

A NEW PARADIGM:
STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSION PLANNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

by

Cheryl L. Richards

KATHRYN CAMPBELL, Ed.D., Faculty Mentor and Chair

ED GOULD, Ed.D., Committee Member

WILLIAM SEGURA, Ph.D., Committee Member

Barbara Butts-Williams, Ph.D., Dean, School of Education

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Capella University

July 2009

© Cheryl Richards, 2009

Abstract

Today's successful businesses and organizations realize the importance of strong leadership to maintain, grow and sustain long-term business productivity and viability. In a time when the skilled workforce continues to shrink and the competition for top talent increases, many businesses have developed sophisticated succession management practices to ensure their organizations will be well positioned to compete in the future. Like private businesses, institutions of higher education will face similar challenges as those who have led for decades leave their institutions. As such, the academy must also formulate strategies for attracting, developing and retaining a leadership pool that will ensure the institution's long-term health. Leadership development is not new to academics and many institutions have supported these programs for years. Few, however, have adopted formal succession planning strategies that are both strategic and deliberate and encompass the full spectrum of succession planning activities. Furthermore, the culture and governance structure present in institutions of higher education is often quite different than that of private businesses. The presence of shared governance and collegial cultures requires academic institutions to think differently about succession planning. This grounded-theory study looked at the succession planning efforts of 6 educational institutions representing the spectrum of 2-year community and technical colleges, 4-year public research universities, and 4-year private universities. The researcher shares current institutional approaches to succession planning and examines how organizational culture and governance in higher education may have impacted deliberate or formal succession planning efforts. Several findings are revealed to include (a) acknowledgement that while leadership development activities were

prevalent, few institutions had formal succession plans, and (b) examples of how academic governance and culture may have influenced institutional approaches to succession planning. The author concludes by recommending several strategies for implementing deliberate and systemic succession plans in the academic environment. These include (a) securing executive champions, (b) aligning the succession plan to institutional culture, mission, vision and goals, (c) taking an approach not unlike strategic planning, (d) carefully constructing communication plans to embrace talent development without inferring entitlement, and (e) a continuous evaluation of both the people and processes involved in succession planning.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to past leaders, current leaders, and the future generation of leaders. To those who have paved the way before me: thank you for leaving a trail and chopping down the thick forest so that I could easily see my path in this journey. To the current leaders: we have much to live up to and much to create for those who follow. May we find the strength, determination, perseverance, and wisdom to continue opening new windows of light for those who will someday walk under the sun lit paths we have left behind. And to the future generation of leaders, which includes my children, Ashlyn and Liam: no matter where the path of life may take you, I hope you will choose education as the foundation for your personal journey. This passage will continually shed light on new paths and take you places you never imagined possible. As you walk along, you will learn much and add to the woodpile of knowledge. My hope is that through I have left the woodpile higher for you and that you will in turn leave it higher for others.

Acknowledgments

The decision to begin a doctoral journey is not one to be taken lightly, nor is it one that can be made in isolation. For it is with the support, encouragement, and sacrifices of many individuals that allow the dreams of one individual to come true. Throughout my journey, there have been many who have supported and sacrificed such that I could realize my full potential and contribute in some small way to the field of higher education.

Foremost, I acknowledge the support and sacrifices of my husband Tom. Thank you for picking up the duties of two parents, having dinner on the table every night, and keeping our home filled with love and laughter while I was tucked away in my doctoral cave. I will forever be grateful.

To my children, Ashlyn and Liam, who too often heard the words, “mommy has to do school work tonight.” Your unconditional hugs and kisses kept me going in the wee hours of the night. May you always know and cherish the value of perseverance and education.

To my Mom and Dad: You gave me the greatest gift in life; the belief in myself. Without that foundation, your words of encouragement, and your support, I wouldn’t be where I am today.

To my fellow doctoral sojourners: Bruce, thank you for leaving me bread crumbs to follow down this path, and for the morsels of motivation at each new intersection. Jill, we’ve walked so many paths together...I can’t imagine having taken this journey without you either a step ahead, behind or beside me. Thanks for listening, philosophizing, and laughing through this with me. Your day is just around the corner!

To my mentors, colleagues and friends: Dr. Zeiss, thank you for your mentorship, support and being a champion for my professional career. Mary, thank you for giving me the opportunity to align my academic passion with my professional work and for your encouragement every step of the way. Lori, thanks for keeping me grounded in this process and celebrating each new milestone in style! Debbie, thanks for helping me think through this topic, collaborating, strategizing and showing me that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. Gene, thank you for the faith you gave in my abilities and for your just-in-time support through conversation and coffee.

To my outstanding dissertation committee: Kathryn, your guidance and counsel kept me focused and unwavering from the goals. Thank you for sharing new perspectives and walking this path with me. Ed, thank you for the opportunity to uphold the League for Innovation scholarship standards throughout this journey. Bill, my thoughts and ideas for this study were shaped through our conversations. Thank you for helping me see the path for this journey and the future journeys to come.

