadership in a transforming world. Investing in both the
presidential pick and the process will prepare colleges and universities for the challenges and
opportunities that lie ahead.

- Celeste Watkins-Hayes is associate professor of sociology and African American studies at
Northwestern University and a faculty fellow at Northwestern's Institute for Policy Research.
She also serves as a vice chair for the Spelman College board of trustees.

Topics: Books, Diversity, Inequality, Institute for Policy
Research, Media, Opinion, Politics, Staff

Retrieved from: https://news.northwestern.edu/stories/2016/01/opinion-agb-college-
president-search/
Presidential Search Committee Checklist
By Muriel E. Poston

The search for a new president is one of the most significant instances of shared governance in the life of a college or university, but it is also one of the most a challenging. Although governing boards have the legal responsibility for selection of a president, the process of selection is the fundamental in determining which candidate has the appropriate academic leadership and administrative skills needed to lead the institution. The recognition of shared responsibility in the search process for academic administrators is reflected in the American Association of University Professors’ 1966 *Statement on Government*:

Joint effort of a most critical kind must be taken when an name institution chooses a new president. The selection of a chief administrative officer should follow upon a cooperative search by the governing board and the faculty, taking into consideration the opinions of others who are appropriately interested.

AAUP’s l981 *Faculty Participation in the Selection, Evaluation, and Retention of Administrators* articulates the importance of faculty participation:

The Statement on Government emphasizes the primary role of faculty and board in the search for a president. The search may be initiated either by separate committees of the faculty and board or by a joint committee of the faculty and board or of faculty, board, students, and others; and separate committees may subsequently be joined. In a joint committee, the numbers from each constituency should reflect both the primacy of faculty concern and range of other groups, including students, that have legitimate claim to some involvement. Each group should select its own members to serve on the committee, and the rules governing the search should be arrived at jointly. A joint committee should determine the size of the majority which will be controlling in making the appointment. When separate committees are used, the board, with which the legal authority rests, should either select a name from among those submitted by the faculty committee or should agree that no person will be chosen over the objections of the faculty committee.

The following is intended as a practical guide for implementation of these principles in the search for a president.

Search Committees
The board of trustees, working with the faculty, creates the search committee structure and defines the charge of the committee. The committee may be formed as a single entity representing both the faculty and the board, or there may be a two-tiered committee structure. In the latter case, the faculty committee—which may include other constituent groups such as students and alumni—is separate from the board committee. However, a single committee representing the faculty and board is the most common standard. Such a committee provides an opportunity for shared perspectives and broader understanding among the various groups and thus fosters a sense of unity in accomplishing a common goal—identifying a president who is qualified to serve as both the chief academic and the chief executive officer of the institution.

- **Committee Composition.** Representatives from the board already and faculty as well as representatives of other institutional constituencies commonly serve on joint search committees. Because faculty play a significant role, their representation on the committee should not be limited to a single member. The precise number is dependent on the size of the committee but should reflect the primacy of faculty concern in determining presidential leadership. The involvement of administrators on the search committee is problematic and should be discouraged since they may represent the perspective of the outgoing administration.

- **Committee Chair.** The chair appointment is typically made prior to the formation of the search committee. The joint search committee chair is typically chosen by the board and is usually a trustee who can provide an important connection between the board and the search committee. In cases where a two-tiered committee structure is utilized, a trustee chairs the board committee and a senior faculty member chairs the constituent group committee.
Committee Selection. Each constituent group should select its own members to serve on the committee. This gives the greatest sense of legitimacy to the members and acknowledges the respective roles of the constituent groups.

Committee Size. The size of a joint search committee will vary according to the institution but may range from nine to twenty. Larger committees are not necessarily less effective, and a good process is considerably more important than the size in determining a successful outcome. In cases of a two-tiered committee structure, the individual committees are smaller.

Committee Charge. The search committee charge is formulated by the board, in consultation with other constituents, and reflects the role of the board in making the selection of the president and in defining the terms and conditions of the appointment. The charge also will set forth other criteria such as:
- search committee membership
- statement of presidential leadership qualities
- breadth of the search: regional or national
- expectations regarding use of search consultants
- number of candidates to be recommended to the board for the final decision
- date by which the board expects recommendations of nominees

Search Process
The search committee has the responsibility of designing its own procedures and timetables. The basic functions of a search involve the identification of candidates; screening and interviewing; and the recommendation of a short list of candidates to the board for consideration. Key factors that should be considered in structuring the search process are:

Search consultants. If executive recruiters or consultants are to be utilized, their selection (or that of a search firm) is one of the first tasks of the committee, unless this decision has already been mandated by the board. A search consultant may be most helpful in educating the committee about the search process, providing a broader pool of candidates for consideration, or checking the candidate references beyond the scope of traditional academic criteria. However, the role of the search consultant should be clearly defined and should not extend into matters of educational or institutional policy. Search firms (which may be non-profit or for-profit organizations) and their consultants range from those that serve only educational institutions to those that have an education division within a large executive search firm. It is important to interview the potential search firms, preferably those staff members who would be assigned to the presidential search, to determine if the match is appropriate to the institutional characteristics and needs. References of the search firm candidates should be contacted. Among the questions that might be asked: How successful were they in previous searches? What were their interactions with faculty and other constituent groups? Do they understand and support the role of faculty in the search process?

Confidentiality. The presidential selection process is a classic conflict between the right of individual privacy and the public's right to know. It is important for the campus community to know the procedures that the committee will use in the search process, and these should be made public early in the search. It is the responsibility of the search committee to keep constituent groups informed of the progress of the search. However, in order to attract the best candidates, the search process may involve some measure of confidentiality, especially during the early phases. The disclosure of candidates prior to the development of a short list of nominees to recommend to the board can result in the loss of the best candidates. However, to ensure a successful search, the nominees who are recommended to the board should visit the campus and be interviewed by the faculty and possibly other constituent groups. The approach to implementing confidentiality and the process and guidelines for campus visits are matters to be resolved early on in the search process.
• **Institutional Analysis and Leadership Criteria.** The search committee should spend some time defining the present condition of the college or university, determining what problems must be faced, what priorities the institution has, and what direction it must take to meet its challenges and opportunities. This institutional analysis is needed in order to determine the type of leadership qualities needed for this particular stage in the college or university’s development. The leadership criteria statement defines the principal qualities that are required in the new president—an academic leader, an experienced fund raiser, etc. The statement of leadership criteria should be circulated to various institutional constituencies for review and comment. Consensus within the campus community on the leadership qualities is important since these criteria are used in evaluating candidates’ credentials and again in the and interview process.

**Sources of Potential Candidates**

In most instances, institutions engage in a comprehensive search. Casting the net broadly includes soliciting nominations from faculty, administrators, and alumni; running advertisements in national journals; and, if an executive recruiting firm is engaged, using the search consultant to identify candidates for review. The issue of confidentiality will again be raised during this step in the process since some nominees, particularly those who are currently successfully leading an institution, may not wish to be identified as candidates.

**Screening**

The purpose of screening is to identify a limited number of candidates from the applicant pool. In the first phase, the list is commonly reduced to fifteen to twenty-five names, in the second stage, to eight to ten names. The final stage of the process involves selecting candidates whom the committee will recommend to the board. Issues to be considered in the screening process are:

• **Background and reference checks.** The search committee may charge a subcommittee with checking the references of the fifteen to twenty-five candidates selected after the initial screening of credentials. These are generally the references provided by the candidate. In this phase of the search process, the committee usually refrains from contacting other possible sources of information out of respect for the candidate’s privacy. In the case of the eight to ten candidates who become semi-finalists, additional sources of information beyond those listed by the candidate may be contacted. A search consultant may be useful at this point in the referencing process, particularly for conducting criminal and media background checks. In the final phase of screening, anyone who might be able to provide useful information on the candidate’s leadership qualifications should be contacted. Referencing by faculty members of the search committee who can contact their counterparts at the candidate’s campus is particularly crucial at this stage. Background information at this point can be obtained not only from telephone calls but also from visits to the candidate’s campus.

• **Interviewing.** The interviewing process may occur in two stages. In order to preserve confidentiality, there may be off-campus interviews with the semi-finalist candidates. Direct contact between the candidates and the search committee is important. The second stage of the interview process involves campus visits where the candidate will meet with different constituencies, particularly faculty and students. These open visits are crucial in the success of the search process because they permit members of the campus community to participate in providing impressions, as well as to contribute to the candidate’s understanding of the culture of the institution. In this final phase of the selection process, open visits present vitally important opportunities for both the campus community and the candidate to determine each other’s suitability. This final step is extraordinarily useful to the search committee in making its final recommendation to the board.
Final Recommendation

The search committee, depending on its charge, may recommend only one candidate to the board. A committee that has conscientiously fulfilled its duty will recognize the best candidate, one who "fits" the institution, and will be able to convince the board of the wisdom of its recommendation. On the other hand, a successful search committee may be able to identify three or more candidates who would make an excellent president. The final act in the search process is the appointment of the president, a decision usually made by the full board.

This checklist is intended as a brief guideline for the presidential search process. The search itself is an opportunity for a university or college to take stock, consider new directions, and identify the individual best suited to lead the institution into its future.

References


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AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders

SECOND EDITION

www.aacc.nche.edu
Institutional transformation cannot take place without the development and continual improvement of a college’s leadership. The expectations we have of our leaders are different from past expectations; priorities must shift to accountability and improving student success.

Over time, AACC’s competencies for Community College Leaders have served as the foundation for developing many curriculums for 2-year college grow-your-own and community college leadership doctoral programs. While these competencies have served our institutions very well, as we reimagine the 21st-century community college, we believe it is imperative that we recalibrate the skills necessary to implement this radical change in restructuring community colleges to be more fluid and responsive.

Institutional transformation cannot take place without the development and continual improvement of a college’s leadership. The 21st Century Implementation Team charged with making recommendations for a new framework for leadership has drawn the following conclusions:

- Successful leaders move institutions to achieve high and improving student success rates.
- We need dramatic steps—a greater sense of urgency and alignment—if we wish to change the student success results.
- The expectations we have of our leaders are different from past expectations; priorities must shift to accountability for improving student success.
- There needs to be deliberate preparation in order to produce leaders with the right competencies, particularly competencies in risk taking and change management.

The current leadership context is especially telling. New and emerging leaders must have the skills
necessary to develop realistic, concrete, and actionable responses to the complex issues that their institutions need to address to provide employers with a skilled citizenry. If we are going to redesign student educational experiences, reinvent institutional roles, and reset the system, we must immediately develop solutions to the leadership crisis that 2-year colleges are facing.

- The pool of current leaders is approaching retirement. According to the Compensation and Benefits of Community College CEOs: 2012 compiled in partnership with the Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT), 75% of respondents completing the survey plan to retire within the next 10 years. In addition to a loss of 75% of current CEOs, institutions are projected to lose a large number of senior administrators and faculty members.

- The pool of potential applicants for the CEO positions being hired with the requisite skills required to “hit the ground leading” is shrinking. Between May 1, 2012, and April 15, 2013, approximately 146 first-time presidents were hired, with many not having had professional development in the essential areas of budgeting, academic management, and fundraising. In addition, many CEOs have to build new leadership teams that may be in the same position as the CEO, not having had extensive and meaningful professional development in the areas in which they are expected to lead.

- Finally, there is a continuous rotation and recomposition of governing boards. Data collected by ACCT and shared through its Governance Institute for Student Success (GISS) show that 32 states have boards appointed by governors, and 13 states have elected boards. The remaining 5 states have an election or appointment process where the college makes those decisions. So massive turnover in the governance structure might take place every 4 years when a new governor is elected, or during every election cycle in those states where trustees are elected. Of these trustees, fewer than 10% are in states with any formal professional development process in place to ensure that members understand their roles and responsibilities in the community college governance process.

Competencies for Emerging Leaders

To ensure that the leadership pipeline is flush with competent individuals, institutions must develop and support grow-your-own programs and invest in sending their employees to national programs for emerging leaders.

It is recommended that the local grow-your-own programs have an outward-looking curriculum so that emerging leaders are exposed to trends and issues that are not only internal to their own colleges, but also from colleges in other localities.

Also, these programs must be willing to rapidly adapt to the changing contexts in higher education, and give participants opportunities to participate in real-world simulations of situations that emerging leaders face. This may be done through case study research or a number of modular offerings in the programs. It is also extremely important that all leadership programs offered by AACC-affiliated councils and other national organizations include a special module on the “21st-Century Commission Report and Implementation.” In charting the path of the community college of the future, emerging leaders need to recognize the context in which they operate and identify the skills required to transform the existing college infrastructure to one capable of ensuring student success in the 21st century.
Competencies for CEOs (New and Established)

Whether you are a CEO within your first 3 years on the job or have been a CEO for 3 or more years, to be an effective leader it is imperative that you employ and hone many of the same skills required for emerging leaders.

Moreover, trustees must be willing to invest in a leader and allow him or her sufficient time to implement a student success change agenda. In Year 1 of the Aspen Prize of Community College Excellence competition, it was noted that longevity of the CEO was one of the major factors contributing to transformation within the institution. Trustees cannot recycle leaders every 2 years and expect to move the institutional needle on student success and completion in any significant manner. If trustees embark on the 2-year recycling plan and the college is miraculously able to achieve high completion results, it is in spite of leadership, not because of it. Whether competencies are related to communications, community college advocacy, finance, or any other factors identified by AACC and its partners, the CEO must master these qualities and ensure that his or her message is steeped in student success.

Community College Leadership Doctoral Programs

Community College Leadership Doctoral Programs (CCL) provide a tremendous service in educating potential leaders regarding skills critical to success. However, as the competencies for the 21st-century leader rapidly change, so must the curriculum and focus of CCL programs. Programs must determine whether their goal is to develop practitioners capable of hitting the ground leading the institution from their first day on the job, or if their goal is to develop researchers that are simply able to write about the institution. Research-based programs contribute to our understanding of leadership development, but could be greatly enhanced by an increased focus on the applicability of research to institutional practice. CCL programs must be willing to reenvision the experiences that they provide to students to include clear, practical, real-world experiences for students that allow them to respond to the rapidly changing institutional environments they will inherit.
Overall Observations about Developing Leaders

Whether a program is grow-your-own or academic in nature, it must be realistic about the outcomes that it expects to achieve and must have ways to measure outcomes.

- Any leadership program must be valued by the organization providing it, as well as the customer contemplating participating in it.
- The curriculum must be much more than anecdotal leadership war stories, and must include opportunities for application of the concepts that the participants are learning.
- The program modules/components in leadership programs must have clear outcomes and measurable results as they relate to mastery of competencies.
- Successful programs must contain team-building components and networking opportunities for the cohort.
- Programs must continue to be refined over time.

Leadership skills evolve. AACC’s new model of competencies for community college leadership focuses more on what leaders need to know based on their positions within the organization. While it is important to understand the role, scope, and mission of your organization as an emerging leader, a senior leader must have the ability to inspire his or her team to support that role, scope, and mission.

In order to appreciate and use these competencies, many of the initial principles that we established in 2005 still apply:

- Many leadership characteristics can be learned. While they can be enhanced immeasurably by natural aptitude and experience, it is essential to support leaders with exposure to theory, concepts, case studies, guided experiences, and other practical information and learning methodologies.
- Members of the community college community can lead from all levels, but must be empowered to do so. The competencies provided will shift in importance depending on the leader’s position.
- Learning and honing leadership is a lifelong process, the movement of which is influenced by personal and career maturity as well as other developmental processes.
- The leadership gap can be addressed through a variety of strategies such as college grow-your-own programs, AACC affiliated council and university programs, state system programs, residential institutes, coaching, mentoring, and online and blended approaches. Important considerations that apply to all forms of delivery include sustaining current leaders and developing new ones.

The field of community college leadership development is encouraged to use the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders. If you do use them, please credit AACC and share your use of the competencies with the association.

AACC embarked on a revision of the original Competencies for Community College Leaders in 2012. Thanks to the following groups for sharing their insights:

- AACC Executive Committee of the Board of Directors
- AACC Presidents Academy Executive Committee
- Association of Community College Trustees
- National Council of Instructional Administrators
- National Council for Student Development
- 21st-Century Commission Implementation Team 9
- Several focus groups consisting of new and seasoned CEOs
How to Process the Competencies for Community College Leaders

The Competencies for Community College Leaders is presented as a progression. The basic competency required for emerging leaders is presented, then that same competency evolves and deepens as that leader becomes a senior member of staff or a new CEO. The competency further evolves as the new CEO becomes more mature in his or her job.

The table provided on the following pages presents each of the competencies and the real-world illustrations that AACC believes are imperative to assist leaders in progressing along the leadership continuum.

AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders

Organizational Strategy

An effective community college leader promotes the success of all students, strategically improves the quality of the institution, and sustains the community college mission based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.

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<tr>
<th>Competencies for Emerging Leaders</th>
<th>Competencies for New CEOs within the First 3 Years on the Job</th>
<th>Competencies for New CEOs That Have Been in Their Positions for 3 or More Years</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understand the mission, vision, and goals of community colleges, and how your role supports them.</td>
<td>Embrace the community college values. Know yourself as a leader, and do not try to emulate others. It is much more important to have strong morals and ethics than to be charismatic.</td>
<td>Be authentic. Develop your personal tool kit for transformational leadership skills that allow you to galvanize employees to support the mission, vision, and goals of the institution.</td>
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<td>Learn the culture of the institution to effectively perform your duties successfully within the cultural constructs/framework that exists.</td>
<td>Begin your tenure by getting to know the established culture of the institution as thoroughly and as quickly as possible before you make any significant decisions or undertake any significant actions.</td>
<td>Have courage. Be willing to make the changes necessary to transform the culture of the institution to one focused solely on student access and success.</td>
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<td>Have a forward-looking philosophy, and be prepared for change. Understand the institutional process for taking risks to improve the student experience; be willing to take risks based on research and data.</td>
<td>Embrace a change management philosophy. Establish an institutional culture that empowers faculty and staff to be calculated risk-takers in developing and implementing evidence-based strategies to enhance student outcomes.</td>
<td>In addition to having an institutional change management philosophy, adopt this way of doing business in the office of the CEO. Realize that it is important to take calculated risks, and to communicate to the college community the rationale for taking those risks.</td>
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<td>Know your institution’s strategies for improving student success and completion.</td>
<td>Know the institution’s strategies for student success and be on the front lines in championing them. Become intimately familiar with the demographics of your institution and what realistic outcomes the institution can achieve. Educate the board about student success, and establish key metrics for student success.</td>
<td>Ensure that employees at all levels of the organization are focused on improving student success. Create urgency about the student success agenda by: educating the board about student success, establishing key metrics for student success, moving the institution forward through a leadership program, fostering apprenticeship and mentoring of midlevel leadership, and maintaining the social justice mission of the institution.</td>
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<td>Provide exemplary customer service that makes members of the community feel welcome. Exemplary customer service is defined as giving the customer more than just what they wanted, in a way that makes them feel they are appreciated so they always want to return.</td>
<td>Commit to ensuring that students are in a welcoming environment, and that the in-take processes are clear and hassle-free. Students should easily understand how to get through advising, registration, and orientation; and should understand their educational pathways.</td>
<td>Create an environment that promotes access, inclusion, and equity for all members of the community to actively participate in a vibrant, intellectual community that offers a broad range of ideas and perspectives.</td>
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<td>Have an ongoing focus on process improvement for internal and external customers. If gaps exist in employees’ technical proficiency, make requests for professional development so they can acquire the needed skills to better serve customers.</td>
<td>Demonstrate technological competence. Strive to ensure that students have access to cutting-edge technology, allowing them to master the skills of the 21st-century employee.</td>
<td>With a highly evolved technophile customer, it is important for you as a CEO to embrace and understand how to communicate with technology. Support the college as it continues to adopt changing technologies that impact student success.</td>
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<td>Understand the organizational structure of the community college, and the function that your unit plays in supporting the CEO in achieving institutional goals.</td>
<td>Become extremely familiar with members of your board of trustees, including what they are passionate about, and how you can best enhance their understanding of your vision for the institution. Communicate with them consistently. Trustees should never be the last ones to hear about important issues impacting the institution.</td>
<td>Articulate the role of the board of trustees to the college community. Understand the role of the leader in supporting the board of trustees through discussions on key trends and issues, and advise the board on the importance of the distinction between governance and management. Provide ongoing professional development for trustees.</td>
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<td>Understand the responsibilities of all employees within the organization.</td>
<td>Assess the needs of the institution and the strengths of current employees, as well as the skills gaps that exist, taking into account the importance of institutional fit and professional expertise in making critical hires.</td>
<td>Build a team around the institution’s goals for student success.</td>
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Institutional Finance, Research, Fundraising, and Resource Management

An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.