To the 6 presidents and executives at the participating institutions: Thank you for candidly sharing your perspectives and insights on this important topic so that we can continue to learn from one another.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	v
List of Tables	x
List of Figures	xi
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	1
Introduction to the Problem	2
Background of the Study	4
Statement of the Problem	6
Purpose of the Study	7
Rationale	8
Research Questions	9
Nature of the Study	10
Significance of the Study	13
Definition of Terms	14
Assumptions and Limitations	16
Sample Population	18
Organization of the Remainder of the Study	20
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW	23
Origins of Succession Planning	23
Evolution of Succession Planning	24
External Influences on Succession Planning	27
Internal Influences on Succession Planning	33
Academic Organizations	35

Gaps in Literature	49
CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY	51
Sample Population	55
Research Questions	56
Data Collection Strategy	57
Data Collection Process and Tools	58
Ethical Considerations	59
Data Analysis	60
Anticipated Results	62
CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS	63
Introduction	63
Institution Profiles	64
Research Questions	68
Data Analysis	69
Emergent Themes	73
Theme 1 – Succession Planning Practices	75
Theme 2 – Governance, Culture and Decision Making	78
Theme 3 – Succession Planning in Academic Cultures	85
Summary of Themes	94
CHAPTER 5. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	97
Introduction	97
Results of Research	98
Conclusions	105

Recommendations	109
Strengths and Limitations	116
Recommendations for Future Research	118
Summary	121
REFERENCES	123
APPENDIX A. SAMPLE PARTICIPANT RESEARCH QUESTIONS	132
APPENDIX B. FULL TABLE OF CODED THEMES	134

List of Tables

Table 1. Institutional Profiles	65
Table 2. Sample Table of Coded Themes	71

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Evolution of succession planning models adapted from
Personnel Decisions International[®]: Real Leadership Advantage[™] p. 26
- Figure 2. Grounded theory cyclical process p. 54
- Figure 3. 5C's: Strategies for succession planning in the academy p. 110

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Succession planning can be described as the practice of identifying and developing select employees to succeed the existing leadership within an organization. While formal definitions on succession planning have evolved from a singular definition focused on the development and replacement of a sole individual (Lopez-Molina, 2008) to much broader definitions today that include development of multiple employees for multiple positions (Byham, Smith, & Paese, 2002; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005), the purpose of succession planning has remained focused on long-term organizational and leadership sustainability.

Many have noted the value of succession planning as a means of increasing the probability of both short-term and long-term leadership continuity and as a major contributor to the success of an organization (Collins, 2001; Thompsen & Smith, 2006). In his book, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins suggests that those organizations that are able to sustain greatness over time are those that build “deep and strong executive teams” (Collins, 2001, p. 45). Having depth in all levels of leadership positions allows for the continuity of business operations by offering consistency of organizational mission and culture even during personnel transitions.

For years, businesses have looked internally to preserve this business continuity and many have become increasingly sophisticated in the process of identifying talent, providing a spectrum of leadership growth opportunities, and implementing measurable evaluation systems. With such sophisticated planning processes and tools available, it would seem plausible for institutions of higher education, which are also faced with

impending leadership turnover in the coming years, to have formal succession planning initiatives to ensure their own organizational continuity into the future. Unfortunately, many academic institutions remain woefully underprepared for leadership transitions (Barden, 2008; Barden, 2009; Leubsdorf, 2006).

This study sought to examine if, and how, higher education institutions may be addressing the need for succession planning as a way to remain competitive in the quest for leadership talent.

Introduction to the Problem

One of the leading experts in succession planning defines *effective* succession planning and management programs as those that not only go beyond identification and development of a single employee, but also those that include a “deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 10).

Many others (Clunies, 2007; Fulmer, 2005; Hirsh, 2000; Wellins, Smith, Paese, & Erker, 2006) have identified typical components that make up succession plans which include

(a) identifying possible successors; (b) challenging and enriching succession plans through discussion of people and posts; (c) agreeing on job (or job group) successors and development plans for individuals; (d) analysis of the gaps or surpluses revealed by the planning process; (e) review: i.e. checking the actual pattern of job filling and whether planned individual development has taken place. (Hirsh, 2000, p.2)

It is this notion of such deliberate and systematic efforts with multiple components that sets succession planning efforts apart from informal leadership development opportunities for all employees. This study addresses the multi-faceted approach to succession planning and notes the distinction that leadership development is a component of the larger succession planning process.

Businesses that approach talent management with a focus on developing future competencies of multiple individuals, any one of whom could be positioned to lead the company, demonstrate this connection between strong leadership and business productivity. (Bennis, 1989; Gardner, 1990; George, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Maxwell, 2002; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Rothwell, 2007; Spears, 1998). Furthermore, it is the focus on multiple individuals rather than the development of a single leader that advances business objectives and raises the level of leadership competency in an organization.

As such, many organizations make certain that a cadre of leaders are continually developed by providing new opportunities to stretch and grow the selected individuals through formalized training and leadership development programs, mentoring, shadowing, and coaching programs, and on-the-job skills (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2006).

Colleges and universities are unique organizations that operate under missions that differ from corporate or business counterparts. Academic institutions tend to focus on serving students or their communities, and less on business productivity. Is it possible then, that colleges and universities can or should approach succession planning with the same level of precision as those businesses that have made the connection between leadership sustainability and business longevity?

Few researchers (Clunies, 2007; Fancher, 2007) have explored how academic institutions incorporate succession planning strategies used in businesses or how these may be received in academia where missions are driven by service, and a collegial culture with shared governance structures prevails. This study set out to better understand the current practices of succession planning in higher education institutions and the influence of academic culture and governance on these initiatives.

Background of the Study

In the growing labor shortage, businesses will continue to compete for strong leadership that will help ensure their business continuity and the competition for talent will become increasingly competitive (Zeiss, 2005). The battlefield will not be limited to businesses and for-profit organizations, however.

Colleges and universities are also experiencing great waves of leadership retirements exposing institutions of higher education to the same leadership gaps as business and industry. “Some studies indicate as many as 45% of current presidents will be leaving their posts within the next eight years” (Cook, 2005, p.1) and others indicate even higher rates of attrition for community colleges predicting “four-fifths of incumbent community college presidents will retire within 10 years” (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002).

In 2006, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* cited Bureau of Labor Statistics suggesting as many as 6,000 posts in higher education could be at risk from large numbers of retiring faculty and administrators (Leubsdorf, 2006). In fact, the same

article indicated that more than 75% of these vacancies could be witnessed at the institution's most senior executive post; the presidency (Leubsdorf, 2006).

While leadership sustainability will be important for institutions of higher education, linking the case for succession planning to business profitability may not be the primary driver. Unlike corporations, that place high value on business bottom-lines, accountability for academic institutions tends to rest on missions of service (Lucas, 2006). As society evolves and the demands of the workforce change, educational institutions may need to think differently about the link between succession planning and organizational continuity.

Will the governance structure and culture, particularly for those institutions that are publicly funded, allow for such activities to succeed? Could differences in governance structure and missions impact how institutions of higher education approach leadership development and succession planning? Does the collegial culture of higher education warrant strategies for identifying and developing future leaders that are different than those strategies employed by businesses?

These questions, and more led the researcher to explore questions about the influence of culture and governance on academic succession planning initiatives. Many suggest that developing leaders for academic posts can and should vary from the leaders who occupy similar positions in business because of the unique culture, governance and missions found in higher education organizations (Birnbaum, 1988; Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003; Winston, 1997).

In this qualitative study, data was collected from 6 academic leaders using grounded theory which allowed the researcher to explore themes of academic governance

and culture, approaches to succession planning, and uncover potential strategies that may be best supported in institutions of higher education. Coding and re-coding throughout the data collection and analysis process allowed the researcher to emerge with several themes and subsequent recommendations for implementing succession plans within the unique culture and governance structure found in higher education.

Statement of the Problem

Experts predict the shortage of skilled labor will be between 5 and 10 million workers in only a few years; a figure that has prompted businesses to look internally to their current talent and develop leadership pools from within their existing employee base (Rothwell, n.d.; Thompsen & Smith, 2006). Higher education institutions are not immune to the labor shortage or the need to replace an aging workforce. This has many academic leaders considering options for attracting, retaining and developing leaders who will be able to build and sustain their institutions into the future (Zeiss, 2005).

According to Bureau of Labor Statistics, the retirement of long tenured academic personnel will result thousands of higher education administration positions becoming available by 2014 (Leubsdorf, 2006). This is a staggering figure for institutions that rely on strong leadership in both administration and faculty positions. The *Chronicle of Higher Education* suggests that many of these senior leaders have already begun vacating positions thus creating a gap in leadership at institutions like Clemson, the University of Kansas, Montgomery College, and at the most senior level in community colleges where the rate of presidential retirements is estimated as high as 79% in the next decade (Leubsdorf, 2006).

Academic institutions, like their business counterparts, will need systematic processes and deliberate strategies for developing internal leaders. Questions remain as to whether or not colleges and universities are currently prepared, and whether their cultures will support the same strategies and processes that businesses use will be successful in an academic institution.

As such, this study looked at how the governance models and culture impacted decisions around succession planning initiatives in 6 higher education institutions, an area addressed by few. Given the limited research in this area (Barden, 2006; Clunies, 2007; Fancher, 2007), this study has extended the discussion of succession planning strategies within the context of academic culture, governance, and business models.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to uncover if and how institutions of higher education were currently approaching succession planning and understand if there are specific considerations for planning in the academic culture; cultures traditionally driven by non-profit missions, collegial cultures and shared-governance.