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<tr>
<td>Know your unit’s budget. Ensure that you monitor your budget routinely and notify leadership if the unit’s allocated budget and expenditures are not in keeping with the institution’s key performance indicators.</td>
<td>Learn how to read your institution’s budget and how to ensure that planning and data inform your budget allocations. Make decisions that ensure that funding is tied to enrollment, institutional performance, and student success.</td>
<td>Develop in-depth knowledge of the finances of the organization and have knowledge of alternative approaches to address shortages in fiscal resources, including projecting potential budget reductions in personnel and institutional operations.</td>
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<td>Institutional fundraising is everyone’s job. Work with your institution’s advancement office to determine where you might be supportive in achieving the fundraising goals of the institution. Learn the skills of effective fundraising.</td>
<td>Be your institution’s chief fundraiser. Learn the skills necessary to lead a foundation board, to run fundraising and capital campaigns, and to make the “ask.”</td>
<td>Take an entrepreneurial stance in seeking alternative funding sources. Ensure that funding sources align with the institutional mission. Understand key components of effective fundraising, including how to identify and approach potential donors.</td>
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<td>Understand the institutional dashboard and how to interpret data to improve the student academic experience within your unit of the institution.</td>
<td>Require an institutional dashboard and routinely discuss with key members of the staff those areas where the institution is underperforming. Design strategies to ensure that the institution is moving in a positive direction to overcome those cautionary areas. Use of data mining and learning analytics to improve the academic experience for students.</td>
<td>Ensure accountability in reporting. Support data mining and understand how to use data to make informed decisions. Support operational decisions by managing information resources and ensuring the integrity and integration of reporting systems and databases.</td>
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<td>Understand the importance of time management and planning in your position.</td>
<td>You cannot do everything on the campus: understand that you must build an effective team capable of supporting the needs of the institution, especially if your position is more external.</td>
<td>Employ organizational and time management. Plan, establish, and delegate expectations for members of your team.</td>
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<td>Understand the organizational protocol: if you are unable to resolve a conflict, understand how to have it addressed.</td>
<td>Understand the protocol for managing conflicts and crisis. The CEO is the spokesperson for the institution in crisis situations, and should be out front. Do not address conflict between employees who are not direct reports to the CEO.</td>
<td>Manage conflict and change in ways that contribute to the long-term viability of the organization.</td>
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## Communication

An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community; promotes the success of all students; ensures the safety and security of students and the surrounding college community; and sustains the community college mission.

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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be articulate. Work on having strong presentation skills. Have direct answers to the questions that are asked.</td>
<td>Be articulate. Work on having strong presentation skills, and a system of communications for your board of trustees, cabinet, employees, and students, as well as the community.</td>
<td>Convey ideas and information succinctly, frequently, and inclusively through the media, to the board and other constituencies and stakeholders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always have a succinct pocket speech that is consistent with the mission, vision, and priorities of the institution.</td>
<td>Have several pocket speeches and know how to determine which speech is appropriate for the audience you are addressing.</td>
<td>Understand communications with print versus on-camera or web-based media, and refine skills to be effective in all venues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the chain of command for communications. Be extremely familiar with the institution’s emergency and crisis communications plans. Always refer individuals to the appropriate person in the communications chain, if it is not you.</td>
<td>Never respond with “no comment.” Understand the protocol for communicating in crisis and emergency situations. Project confidence that the college is taking all necessary precautions to ensure that students and employees are safe.</td>
<td>Project confidence and respond responsibly and tactfully. Have a communications chain of command and be prepared to address your institution’s emergencies and crises promptly, and consistent with institutional policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be willing to offer a realistic solution to any institutional problem. Be willing to participate in an environment that allows shared responsibility in problem solving.</td>
<td>Create an environment where employees feel comfortable in sharing their observations and ideas to improve strategies for solving problems.</td>
<td>Facilitate an environment of shared problem solving and decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn the nuances of communications with various internal and external stakeholders. Know the appropriate jargon for the group you are addressing.</td>
<td>Continue to refine your communication skills through professional development opportunities. Research the appropriateness of how to greet various stakeholders, and what topics may be off limits to discuss with them.</td>
<td>Build and leverage internal and external networks and partnerships to advance the mission, vision, and goals of the community college. Learn to communicate across sectors, shying away from “education-ese” when working to forge effective partnerships with potential and current partners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Become familiar with what it means to be globally competent. While this does not necessarily reflect engaging in international education, it does focus on students understanding the societal complexities that encompass other points of view, and new ways of thinking and acting.</td>
<td>Understand global competence, and strive to provide students with opportunities to become exposed to different points of view and their role within the global society. Ensure that your board of trustees supports global programming before aggressively pursuing this as an offering for the college.</td>
<td>Understand that people live and interact in an increasingly globalized world. Give learners the opportunity and competencies to reflect and share their own points of view and roles within a global, interconnected society, as well as to understand and discuss complex relationships of common social, ecological, political, and economic issues to derive new ways of thinking and acting.</td>
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### Communication, continued

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<td>Be familiar with grassroots efforts to organize stakeholders to advocate for the community college mission.</td>
<td>As CEO, work to develop ongoing relationships with print, broadcast, and electronic media outlets, as well as with students, faculty, and staff, to further the goals of the college.</td>
<td>Understand how to engage media at the local, state, and national levels to advocate for the community college mission.</td>
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### Collaboration

An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission.

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<td>Understand that there are no lone rangers. All employees must collaborate to ensure that there is a focus on student access and success.</td>
<td>Develop a culture of collaboration on the institution’s campus.</td>
<td>Break down silos and mitigate internal politics within the institution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know the key stakeholders that are advocates for the institution, and the roles that they play in the community.</td>
<td>Establish relationships with key external stakeholders in the community, other educational institutions, legislators, and so on. Do not only call on partners when there is a crisis, but also contact them and allow them to celebrate when there is good news.</td>
<td>Build and leverage internal and external networks and partnerships to advance the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.</td>
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An effective community college leader understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the community college on the local, state, and national level.

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<td>Recognize there are multiple government programs at the state and federal levels that contribute to the funding of a college’s students and programs.</td>
<td>Understand the role that multiple government programs play in the operation of a college.</td>
<td>Heavily engage in shaping multiple government programs to best meet college objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognize there is an interplay of public perception and policymaking that can impact college operations.</td>
<td>Understand the role of the CEO in crafting an advocacy position that aligns public interest with college operations.</td>
<td>Engage with public outlets in a proactive manner that most effectively advocates for the operations of the college.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next Chancellor must understand and embrace Baton Rouge Community College’s role in helping its students and the region in meeting its goals.

REQUIRED QUALIFICATIONS:

- The candidate will be expected to have a minimum of 5 years high level executive experience with demonstrated performance of exceptional quality, preferably in a comprehensive community college.
- Those holding an earned doctorate with a background in higher education administration are preferred. Administrative experience in other disciplines will also be considered.

THE DESIRED QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE NEXT CHANCELLOR OF BRCC COLLEGE INCLUDE:

- The leadership ability to set and articulate a vision and strategic plan for BRCC, particularly focusing on greater inclusion of the BRCC faculty, staff and students in developing that vision and plan, while also working with stakeholders in the community to ensure relevance to the needs of the region.
- The ability to inspire, lead a complex organization and make a long-term commitment to the College and to all those served by BRCC.
- A passion for the role and mission of community colleges and an understanding of the key role the College plays throughout the community.
- An unwavering commitment and dedication to supporting and growing a culture of inclusion and diversity throughout the College community.
- An inclusive leader who demonstrates positive leadership, flexibility and accessibility and is committed to and appreciates the importance of investing in the professional development of faculty and staff.
- A proven track record of successful senior management experience including sound business practices and financial management.
- An exceptional communicator, listener and visible leader who inspires confidence and will seek out and value contributions from employees, students, and the community.
- A commitment to ensuring appropriate linkages and balance between academic and technical education.
- Demonstrated leadership in the transfer mission and possess a strong background in workforce development.
- A collaborative individual who believes in and supports traditional and non-traditional student organizations and activities.
- An individual willing to use technology and new teaching methods to creatively address future workforce demands, as well as changing degree, certificate and program needs.
- The ability to communicate and work effectively with legislators, elected and government officials and community leaders as part of a system-wide team, to build consensus and to advocate on behalf of the College.
- The willingness and demonstrated ability to build external relationships with community partners, leaders and citizens to promote BRCC and expand its visibility and place within the community.
- A comprehensive understanding of accreditation processes.
- The ability to develop and maintain relationships and collaboration with local and state elected officials, K-12 educators and other colleges/universities.
SALARY

Salary, benefits, length of contract and other terms and conditions of employment are negotiable and competitive.

APPLICATION PROCEDURES

To ensure full consideration, application materials should be received no later than Monday, October 24, 2016. The position will remain open until filled.

Candidates will need to have the following information or materials available to complete the application:

- A completed Candidate Summary sheet that can be found on the left hand side of the ACCT Searches web page.
- A letter of application that succinctly addresses the Position Profile and demonstrates how the candidate’s experience and professional qualifications prepare them to serve the needs of Baton Rouge Community College (not to exceed 5 pages).
- A current resume including an email address and cellular telephone number.

NOTE: Candidates must combine their candidate summary sheet, cover letter, and resume into a single PDF file. Candidates will follow the prompts they are given while completing the application form. Candidates must input eight references: three supervisors, two direct reports and three faculty members from current or former institutions.

To apply, go to [http://www.acctsearches.org](http://www.acctsearches.org)

For additional information, nominations or confidential inquiries please contact:
Julie Golder, J.D., Board Services Coordinator, [jgolder@acct.org](mailto:jgolder@acct.org), 202-775-4466 (office) or 202-384-5816 (cell).

Narcisa Polonio, Ed.D., EVP of Board Leadership Services, [npolonio@acct.org](mailto:npolonio@acct.org) or 202-276-1983 (cell).

For technical assistance please contact:
Marc Wollenschlaeger, Board Services Associate, [mwollenschlaeger@acct.org](mailto:mwollenschlaeger@acct.org) or 202-775-4458.

*An ACCT Search*
Minnesota State Colleges and Universities invites applications and nominations for president of Century College.

Century College seeks a visionary leader to work with college students, staff, faculty, and the community to advance its mission of inspiring, preparing, and empowering students to succeed in a changing world.

Century College is one of the largest two-year community and technical colleges in Minnesota, serving approximately 21,000 credit and non-credit students each year.

The college offers a variety of degrees, diplomas, certificates, and courses in the areas of general education and transfer, business, human services, health sciences, technology, engineering, applied design, and industrial trades.

The Continuing Education and Customized Training department offers non-credit workforce training and development in the areas of business, healthcare, computers, transportation, trades and industry, and personal enrichment.

Dedicated to student success, Century College is the only Minnesota two-year college participating in the national “Achieving the Dream” initiative, and was recently designated “Leader College” status based on promising data regarding student success initiatives and a reduction of the achievement gap.

Century College is situated within the Minneapolis St. Paul metropolitan area (pop. 3.5 million) and has two campuses, West Campus and East Campus, connected by a half-mile pedestrian bridge. The West Campus is located in a suburb called White Bear Lake, MN (pop. 24,555) and the East Campus is located in a suburb called Mahtomedi, MN (pop. 8,013). A third facility, Transportation Training Center, is located in an exurb called Afton, MN. Century College attracts students from throughout the region.

Century College is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (Minnesota State). With 24 community and technical colleges and seven state universities, Minnesota State is the largest provider of higher education in the state of Minnesota. Under the leadership of Chancellor Steven Rosenstone, Minnesota State is committed to ensuring access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans; being the partner of choice to meet Minnesota’s workforce and community needs; and delivering to students, employers, communities, and taxpayers the highest value, most affordable higher education option.

Reporting to the chancellor, the president of Century College serves as chief executive officer responsible for leading the faculty and staff in fulfilling the college’s mission. The president serves on the system’s Leadership Council, which consists of the chancellor, the chancellor’s cabinet, and the 30 college and university presidents. As a member of the Leadership Council, the president contributes to the overall direction of the nation’s fifth-largest system of higher education.
Strategic Framework

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities plays an essential role in growing Minnesota’s economy and opening the doors of educational opportunity to all Minnesotans.

To that end, we will:

Ensure access to an extraordinary education for all Minnesotans

Our faculty and staff will provide the best education available in Minnesota, preparing graduates to lead in every sector of Minnesota’s economy.

We will continue to be the place of opportunity, making education accessible to all Minnesotans who seek a college, technical, or university education; those who want to update their skills; and those who need to prepare for new careers.

Be the partner of choice to meet Minnesota’s workforce and community needs

Our colleges and universities will be the partner of choice for businesses and communities across Minnesota to help them solve real-world problems and keep Minnesotans at the leading edge of their professions.

Our faculty and staff will enable Minnesota to meet its need for a substantially better educated workforce by increasing the number of Minnesotans who complete certificates, diplomas, and degrees.

Deliver to students, employers, communities, and taxpayers the highest value / most affordable higher education option

Our colleges and universities will deliver the highest value to students, employers, communities, and taxpayers.

We will be the highest value / most affordable higher education option.

Minnesota State

Minnesota State is the largest single provider of higher education in the state of Minnesota, and the fifth largest system of higher education in the country. With 37 institutions, including 30 two-year colleges and seven state universities, Minnesota State serves 58% of the state’s undergraduate student population.

The system includes 54 campuses in 47 Minnesota communities, serving nearly 400,000 students, with 120,000 students taking non-credit courses and customized training programs designed for businesses. Overall, the system produces more than 40,000 graduates each year, of whom 81% get jobs in related fields and 80% stay in Minnesota, contributing to the state’s economy.

Minnesota State colleges and universities offer 555 programs and 18,600 courses partially or fully online. The system also serves more than 99,000 Pell-eligible students, 62,000 Minnesota students of color, 32,000 PSEO students, and 10,500 veterans. Minnesota State serves more students in these categories than all of the other higher education providers in the state combined.

Minnesota State is governed by a 15-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor. The board has policy responsibility for system planning, academic programs, fiscal management, personnel, admissions requirements, tuition and fees, and rules and regulations.

Chancellor Steven Rosenstone is the chief executive officer of Minnesota State. He is responsible for providing academic leadership to the system’s 37 colleges and universities, ensuring effective and efficient management and operation of the system, carrying out board policies, recommending operating and capital budgets to the board, and planning for the current and long-term educational needs of Minnesota.

In January 2012, the Board of Trustees adopted a strategic framework for the future of Minnesota State. The framework emphasizes the essential role Minnesota State plays in growing Minnesota’s economy and opening doors of educational opportunity to all Minnesotans.

Minnesota State has now embarked on Charting the Future, a systemwide initiative to deliver on the commitments set forth in the strategic framework. Charting the Future for a Prosperous Minnesota lays out the path to increase access, affordability, excellence, and service by forging deeper collaborations among Minnesota State colleges and universities to maximize the collective strengths, resources, and the talents of the faculty and staff. Implementation began in Spring 2014 and will continue over the next few years.
About the College

Century College is dedicated to the success of each student. Focused on innovation the college offers a warm, welcoming, vibrant learning community and is a connected, engaged resource for our local communities.

The creation of the Century College strategic plan, Century 2020, demonstrates the college’s commitment to its vision of transforming lives through an innovative, rigorous, and compassionate approach to education. In preparing for a changing world and increasing the success of all students, the college’s 2015-2020 strategic plan will eliminate the racial achievement gap; reaffirm the college’s dedication to learning; create clear, supported pathways to transfer and to employment; provide integrated support; and align and evaluate the college and its resources to meet these goals.

The college is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. In 2005, Century College was accepted into the Academic Quality Improvement Program, a pathway for maintaining accreditation that focuses on continuous quality improvement. In addition to Century College’s institutional accreditation, many of Century College’s program areas have achieved accreditation and certification status.

The diverse student body at Century College enriches the educational and campus life experience. Students attend Century College from local communities, from states across the U.S., and from countries around the world. The average age of a Century College student is 26 years old, 38 percent are students of color, and 55 percent are female. Fifty-five percent of new entering students are first generation (federal definition).

Enrollment at Century College has increased 7.2 percent over the past decade. Full-year equivalent (FYE) enrollment has averaged 6,888, peaking at 7,879 in 2011. Enrollment has declined over the past few years as the recession has eased; however, new student numbers were up nearly 4 percent for Fall 2015 with a 2.5 percent increase in students attending full time.

Century College spans over 170 acres, which include a wildlife refuge, walking trail, and athletic fields. The East and West campuses total 740,202 sq. ft. in building space. The college features advanced classrooms and facilities, including a beautiful Science Library Center, state-of-the-art “Link 6” classrooms, a vibrant Student Center, and a newly renovated Fab Lab.
Academic Programs and Pathways

General Education and Transfer Pathway

Century College offers Associate in Arts degrees, certificates, and individual courses designed to transfer to a four-year college or university. In addition, Century College partners with many four-year colleges and universities to offer a baccalaureate degree that can be completed on campus at Century College, online, at a nearby location, or at the four-year college or university.

- Associate in Arts
- General Transfer – MN Transfer Curriculum
- Academic English Proficiency
- Associates in Fine Arts - Art
- Associates in Fine Arts - Music
- Communication Studies
- Creative Writing
- Gender Studies
- Global Studies
- Individualized Studies
- Enrichment and Undecided

Applied Design and Industrial Pathway

The college offers Associate in Applied Science degrees, diplomas and certificates in career and technical programs that involve customer relationships, applied design and industrial careers.

- Auto Body Technology
- Automotive Service Technology
- Cosmetology/Nail Care Technician
- Facilities Maintenance Engineer
- Heating, Ventilation, Air Conditioning & Refrigeration
- Horticulture
- Interior Design
- Kitchen and Bath Design
- Solar and Renewable Energy
- Visual Communications Technologies (VCT)
- Filmmaking and Video Production (VCT)
- Graphic Design (VCT)
- 3D Animation (VCT)
- Professional Photography (VCT)
- Web Design (VCT)
- Welding

Business Pathway

The college offers Associate in Applied Science degrees, diplomas, and certificates in career and technical programs in business, commerce, management, and administrative support.