As such, the goals of this research study were 3-fold. First, the researcher sought to understand if institutions had formal succession plans and explore whether or not the governance structure impacted decision making and approaches to succession planning. Second, the researcher sought to understand if organizational culture influenced an institution's approach to succession planning. Finally, the researcher sought to uncover potential strategies, methods, and/or processes that were important to institutions as they

thought about developing and retaining leadership talent through formal succession planning.

By focusing the research on these goals, the study yielded outcomes in the form of a themes and a series of succession planning strategies that may be helpful to future institutions that seek to implement succession plan efforts.

Rationale

The combination of an aging workforce, the important role higher education institutions play in developing future workers and educating citizens in our evolving society, and the increased competition for talent has signaled a sense of urgency for colleges and universities to explore succession planning. Limited research on this topic prompted this study which sought to understand if institutions are prepared to meet these challenges and if so, what strategies they employ.

Some believe that colleges and universities operate differently than private businesses and thus require different strategies for addressing these challenges (Bowen, 2008; Leubsdorf, 2006). Others believe that private sector businesses and social sector organizations are more alike and that strategies the institutions of higher education use to respond to these challenges may be similar to their counterparts in businesses (Collins, 2005).

Using a grounded theory approach, the researcher was able to better explore academic cultures and governance structures as specifically related to decisions regarding leadership development and succession planning. This study also uncovered potential

strategies for succession planning that might be supported across many different academic structures.

Research Questions

The focus of this study was to understand if organizational governance and culture influence an institution's decision to engage in succession planning and if so, what approaches may be most suitable for institutions of higher education. The researcher posed 3 primary questions to include

1. Has your institution considered implementing a formal succession plan?
 - a. If so, how is your institution approaching the process of succession planning?
 - b. If not, what has been a factor in your decision not to engage in a formal succession plan?
2. To what extent, if any, does the governance structure of the institution influence decisions on succession planning?
3. Based on the institutional culture, what process, methods or strategies for succession planning might be best supported by the institution?

Following protocol for grounded theory approaches, the researcher did not enter the study with any pre-conceived hypotheses, but rather recorded participant answers to generate theories from the data. Through a process of coding responses in keywords, then subsequently probing emergent themes with additional follow up questions, the researcher was able to come to a point of theoretical saturation at which time there were no new themes to record. Given the selected approach to the study, the additional

research questions were based on themes that emerged from each subsequent interview and therefore, not all probing questions were used with all interviewees.

Nature of the Study

In grounded theory studies, researchers are discouraged from formulating hypotheses in advance of the study. Rather, this approach encourages researchers to engage in a process of discovery whereby a new and emergent theory may result from the research. The strategy is most suited when the desired outcome is to generate a new theory from the data rather than using an existing theory to explain the why the data is the way it is (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003).

Whereas quantitative researchers begin with a hypothesis and test specific research questions, the questions in a grounded theory study often evolve as the researcher becomes more immersed in the environment. In this way, qualitative research and thus grounded theory can be described as a process that is “emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181).

Creswell (1998) suggests that grounded theory is best conducted in the natural environment so it is “‘grounded’ in data from the field, especially the actions, interactions and social processes of people” (p. 56). This methodology supported the researcher’s intent to explore the culture and presence of shared governance in academic institutions and emerge with new ideas about how these influenced decisions around succession planning. This process also allowed for the emergence of new insights about strategies that may be best supported given the unique and complex operations of an academic institution.

This qualitative study used grounded theory to explore the governance models, organizational culture, and approaches used by various institutions of higher education to identify, develop, and assess candidates for leadership positions. Participants included presidents or executive leaders of 6 higher education institutions in the United States representing both public and private, 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities.

This methodology was selected to allow the researcher to gather information from within the natural environments of the academic institutions and to allow participants to describe their culture and structures of governance as related to decisions of succession planning. This strategy is indicative of research that is grounded in an emic perspective or that of the participants.

A preliminary review of literature on governance structure suggested that “different governance systems do affect higher education decision-making” and not all academic institution cultures or governance models are the same (Knott and Payne, 2001, p.6). The governance structure, mission, vision and values of a private liberal arts college may likely differ from a technical or vocational junior college, or that of a public research university. As such, the researcher included a variety of educational institutions by interviewing top decision makers at 2-year institutions that represent community and technical colleges as well as those at 4-year universities as well as those that characterized public and private universities.

The researcher recorded themes and categorized findings by institutional type then followed a systematic process of coding and recoding until the analysis of data resulted in common themes. Several themes spanned across each institutional type, and were therefore generalized to form emergent themes. Other themes were limited to

specific institutional type which gave way to additional insights and conclusions about the role of academic culture and governance on decisions of succession planning.

The researcher posed a series of research questions in anticipation of gaining more insight into how institutions are governed, their collegial cultures, and ultimately understand what strategies, if any, were currently in place to support succession planning activities. Each participant was asked the same opening questions but the researcher further probed into potential new themes based on each individual interview. Additionally, the researcher tested each emerging theme with each subsequent interview to determine if a pattern would emerge.

The researcher observed, questioned and recorded the participants' responses to questions of formal succession planning efforts, models of governance, descriptions of institutional culture, and processes of decision making that might have influenced succession planning strategies. As answers to these questions were recorded, the researcher asked additional probing questions until a point of theoretical saturation was reached and no new themes emerged.

The researcher used existing literature on succession planning in corporate and other organizational settings to check the emergent themes and subsequently prepared recommendations for the necessary strategies, methods, and/or process needed to establish a successful succession plan within an academic environment. Through data analysis, the researcher was able to offer new perspectives about the succession planning strategies that might be best supported in the culture and governance models of higher education institutions.

Significance of the Study

Succession planning has been widely practiced in corporations since the early 1970s as evidenced in the vast bodies of literature and research on succession planning in business (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Rothwell, 2005). The culture and governance structure of higher education institutions, however, varies from many for-profit businesses as documented by many (Barden, 2006; Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003) who suggest that institutions of higher education are complex structures with unique behaviors and cultures.

Some of the distinct characteristics evident in academia include the presence of shared governance, multiple internal stakeholders, public accountability, and a mission that differs from privately held corporations. All of these influences can make it challenging for formal succession planning to occur within an academic institution and may provide explanation for why so few colleges and universities have formal succession plans in place for top presidential leaders (Barden, 2006; Bowen, 2008); much less second-tier and mid-level leadership positions.

The *Chronicle of Higher Education* reported in 2006 that “many colleges are poorly prepared to replace the administrators who will soon depart” (Leubsdorf, 2006, p. 52). Two years later, the *Chronicle* again published an article claiming that “an astonishing number of institutions have no succession planning process in place” (Bowen, 2008, p.1). With an average employee turnover in academic institutions of 17 percent annually (Selingo & Carlson, 2006) and looming retirements at educational institutions across the country, colleges and universities simply cannot overlook developing their internal talent to succeed the current leadership.

At a 2006 joint association meeting among 3 prominent higher education professional associations (AHEFO, the Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers, NACUBO; the National Association of College and University Business Officers; and SCUP, the Society for College and University Planning), the critical need for succession planning was articulated in the statement that “unless college leaders do more to identify and nurture new talent, higher education will face a leadership crisis in the coming decades as the baby-boom generation of college officials retires, and the pool of potential replacements shrinks” (Selingo & Carlson, 2006, p.25).

This research study sought to better understand if institutions were truly under-prepared in their succession planning efforts and if so, what role the academic culture, governance structure and missions might have played in these decisions. The significance of the study was that it confirmed the need for leadership development in academia although few institutions had formal succession plans in place to address this impending need. Subsequently, the researcher was able to present new strategies to help institutions become better prepared to respond to the current and growing leadership gaps.

Definition of Terms

Governance. Governance in academia has been defined by many including Birnbaum (1988), Bolman and Deal (2003), Cohen (1998), and Ramsden (2003) as extremely complex and shared by many. Shared governance was defined in 1967 by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) as participation by all constituents within the academic community including faculty, administrators, staff,

presidents, trustees (Birnbaum, 1988). The presence of shared governance is perhaps best understood for the purposes of this study as the collegial culture in higher education. Ramsden (2003) defines this concept of collegiality as a combination of mutually respectful discussion and collaborative decision making such that many voices are heard in a community of diverse perspectives. In this study, shared governance was defined through the data collection process and it was ultimately determined that *shared governance* did not exist at most institutions, however *shared decision making* was prevalent.

Leadership Development. Leadership development is defined as one component of the larger succession planning process. Leadership development includes opportunities for personal and professional growth through a variety of activities to include training, on-the-job assignments, job-rotations, coaching, mentoring, projects, workshops, internal and external professional development opportunities, and other growth assignments. Leadership development, however, should not be used synonymously to describe the comprehensive succession planning process.

Succession Planning. Succession planning has been defined by many. Barden (2006) describes it as “anticipating leadership change and dealing with it internally” (p.1); Byham et al. (2002) discuss succession planning as one option to addressing the leadership gap whereby organizations “tap into the quality people already in their organization, thus growing and keeping their own leaders” (p. 1); and Rothwell (2005) has referred to succession planning as a “deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop

intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (p. 10).