- Accounting
- Business Administration
- Business Management
- Entrepreneurial Certificate
- Marketing
- Marketing Communications Technology
- Office Technology
- Office Technology - Medical
- Sports Management
The college’s strategic plan, Century College 2020, has committed the college to expanding on existing strengths in experiential learning—including more opportunities for undergraduate research, service learning, and internships; integrated support services; and clear academic pathways for students. The college’s pathways commitment includes deeper partnerships with universities so students can earn four-year degrees on the Century campus, and with area high schools, particularly the Northeast Metro Career and Technical Education Center which is co-located on Century’s east campus. The college is also developing academic pathways within the college to better align program offerings, student communication, and advising and counseling services. The six pathways will help students get on a transfer or career path earlier, encouraging greater persistence and completion.

Health Science Pathway

The college offers Associate in Applied Science degrees, diplomas, and certificates in career and technical programs in health and medical-related careers.

- Dental Assistant
- Dental Hygiene
- Emergency Medical Services
- EMS - Emergency Medical Technician
- EMS - Paramedic Science
- Health Sciences Broad Field
- Medical Assistant
- Nursing
- Nursing Assistant
- Orthotics and Prosthetics
- Pedorthics
- Radiologic Technology

Human Services Pathway

The college offers Associate in Applied Science degrees, diplomas, and certificates in career and technical programs in human and support services, social services, and education-related fields.

- Chemical Dependency
- Criminal Justice
- Education
- Fire Services
- Human Services
- Intelligence and Crime Analysis
- Investigations
- Law Enforcement
- Paraeducation
- Public Safety
- Translation and Interpreting

Technology and Engineering Pathway (STEM)

The college offers Associate in Applied Science degrees, diplomas, and certificates in career and technical programs in the fields of mathematics, science, engineering, and technology.

- Additive and Digital Manufacturing
- Cloud Computing
- Computer Information Systems
- Computer Science
- Cybersecurity, Virtualization, & Forensics
- Engineering
- Engineering CAD
- Enterprise Computing Technology
- Information & Telecommunications Technology
Student Services and Support

Century College is committed to the success of each student. This commitment to student success and persistence is demonstrated by the many student services and support available at the college.

A variety of academic resources provide students with support for their academic pursuits. Academic Resource Centers are located on the West and East campuses. Other academic resource centers include the Access Center, English for Speakers of Other Languages Center, Language Lab, Mathematics Resource Center, Reading and Student Success Center, Science Resource Center, and the Writing Center.

As part of the extensive work being accomplished through the Achieving the Dream initiative, the college has developed innovative approaches to academic support, including Tutors Linked to Classes, Learning Communities, and expanded peer tutoring.

Many support services are also available to students outside of the classroom. The Multicultural Center, Veterans Center, and LGBTQ Center promote a college environment that values equity, excellence, and diversity by offering student spaces, services, programs, and initiatives. College counselors can assist students with career decision making or personal concerns. A registered nurse and once-a-week doctor is available to students through Student Health Services, and an on-campus Food Pantry is available to students in need.

Planning is an important component to supporting the success of students at Century College. The college assigns students an academic advisor or counselor based on academic pathway to help students stay on track to completing their degree. The college’s Transfer Center provides resources and support to incoming and outgoing transfer students. Career Services assist students with job preparation and is an employment resource connection. The innovative GPS LifePlan, developed by Century College, helps students set goals and design plans that lead them to the success they desire.

Student Life

Century College offers students a variety of student life opportunities to connect with others, gain leadership experience, get involved, and have fun.

Students are encouraged to become active members and leaders of the campus community through student government and a variety of student clubs and organizations, such as Student Senate, Planning Activities Committee, Phi Theta Kappa, Asian Student Association, Engineering Club, Brother 2 Brother, student newspaper, and many more.

Century College also offers NJCAA Collegiate Athletics programs. Students can participate or cheer on the Century College Wood Ducks in men’s baseball and soccer as well as women’s softball and soccer. Students can take advantage of the many recreational activities offered through the college’s intramural program and enjoy multiple college theatre and art experiences.
Century College Foundation

The Century College Foundation’s mission is to transform and enhance the lives of our students by providing financial support for educational opportunities.

The Foundation is proud to provide this support to Century College students in a variety of ways, from scholarships for tuition and books and paid internships to one-time emergency grants through the Random Acts of Kindness program.

Last year, the Foundation raised $2,234,000 and awarded over $311,000 in scholarships and an additional $128,000 to programs. 124 students with extreme need received a total of $22,000 to assist with housing, child care, health and other urgent issues.

The Foundation is guided by a board of directors who are representative of the greater community and the students. The Century College Foundation is a 501(c)(3) non-profit, tax-exempt organization.

Partnerships and Grants

Century College is engaged and connected with local communities, K-12, higher education, and business and industry. The college strives to develop partnerships and acquire grants that provide opportunities and services for students and further the college mission.

Academic programs maintain engagement with local and regional business and industry through advisory groups, service learning, and internships.

Through student success initiatives, the college is striving to develop connections with social service agencies to provide services and resources to students on campus. Expanding relationships with ethnically diverse community groups provides an increased understanding of Century College students.

The college is continually building partnerships within the Minnesota State system and with other four-year colleges and universities through articulation agreements and on-campus offerings. Links with local K-12 schools have expanded the college’s offerings at the high schools and through the Post Secondary Enrollment Option (PSEO) program.

Grants

Century College has received numerous grants that have enabled many expanded partnerships and services to students.

- $339,434  US Department of Education, Upward Bound (TRIO, St. Paul Public Schools)
- $292,267  US Department of Education, Educational Talent Search (TRIO, St. Paul Public Schools)
- $323,632  US Department of Education, Traditional Student Support Services
- $220,000  US Department of Education, Veterans Student Support Services
- $69,336  US Department of Education, Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education
- $1,361,485 US Department of Labor, TAACCCT, HOPE Careers Consortium
- $284,070  US Department of Labor, TAACCCT, Advanced Manufacturing Partnership
- $22,000  National Science Foundation, Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation in STEM
- $62,434  National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), National Space Grant
- $16,428  Aliss Foundation Grants
- $121,000  MN Department of Health, Young Student Parent Support Program
- $50,000  MnSCU System Office, GPS Lifeplan Initiative
CECT Partnerships and Grants

Century College is actively working to address the needs of the manufacturing industry by creating customized programs that are portable and flexible, and can be brought to the work site. The college addresses the needs of incumbent workers and underserved populations, creating connections and partnerships between employers, individuals, and the communities they serve. In fiscal year 2016, Century CECT secured 16 grant partnerships through the Minnesota Job Skills Partnership (MJSP) Board and provided $1,090,464 to train more than 1,780 employees in manufacturing. Century College is also the training partner for the Pathways to Prosperity program from the Minnesota Department of Employee and Economic Development. Grants totaling $900,000 serve training programs for the Hmong American Partnership, Neighborhood House, and the Center for Asian and Pacific Islanders.

Century College is one of the few colleges in the country to receive a federal grant to help train veterans and their spouses for a Class A commercial driver’s license. The four-week program is conducted at the college’s state-of-the-art Transportation Training Center in Afton and includes 180 hours of classroom education, hands-on practice, and individual over-the-road training. Students also receive job-placement services. Financial support and assistance is made possible by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration.

CECT also manages a 790,000 US Dept of Labor, TAACCCCT, Advanced Manufacturing grant as one of 12 colleges participating in a Consortium that is working together to implement the Learn, Work, Earn project which focuses on developing educational pathways and career tracks in the advanced manufacturing sector.

Continuing Education & Customized Training Services

Century College Continuing Education & Customized Training (CECT) provides a comprehensive, one-stop shop for business and industry training needs serving more than 7,500 individuals annually and 125 area businesses. The non-credit department serves both employees and employers through open-enrollment classes and certificate programs held at various campus locations, and customized contract training at the work site. Specialties include entry-level healthcare, business and office technology, fire service and public safety, trades and manufacturing, and transportation. Services include professional development, certification preparation, workforce skills gap training, custom contract training, employee development, business consulting services, workshops, seminars, and conferences.

Professional Continuing Education

Hundreds of non-credit classes, workshops, and seminars are designed for adults needing to satisfy professional credentialing requirements or seeking career advancement, job mobility, or professional growth. The department partners with area Workforce Centers, state and local agencies, businesses, and community services to continually monitor and respond to current trends, professional requirements, and individual training needs and interest. Continuing education courses are offered in the evening or as daytime classes, both on and off campus. Fees vary according to instructional costs. Enrolled students earn continuing education units in recognition of their participation.

Industry-Specific Customized Training

By evaluating workforce training needs, identifying cost-effective options, and implementing industry-standard solutions, customized training services lead the way for area businesses; healthcare facilities; fire; law enforcement and public safety agencies; manufacturing; and transportation agencies. Last year, more than 175 training contracts served 125 companies that benefitted from innovative solutions customized to their unique workforce training problems.

Serving Students and Community

CECT manages the Student Parent Center which provides financial, personal, and academic support designed to help meet the needs and challenges of student parents. Resources include a family-friendly study area, free workshops, a parent resource library, and support for grocery and household items. The Student Parent Center is funded through a grant by the Minnesota Department of Health.
Inquiries, Nominations and Applications

GreenwoodAsher, an executive search firm, is assisting Minnesota State and Century College in the search. Screening of applications begins immediately and will continue until an appointment is made. Nominations should include the name, position, address, and telephone number of the nominee.

Confidential inquiries and nominations should be directed to:
Jan Greenwood or Betty Turner
AsherGreenwood/Asher & Associates, Inc.
42 Business Center Drive, Suite 206 Miramar Beach, FL 32550
(850) 650-2277
jangreenwood@greenwoodsearch.com
bettyasher@greenwoodsearch.com

Victoria DeFord, M.A., SPHR
Human Resources Director, System Office & Executive Search Manager
Minnesota State
(651) 201-1664

Links:

• To learn more about Minnesota State, please visit www.mnscu.edu
• To learn more about Century College, please visit www.century.edu

Presidential Search – Qualifications and Characteristics

The successful candidate will demonstrate most, if not all, of these qualifications:

► Strong leadership skills necessary to provide vision and direction to the college, the community, and the Minnesota State system
► Strong proponent of the community and technical college mission
► Champion of student success
► Demonstrated experience advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion
► Progressively responsible experience in higher education administration or in other complex organizations
► An appropriate combination of experience in program and curriculum development, fundraising, governmental relations, accreditation processes, and budget and fiscal management
► Experience in a collective bargaining environment
► Experience and leadership in shared governance
► Experience partnering with K-12 and baccalaureate institutions
► Experience building relationships and partnerships with business, education, and other community organizations
► Demonstrated ability to collaborate with other Minnesota State colleges, universities, and the system office, and to identify effective strategies for leveraging collective strengths, resources, and employee expertise
► Demonstrated ability to innovate and encourage creative thinking
► A collegial and collaborative management style that is authentic, transparent, and respectful
► A visible, engaged, and accessible presence with students, alumni, community leaders, and friends of the college
► Exceptional oral and written communication skills effective with a broad range of audiences
► An earned doctorate or terminal degree is preferred but not required
Founded in 1966, College of the Mainland (COM) is a comprehensive community and technical college located in Texas City, Texas. Texas City is part of the Mainland Texas Gulf Coast area which provides numerous leisure activities with great fishing, bird watching, and tropical sunshine while, at the same time, being home to Fortune 500 companies, such as Marathon Petroleum and Valero Refining. With six major petrochemical operations breathing life into the business community, along with the boom of expansion along the I-45 corridor, growth is occurring rapidly throughout the region.

The area of the College District encompasses 237 square miles, and its taxing district includes the five independent school districts of Dickinson, Hitchcock, La Marque, Santa Fe, and Texas City. Its service district includes Friendswood ISD and the part of Clear Creek ISD located in Galveston County. Lago Mar, a vibrant 2,033-acre master-planned community currently being developed, is the largest tract of land set aside for new home and commercial development south of Dallas, Texas. Its projection of 7,000 new residences will have a major influence on our area. The public/private partnership that is in existence is evidence of the proactive nature of our community.

COM is situated on a beautiful 120-acre campus 15 minutes north of the resort community of Galveston Island and 30 minutes south of Houston. COM boasts the #1 rated Process Technology program in the United States and is responsible for the outstanding training for not only the local economy, but also nationwide petrochemical positions. COM graduates with technical degrees earn the highest starting salaries of any new university or college graduate in the state. COM has four learning centers, including the COM Learning Center – North County in League City, the COM Cosmetology Lab, the Gulf Coast Safety Institute, and the COM Lifelong Learning Center located at Gulfway Plaza in La Marque, Texas. COM also partners with ten local high schools through its Collegiate High School Success program.

COM enrolls approximately 4,000 credit and 1,000 continuing education students each semester. COM’s diverse student body is approximately 48 percent minority that includes 27 percent Hispanic and 17 percent African American. The college prides itself on its participation in Achieving the Dream (ATD) and its designation as a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI).

**Challenges and Opportunities**

The new President of College of the Mainland will work with the College to address the following challenges and opportunities:

1. Seize the opportunities of regional development and support the growth of the student population by expanding programs and facilities.
2. Garner support for a bond election and successfully implement the bond in order to renovate and expand COM’s infrastructure and facilities.

3. Guide and facilitate the reassessment of strategic goals and annual priorities while building consensus and trust and furthering the commitment to student success and inclusion.

4. Empower students, faculty, and staff to foster a college culture that inspires exceptional leadership, supports professional development, and furthers academic excellence.

5. Nurture existing relationships and build new relationships with business and industry, governmental entities, and community organizations.

6. Expand and sustain relationships with the College’s foundation and alumni to advance the College's resource development efforts.

**Ideal Characteristics**

College of the Mainland seeks a visionary and future-focused leader who will continue the College’s tradition of delivering accessible, affordable, and high quality education and who possesses the following characteristics:

1. A student-focused leader dedicated to providing exceptional academic offerings and effectively responding to local and regional workforce needs.

2. Successful experience implementing enrollment management initiatives focused on growth and retention.

3. A visible community leader with a strong commitment to the “community” in community college who will actively engage with constituents throughout the community.

4. Successful experience passing, implementing, and managing a multimillion-dollar bond measure.

5. An active leader who is accessible and visible throughout campus.

6. A visionary leader with a demonstrated commitment to the community college mission who can articulate a compelling future for College of the Mainland.

7. Experience prioritizing, strengthening, and improving an institution’s infrastructure, facilities, and technology.

8. Community-focused leader who is experienced working with foundations, business and industry, K-12 systems, and colleges and universities.
9. A leader who embraces, honors, respects, and celebrates diversity within the student population, including unrepresented, first generation, and at-risk students.

10. A student-focused leader experienced with accreditation, Achieving the Dream initiatives, and an unwavering commitment to academic excellence and unparalleled workforce training.

11. An experienced leader comfortable working with Boards and committed to creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and open communication between the Board and constituents.

12. A strong financial steward with budgetary experience who will appropriately prioritize financial resources and pursue new funding.

13. An effective, honest communicator and exceptional listener who clearly articulates his or her decision making process, welcomes input and demonstrates commitment to listening to all points of view and fostering respect across the college.

14. A collaborative, reflective, and considerate leader who respects and engages all constituents for the betterment of the educational community.

Minimum Qualifications

1. Earned doctorate from a regionally accredited institution is preferred.

2. Progressive senior level administrative experience, preferably at a community college or university.

3. Classroom teaching experience is preferred.
VENTURA COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT
invites applications for the position of:

Chancellor

**SALARY:** Not Displayed

**OPENING DATE:** 10/26/16

**CLOSING DATE:** Continuous

**DESCRIPTION:**
The Ventura County Community College District (VCCCD) welcomes applications for the position of Chancellor. The Chancellor serves as the Chief Executive Officer responsible for District administration in accordance with the California Education Code, accreditation standards and the policies established by the Board of Trustees. The Chancellor reports directly to the Board of Trustees and is delegated authority for the overall operation of the District, including all programs and services involving educational development, student learning, human resources, facilities planning, business services, fiscal affairs, and legislative relations. The Chancellor provides policy recommendations to the Board of Trustees, engages in strategic planning, provides educational leadership, and supports District policies with state and local constituencies.

**COMPETENCIES**
The Board of Trustees seeks an experienced leader demonstrating excellence in the following areas:

**GOVERNANCE**

- Works productively with a five-member elected Board of Trustees in a three-college district.
- Is committed to the participatory governance process.

**STUDENTS & COMMUNITY**

- Listens to and addresses student needs and concerns.
- Is accessible to the colleges and engages the community.
- Is knowledgeable of community colleges’ role in the community and economic development.

**COMMUNICATION & CONSULTATION**

- Maintains a rapport with faculty and staff.
- Demonstrates effective listening and communication skills while remaining responsive in maintaining a climate of trust, collegiality and transparency.

**DIVERSITY**

- Works effectively with diverse populations and embraces the benefits of a multicultural environment.
- Is committed to highest ethical standards in governance/management.
- Possesses the skills necessary to build a sense of community within the District while fostering relationships throughout the county and state.
- Creates/maintains administrative and faculty environments that encourage and support innovation.
- Identifies needs, processes and priorities to make effective decisions when faced with competing interests.
- Demonstrates fiscal responsibility, and the ability to develop and implement resourceful, creative approaches to generating new revenues.
• Understands and embraces technological innovations in student learning and administration.
• Is committed to the collective bargaining process.

ADVOCATE

• Politically astute and an effective communicator with local and state leaders.
• Skillful in evaluation and accreditation processes.

IDEAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CHANCELLOR

• Student-centered leader whose philosophies, strategies, and tactics are guided by their needs and those of the community
• Strategic and data-directed decision maker and informed risk taker in pursuit of student-oriented change
• Strong team builder, engaging internal leaders and constituent groups in a focus on student access and success
• Effective motivator, making a case for pursuit of improvement and an expeditious path to accomplish it
• Successful leader of sound planning, allocating, and evaluating processes related to management of institutional resources (human, fiscal, physical and technological)
• Entrepreneurial developer of external partnerships and funding, aligned with the vision and goals of the institution and focused on student success
• Culturally competent professional who can lead and support diversity and inclusion
• Passionate and visionary educator, aligning with the historic mission of community colleges in the United States
• Courageous and persevering executive who addresses challenges and confrontations, while using creativity and innovation to bring divergent perspectives to consensus, and conflicts to successful resolution
• Enthusiastic leader in recognizing and celebrating institutional achievements and those of its employees, while advocating for personal and professional growth
• Informed and experienced executive regarding the collective bargaining environment, the priority of working effectively with employee groups, and ways of achieving successful negotiation outcomes
• Thoughtful and respectful chief executive officer as the role relates to relationships with the District’s Board of Trustees, California Community College System Office, and other relevant governing bodies, laws and regulations
• Experienced leader who understands the importance of Board/CEO relations and can build a strong collegial working relationship with the Board of Trustees

For more information about this employment opportunity, the District, and the community we serve, please visit the following website: http://chancellorsearch.us/vcccd/

REPRESENTATIVE DUTIES:

Direct the overall operation and general administration of the district pursuant to policies and procedures established by the Board of Trustees and within the framework of collective bargaining agreements and applicable local, state, and federal laws; exercise broad discretionary authority within the framework of Board policy; ensure Board policy is properly developed, reviewed, and executed. E

Establish District and college goals, and monitor progress toward these goals by ensuring that educational, fiscal and facilities plans are developed for Board action and implemented pursuant to such. E

Recommend and be accountable for implementing District rules and regulations related to fiscal management, educational programs, student services, organizational structure and staffing, including the appointment, evaluation, assignment, compensation, transfer and termination of all District personnel, and physical plant and facilities. E

Direct, supervise, and evaluate Presidents and Vice Chancellors. E

Plan and review the educational program of the District on an ongoing basis, in consultation with the college presidents; recommend to the Board of Trustees modifications which will improve the scope and quality of District offerings and related services, and provide for equitable distribution and balance of District curricular offerings among the colleges. E

Submit to the Board of Trustees for study and recommend the annual budget and long-range financial
Ensure compliance with all laws and regulations pertaining to local and state-funded capital construction projects.  