In this study, the researcher defines succession planning as a deliberate and systematic process by which institutions of higher education identify, develop and assess internal employees for future leadership positions. The components of succession planning are numerous and can include (a) identifying appropriate succession candidates; (b) assessing areas for development against organizational needs and goals (c) providing leadership development opportunities through a variety of methods to include training, on-the-job assignments, job-rotations, coaching, mentoring, projects, workshops, etc, (d) evaluating the effectiveness of the development for the employee and organization, (e) and ultimate placement (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2006; Hirsh, 2000; Rothwell, 2005).

Assumptions and Limitations

In grounded theory studies, the researcher is encouraged to enter the study without preconceived hypotheses or assumptions of what may be found; but rather allow the data emerge as part of the study. This is difficult for any researcher who has spent time reviewing the literature or working within the environment that is examined.

Based on the literature reviewed to date and the researcher’s nineteen years of experience of working in public, private universities and a community college, it was difficult to limit bias or assumptions about the unique culture and ways of doing business in the academy. As such, the researcher assumed that the study would uncover characteristics that were unique to the academic culture that may be different than those found in business cultures. Similarly, the researcher assumed that there would be

evidence to support the presence of collaborative or inclusive decision making in these institutions and that this may influence decisions around succession planning.

The sample population represented senior executives at each institution, and it was therefore assumed that the participants would have a broad knowledge of the institution and be willing to share information about their governance, mission and vision, culture, and succession planning efforts. With the exception of one participant who was new to the role, all executives were able to speak from a broad CEO perspective which allowed the researcher to make several conclusions about the influence of culture and governance on succession planning in higher education.

The limitations anticipated in this study included the ability to generalize the findings across all types of higher education institutions in the United States because of the small sample size. To minimize this, the researcher interviewed executives at 3 public institutions and 3 private institutions, and executives at community colleges technical colleges, public state universities, and private non-profit universities with geographic footprints across most regions of the United States.

Rothwell (2005) suggests that CEO commitment is paramount to the success of a succession plan and it is for this reason that the researcher limited the study to participants whose role was president or senior executive responsible for succession planning initiatives at the institution or system. It was unknown at the onset of the study if restricting the participants to CEOs would create unknown limitations in academic institutions where strong collegial cultures, shared governance, and multiple stakeholders play a role in decision making. Given the extensive years of service of the participants,

and their deep understanding of academic and corporate working environments, this did not appear to create limitations for the study.

Another anticipated limitation of this study was concern for geographic boundaries that necessitated phone interviews for some participants while face-to-face interviews were conducted with others. In grounded theory, the researcher records themes from both spoken words as well as observes the environment and records non-verbal themes that may emerge from communication from participants (Creswell, 1998). The researcher was concerned that conducting phone and face-to-face interviews might create inequities in data collection. This proved to be an unfounded limitation as the researcher mitigated the inequities by recording all interviews and focusing on spoken words in transcribing interviews of all participants regardless of interview format.

A final consideration for this study was the professional relationship or acquaintance between the researcher and many of the participants. Because these relationships were by professional association and in no instance was the researcher in a position of authority or influence over participants, this did not create limitations in the collection of data. All participants willingly agreed to participate in the study and the researcher took all necessary precautions to ensure anonymity of the participants to mitigate any risk of disclosure of confidential information. In fact, several participants confirmed confidentiality before freely sharing their perspectives on specific questions.

Sample Population

Research was conducted by sampling 6 institutions of higher education representing a cross-section of public 4-year colleges and universities, 2-year community

and technical colleges, and 4-year private institutions. Institutions varied in governance model, size, and geographic location within the United States. All of the participants agreed to participate in the study based on professional relationship or acquaintance with the researcher.

The research study included participants that represented the spectrum of public and private institutions, institutions with single campuses and others with multiple campus sites, and institutions with varying levels of comprehensiveness in programs, degrees, and student services. Of the 6 participating institutions, 3 had campuses in the Southeastern United States, 2 institutions had campuses in the Midwest, and 2 had campuses in the Northeastern United States.

At the time of the study, it was not known, nor was it necessary for the participating institutions to have a formal succession plan in place since the purpose of the study was to explore if and how institutions embrace formal succession planning.

Because succession planning is best positioned for success when it has a high level of executive or senior administration support (Rothwell, 2005), participants in the study were selected based on executive post within their respective college or university. Interviews were conducted with 5 presidents of colleges or universities and 1 vice-chancellor; all of whom were key decision makers in matters of leadership development and succession planning in higher education. Experience of the executives ranged from just over one year in this capacity to over fifteen years as chief executive of their respective institution.

The nature of the research participants' positions and responsibility for the institution was such that an informed consent was sufficient for Institutional Review

Board approval. Institutional and individual identity was further preserved through anonymity in all written and published documents. Data presented in Chapter 4 protects this anonymity by referring to participants as College President A, University President B, and so on for C, D, E, and F.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

In grounded theory studies, literature is often treated the same as another set of data that may be included in the collection process, or come after it, to give context to emerging themes (Dick, 2005). Thus, the organization of the remainder of this study follows a cyclical process whereby data to include interviews and additional literature was collected, analyzed, tested against existing research, and then ultimately used to form themes and recommendations.