Recommend the organizational structure for the District, including the staffing and the classification and compensation of positions, pursuant to Equal Employment Opportunity principles and guidelines; implement these actions as approved by the Board of Trustees.  

Promote participatory governance in the District by coordinating the establishment and implementation of representative employee groups to review issues and make recommendations on District policy as appropriate.  

Represent the District in the local, statewide, and national communities; represent the District in relationships with other governmental agencies, businesses and the media; advocate on behalf of the District with elected officials, agencies, and organizations that may impact or influence the District's programs and/or resources.  

Serve as official spokesperson on matters relating to board policy; coordinate the scheduling and convening of regular and special meetings and agendas of the Board of Trustees.  

Recommend the establishment of citizen committees, as needed, to review issues and recommendations and advise the District and colleges; promote community involvement in order to promote the value of the District's programs and services to business, industry, civic organizations, and the general public.  

Support, manage and resolve complex issues.  

Provide leadership in the utilization of voter-approved bond funds to meet current and projected student growth.  

Engage and motivate the broad spectrum of staff, faculty, students, and community in developing policies, procedures, and programs that support achievement of the District's mission; promote cohesiveness, professionalism, and respect among all District constituencies; encourage and support teamwork among the colleges and the District Administrative Center.  

Ensure Board policy is properly developed, reviewed and executed.  

Provide sensitivity and responsiveness to special needs and appreciation of diversity in student, staff, and community constituencies; provide student-centered visionary educational leadership.  

\[E = \text{Essential functions}\]

**MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS:**

**Minimum Qualifications**

- Earned master's degree from an accredited institution
- Three years of recent experience in a senior leadership position
- Demonstrated sensitivity to and experience in working with people from diverse racial, ethnic, disabled, and socioeconomic backgrounds

**Preferred Qualifications**

- Earned doctoral degree from an accredited institution
- Five years of recent experience in a senior leadership position in higher education
- A broadly recognized leader in institution(s) known for: facilitating effective access and successful outcomes for students; using data-driven planning, resource allocation and evaluation; and maintaining an orientation toward creating lasting change in a culture of continuous improvement

**SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**

**COMPENSATION AND FRINGE BENEFITS:**

Our compensation package is highly competitive depending upon experience. VCCCD offers comprehensive insurance benefits that include medical, dental, vision and life insurance plans. Executive administrators are provided 20 days of paid vacation leave per year.
APPLICATION PROCEDURE:
Applications will be accepted until the position is filled. To ensure initial consideration, please apply by January 16, 2017. All application materials must be submitted electronically through the District’s online application system located at governmentjobs.com/careers/vcccd. The following materials must be submitted for you to be considered:

- Completed Application for Management Employment
- Resume or Curriculum Vitae
- Letter of application focused on the link between professional qualifications/characteristics and the needs of the District (no longer than 5 pages)
- Unofficial transcripts of graduate study, degrees, and conferral dates (official transcripts of all higher education study and degrees will be required for finalists).
- Names, contact information (current phone numbers and email addresses), and relationship for eight references to include the following: supervisors/board members, management subordinates, administrative assistants, faculty, support staff, leadership peers, and community members

NOTE: Foreign transcript evaluation is required for foreign coursework used to meet minimum qualifications and must be included with your application materials. For a list of recognized organizations providing transcript evaluation services, visit http://www.naces.org/members.htm.

SELECTION PROCESS:
The selection committee will review and screen all applications. The committee will invite the most qualified applicants to an initial interview with the committee. Following the initial interview, the committee will recommend candidates to the Board of Trustees for final consideration. Applicants with disabilities requiring reasonable accommodation during the selection process must inform Ben Duran of PPL (bduran@pplpros.com), in writing, of the need for a reasonable accommodation no later than the application deadline. The request should include a description of the type and extent of the accommodation requested.

The Ventura County Community College District is committed to the principles of equal employment opportunity. It is the District’s policy to ensure that all qualified applicants for employment have full and equal access to employment opportunity and are not subjected to discrimination in any program or activity of the District on the basis of ethnic group identification, race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, gender, physical disability, mental disability, ancestry, sexual orientation, language, accent, citizenship status, transgender status, parental status, marital status, economic status, veteran status, medical condition, or on the basis of these perceived characteristics, or based on association with a person or group with one or more of these actual or perceived characteristics.

CONFIDENTIAL INQUIRIES
The VCCCD Board of Trustees invites you to contact us if you are interested in becoming our next Chancellor. The VCCCD Board of Trustees has retained the consulting firm of PPL, Inc., to assist with the Chancellor search and selection process. Contact either of the following PPL consultants for additional information about the District and/or confidential inquiries about the position.
Dr. Benjamin T. Duran: (209) 761-0534; bduran@pplpros.com
Dr. Donald F. Averill: (909) 790-5056; daverill@pplpros.com

APPLICATIONS MAY BE FILED ONLINE AT:
http://www.vcccd.edu
255 W. Stacey Ave., Suite 150
Ventura, CA 93001
hrmail@vcccd.edu
Dear Small College President

Date Published: October 13, 2015

by Amit Mrig, President, Academic Impressions
Moody’s just released a report predicting that the rate of small college closings will triple by 2017. This has caused some consternation and backlash from small college presidents. I don’t plan to contest or affirm Moody’s prediction; I think what’s more critical to be aware of is that for you and other presidents of small colleges, there is not only a threat but a window of opportunity. Significant and sustained change is needed, but the change you need is within your own control. I have spoken with a number of small college boards and with many of your peers in the president’s seat. And there are five key messages that I want to share.

1. You have to differentiate. Small, student-focused, and a beautiful campus are not differentiators.

How will you compete for students in an oversaturated market? When I ask administrators and board members at small colleges what sets their college apart, they point to their tight-knit community, their close faculty/student relationships, their beautiful campus, or their culture focused on student learning. Hundreds of small liberal arts colleges also have these characteristics. These aren’t truly distinctive—they aren’t competitive advantages. You need to be talking about:
- What are the programs you are most known for?
- Are there specific types of students you serve better than anyone else does?
- How do you know that these are actual strengths of your institution, rather than just aspirations?

2. You don’t have a marketing problem.

If your college is facing multi-year declining enrollment or a decline in the ratio of admits to yields, you may be tempted to respond with short-term investments in marketing and recruiting. But the real issue behind declining enrollment is declining competitiveness; students are choosing to go elsewhere, forcing you to lower your price in order to fill your class. This is not a marketing problem. It’s a problem with your value proposition as a college.

You need to find ways to bridge the academic pillars of the institution and the marketing strategy. Your marketing plan should emerge directly from a deep conversation around your academic offerings—both what you offer and how you offer it. You may have big decisions to think through when determining who are designing your offerings for and what will truly separate you from the competition.

3. Focus is key.

You can’t be all things to all people, and you can’t sustainably keep adding programs to draw students, any more than you can simply cut your way to sustainability. In reality, your college is probably stretched too thin and overprogrammed for your resource base. You need to prioritize and focus. What are you going to discontinue? Where can you make focused investments that will set your institution apart from others?

I think this is a very important and very difficult conversation. It requires that the institution turn its attention from short-term marketing tactics to long-term resource allocation and prioritization on the academic side of the house. And you have to differentiate your resource base so it’s clear what programs are the future and which programs are not moving the institution forward. It has to be about both.

Whatever your focus, it needs to be specific and shared across the key campus stakeholders. It needs to be formed through an alignment of market demands with the academic strengths of the institution. This is the only way to establish a viable strategy for the long-term.

4. You need to have "ruthless patience."

When we interviewed him for our paper Small but Mighty: 4 Small Colleges Thriving in a Disruptive Environment, Lynn University president Kevin Ross spoke about the need for both long-term vision for how to differentiate your college and—just as important—the grit to see it through. In his own case, he stayed the course of a long-term plan through the recession:

"The economic downturn was tricky. We knew that for a couple of years we would have a smaller but higher quality class; our entering class was in the 400s at one point, we knew how long we could sustain that, and we knew we had to stay the course and have what we call ruthless patience. Now our class is closer to 700 students."
If your institution’s long-term plan is to survive economic upheavals, turnover on the cabinet or in the presidency, and momentary crises, your leadership team and board must cultivate “ruthless patience.” You have to stick with initiatives. You have to plan for the long term.

The short tenure of institutional leadership is particularly a challenge here. You can’t let new administrations derail the long-term plan. The role of the board is key here. The board owns the institution and needs to serve as the trustees not only of its fiduciary health but of its long-term vision and plan!

5. You know what you need to do. Do it.

If you can assemble a diverse group of dedicated trustees, administrators, and faculty, you will find that most of the answers to your college’s future are in the room. The biggest question you have to answer is: do you have the will to take your good institution and make it a great institution?

You will have decisions to make in order to focus your attention, but I don’t think knowing what to do will be the hard part.

The hard part is doing what you know you need to do.

I’m confident we have the requisite talent to deal with the challenges we are facing today and I wish you the best in this important journey.

Best,
Amit Mrig

Continue this Conversation

I would love to continue this conversation and learn more about what your campus is doing to differentiate and align mission and market. What challenges are you facing, and how are you overcoming them? How can AI be of service? Please contact me at amit@academicimpressions.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amit Mrig, President and CEO

Amit co-founded Academic Impressions in 2002 to provide research, publishing, and training on issues that directly impact the sustainability of higher education. Under his direction, AI has published hundreds of articles and papers, interactive training programs, and topical and timely webcasts, serving over 50,000 academic and administrative leaders across 3,500 colleges and universities. Amit leads and manages AI’s research, programming, and publications on higher ed leadership development. Many of AI’s research and thought leadership papers have been authored by Amit, including The Other Higher Ed Bubble, Small but Mighty: 4 Small Colleges Thriving in a Disruptive Environment, General Education Reform: Unseen Opportunities, and Meeting the Challenge of Program Prioritization.

Amit has consulted with dozens of higher ed leaders, cabinet members, and board members—discussing current challenges and practical solutions while helping to identify which issues they can address to best impact change at their institution. Amit is a frequent contributor to Forbes, discussing issues in higher education. He also serves as an active board member of The Challenge Foundation, an organization helping low-income students successfully earn a college degree.
by Amit Mig and Daniel Fusch, Academic Impressions
In Denver, CO this March, Academic Impressions convened a select group of forty academic and administrative leaders from diverse colleges and universities to address the question: **What are the skills and qualities that leaders in the future need to have in order to thrive?**

**Why this Conversation is So Critical Now**
Leadership matters. As program facilitator Pat Sanaghan remarked, an institution “cannot rise above its leadership.”
The circumstances colleges find themselves in today -- whether those circumstances are productive or disastrous -- are a product of the decisions and actions (or inaction) of past leaders. If your own institution’s outlook isn’t bright, that’s a leadership issue.
In a time of significant change and stress in the industry, we need to rethink the kind of leadership we need.

**How We Pursued this Conversation**
No one sage has the answers to this complex question. That’s why we called together 40 people from all across an institution’s organizational chart and from diverse types of institutions. We had presidents, chiefs of staff, chief academic officers. We also had several faculty, and administrators from student affairs, HR, enrollment management, institutional advancement, campus safety, and other departments.
We convened this meeting using an “open space” format where the participants created the specific topics for discussion in service of the broader theme of the future of higher education leadership. We could not have predicted or prescribed what topics they suggested or how much interest a given topic would garner. The participants took ownership for creating and organizing the agenda.

*The agenda for an open space meeting is created in real time at the event, so that the most pressing questions and concerns participants bring to the meeting are in fact what we meet to discuss.*
Over the course of a morning we have 25 different small-group discussions about different aspects of leadership including creativity, courageous decision making, breaking down silos, succession planning, disruptive innovation, trust, and many others.

*The open space methodology was pioneered by a man who wanted to replicate and encourage the kind of practical and engaged discussion that occurs during the “coffee breaks” in a typical conference or symposium. He wanted to create an event where the entire meeting would be a structured coffee break.*

**What We Discussed**
In this case, the conversationshigher-ed leaders most wanted to have were about how leaders can:
• Inspire creativity, risk taking, and innovation
• Inspire change and a sense of urgency -- without paralyzing people
• Break down silos and build collaboration
• Cultivate a culture of courageous decision making
• Build trust and relational capital
• Respond to changing student needs and expectations
• Engage in succession planning
• Ensure the success of leaders coming in from outside of higher education

**What We Learned**
At the halfway point of the day, we paused to ask everyone to share their key insights from the morning’s small group discussions. Here is what the participants said:
• “Most—if not all—of us are facing very similar challenges and issues. We are not alone. We’re all trying to stay in the boat on that permanent whitewater.”
• “Fear of change is the big obstacle. 80% of people fear change, and 20% (the visionaries) look forward to it.”
• “We have a lot of smart people in higher ed. We need to take the time away from the day-to-day to reflect, talk, tap that talent. That talent is a strategic asset.”
• “We need partnerships with other institutions, other organizations. We don’t have to lift it alone.”
What We Designed: A Leadership Model for the Future

Following a morning full of dynamic conversations, the group worked together to build a leadership model for the future. To do this, we:

- Shared typed transcripts of the morning sessions (which AI staff prepared during the lunch hour), so that the afternoon could begin with a careful review of 20+ pages of recorded discussion;
- Worked together to identify key skills and qualities that leaders in the future will need to be successful -- beyond just the "givens" of compassion, integrity, etc.
- Created a visual framework and hierarchy for those skills and qualities, categorizing them.

What emerged was a model for the skills and qualities that leaders need if their institutions are to not only survive but thrive in the future. The model focuses on six critical skills that our participants agreed higher-ed needs to both hire for ... and cultivate all levels of leadership within the institution. Academic Impressions will be sharing this model in full in an upcoming report.

Next Steps

There was tremendous energy and excitement during the day. New relationships were formed and existing ones enhanced. Participants shared examples of leaders who model the proposed skillset and shared numerous resources on the various aspects of leadership. Academic Impressions is committed to devoting more research and resources to fleshing out the leadership model, identifying leaders who truly exemplify these attributes, and designing professional development opportunities to build and enhance these skills.

In fact, this effort is core to our mission, which is to contribute ideas, resources, and training to support a more sustainable model for higher education. Helping higher education identify and develop the twenty-first century leadership skill set is key to this. In the months ahead, we will be excited to share with you a deep exploration of the new leadership model the participants at our meeting have proposed. If you:

- Are interested in participating in the conversation,
- Have a powerful example of leadership to share, or
- Want to know about upcoming events and publications from AI on leadership issues,

...then contact Amit Mrig at amit@academicimpressions.com. We would love to continue this conversation with you.
10 Mistakes New Presidents Often Make

October 21, 2016

Friday, October 21, 2016

1:00 - 2:15 p.m. EST

- Negotiating your first-year action items
- Being visible internally while remaining the external face
- Building your senior team
- Managing and supporting senior staff
- The role of informal advisors
- Developing a working relationship with your board president
- Building your relational capital with faculty
- Negotiating an agenda of change versus momentum
- Managing time and setting boundaries
- Understanding the seduction of the leader

LEARNING OUTCOME:

After participating in this online training, you will be able to plan for a president's first year with actions that help the president avoid common mistakes.

Want more information about this event?

Contact Amit Mrig, President and CEO if you'd like additional information about the program agenda.
FOCUS ON THE FUTURE
Making Difficult Decisions
By

Amit Mrig | President | Academic Impressions

Patrick Sanaghan | President | The Sanaghan Group

In dialogue with:

David Angel, President, Clark University (Worcester, MA)
Stephen Jordan, President, Metropolitan State University of Denver (Denver, CO)
Elizabeth Kiss, President, Agnes Scott College (Decatur, GA)
Robert Kustra, President, Boise State University (Boise, ID)
Steve Titus, President, Iowa Wesleyan University (Mount Pleasant, IA)
Karen Whitney, President, Clarion University (Clarion, PA)

Edited by

Daniel Fusch, Director of Research and Publications, Academic Impressions
Today’s challenges facing higher education are immense and well-documented. With fewer students attending college, stagnant completion rates, fundamental questions about quality and value, and expenses continuing to outpace revenues, leaders in higher education are under significant pressure to reimagine their business models and create a more sustainable path forward.

Each institution is responding to these challenges in its own way. Some are making difficult cuts to academic programs to balance the budget; others are revamping the curriculum and creating new programs and offerings; some are creating bold new partnerships with their community; and still others are repositioning their brands to more clearly convey what makes them unique.

Regardless of the path taken, the circumstances are always complex, the decisions always difficult, and the outcomes always uncertain. And no matter how successful the result, the ultimate action will be unpopular with some stakeholders, on- or off-campus. So how do leaders operate in these situations?

That is the subject of the third event in our series, *Presidential Dialogues: Focus on the Future*. We convened six leaders from very different institutions, and with different leadership styles and approaches. These leaders proved to be highly credible, thoughtful, and strategic in how they navigate and endure the hard work of leading an institution.

Making effective decisions is difficult under any circumstance and for any leader. When you are the president of a college or university, all of the easy decisions have been made by other people. So how do presidents operate in today’s environment? How do they make important decisions with imperfect information? How do they proceed when even great ideas will meet with resistance? What concerns them and what excites them about the future of higher education? These are some of the questions that guided our conversation.

What emerged is an informal model that we hope is helpful for leaders—at any level of the institution—for making difficult decisions when the stakes are high. We hope their experiences and insights are useful to you.

*Progress occurs when courageous, skillful leaders seize the opportunity to change things for the better.*

- Harry S. Truman
An Informal Model for Making Difficult Decisions

Our current models of leadership tend to place a higher value on leaders who are decisive, but making good decisions, especially difficult ones, is not an innate skill. It is honed over time, and through practice, seasoning, and reflection. Effective leaders know that indecision is still a decision, one that usually makes matters worse. And yet these same leaders know that even with the best information and intentions, their decisions will still be flawed. So how, then, do leaders make good decisions?

In our conversations with these six presidents, a simple and informal, but powerful model evolved. To make difficult decisions, leaders need the courage to act, a relational skillset, and a keen understanding of their operating environment. We will unpack these three dimensions of decision making below.

Acting Courageously

When you think of courage, you usually think of a hero’s actions: a fireman going into a burning building to save someone, or a police officer risking her life for the safety of another. In these matters of life and death, courage is about bravery, heroism, and is usually an individualized action.

In organizational life, courage means something different. It is about a willingness to persist against the odds. It comes from a place of deep reflection and sense of purpose. Courage in a leadership context is about being willing to act for the greater good. Our presidents all understood and embraced the broader mission, vision, and values of the institution’s work. This framework was critical in allowing them to elevate the conversation and ensured that the institution fulfilled its noblest aspirations, even when that required difficult decisions to be made.

Taking on the most important issues (playing the long game)

Each of the institutions represented had a unique and rich history, beset with numerous contradictions and complications. A few examples: a founding member of the AAU with a liberal arts mission, a women’s college operating in a post-Sweet Briar world, an institution serving a growing student population with whom it has a challenging history.

These presidents could have operated on the margins—making incremental changes that would preserve the status quo and appease the most people. Rather, they have embraced the uniqueness of their institutions and have fought to ensure that their institutions would endure for decades to come. Indeed, they are finding ways to manage competing priorities and tensions, grow in an unfavorable environment, and improve decades of strained town-gown relations.

For one president, this meant asking two pivotal questions: Are we good? Are we relevant? When considered, these are incredibly powerful questions. When answered with honesty, these answers may not reveal what everyone wants to hear. “We’re more concerned with the second question,” the president commented. “The liberal arts are relevant to society as long as we’re willing to adapt and reinvent liberal arts education. If our vision for education hasn’t changed in fifty years, then we’re not relevant.” That may be a controversial statement to some, but elevating the conversation in this way puts the most important issue front and center and creates the space for discussion, debate, and action.

To further illustrate this point, one president spoke of responding to a local need and seeing an “imperative” to act. This president told a powerful story of an institution serving an inner-city and strongly Hispanic demographic, a local community that had been wounded in past town/gown interactions, as much of the local historic neighborhood had been replaced by the campus a few decades before. When this president began his tenure at the institution, he noted this history, the rapidly changing demographics of the area, and the fact that there was no Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) in the state. Becoming an HSI would simultaneously help close a significant achievement gap and begin to repair and rebuild town/gown relationships.
The president could have stopped there—after all, the goal is a win-win, serving the local and regional community and creating a sustainable student pipeline for years to come. But in this community, as in many across our country, undocumented students were a numerous and neglected segment of an already underserved population. So this president made it a mission to serve them. This decision was especially courageous in light of multiple consecutive years of the state legislature (the same one his institution is dependent on) defeating a local version of the DREAM Act.

At significant risk to his employment and to the institution’s short-term standing with the local legislature, this president determined to pursue the long game in terms of his institution’s service to its city and region. He didn’t walk in blindly. The institution prepared by producing a sophisticated financial, political, and legal analysis of the decision’s likely impact, after which the board backed a plan to serve undocumented students. The political pushback was significant, immediate, and included thousands of articles of hate mail and hate email daily, as well as public investigations into the legality of the institution’s plan.

In the face of all that opposition, the institution enrolled 235 undocumented students that summer, offering them a reduced tuition achieved not via a subsidy, but by calculating the cost and setting the rate accordingly. The local business community rallied behind the institution, and when the next legislative session passed the bill, the institution was credited with having led the way. Today, the institution enrolls 390 undocumented students—60% of the undocumented students in the state. This took courage, persistence, thoughtful planning, and a moral stance, asking “what’s the right thing to do here?”

What enables courage?

When we asked How did you do it? How did you keep going in the face of sustained and powerful opposition? — the responses from that president and the other five were striking. “To be a good president, you have to be willing to be fired at any time,” several of the presidents insisted, speaking to both the need to honor what’s best for the institution, not what’s best for the president’s individual job security, and the need to separate one’s own identity from the job. “There’s a big difference between being the president and doing the presidency. A lot of people want to be the president. There’s a big difference. This is real work. You are not the presidency; the presidency is something that you do.”

The presidents emphasized two things that enabled them to bring that kind of focus and courage (as well as the necessary detachment) to their work: personal support and time away for reflection.

Personal support

“These things are huge,” one president told us, “and we don’t talk about them. Let’s be candid: how often do we hear about one of our colleagues committing suicide? You need to have someone to talk to, someone to give advice or just listen. I see a “swim buddy” about how to keep my head straight and to be honest and caring with me, when I’ve done something that is unpopular, but right and I’m getting raked over the coals for it on social media.”

Other presidents spoke about turning to utilizing therapists or executive coaches—individuals who are objective and impartial and can provide a sounding board and counsel when the president needs to share the emotional frustration of swimming against the current. “We’ve used executive coaches,” two presidents told us. “Successful presidents use executive coaches. You want someone who is really neutral and detached to walk with you over the course of a year—this has a profound impact. It’s the common practice in corporate America; we need to get it into our sector.”

Being able to check opposing views and their own moments of self-doubt against an objective sounding board helped these presidents hold fast to their sense of purpose.

Time for reflection

Just as important to these presidents was the idea of time away—to recharge, reflect, and reaffirm that sense of purpose. One president cited the principle of devoting one hour a day, one day a week, one week a month, and one month a year to reflection. “That much time away is never going to happen,” the president acknowledged, “but we can start.”
Most of the presidents in the room had a location outside their cities—sometimes outside their states—that they could retreat to for time alone, time for thinking. This might be a cottage on a lake, or a town where no one knows them by sight. “When I’m there,” one president remarked, “I’m all in, no guilt for taking time for myself.” Having that complete, though temporary, separation from campus and public life provides both the refreshment and the serious reflection time needed to empower a courageous president in pushing forward.

Is this the Hill You Want to Die On? (Choosing Your Battles)

What also set these presidents apart—and allowed them to proceed with such courage and fortitude—was that they knew they had to choose their battles carefully. They couldn’t pursue everything they needed or wanted to; they had to engage in deep reflection and “soul-searching” at the outset of taking action. They had considered the need, the opportunity, and the cost (personal, political, and professional) of the decisions they faced.

One president, describing himself as a “very cognitive decision maker,” shared three questions that he asked when he first saw the need to act, and his answers to those questions gave him the will to pursue the changes needed at his institution. Those questions were:

- Is what we’re doing important?
- Even if what we’re going to do is worthy, is it worth it?
- Can we actually get it done?

This president led an extensive curriculum redesign after a series of conversations with regional employers revealed that these employers were often finding that they had to “de-educate” college graduates. These employers shared that they were now looking to recruit from colleges and universities that prepared graduates not just with specialized skills and knowledge, but with fortitude, courage, critical thinking, and with the ability, when placed in challenging situations, to make decisions that reflected their organization’s ethics and values. This precipitated an effort to revise and revitalize the undergraduate curriculum around those competencies.

But though many of the curricular changes this president pushed for were worthy, he reflected that it was important to decide which changes were worth it. Some were; some weren’t. For example, he recalled closing a particular academic program, “I used up 95% of my relational and psychic capital doing it. In the end, I saved the institution a minor sum of money. We got it done, but it wasn’t the best decision. It used up so much energy and political capital that could have been spent on more essential changes. Now, I do this gut-check first: Is it important? Is it worth it? Can I get it done?”

These presidents persisted in driving change by focusing on the long game, beginning with that gut-check and proceeding with an awareness of the cost, and using reflection and counsel from personal confidants to help stay focused and energized over the long haul.

Developing a Relational Skillset

There is no roadmap for navigating declining funding and increasing expectations, and there is no instruction manual for preserving the academic history of an institution while making it more relevant to today’s demands. The operating environment in higher education is too complex for a leader to simply be “smart enough” to know the right answer in each situation.

Our presidents were keenly aware of this, and were each not only courageous, but very skillful in their approaches. They needed unfiltered information and diverse points of view, so they invested the time to create trustful relationships with others across campus. This was not an episodic technique; they led and continue to lead through relationships.

Four important relational skills emerged as these six presidents spoke:

- Building trust and relational capital
- Acting as a convener
- Leveraging the senior team’s insights and feedback
- Seeking multiple perspectives
Building trust and relational capital

If the president has courage, but no skill in building trust and relational capital, he or she will be fighting an uphill battle alone. Trust is hard to earn and easy to lose, but these six presidents had concrete suggestions for managing it. “Don’t do anything without making sure the faculty know it’s coming,” one president advised. “You don’t want them to read about it in the morning paper.” Investing the time in keeping everyone informed, proactively, is critical.

While one president described the tribulations of wrestling with a long-standing faculty union, another described a scenario in which the faculty led transformative change. “Faculty are portrayed in the media as intransitive and reluctant to change,” this president noted, “but, they can be change agents in the right context and the right culture, and the president’s role is to create that right context and foster the right culture.”

How does a president do that? Three strategies surfaced during our conversation:

1. **Recognize that fear of change is really about fear of loss, and be attentive to how that fear is impacting people.** One president described a scenario in which a consultant presented findings to the faculty that the president and the faculty had already discussed for months. The findings should have come as no surprise. “But all hell broke loose,” the president recalled. “It was all emotion. The very same people were saying ‘We are already doing this’ and ‘We could never do this.’ Reflecting on it later, I realized: The need for change was finally real. People now knew we had a limited time to actually redesign the curriculum. I realized that what they needed now was care.” In higher education—and particularly for faculty—one’s profession is often tied very closely to one’s identity. This can heighten the fear of loss. Some presidents make the early mistake of charging ahead into change without first providing space for their community to work through that fear.

2. **Deploy your home and personal life strategically.** The president in the scenario above launched a “Wine and Cheese” initiative. Over the course of several weeks, the president hosted every faculty member at home, in small groups. In that more relaxed and informal environment, the president asked questions that mattered: *How are you feeling about these changes? What scares you the most?* Several weeks later, the faculty were ready to schedule their own retreat to plan how to implement the change needed. What made the difference was the personal outreach to provide time and a safe space where constituents could voice and work through their fear of loss.

3. **Younger faculty are closer to the future.** One president we spoke with has made it a regular practice to identify younger faculty who believe in the institution’s future and desire change. A few times a year, this president holds an informal luncheon with seven junior faculty. “I get amazing intelligence from these faculty,” the president remarked, “rather than waiting for information to trickle up to me through the traditional channels. As a president, I need to rely on the people on the ground—both faculty and staff—who will tell me the truth.” One mistake some presidents make is to listen to and learn from only members of the institution’s cabinet. In one case, a president told the story of one dysfunctional division that persisted for years until a front-line staff-person wrote an email to the president, prompting an investigation. “I would have found out about the issue much sooner,” the president recalled, “if I’d been listening to and learning from staff closer to the ground.” A president needs to be trusted by not only the top leadership of the institution, but also the faculty and staff who work with students every day. Being visible, and more importantly, accessible, is important for any president. They need to be proactive in seeking others’ perspectives and aspirations and considering them appropriately.

**Acting as a convener**

A president with a lot of relational capital to draw on can achieve momentous and difficult changes — but often only by convening the right people to drive those changes. There is risk involved in doing so, but it is essential for tackling adaptive challenges — the challenges that don’t have easy or clear answers, and for which there is no “playbook” (e.g. lowering costs, while simultaneously improving quality).
The president’s position is unique: this is a leader who can look across campus, break down silos, and bring people together to discuss the institution’s future — especially people who otherwise would never meet in dialogue.

One president of a liberal arts college, suggesting that “sometimes you have to do something risky,” described a series of retreats during which faculty and trustees met for serious deliberation about the future of the institution. “Connecting these two perspectives was incredibly important for us,” she recalled. Convening different groups is not without risk, but is the best way to create an informed and shared picture of the future; and it can engender the necessary trust to move forward. This is essential to fostering the creativity and risk tolerance that will be necessary to tackle the adaptive challenges facing higher education.

This is not to suggest that every such conversation will be scripted and led by the president; often, the president’s role is simply to commission the right process and start the conversation. “You can harness shared governance in the service of institutional transformation,” one president advised, describing the process used to undergo a rapid undergraduate curriculum redesign. In that case, rather than appoint a committee to oversee the redesign, the president established a process whereby faculty nominated and elected six representatives who manifested credibility and trust. “Five of these six actually matched who I had wanted to choose,” the president recalled. The difference was that the faculty had elected their own representatives.

During working meetings throughout the change effort, faculty leaders facilitated the rapid election of “pop up” task forces that would be tasked with developing one aspect of the curriculum design prior to the next meeting. This ensured that the change effort moved at a rapid clip, and when efforts threatened to derail, the strategy of electing a temporary, one-month task force to address the situation provided an alternative to direct intervention from the president, which may not have been as welcome and may have served only to exacerbate tensions.

These tactics are driven by the perspective that faculty are not the opposition, but rather that the faculty contain the knowledge and the drive to get change done. The key is to empower those who are ready to lead that change — “Create space for your people to lead,” one president advised. “Go where the energy is.” At several institutions, faculty were highly siloed within their disciplines, and mid-career and senior faculty were restricted by the requirements of tenure and promotion, so that they simply didn’t have the capacity or weren’t incentivized to engage in broader institutional issues. In those cases, convening a process where younger faculty were included was critical.

**Sidebar in the Presidential Conversation:**

Current events were top of mind for our six presidents and as we discussed the role of university leader as convener, one participant acknowledged the connection to broader societal issues. Universities are unique places where multiple views are tolerated, discussion and debate is valued, and civility and respect are prized. As one president eloquently stated, our universities must become “incubators of inclusion” where we engage in the difficult discussion of race, class, and privilege in this country. Creating these spaces for dialogue will also take courage, skill, and a deep appreciation of the multiple contexts and perspectives we each bring to this conversation.

**Leveraging the senior team’s insights and feedback**

Besides building relational capital and convening critical conversations across campus, presidents who are preparing to make difficult decisions need to cultivate a senior team who trusts them and believes in a shared vision. If you have a senior team who trusts
you and is trusted by the institution, the university rises. This happens not only because a highly effective senior team helps ensure implementation of strategic initiatives, but also because a senior team can serve to check the president’s thinking and provide honest feedback on the president’s perspective. In fact, that’s one of the best roles the senior team can serve, and candid feedback from a trusted team is absolutely critical to a president who has difficult decisions to make.

One president we spoke with does a 360 assessment annually, and speaks to the importance of being open, as well as humble and vulnerable, with the senior team. “Asking for help is not a weakness,” another president stressed. “I tell my senior team: I don’t have to be right, but we do. I need their input if we’re to succeed in enhancing the experience for students.”

Presidents can fall prey to what Pat Sanaghan calls the “seduction of the leader syndrome,” meaning that the higher you advance within an institution, the less access a leader has to information about themselves. Unless a president is open in asking for help and visibly rewards the giving of feedback, it is likely that any feedback the president receives will be less than candid. If your senior team doesn’t believe they can push back against your ideas and be heard, then the robust, collaborative culture you need in order to propel change efforts forward will not exist. The ability to encourage, receive, and learn from the senior team’s feedback is a critical leadership skill. When you receive honest feedback and reward it quickly, you send the message that this feedback is appreciated and wanted.

**Seeking multiple perspectives**

In the same vein, presidents—and the institutions they lead—can run the risk of “listening to themselves too much.” This theme emerged repeatedly in our conversation with the six presidents, and all of them emphasized how critical it is for the president to bring in fresh ideas from sources both internal and external to the institution. Internally, this means identifying the “pulse keepers” who see opportunities first, as well as the “cultural travelers” who can communicate these opportunities across divisions, between different constituencies.

“The most useful thing to me,” one president noted, “is to have people who come at problems and think about problems differently than I do. I look to my board for some of these people; we have a lot of finance people on the board, people who are involved in hedge funds and investments. Those people think about problems in a different way than I do, because of the kind of risk analysis that they do. I need people around me who will challenge me.”

Externally, seeking multiple perspectives means listening to the market. For example, one president routinely brought in employers who were interested in connecting with students—the CEO of Whole Foods, and the #2 executive of IDEO—to serve as professors of practice and as mentors for students. These external experts and others also provided the administration and the faculty with valuable insight into the kind of interdisciplinary and collaborative work graduates would participate in within their organizations, the kind of work they hope the institution will prepare students for.

Another president shared the example of “market testing” new undergraduate curricula. This president engaged consultants to model potential curricula and learning outcomes with seventeen-year-old high school students, to determine which potential directions were perceived as best meeting that demographic’s life and career needs and goals.

Effective presidents are defined not only by their courage in staying the course, but by their skills at building trust, convening the cross-boundary conversations needed, cultivating the senior team and encouraging their honest feedback, and seeking a wide variety of both internal and external perspectives on the change needed.

**Knowing Your Context**

When making decisions, courage and skill will still not be enough unless also paired with a deep understanding of the institution’s culture and operating context. Higher education is incredibly diverse; the right approach for one institution likely will not work at another. This is why the diversity of our group was so important—we wanted to hear from large institutions and small,
selective and open-access, rural and urban, and from representatives of multiple regions. So many factors contribute to the way an institution will understand and define their challenges, and the way they will seek and pursue opportunities.

The key is knowing how to take bold action in ways that are authentic to the culture of the institution and aligned with its mission and values. The president must understand several constituencies and the culture, and must be able to shape a narrative for the institution’s future that speaks to the institution’s unique operating context. The question the president has to find answers to is: What can preserve the identity, history, and mission of the institution while making it more sustainable and relevant for years to come?

**Understanding your constituencies, the culture, and the needs**

All six presidents spoke to the importance of listening to the institution’s culture as a prerequisite step to becoming “culture shapers” or “culture shifters.” “We’re like mayors,” one president remarked. “I once heard a president give a speech about how many constituencies he served: 28. It’s an outrageous number. I don’t know how he got it. But I can easily come up with 10 or 15.”

Understanding the needs and demands of these varied constituencies is as crucial as it is complex—because, as Peter Drucker famously said, and as each of the presidents in this conversation reminded us, “culture eats strategy for breakfast.” Another of the presidents told us, “The president has to ask smart questions. You have to recognize that an institutional culture is a really complex ecosystem. There are so many different players, each of whom can and do claim to be at the heart of the institution. Appreciate the complexity of that ecosystem and be a cultural traveler. Interact productively with these different and diverse constituencies.”

Another president added that for these reasons, the president’s “warrant for leadership” is something that comes not only from the governing board that hires and evaluates the president, but also from the faculty, the staff, and the community. A president needs to understand the degree of readiness for change within these constituencies, and needs to forecast how these constituencies will respond. “All places want to change until they know what’s demanded of them,” one president remarked.

One president described this contextual awareness by borrowing Henry Mintzberg’s metaphor of the potter’s clay. As you shape the clay over time, effective leadership requires knowing how much pressure to put on the form developing from the clay. Too much, and it comes apart. Too little, and the implement you’re shaping fails to take form. “You have to understand when to back off, and when to put more pressure on and drive the agenda.” Patience, persistence, and compassion are key here.

**Shaping the narrative**

Besides shaping the “clay” of the institution’s culture, the president must also be adept at communicating the need for difficult decisions in a way that speaks to the institution’s specific operating context. The urgency of a crisis will make some decisions possible that would not be possible otherwise. When the institution is faced with significant headwinds (i.e. declining enrollment, dwindling state support, poor retention, etc.), the president will be focused on the institution’s survival, making decisions to build the institution’s resilience in order to weather the storm intact.

But in cases where no overt crisis is present—when the winds are calmer, but the president can see a storm brewing ahead—the president must still find ways to instill a sense of urgency to act. In the absence of an immediate and galvanizing emergency, how can a president shape that story?

“Our long-enduring institutions have thick cultures,” one president advised. “That’s why you need to be a good reader of the culture, history, and aspirations of the institution. Presidents who come in proposing a 90-degree change often get run out of town. More often, you can find a narrative for change that connects with the ambitions and goals laid out in the strategic plan—that harnesses those dreams already embedded in the culture to move the institution forward.”

Another president gave the example of arriving at the institution and finding in the strategic plan a (largely neglected) aspiration to be an urban research university.
Seeing the need and the opportunity to become a metropolitan research university, the president used the language of the strategic plan to help shape the narrative in a way that would both be embraced by and empower the institution’s constituents. “They thought I was a great genius of vision,” the president reflected, “but actually the idea was out of their own strategic plan—it had been buried in there and just needed to be surfaced.”