Chapter 2 begins with an exploration of existing literature in the areas of succession planning, academic leadership, culture and governance and is intended to set the context for possible research findings. The review covers the origins of succession planning and the influence of social changes, technological advances, economic conditions, new political environments, and the changing demographics of the workforce; all of which has ultimately led to an evolution of succession planning strategies. Internal influences including organizational culture and priorities along with changing employee expectations are also reviewed.

The second part of the literature review focuses on the academic organization to include the evolution of academic governance, shaping of academic culture, importance of academic missions, role of academic leaders, decision making in the academy, and

how decisions around succession planning are reached. Upon comparing the literature on succession planning with that specific to academic environments, the chapter concludes with gaps in the literature and suggests opportunities for this study to begin filling this void. The literature is again woven into later chapters during the process of data collection, analysis and conclusions.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology and includes rationale for the use of grounded theory to allow for theories to emerge from within the natural environment. This chapter addresses the proposed sample population, 3 primary research questions, and strategies for collecting data.

Chapter 4 provides detail on how the study was carried out including the data collection and analysis processes. Because grounded theory methodology suggests that the theory already exists and just needs to emerge from within the data, most of this chapter is dedicated to the data analysis. The researcher provides detailed description on the participating institutions, restates the research questions, and then shares how various themes emerged by answering the research questions. Each of the themes is then further detailed with supporting quotes from participants.

Finally, Chapter 5 presents the results of the study that includes conclusions about current succession planning practices in higher education and the role of governance and culture in decisions surrounding succession planning. The researcher offers recommendations for institutions that may want to address leadership development through deliberate and systemic succession planning processes and acknowledges the study's strengths and limitations. The chapter concludes with 5 strategies for succession

planning in the academy and the researcher poses recommendations for several areas of future study on the topic of succession planning in higher education.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to better understand succession planning in higher education institutions. As such, the researcher included a review of literature on succession planning as well as a review of key literature on academic organizations. The literature in each area was plentiful although there was little research on succession planning within the academic culture. To focus the study and determine aspects of academic literature that were critical to the study, the researcher began with an overview of succession planning and concluded with the key areas of academic literature (governance, culture, leadership) that were important to support succession planning in higher education institutions.

Origins of Succession Planning

One of the earliest authors to espouse the benefits of succession planning was Henri Fayol who not only believed that deliberate leadership replacement planning was a requirement of management, but that it was the only way to avoid organizational missteps by putting persons in positions for which they were not ready (Rothwell, 2005). Fayol understood the true value of planning which was not to simply identify an individual who would step into a new leadership post, but also, for the organization to invest in training and development of an individual so that he or she would be well equipped to persist in any leadership position.

Evolution of Succession Planning

Since Fayol's early writings, many businesses and organizations have experimented with various approaches to succession planning. Early models were often called direct replacement plans whereby a single individual was identified to succeed a key executive should there be an unfortunate crisis or need to replace someone quickly. Direct replacement and crisis planning is necessary as witnessed in the 1996 plane crash that took the lives of Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown and thirty other top executives (Rothwell, 2005, p. 16). Similar examples could be shared by companies who were impacted by the loss of key executives in the events of 9/11. The need to have an immediate executive in-charge is not to be discounted, but it should also not be confused with the comprehensiveness of a deliberate and systemic succession plan that looks beyond immediate replacement needs in a crisis situation.

Wolfe (1996) compares replacement planning to succession planning stating that the former is "reactive", and a "form of risk management" that is "restricted" and a "narrow approach" (p. 16). The latter focus on succession planning is conversely, "pro-active", focuses on "planned future development" and is "flexible" (Wolfe, 1996, p. 16). Wolfe (1996) goes on to comment that "replacement planning mode focuses on risk management" whereas the "succession planning mode works toward continued leadership and talent building" (p. 16).

In fact, the direct replacement approach has been negated by several succession planning experts (Rothwell, 2005; Byham, n.d.) as a method wrought with deficiencies. The direct replacement planning method focuses on the immediate needs of one individual without consideration for long-term organizational strategy or growth. It lacks

what Rothwell (2005) defines as a “deliberate and systematic effort” to “retain and develop” individuals, and simply assumes an individual could step in to fulfill current leadership expectations without looking systematically or holistically at the organization (p. 10).

Since the mid 1990s, there has been a renewed interest in leadership planning and the need for new models that reach beyond a single emergency successor. The process of succession planning has subsequently evolved from a simple *back of the envelope* planning process in the 1960s to one today that is highly strategic, objective, and formalized to yield broad *talent pools* rather than limiting the planning process to a single-successor. (Byham et al., 2002; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rothwell, 2005).