Conclusion

For the six presidents in this conversation, the trifecta of courage, skill, and context proved a useful model for discussing how presidents can be informed, empowered, and effective in making difficult decisions. This represents a departure from traditional models for presidential leadership. Several presidents alluded to the fact that, culturally, we acclaim resolute decision makers or heroic, charismatic personalities. But these six presidents were diverse in leadership styles, approaches, and personalities, and all of them were skeptical of the value of decisive action unaccompanied by deep understanding of the institution’s culture and deep efforts to build trust and collaboration.

In the pages that follow, you will find their advice for new presidents—advice that reflects the different personalities of these six executive leaders, but that also reflects one accord about where the priorities of the president of the twenty-first century lie and what it will take to serve those priorities. You will also find a worksheet to help guide you in the reflection and analysis needed when you are considering and preparing for a difficult decision.
# Worksheet for Approaching Difficult Decisions

**Questions to Guide My Reflection & Planning**

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<td>What are the emerging trends/issues?</td>
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<td>Is there a &quot;storm&quot; looming?</td>
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<td>Who are my thought partners?</td>
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<td>What do they see also?</td>
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<td>How can I involve others in the seeing and sensing?</td>
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<td>What is my early thinking about the situation?</td>
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<td>What's the best path forward here?</td>
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<td>With my gut? What is my intuition telling me?</td>
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<td>What's the upside of this path forward?</td>
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<td>Am I listening to people?</td>
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<td>Where will I get institutional support?</td>
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<td>From my senior team?</td>
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<td>From relationships with faculty?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Where will I get personal support?</td>
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<td>From coaching? Therapy? Confidants? Family?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>If I look out a year from now, what do I hope to see?</td>
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<td>What might get in the way of that picture?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Am I up for this? Can I do it, really?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What do my confidants and friends say?</td>
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Advice for New Presidents

We asked each of the six presidents what advice they would offer for presidents making the transition to a new institution.

**David Angel**, President, Clark University (Worcester, MA)
The leadership you need to practice is a learned and cultivated ability. You need to cultivate the trifecta of leadership, skill, and courage. This is something you have to learn in a disciplined way.

**Stephen Jordan**, President, Metropolitan State University of Denver (Denver, CO)
There’s a saying, ‘What you do speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you say.’ You are judged on your actions. Walking the talk is really important.

**Elizabeth Kiss**, President, Agnes Scott College (Decatur, GA)
Bring a capacious curiosity to the role. You need to be questioning. Asking smart questions, asking the right questions of your students, your colleagues, of the board—is part of the way we lead.

**Robert Kustra**, President, Boise State University (Boise, ID)
Don’t stop listening. Keep an open spot on your calendar for lunch. If you are in your office with the door closed, having soup for lunch, that might be a problem. You could be sharing that lunch with someone. So have a rule in your office: “Get me out of my office.” Do reserve time for reflecting and thinking about the job, but do make time for people, too.

**Steve Titus**, President, Iowa Wesleyan University (Mount Pleasant, IA)
Help is the essential four-letter word a president has to embrace. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a sign of wisdom and maturity. Your warrant for leadership will depend on your capacity to seek counsel.

**Karen Whitney**, President, Clarion University (Clarion, PA)
A good president is comfortable in their own skin, aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and able to communicate during a stressful time what they do well, what they don’t do well, and what they are going to do about that. Living it every day is the hard part. Listen, communicate, do, communicate, listen, communicate, reflect, communicate, repeat.
Continue the Conversation

We hope you enjoyed our complimentary paper Presidential Dialogues: Making Difficult Decisions. As we continue to conduct the Presidential Dialogues to address the issues today’s higher-ed leaders face, I would love to get to know you and your institution better. If you found this paper insightful, we can share other resources for college and university leaders, and there may be further opportunities for us to build a relationship. As you look to make the difficult decisions for your campus, I’d love to find out how we can help and I would welcome the opportunity to talk with you. Please feel free to reach out to me at:

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About Academic Impressions

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BUILDING LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

Patrick Sanaghan
President, The Sanaghan Group
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Dr. Sanaghan serves as the head of The Sanaghan Group, an organizational firm specializing in leadership development, executive coaching, strategic planning, and leadership transitions. Pat has worked with over 200 campuses and hundreds of organizations in the last twenty-five years. He has taught leadership to thousands of leaders in higher education, and helped over one hundred campuses conduct collaborative, transparent strategic planning processes.

He is the co-author/author of six books, numerous articles, and several monographs in the fields of strategic planning, leadership, and change management. His most recent books include: *Collaborative Leadership in Action* and *How to Actually Build an Exceptional Team*. 
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RESILIENCE

“Resilience is the capacity to bounce back from misfortune, disruptive change and failure.”
- Rebecca Shambaugh (2010)

“The ability to recover from illness, depression, adversity or the like; buoyancy.”
- Dictionary.com
RESILIENCE: MOVING FORWARD DESPITE OVERWHELING ODDS

Currently, leadership “resilience” is a hot topic in the arenas of change management, organizational development and leadership. Hundreds of books and articles have been written about resilience over the last twenty years. We are gaining a deeper understanding of the complexity and power of resilience as it relates to effective leadership—and more importantly, how we might teach resilience to our leaders.

Resilience can be a perplexing and baffling subject to understand:

- Why do some people get paralyzed by challenges and crisis, while others use these same incidents as springboards for change and growth?
- How do some people endure real difficulties over time, yet remain steadfast and quite positive?
- Why do children, who are often valiantly resilient to life’s challenges, tend to lose their resilience and “buoyancy” as they get older?
- It seems that resilience can become smaller and smaller and more brittle over time. How do you nurture personal resilience so that it remains with you throughout your lifetime?

Why is resilience so difficult? Steve Snyder (2002) in his Harvard Business Review article explores this notion in depth: “It requires courage to confront painful reality—the faith that there will be a solution, when one is not immediately evident and the tenacity to carry on, despite a nagging gut feeling that the situation is hopeless.”

This is the essence of effective leadership, to continue forward despite the seemingly overwhelming odds.

The “adaptive” challenges facing higher education today will continue to be daunting, ambiguous and complex, with no easy solutions. Leaders must learn to lead in a different way, leading while they are learning, in the full view of everyone. It will take resiliency, tenacity and humility to lead our campuses into the future. Resilience will be one of the most important leadership capacities for everyone who aspires to really lead.
WHAT YOU’LL FIND IN THIS PAPER

In the pages that follow, I will:

- Share some of the most recent research on resilience.
- Begin to identify the critical characteristics of resilient leaders.
- Suggest a set of practical strategies for leaders to consider as they develop their own resilience.
- Share some resources and books that might be helpful to interested leaders who want to continue their own learning journey about resilience.

LEADING IN THE PERMANENT WHITEWATER

But how do you learn to be more resilient while under great stress and while living in the “permanent white water” (Vaill, 1996) that we are experiencing in higher education?

MINI CASE STUDY

I know of one president who had to fire one third of his staff and faculty during the first week of his presidency. How do you continue to lead after that? How do you create hope after that? How do you rebuild trust? How does the campus “bounce back” from that? He will need all the resilience he can muster to deal with the tough difficulties and challenges ahead. It will be a daunting and sticky journey, and the odds are against him in this “turnaround” situation.

“A turnaround is a testament of a company’s lack of resilience. A turnaround is a transformation tragically delayed.”

- Hamel & Valikangas, 2003
Different fields of study (e.g., urban planning, transportation, politics, climate change, disaster response) define resilience in dramatically different ways. The focus of this paper is on personal resilience. I will use Andrew Zolli’s definition of resilience from his wonderful book, *Resilience: Why Things Bounce Back*, as a working model to describe the type of leadership resilience this paper will discuss.

“Resilience is the capacity of a system, enterprise or person to maintain its core purpose and integrity in the face of dramatically changed circumstances.”

- Zolli, 2013

Zolli goes on to explain that we may never return to our prior environment after experiencing this kind of difficult and powerful change. In fact, we will find ourselves living in a “new normal” where our usual models, frameworks and practices might prove irrelevant and ineffective. How do you then lead under these circumstances, when there are no maps or recipes to help guide the way? It is our capacity for resilience that will enable us to lead under stressful and ambiguous circumstances.

In the enduring whitewater that higher education is trying to navigate, and with a future filled with adaptive challenges, complexity and ambiguity (Sanaghan and Jurow, 2011), we must be able to teach and develop our leadership resilience or we will fail.

Setbacks, failures and mistakes will be inevitable (Farson and Keyes, 2003; Gladwell, 2008; Heifetz, Grashaw and Linsky, 2009; Griswell, 2009). How our leaders deal with these seemingly negative situations will determine their effectiveness and define their leadership.
CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT LEADERS

In a seminal *HBR* article, “How Resilience Works” (2002), Diane Coutu identifies three essential characteristics of resilient individuals. Many researchers and practitioners are aligned with her view. Her thinking will provide us with a beginning framework for understanding individual resilience and its implications for leaders.

1. THEY HAVE A STAUNCH ACCEPTANCE OF REALITY

   “Facing reality is grueling work.”

   - Diane Coutu (2002)

Resilient individuals look at a crisis, challenge or failure straight on and don’t sugarcoat anything about it. They don’t deny how difficult a situation is, nor do they use platitudes (e.g., “never lose the opportunity of a crisis”) to explain things away. Yet—and this is an important finding—together with their stark realism, they still have realistic faith that things will get better and that they will come out whole on the other end.

This is not a Pollyannaish optimism or a false hope that everything will be okay no matter what, but a deep faith that things will get better, and that they will endure the crisis or challenge. This faith creates a powerful touchstone for resilient individuals and a humble confidence that keeps them moving forward in spite of difficult circumstances.

This staunch acceptance of reality is a pervasive theme in the research on resiliency (Pulley and Wakefield, 2002; Griswell and Jennings, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Maddi, 2005), and is foundational to understanding resilient leadership.
Cortu and others speak about vice admiral Jim Stockdale (one of the most decorated soldiers in modern military history) who endured many years of beatings and torture by the Vietcong in the infamous Hanoi Hilton. Jim Collins, author of *Good to Great* (2001), interviewed Stockdale for his book and asked what coping strategy Stockdale used during his captivity.

“I never lost faith in the end of the story. I never doubted, not only that I would get out, but also that I would prevail in the end and turn the experience into the defining event of my life; which, in retrospect, I would not trade.” Stockdale continues: “This is a very important lesson. You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end, which you can never afford to lose, with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality – whatever they might be.”

Collins called this way of thinking the **Stockdale Paradox**: deal straight on with the difficult situation or crisis and don’t lose faith that you will endure in the end.

### 2. THEY HAVE A CLEAR SENSE OF PURPOSE AND MEANING

Resilient leaders believe that they are serving something bigger and beyond themselves. This enables them to endure hardship because there is a noble purpose to their lives, and they can see meaning beyond the challenge or crisis. To resilient leaders, suffering is not just punishment or “mean”; difficult experiences hold lessons. These leaders learn valuable life skills, and develop constructive attitudes and methods for coping. They report that these difficulties clarify and deepen their “lived” values and core principles (Pulley and Wakefield: 2001; Griswell and Jenkins, 2009; Zolli, 2013).

This sense of meaning enables resilient individuals to act on the courage of their convictions and take decisive action in ambiguous and uncertain situations. They are clear about who they are and what they are here to do. Their values anchor them through challenging times, and they focus on what matters most.

Their lives become “a search for meaning” (as the famous psychiatrist Victor Frankl might state) through all the distress and adversity. In many ways, difficult challenges become ennobling and help shape the core of the person, even help define who they really are.

“A happy life consists not in the absence but in the mastery of hardships.”

- Helen Keller
3. THEY HAVE AN UNCANNY ABILITY TO IMPROVISE

Resilient leaders make do with whatever is at hand. They have what French anthropologist Claude Levi-Straus called *bricolage*, a kind of inventiveness and improvisation where people use whatever tools and resources are available (Coutu, 2002). People who have bricolage don’t complain about what they don’t have, but use their creativity to solve problems and take risks, dealing with challenges in unconventional ways.

Resilient people possess intellectual curiosity. When they encounter hurdles along the way, they are able to explore possibilities. They realize that there are rarely recipes or formulas for real challenges and problems. And, as Ben Horowitz suggests (2014), they are very good at focusing on the road, not the walls. They don’t deny the challenges and blockages, but they aren’t overwhelmed by them. They keep their “eyes on the prize” and focus on what they need to accomplish; with their goal(s) clearly in mind, they do whatever is necessary to get through the difficult times.

We need to teach our higher education leaders how to deal with the tough issues head on and be transparent with their communication and their decision making processes. Platitudes and slogans aren’t what is needed when a campus is trying to manage a looming crisis. The facts need to be communicated in no uncertain terms, and leaders need to create a collective faith (not a false hope) that we can get through this together.

During a challenge or a crisis, leaders need to create clear goals and objectives that people can understand, and they need to remind people that the work they do serves the mission and values of their institution. A noble purpose is an enabler of courageous action and hard work. Each of our campuses’ missions serve honorable and enduring values. In higher education, our communities are already infused with purpose and meaning, and we need to use this as a strategic resource to deal with hardship and onerous challenges.

Lastly, teaching our leaders to take risks, and to be more creative and inventive provides them with the ability to improvise and adapt to dramatically changing circumstances. Developing this skill set takes preparation and practice because it doesn’t come naturally to most leaders. The good news is that some of our very best business schools (UCLA, Carnegie Mellon, UVA, UNC, MIT, and Columbia) are already teaching leaders how to improvise (Glazer, 2008).
**KEY RESOURCE**

*Leadership Agility: Using Improv to Build Critical Skills* (Kelly, 2012), a white paper from UNC’s Kenan-Flagler Business School, describes the improvisation courses that many business schools are providing in their leadership programs.

**FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS:**

- How would you rate yourself on your ability to deal with the “reality” of a difficult challenge?
- Do you “tell it like it is,” or do you tend to smooth things over? Do you play down the real risks attached to a looming crisis or a difficult situation?
- How do you “keep the faith” when tough things happen? How do you communicate this to your followers?
- Would the people who work with you describe you as having tenacity? Grit? Courage?
- What is your personal sense of purpose and meaning? Why do you lead others? What important purpose do you serve by leading others?
- What are your “lived” values? Do you communicate by word and deed what your personal values are to others? Are you willing to “live” your values when the going gets difficult?
- How would you describe your ability to improvise? Are you able to be creative, try different approaches, and take risks to solve complex and ambiguous problems?
AN INFORMAL RESILIENCE SCORECARD

Many of the researchers and theorists who have studied resilience have identified some common factors resilient people possess. You many want to use the following characteristics as a personal resilience scorecard. Using this scorecard, identify the factors that you currently possess and note where you might want to build a competency or two.

In no particular order of priority, resilient people:

1. **Tend to be generally optimistic** about life and have a positive view of the future (Pulley and Wakefield, 2001; Coutu 2002; Southwick and Charney, 2012; Zolli, 2013; McNulty, 2014).

2. **Are naturally curious** and have a continuous learning journey throughout their lives (Pulley and Wakefield, 2001; Griswell and Jennings, 2009; Siebert, 2005; Neill, 2006).

3. **Have a healthy tolerance for failure** (Farson and Keyes, 2003) and see mistakes as learning opportunities. When they make mistakes, they don’t judge themselves harshly (e.g., “Why didn’t I see that coming?” or “What was I thinking?”). This forward-looking attitude allows resilient people to search for lessons as they move through difficult situations and challenges (Sanaghan and Jurow, 2011; Zolli, 2013). This search is a proactive process that puts them in the driver’s seat rather than leaving them in the position of merely reacting to circumstances. This proactive approach creates a strong sense of self-efficacy and fosters their confidence that they can master their fate (Griswell and Jennings, 2009; Coutu, 2002; Snyder, 2013).

4. **Are good at asking for help!** This might seem counter-intuitive to some people who think asking for help is a sign of weakness. It is not. Resilient people actively seek out the support of others, and these support systems come in handy when challenging times occur (Pulley and Wakefield, 2001; Siebert, 2005; Neill, 2006, Maddi, 2005; Shambaugh, 2010; Reivich and Shatte, 2002).

**KEY RESOURCE**

There is a short and powerful video entitled “Everyone Needs a Tap Code” from the PBS series *This Emotional Life*. The video describes how prisoners of war in Vietnam supported each other through extraordinarily difficult times by creating a secret communication system for themselves.
5. **Are self-aware and mindful.** Resilient people know who they are. They “live” their values and have a strong sense of emotional intelligence. These capacities enable them to deal constructively with difficult events and to endure over time. Their self-awareness helps them to identify both their appetites and aspirations and make healthy choices and decisions throughout their lives. They often believe they can greatly influence their lives, rather than just react to whatever happens (Goleman, 2000; 2005; Shambaugh, 2010; Griswell and Jennings, 2009).

6. **Have some kind of religious or spiritual connection** and see their faith as both an anchor and a beacon that supports them through trying times. This does not mean that people without faith can’t be resilient. It does mean that, for some, faith is an enabler that allows them to move forward (Coutu, 2002; Southwick and Charney, 2002). For example, recent events in South Carolina—in which a madman killed many people during a church service—demonstrate “faithful” resilience at work. As a nation, we witnessed an extraordinary sense of grace from the members of that church who were able to forgive an unspeakable act of violence and to come out the other side with an elegant humanity that takes one’s breath away.

7. **Are good problem solvers** who search for solutions and try different approaches when confronted with tough challenges. They are willing to take creative risks and use counter-intuitive solutions to problems they encounter. They don’t get caught in “analysis paralysis”; they don’t get bogged down trying to create the perfect solution. They move forward. They pay attention to what is going on and adjust in midstream if necessary. They have confidence that their personal resources can produce the solutions needed in uncertain times (Siebert, 2005; Maddi, 2005).
RESILIENCE SCORECARD

Use the characteristics of resilient people as a way to identify your areas of strength and areas of needed development. It is a helpful practice to both score yourself and then invite a colleague or good friend, who knows you well and who will be honest with you, to score you. Then you can compare and contrast the two scores – the one you gave yourself and the one your friend or colleague gave you. This can provide a great reality check and food for an interesting conversation.

How would you rate yourself on the characteristics of resilient people?

Give yourself an A = I really have this capacity/skill

B = I have pretty strong capacity but could improve in this area

C = I need real work in this area

Optimism
Curiosity
Failure Tolerance
Asking others for help
Self-awareness?
Sense of Faith
Problem Solving Ability

After you score each characteristic, choose one real strength that you can continue to build on, and choose one area of needed development. You want to avoid trying to improve too much at one time, and you want to avoid focusing only on weaknesses. A balanced approach is essential in order to build up your capacity for resilience.
SOME CLOSE RELATIVES OF RESILIENCE

Interested readers might want to investigate two other characteristics that resilient people often possess – grit and hardiness.

GRIT

“Grit,” popularized by Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth of the University of Pennsylvania, describes a personal trait that involves perseverance and passion for achieving long-term goals. People who have “grit” also have great self-control and are able to delay near-term gratification in order to pursue long-term success. These individuals have a deep commitment to their pursuits and just don’t let things get in their way. Their passion for improvement and learning carries them through difficult times and challenges, and in the end, their perseverance almost always pays off. Resilient people often possess a great deal of grit.

Duckworth’s research has reviewed a wide range of people (from Spelling Bee champions to West Point students), and she and her fellow researchers have found that when you look at two equally talented people, the one who has grit will do better over the long haul.

HARDINESS

Second, “hardiness” is a personality style or a pattern of characteristics shared by people who handle stress well. Two of the pioneers of hardiness research are Suzanne Kobasa & Salvatore Maddi.

Maddi & Kobasa identified three personality traits of managers who dealt with pervasive stress effectively. These managers possess:

1. **Commitment.** Hardy people share an attitude of genuine interest in other people and possess an overall curiosity about people and the world.

2. **Control.** Hardy people believe that control is something that comes from within and that they can influence events that are taking place around them.

3. **Challenge.** Hardy people have the attitude that change is “normal” and that change offers opportunities for growth and development. Change isn’t something that should be avoided. Hardy people are committed to facing problems and won’t stop until they find solutions. They are unafraid of making mistakes.
Investigating these two powerful concepts—grit and hardiness—will give you a deeper and contextual understanding of resilience. Our leaders will need all the resilience, hardiness, grit, and grace they can gather, if they are to lead thriving campuses in a challenging future.

“It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strived valiantly; who errs, who comes again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.”

- Theodore Roosevelt
STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING YOUR LEADERSHIP RESILIENCE

1. NEVER WALK ALONE

This is one of the prevalent themes in personal resilience research (Pulley & Wakefield, 2001; Goleman, 2000, 2005; Snyder 2013; Zolli, 2013). People who have social support (e.g., friends, allies, team members, confidants) weather the storms of adversity much better than those who don’t have that support.

Where do leaders go when dealing with unprecedented change and challenge? Who do they talk to about their doubts? Fears? Hopes and aspirations?

FIND AT LEAST TWO CONFIDANTS

Heifetz and Laurie (2001) were some of the first thinkers to identify these trusted individuals. Confidants are people you respect and trust deeply, and who care about you as a person. Most importantly, they will be honest with you, which is a gift to a leader. These are authentic allies who will listen carefully, gently push back on your ideas, and provide wise counsel and feedback. They act as sanctuaries when the storms hit and you don’t know where to go next.

It is important that you meet with your confidants on a regular basis, not only when there is a crisis or when things are difficult. Nurture these relationships because they can last a lifetime. Endeavor to be a trusted confidant for others, especially for your own confidants. The reciprocity will build a durable bond that can prove an invaluable asset during trying times.
BUILD A “THOUGHT PARTNER” NETWORK

Thought partners are different from confidants because their role and contribution focuses on making you a smarter leader. This doesn’t mean confidants can’t do this, but the confidants’ gift is the emotional and psychological support they provide.

Thought partners—and you can have many of these—provide you with different perspectives and insights. They can also help you keep up to date on emerging practices, trends and events that could impact your institution. Our thought partners expand our thinking, help slow us down when we get overwhelmed, and prevent us from jumping to solutions too quickly.

They are great resources to tap before we make important decisions, because they can provide multiple options and help us with sense making when we are dealing with complexity and ambiguity.

You need to be a good thought partner in return. Read widely, share your insights and really participate in multiple networks. No one appreciates a one-way relationship. You have to actively and meaningfully contribute to add value to these strategic relationships.

FOCUS QUESTIONS FOR LEADERS:

- Who are your thought partners?
- Do you pay attention to these relationships?
- What contributions have you made to your thought partner network?
- Who else needs to be in your thought partner network?
- Who is a very different thinker from you? (These people will often see things you can’t!)
- Outside your profession/field/industry, who would be interesting to talk with, to build a connection with? To learn from?
FIND A GOOD THERAPIST

A therapist can help you understand your issues about power, how you deal with conflict, and why you procrastinate and delay important decisions. A therapist can help you identify the difference between your appetites and your aspirations, and most importantly, why you want to lead others.

The more self-knowledge you possess, the more effective and resilient you will become (Heifetz and Laurie, 2001; Goleman, 2000, 2005; Snyder, 2013). It takes real courage to examine your inner life, values, motivations and hungers. Too few leaders take this journey, because leaders falsely assume that seeking a therapist somehow conveys that they have a “problem” or aren’t smart enough to figure out things for themselves. Both of these insidious notions can prevent leaders from undertaking the work of real learning and self-awareness.

Leaders who lack self-awareness can cast a dark shadow across the campus and can wreak havoc along their journey (Kellerman, 2004; Lipman-Blumen, 2006; Griswell and Jennings, 2009; Shambaugh, 2010). I have worked with several “shadowy” leaders in my career. Their aversion to self-reflection was a cowardly act. These kinds of leaders have no place on our campuses.

SEEK OUT OTHER RESILIENT LEADERS

Ask your friends, colleagues, confidants and thought partners about the resilient leaders they know. These leaders are out there; go find them, because they can be an invaluable resource with their insight and wisdom. They have taken the difficult journey, survived and even thrived, and almost always are gracious and willing to share their experiences with you.

If they trust your intentions and believe that you are on an authentic learning journey, then ask them the following questions to help create a powerful conversation:

- What practices do they use to navigate tough challenges?
- Where do they go to be renewed?
- What role, if any, does their faith and religion play in sustaining their leadership resilience?
- Where do they go to seek advice and perspective? Obviously, you don’t need them to provide specific names, but find out what qualities their confidants and thought partners possess that make them such a valuable resource.
- What have they learned from their failures and disappointments?
2. SEARCH FOR THE LESSONS

“Failure, as well as success, leaves clues.”

- Sanaghan, 2014

I believe that failure, setbacks and disruptive change are inevitable in a world full of ambiguity and complexity. When there are no easy answers or elegant solutions available, leaders will have to take risks, try creative approaches, fumble at times in front of people—and mistakes will be made.

Leaders will need courage to seek the lessons that they can learn from their failures as well as their successes. One is obviously harder than the other but, often, that’s where the deepest and most valuable lessons lie. This is both counterintuitive and difficult to do for any leader.

This is where your confidants become especially useful. They can provide the emotional support necessary to unpack an uncomfortable situation or a difficult incident. Endeavor to share openly with them. Provide the facts, history and context, and actively seek their advice and perspective. Strive mightily not to be reactive to their responses. Just listen, absorb what they are telling you, and learn.

The following are some probing questions that leaders have found helpful in their learning journey:

- Discuss what should have happened and what actually happened.
- What are some things you didn’t see coming? What signals were there that you ignored?
- What feedback didn’t you listen to, or what feedback did you avoid?
- Who provided you with contrary positions and perspectives? What was your reaction and response to those individuals?
- Who should you have listened to but didn’t?
- What went unnoticed by you, but was clear to some people?
- Are there any patterns you can identify? (e.g., Has this happened before? Did you shut down contrary opinions? Did you rush for closure?)
- Who helped you during the situation or crisis? Who was not helpful?
Were there any internal struggles that kept you from taking appropriate actions?

What politics were at play?

Did you have any intuition that things weren’t going as planned? Did you listen to your intuition? If not, why not?

You get the idea.

Asking the right set of questions can help you reveal deep lessons. Invite your confidants to probe gently but assertively. Dig out the answers in this safe environment. Write them down, review them regularly and never forget them. These lessons were hard earned, and they will help you face the next crisis, challenge or setback.

What do you know now that can help you in the future (e.g., ask for help sooner rather than later; involve others in your decision making and don’t try to shoulder everything yourself; delaying a decision can often make matters worse; encourage your direct reports to share bad news as soon as possible)?

Try and capture three important lessons after discussing the situation or incident with your confidants. Keep the list of lessons to three or four, because brainstorming a long list of lessons will only clutter things up, and it is unnecessary. Three lessons are plenty.

You might find you have a couple of pages of these tough lessons by the end of your career. Share them with other leaders, especially younger and emerging ones. One piece of wisdom can help others avoid a great deal of pain. Here is a short list of my own “lessons learned”:

- I tend to shut down when arrogant people try and provide answers and solutions. The lesson for me: even arrogant jerks can have smart ideas; strive mightily to listen to them.

- I value being “decisive.” A lot of my biggest mistakes came from rushing to closure on important decisions.

- I need to show my emotions more. I tend to try and be stoic. My people need to hear both my fears and hopes more often.

- Listen until it hurts. I often anticipate what others will say and shut down my listening because I think I’ve already “got it.” In fact, often I didn’t “get it.”
BUILD REFLECTION TIME INTO YOUR SCHEDULE

Many of the experts on resilience suggest that reflection is a powerful way to build personal resilience (Pulley & Wakefield 2001; Griswell & Jennings, 2009, 2011, 2013). This can be a challenge for busy and overwhelmed leaders. In the enduring whitewater that higher education leaders live in, it is counterintuitive to carve out time to think and reflect. Doing so will take real discipline and commitment, but reflection is an essential protocol to build into your daily and weekly routine.

There are plenty of ways to capture your thoughts and reflections: recording a video, keeping a journal or using apps like Penzu or iDoneThis. Taking the time to reflect will often reveal important, even strategic, information that might not be apparent at first glance (Sanaghan, 2015).

Here are some suggested guiding questions for reflection:

- What challenges keep coming up? Why do they persist?
- Who confides in me? Who seeks my advice? Who do I talk with?
- How are my people feeling? Are they committed? Do they feel supported? Listened to? How do I know this?
- Who gets on my nerves? Why?
- What future challenges do I see? What can I do to prepare for them? Who can I talk with to get different perspective about the future?
- Am I living my values? When and where do I do this?
- What am I proud about? What difference have I made, really?
- What am I avoiding doing? Why?
- What makes me anxious?
- What is something I have learned in the last week?

Review your journal notes with your confidants on a regular basis. This doesn’t mean you need to go over every one of these suggested questions in detail, but it is important to share a broad but meaningful summary of your reflections and to ask for feedback.
READ ABOUT RESILIENT LEADERSHIP

In history, there are many resilient leaders who faced dangers, crises, and daunting challenges and who thrived anyway. Leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Indira Gandhi, Winston Churchill, Golda Meir, and James Shackleton all knew the sting of defeat and hardship but somehow endured. Reading about their lives, motivations, doubts and hopes can provide you with a well-tread roadmap to resilience.

Seeking to understand the strategies and practices they employed to endure over time can be a revelation. More importantly, discussing these books and biographies with colleagues creates the deeper opportunity to explore and expand your thinking about truly resilient leadership.

This is where your thought partner network might come into play. Each person in your network can choose a leader to read about and discuss. I have participated in several of these “book club” discussions and have found it worthwhile. Several campuses I work with have a lunch discussion monthly about a specific leadership book. People from all over campus gather to talk about these resilient leaders and to discuss the implications for their own leadership work.

A caution here: Sometimes when people read the biographies of great leaders, they find that these leaders’ journeys are daunting, even impossible, to emulate. Emulating them is not the point. The key is to focus not on their accomplishments but to search for the lessons embedded in their journeys.

For example:

- Nelson Mandela never gave up hope for a vision of what his country could become. He spent 27 years in jail, being faithful to an ennobling vision that elevated his country and to a strong belief in the humanity of the people of South Africa. The lesson is the power of a long-term vision, not just endurance of long hardship.

- Winston Churchill fought depression almost his entire life. He lived with the “black dog” of depression even as he led Britain through a war. Yet his tenacity created a leader who would “never give up . . . never, never, never” and who saved Europe. The lesson here is the tenacity.

- Helen Keller, who was both deaf and blind, became an internationally known author, political activist and lecturer. She was the first deaf/blind person to earn a bachelor of arts degree. She modeled grace and perseverance throughout her life and paved the way for the education of people with special needs.

- Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese political activist, endured separation from her family while under house arrest for almost fifteen years. She is now a member of the Burmese Parliament, and she won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Her deep love for her people and country enabled her to deal with hardships and difficulties over a long period of time.
ENDEAVOR TO BUILD A GREAT TEAM

A talented, dedicated group of individuals working together toward a shared purpose, accomplishing the goals they committed to, and supporting each other is a wonderful thing to witness. It’s also as rare as blue diamonds (Sanaghan & Eberbach, 2014).

Building and maintaining a high-performing team is a difficult and daunting task. It is not for the faint of heart. It takes a great deal of aspiration and perspiration, courage and discipline to create such a team. Unfortunately, most leaders in higher education have not been taught how to build a team, and they suffer from the myth that if you just put a bunch of talented people together, something magical happens, somehow.

If you really want to build your resiliency muscles, building a team might be the best and hardest way to accomplish that. It is a real challenge to commit the time and effort necessary to build a great or even a pretty good team. You cannot fake this; either you are successful at it, or you’re not.

When a crisis hits or a failure seems inevitable and you are standing alone, you are in trouble. But if you have a real team to stand with, the chances of surviving and even thriving are increased. With a real team, you can use the diverse talents and multiple perspectives of its members to solve complex problems. You can also draw upon the emotional support of others and lift the buckets together to put out the fire.

Leading an effective team develops your leadership skills in several ways, because you have to be an:

- Effective communicator
- Great listener
- Trustworthy person who acts with integrity
- Effective decision maker and problem solver
- Results-oriented person
- Relationship builder

All of these skills build your resilience and will prepare you for the inevitable challenges, problems and crises that await all of us. If you can build a high-performing team, you will have accomplished a great and noble task. You will also be well prepared for almost everything. Dedicate yourself to this.
KEY RESOURCE

For some practical strategies, read my paper “5 Secrets to Developing a High Performing Team in Higher Education” (Academic Impressions, 2014). In this paper, I:

- Expose 6 potentially destructive myths about teams.
- Help you create a new plan for developing a high-performing team, presenting 5 strategies used by some of the highest performing teams across sectors.

3. BE “ACTIVELY” PROACTIVE

In order to build your leadership resiliency “muscles,” a proactive approach is essential to your success. Do not wait for the crisis, challenge or failure to come to you; build a “resilience readiness” to deal with these difficult incidents before they happen.

This does not mean trying to predict the future or engaging in scenario thinking about what you “might” do in a crisis or how you “think” you might act. Such practices may be helpful and may possibly prepare you intellectually, but you need to prepare yourself experientially.

Some of the suggestions in this paper (e.g., building a thought partner network, maintaining a journal) can help you develop resilience. But, being “actively” proactive creates a different stance. You are not waiting; you are seeking ways to learn, grow and develop. Putting yourself out there, actively seeking challenges, placing yourself in unfamiliar situations, working with people you don’t normally interact with, can help prepare you for the difficult times ahead.

This is like keeping yourself in good physical condition so that if you experienced a health crisis (e.g., car accident, heart attack, sports injury), your chances of recovery are vastly improved. People who are overweight, smoke or drink too much, often don’t survive a heart attack or health crisis. You can’t control the occurrence of a health crisis, but you can control your physical condition and degree of readiness for the crisis. Work on getting your resilience “in shape.”
SEEK MOBILITY AND “JOB ROTATION”

If you are building your resiliency muscles, you need a variety of experiences to broaden your leadership portfolio. In higher education, it is easy to get trapped into a single career path (e.g., financial affairs, budget analyst, controller, chief financial officer). This is not a bad thing, but this functional approach, this way of looking at the world, can lock you into a pattern of problem solving and thinking in certain ways. It can limit you.

Although job rotation is an accepted practice in the corporate sector (Fernandez-Aroaz, Groysberg and Nohria, 2011), it isn’t a familiar practice in higher education. By job rotation, I don’t mean “visiting” another department for a day to see how they do things. Nor do I mean “shadowing” a leader from a different division or school. Both of these are helpful practices for gaining understanding and perhaps perspective, but you need more than that.

I do mean a significant investment of time (e.g., a semester, or six months) where a leader actually works, not just observes, in a different department, division or school. For example, someone from enrollment management may do a “rotation” in student affairs. Or the financial people may work with the deans or in development. Besides breaking down the silos that exist on most campuses, a leader who rotates would also get to know another group’s culture, how they conduct business, how they communicate and problem solve together.

I have interviewed several vice presidents who have had rotation assignments supported by an enlightened president or chancellor. It is a game changer. These vice presidents conveyed to me that they now see more of the system and have developed a holistic perspective about how their institutions function. They learned things they never imagined and connected with others across the campus who care deeply about the mission and values of their institution. This connection built a sense of faith in others who are trying to do the right thing in service to the school’s vision. Rotation also builds the relational capital necessary to collaborate effectively and achieve meaningful results across institutional boundaries.

These vice presidents return to their former jobs with expanded insight and perspective and share what they have learned about the other group with their colleagues. Almost always, these rotation assignments build powerful resilience skills and enhance their understanding of how the campus actually works.
SEEK DEVELOPMENTAL ASSIGNMENTS

Work with your supervisor to identify developmental or “stretch” assignments in your division or department that will build your skillset and help you develop in new areas.

For example, if you are good at the technical or financial end of things, you might want to be a part of an interdisciplinary or cross-boundary team that is working on an important and complex project or initiative. You can bring your “gifts” to the table, but the key here is that you will also learn from others. Better yet, lobby to head the work group or co-chair it so that you will learn to facilitate a group, build a team and produce meaningful outcomes. Put yourself in a situation where you can’t always rely on your current bucket of skills. Use those skills, obviously, but also “stretch” yourself to build new skills and muscles.

Once again, being proactive puts you in the driver’s seat and stretches you as a leader. The initial learning curve can be daunting because you may be in an area that you have little experience with. That’s where some of the resilience strategies will be helpful. As your learning journey begins its steep climb, having thought partners and confidants, and building time for reflection will be essential strategies for success.

A caution here: you want to “stretch” but not break. Taking on an assignment far beyond your current skillset is foolish. This is where effective supervision comes in. Your supervisor should understand both your strengths and areas of needed development. This can be invaluable as you identify potential opportunities to grow and learn.

EXAMPLE OF A “STRETCH” ASSIGNMENT

Back in the late 1990’s, I was part of a change management team for a large, multi-national oil company. They were implementing an enterprise-wide technology platform. The general manager, who I had worked with previously, assigned me to be in charge of the communication plan for the entire change effort. I was not enthused, and I communicated that there were others far more qualified than me to take on this critical responsibility. Besides, I was an “outsider.”

He insisted, and he was right. I spent a month running around, meeting with multiple stakeholders, listening to as many people as I could, reading about communication practices and protocols for complex systems. It was exhausting. It was also one of the most powerful learning experiences of my career.
After a month, I knew more about the organizational culture than almost anyone internally because I had crossed multiple boundaries in my learning journey. I found out who the really smart leaders were, how the current communication process was broken, and discovered a bucketful of great ideas for designing and delivering an effective and trusted communication system.

I then worked with several internal leaders and we created a “straw man” for a communication system and presented it to the senior team of twenty-four leaders. Besides a few minor tweaks, it was approved wholeheartedly and was implemented in 30 days. We built in an ongoing assessment process, in which multiple stakeholders evaluated the effectiveness of the communication plan. It was considered a great success, especially by front line workers who had previously felt uninformed.

The key here is this: I could have created a wonderful “theoretical” communication system that would not have worked. The general manager was smart enough to insist on making sure I involved his people in the creation of the new communication system. He also knew that my “stretch” assignment would enable, if not force, me to grow in dramatic ways. Because I “knew” about the company in a deeper way, I was able to help with other strategic change initiatives over the next eighteen months.

BECOME A “CULTURAL TRAVELER”

Cultural travelers: I have written about these unique individuals before (Sanaghan, Goldstein & Jurow, 2001; Sanaghan, 2014, 2015), and about their great contribution to their respective organizations. These are very resilient individuals who understand the multiple cultures (faculty, staff, administration, community members) that exist on every campus.

These people connect with others across the campus and act as bridge builders, translators and problem solvers. They are invaluable because they are deeply trusted by others and because they know how to build the relational capital necessary to conduct effective cross-boundary work.

Cultural travelers always work in service of the vision and mission of the institution and live the stated values of their campus. These are not gadflies or gossipmongers flitting all over the place, spreading rumors and stirring things up. They are deeply dedicated to getting things done for all the right reasons. Their reputations precede them and enable them to connect easily and authentically with others. They are a gift to the institutions they serve.
It doesn’t take decades to become a cultural traveler, but it doesn’t happen overnight. These resilient individuals do several things to build a trusted reputation that enables them to “travel”:

- **They are great listeners**, which conveys respect for others and gives them access to information few leaders ever hear.

- **They keep their commitments** and their word. This sounds simple, but it’s also very hard to do, especially in the robust political cultures that exist on many campuses. Cultural travelers are consistent across stakeholder groups and don’t under-promise to be safe or over-promise to impress. They commit to what they believe they can actually accomplish and are clear about what they cannot do.

- **They are able to keep confidences**, which creates a deep trust and bond with others. When navigating complexity, people will have many doubts and fears that need expression. People know they can share these doubts and fears with the travelers, and that these confidences will not be shared with others. This helps build the relational bridges necessary to accomplish things. Which brings me to my next point . . .

- **Cultural travelers get things done**. They are known for their “can do” attitude and for producing meaningful results. This orientation toward accomplishing things creates the credibility needed to move things forward and sustains their reputation.

- **They are transparent, forthright and authentic**. What you see is what you get. They are seen as serving the common good and are committed to what’s best for the institution.

The best way to learn how to be a cultural traveler is to get to know some travelers and spend some time with them. Watch how they weave throughout the campus, building connections, sharing ideas and producing results. Learn from their example. Committing yourself to learning how to become a great “traveler” will build your leadership resilience in dramatic ways.
4. EMBRACE COUNTERINTUITIVE NOTIONS

At first glance, the next few suggestions might seem “odd” or counterintuitive to most leaders. They also might challenge the way leaders normally think about leadership. One characteristic that sets resilient leaders apart is their ability to think differently and try creative approaches to leading others.

BE MORE “FAILURE TOLERANT”

Richard Farson and Ralph Keyes wrote an intriguing and informative book, *Whoever Makes the Most Mistakes Wins* (2003). They looked at some of the most successful companies in the world and found that their leadership has learned that failure is an essential part of the learning and innovation process. Moreover, they discovered that these excellent companies are not afraid of failure. Given the ambiguity, complexity and adaptive challenges currently facing higher education, a little “tolerance for failure” will come in handy.

Resilient leaders see failure as a resource that they can learn from, to discover new directions, approaches and solutions to the complex challenges they face. This is counterintuitive for too many of our leaders in higher education. Often, leaders ignore the failure, try and hide it, don’t want to discuss it, and keep urging people to “move forward.” That is a wasted opportunity.

Farson and Keyes are not talking about lethal failure. That would be foolish. But few of us ever deal with those kinds of devastating experiences. They do mean that tolerance for the everyday, inevitable mistakes and failures that will be made is an essential leadership stance. It is part of the learning experience we all must take. It can’t be avoided.

The key to failure-tolerant leadership is having the courage and the ability to uncover what happened, as well as how and why it happened, and then to apply the lessons to future endeavors. Failure-tolerant leaders model the way by encouraging questions and having a non-judgmental approach to discovering the clues that failure leaves behind.

This does not mean that making a bunch of mistakes is encouraged; that would damage the credibility of any leader. But searching for the lessons in a safe, supportive environment will help people be smarter and more resilient in the future.
EXPERIMENT WITH “EMBRACING CONFUSION”

This is one of the most powerful concepts I have encountered in my thirty-year consulting career. When dealing with complexity and ambiguity, leaders will often become “confused” and unsure about how to address an adaptive challenge. This is a normal reaction.

In an excellent monograph, *Embracing Confusion: What Leaders Do When They Don’t Know What To Do* (2005), Barry Jentz and Jerome Murphy discuss this complex leadership dynamic, which they call the “lost leader syndrome.” This occurs when a leader faces situations and challenges that simply don’t make sense. Unable to discern a clear path forward, the leader can become confused, disoriented and even “lost.”

This “confusion” has nothing to do with a leader’s intelligence or ability. It is an inevitable element in a world filled with adaptive challenges. Unfortunately, when most leaders find themselves confused, they see this confusion as a liability. They hide it, cover it up and pretend to be in charge or to know all the answers. Leaders falsely believe they will lose their credibility and authority if they ever admitted they are “confused.”

What Jentz and Murphy suggest is counterintuitive because they see confusion as a resource and not as a liability. They believe confusion can be fruitful. Confusion can enable us to test old assumptions and be more creative. Jentz and Murphy look at confusion as “potter’s clay,” rather than as quicksand that will swallow up a leader.

How many times have you been in a meeting and were unsure, even confused, about where the conversation and the discussion were going? Where momentarily, you got overwhelmed and wondered what was going on? Every once in a while, some brave group member has the courage to say, “I’m not sure where we are going with this discussion” or “I hate to admit this but I’m lost here.” When this happens, most group members give a sigh of relief, because that remark has described exactly what they were feeling and thinking. Too often, we hide our confusion and others do also. We then seek quick solutions and fixes to get rid of our confusion and restore our sense of equilibrium. This “jumping to solutions” approach can produce drastic results.

Jentz and Murphy believe that if a leader can share that they are confused, that sharing can promote honesty, build trust, and create mutual respect. This takes a great deal of courage and is quite hard in my experience.
Jentz and Murphy have created a five step process they call Reflective Inquiry and Action (RIA). RIA enables leaders to use their temporary confusion as a resource. These are the five steps:

**REFLECTIVE INQUIRY AND ACTION (RIA)**

1. **Embrace your confusion.
2. Assert your need to make sense.
3. Structure the conversation.
4. Listen reflectively and learn.
5. Process your response aloud.

**1. Embrace your confusion.**

Acknowledge to yourself that you are confused. This is the first and most important step. Don’t deny the confusion or stuff it down. Just admitting you are confused creates the opportunity for discovery and dialogue.

**2. Assert your need to make sense.**

Let others know you are currently confused and that you need help making sense of the confusion. For example, use statements like:

- “This new information just doesn’t make sense to me.”
- “Before I make a decision, I need help understanding the situation and exploring options for dealing with it.”
- “I have a few thoughts about this but I don’t feel like I have enough, or the right, information yet to make a good decision here.”

**3. Structure the conversation.**

This is a critical step in the process. You want to create the condition for “joint inquiry,” where you invite others to join you in the dialogue and discussion. As a leader you want to communicate that being confused is not incapacitating. For example, use statements like:

- “I may not know the course of action presently, and I need your help to identify a next step.”
Listen, we have x minutes/hours to make this decision; between now and then, I am going to talk about what has confused me, and I want you to provide me with information, advice and feedback about what you think needs to be done."

The key idea here is that you are inviting people into the conversation and, almost always, they will want to help.

4. **Listen reflectively and learn.**

The leader needs to actually listen (not simply react) and clarify what they are hearing and learning, out loud. For example:

- “You seem to be saying x, do I have that right?”
- “This is my response to your feedback so far. X makes real sense to me, but I am unsure about y.”

If the people involved in the discussion witness you listening carefully, they will feel heard. This will encourage more discussion and idea sharing.

5. **Lastly, process your responses** out loud (after listening carefully).

You can say, “This is my reaction to what I have heard” and then summarize where you are right now in the decision making process. For example:

- “I think I am headed toward the third option and this is why.”
- “I realize we don’t have all the relevant information to make a good decision. I would like us to find the answers to x, y, z and return here tomorrow to make the final decision.”
- “I am clearer about what the next step needs to be. Here’s what influenced my decision. Does this make sense to you?”

**HOW TO GET BETTER AT EMBRACING YOUR CONFUSION:**

1. Use this process with a trusted thought partner, confidant or friend first. In a safe environment, you can fumble through the process and develop confidence in it.

2. After you have experimented with RIA in a safe environment, use it with your team members or direct reports. If there is enough trust and respect in the group, you will be able to unpack your confusion and show them how to use the RIA process also. If you don’t feel comfortable with your team or direct reports, that’s a powerful diagnostic of the level of trust present in the group.
3. Be sensitive to cultural norms on your campus. There are several campuses I have worked on where, if you were to express your “confusion,” the critics and curmudgeons would come after you with longswords. Be sensible here. There is an old saying that “one might admire a grasshopper for its courage if it attacks a lawnmower, but one wouldn’t respect its intelligence.” Use your common sense when deciding whether to use RIA. There is an art and a craft to using RIA. If you, as a leader, are always admitting you are confused, you will lose credibility quickly. Use RIA judiciously and when the issues are complex and important.

I have had the opportunity to work with over a hundred college and university presidents over the years. The ones I most admire and would actually follow are those who would feel confident enough to “embrace their confusion.”

LEARN HOW TO CONDUCT AN AFTER ACTION REVIEW (AAR)

After Action Reviews (AARs) are a learning method developed by the U.S. Army in the 1970’s to help soldiers learn from both their mistakes and their achievements. Both successes and failures leave clues. An effective AAR can produce a powerful database for teams and work groups to review and apply lessons learned to future efforts. The AAR is a structured review process that uses four focus questions to organize the discussion:

![AAR REVIEW QUESTIONS](image)

You will want to ask some variation of these four questions:

1. What did we set out to do? (What was our intention?)
2. What actually happened? (What did we do?)
3. What caused our results? (Why did it happen?)
4. What will we sustain/improve? (What can we do better next time?)
Don’t be fooled by the simplicity of these four focus questions. When conducted effectively, they will reveal a wealth of information. It is very helpful to have an identified, quality facilitator help the group move through the process and make sure everyone participates. AARs are not gripe sessions or critical reviews, and they are not intended to embarrass anyone. They are a learning process that can make groups and teams smarter and can better prepare them for future events and issues.

They are also risky endeavors because they assume that the organizational culture supports honesty, openness, feedback and transparency. If that does not describe your campus culture, don’t attempt an AAR, because it could turn into a deeply negative and harmful review in the name of “rigor” and “discipline.”

If you are going to build your capacity for conducting an AAR, I would suggest you begin with successes first. Then, if appropriate, migrate to mistakes and missteps, if the right conditions exist.

Sometimes AARs are called “post mortems,” because they are often conducted after a project is completed. But if you are involved in a long-term change process, you can use an AAR periodically to stop the momentum of an initiative, reflect on what has happened so far, and learn from it as you move forward. This protocol can build learning into the entire process. It will take discipline to do this, but it is well worth the effort.

Today, AARs are used extensively throughout the armed forces and in many corporations. They are only now seeing some use on college campuses, but they can help a campus become smarter and build its institutional resilience if the campus applies what it is learning.

AARs can be conducted in person (my preference) or electronically. The participants answer the four focus questions and solicit input from other group or team members. Individual comments are not shared outside the group, but “lessons learned” from this debrief can be circulated to appropriate parties throughout the campus.

The following are lessons learned from a previous strategic planning process with which I was involved. These lessons were captured in an AAR and sent electronically to all leaders on the campus:

1. Senior leadership’s meaningful involvement is critical to success (e.g., attend planning meetings, read the reports and respond, talk about the importance of the planning process).

2. A transparent and robust communication process is important. People need to trust the communication process if they are going to believe that the planning process is credible (e.g., tell the truth during the data gathering process, both our strengths and weaknesses; have a combination of high tech communications, such as newsletters and email updates, and high touch communications, such as town hall meetings, small group discussion, and planning updates throughout the planning process).
3. Make sure you have meaningful engagement of campus stakeholders, especially faculty. Be committed to listening to everyone; capture their ideas and put those ideas into a shared database that others can review. If faculty aren’t really involved in creating the plan, you will not get it implemented.

4. Make sure you don’t fall into the trap of “listening to yourselves too much.” Be disciplined about seeking an external perspective (e.g., look at national issues and trends in higher education, seek the perspectives of external stakeholders).

5. Realize that trust is a “strategic asset.” You need to pay attention to building “relational capital” throughout the planning process. You can do this by being transparent with all the data that is gathered throughout the process, defining the “decision rules” (who is going to do what), telling the truth, and listening to multiple perspectives.

You get the idea. We are talking about short, sweet and powerful lessons that any leader on the campus can use in their change initiatives or in future planning efforts.

If you can conduct multiple AARs on your campus, you will build your resiliency muscles. You will prize feedback and learning, open up communication channels throughout the institution, and make people smarter across silos. All of these are powerful capacities to have when a crisis hits or when a tough challenge rears its ugly head.

**LEARN ABOUT METAPHORICAL PROBLEM SOLVING**

One creative tool that you might consider learning about is the practice of “Metaphorical Problem Solving.” This creative approach helps you rethink a problem by making an implied comparison between two seemingly dissimilar things or objects.

Metaphors such as “Life is a like a box of chocolates” or “You have the heart of a lion” can help people visualize the connection, so that they can see that things that don’t “seem” alike are in fact quite connected. When solving real problems, you find a metaphor for the problem (perhaps the problem is “like an elusive snake in the grass”). Then you try to solve the metaphorical problem (you could “use a net to catch the snake” or “use a flashlight to see the snake better”). Then you apply the metaphorical solution to the real problem you are dealing with.

For example, “using a flashlight” might mean finding more people who can help you look at the problem in order to “shed more light on it.” Similarly, “using a net” might mean defining the scope of the problem more carefully and limiting its range so that you can try and solve one piece of it instead of trying to solve the whole thing at once.
MindTools.com has an excellent web page that explains this problem solving approach (along with other techniques) very well, and I encourage you to take a look.

**TALK WITH “EDGE THINKERS”**

Several theorists and researchers (Hamel & Valikangas, 2003; Ho, 2012; Zolli, 2013) suggest that leaders need to find the creative, different, and “edgy” thinkers who work in their organizations. Every organization has these unique characters who simply see the world differently. Often, these are people who “live on the edge” in their personal lives. Maybe they ride in a motorcycle gang, live in an artist colony, belong to an avant garde theater troupe, or skydive on the weekends.

Building a relationship with these individuals and having conversations with them can stimulate your thinking, help you challenge your assumptions about what is “normal,” and keep you intellectually engaged. Seeing the world through someone else’s dramatically different lens can help you build your intellectual resiliency in interesting ways. For example, edge thinkers often see the “harbingers” of change before other people do; talking with them can make you “smarter” about what might be coming down the road.

**KEY RESOURCE**

The Edge Foundation is a group of international intellectuals who contribute to the website edge.org, which explores scientific and intellectual ideas. They really think differently, and there are numerous articles, references and videos that show how “different” and brilliant people think.

Each year they publish a book on one powerful idea. 2015’s theme is *What Do You Think about Machines That Think?* Other years covered topics like *What Should We Be Worried About? and What Scientific Idea is Ready for Retirement?* Pretty interesting stuff.
DEEP LESSONS ABOUT RESILIENCE

To review, here are seven “deep lessons” about resilience that deserve your thought and close attention.

1. IT’S HARD WORK

Remember that building your personal resilience is hard work; it usually doesn’t come naturally. Dealing with life’s inevitable challenges and failures and remaining open to possibilities and alternatives takes courage, risk taking and “grit.” Fear, anger, and confusion can often paralyze us. The very good news, though, is that resilience can be learned.

2. RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

Building authentic relationships and connections with others is essential. Trying to go it alone is not an effective strategy and the idea that effective leaders do so is mostly a myth. Social support is one of the most powerful resources you can have in your personal resilience “toolbox.” Resilience thrives on a sense of community. So build a community.

3. IDENTIFY MANAGEABLE STEPS

Create clear and manageable goals and identify simple next steps. It is easy to get overwhelmed and feel incompetent when a crisis hits or a failure occurs. Build a bridge to the future by establishing some achievable goals that will help get you through the present situation. This approach can help dampen your feeling that present circumstances are overwhelming and confusing.
4. **LEARN TO IMPROVISE**

Try to be inventive, take some risks, and put resources to unfamiliar uses. Build your creative thinking muscles, experiment and don’t judge yourself as you learn to improvise and to lead amid complexity and ambiguity.

5. **KNOW YOUR “LIVED” VALUES**

Identify your “lived” values and guiding principles. What are the handful of meaningful values (not platitudes!) that you consistently exhibit. What are your “non-negotiables”? These can infuse your life with meaning and sustain you through difficult times. This self-awareness is a pervasive theme in the research on resilience. Knowing what you really stand for and what’s important to you enables you to weather many storms. Resilience depends on strength of character, and that strength of character is created by a set of authentic values. What are yours?

**KEY RESOURCE**

There is an excellent HBR article entitled “Make Your Values Mean Something” by Patrick Lencioni (2002). Lencioni talks about the importance of personal and organizational values. His article is well worth the read, and can prompt a great conversation for leaders about the vital importance of “lived” values.
6. REMEMBER THAT THIS IS A LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Try to remember that leaders are all on a learning journey that doesn’t end. Failure and disappointment need to be seen as opportunities to gather feedback for the voyage, because there are no simple answers anymore. All the easy challenges have been solved already, and only the tough ones remain. Mistakes will be inevitable, and how we use those mistakes to learn will determine our level of resilience and will define our leadership effectiveness. The key isn’t to learn how to fail, but to learn how to “bounce back” from mistakes.

“So the real skill is the resilience to climb out of the hole & bounce back.”

Elizabeth Moss Kanter, 2013.

7. RESILIENCE IS A CHOICE

Resilient people do not let adversity define who they are. They strive to move forward toward meaningful goals, and they realize that patience and persistence enable them to deal with complex, adaptive challenges. They develop constructive responses rather than reactive actions, and they believe that resilience is a choice they make in order to avoid the shadows of defeat.
RESOURCES

STRATEGIC RESOURCES

THE RESILIENCY CENTER

Founded by the late Al Siebert, this center is a helpful resource for information on resilience. They also have a free Resiliency Score tool that individuals can take to measure their personal resilience.

THE HARDINESS INSTITUTE

Founded by Salvatore Maddi, this institute offers relevant research on resilience, as well as a Hardiness Survey Test, which tests stress management and resilience. The tool costs $29.95.

TED TALKS ABOUT LEARNING FROM FAILURE

There are at least eight Ted Talks in which a diverse set of speakers talk about “failing forward” and realizing that failure is an important part of the learning journey.

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

The APA has an informative online brochure entitled “The Road to Resilience,” which provides strategies for building personal resilience.

A LEADER’S GUIDE TO AFTER ACTION REVIEWS (1993)

This guide from the Headquarters Department of the Army will walk you through conducting an AAR.
THE DUCKWORTH LAB

This is an excellent resource for Dr. Angela Lee Duckworth’s research on “grit.” The lab offers free videos and surveys, as well as extensive information on Duckworth’s findings. You can also find a Ted Talk (“The Key to Success? Grit.”) by Dr. Duckworth that is both popular and informative.

THE POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY CENTER AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The Center was established by Martin Seligman, a well-known psychologist, and his colleagues. Their research is focused on the positive aspects of optimism. The mission of the Center is to promote information, research and training on positive psychology, and the Center’s web page offers extensive information about positive psychology.

REFERENCES