This evolution can be best illustrated through Figure 1 which captures progression beyond casual conversation and the single direct replacement model to one that focuses on developing multiple individuals at multiple levels in the organization. This has led to what many refer to as true succession planning and what recent experts deem talent management.

Rothwell (2007) suggests that unlike direct replacement planning, effective succession planning takes into account the development of many people such that the result is a “deep bench strength throughout the organization so that, whenever a vacancy occurs, the organization has many qualified candidates internally that may be considered for advancement” (p.3). One of the hallmarks of the talent management approach is the shift from single succession candidates to *groups* of candidates who become part of the organization’s talent pool.

Figure 1

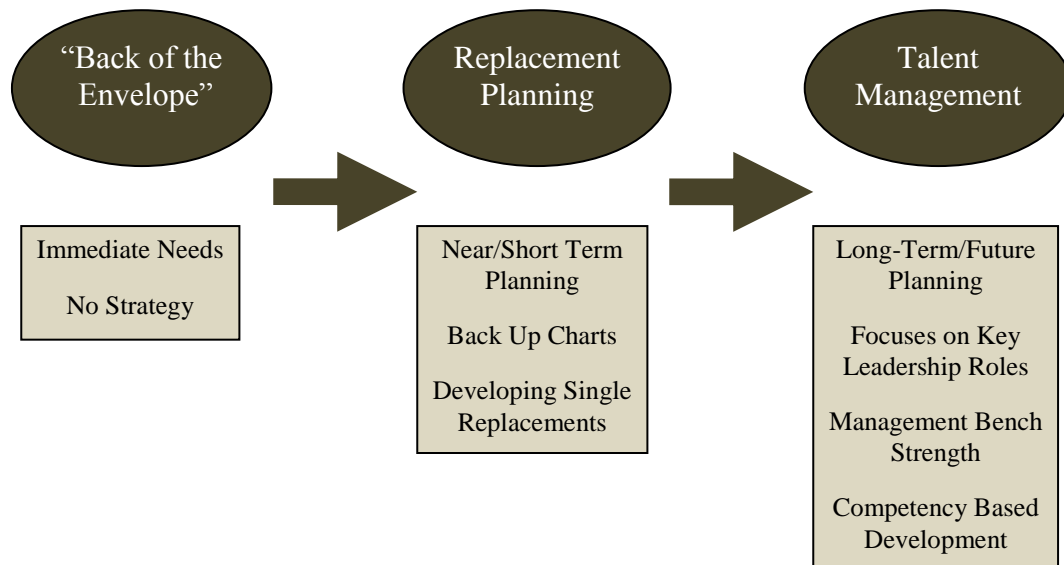


Figure 1. Evolution of Succession Planning Models adapted from Personnel Decisions International®: Real Leadership Advantage™. Copyright © Personnel Decisions International Corporation. All Rights Reserved. Adapted with permission.

The talent management approach to succession planning is one that is deliberate, future oriented, and based on developing competencies of multiple individuals rather than a single individual. These models include a thoughtful strategy for managing an organization’s total human capital and their total workforce (Byham et al., 2002; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Kirby, 2004; Wellins et al., 2006).

This latest evolution of succession planning models has been influenced by external social, political, economic and technological changes in our society and by internal expectations of organizations and employees. The next section of literature review examines these types of external and internal influences on the evolution of succession planning.

External Influences on Succession Planning

When Henri Fayol developed his fourteen points of management that prompted early models of succession planning in 1916, the societal, political and economic climate was quite different than it is today in 2009 (Rothwell, 2005, p. 10). The following pages examine these external influences on succession planning with specific attention on 6 influences which include (a) social changes, (b) technological advancements, (c) economic conditions, (d) political environments, and (e) the increase of knowledge and information, and (f) the changing demographics and workforce.

Social Changes

Draves and Coates (2007) describe the period between 1900-1920, as a significant time in US history; a time that marked significant evolution in business, industries, and even technology. During this period in American history, our society evolved from one that was predominantly agrarian and focused on farming to an industrial society where factory work and manufacturing industries influenced business and organizations (Draves & Coates, 2007). In these early days of the century, it was assumed that one would walk into the footsteps of one's father or grandfather as in previous generations.

Consequently, planning for replacements did not require as much strategy as it would in future decades. The advent of new technology in the form of automobiles, gasoline, and new farming equipment allowed individuals the flexibility to move away from family farms and seek other business opportunities, which many of them did (Conte & Karr, 2001; Draves & Coates, 2007). Society was changing and farmers and business owners began to realize the importance of strong leadership. Other influences included advances

in technology, changing economic and political climates, and a notable shift in the workplace demographics.

Technological Advances

Perhaps the best way to sum up the differences in technology from the 1900s to today can be found in Draves and Coates (2007) statement that “just as the automobile shaped society in the 20th century, the Internet is shaping society in the 21st century” (p. 17). Technology is persistent in virtually every facet of American business and drives many of the business and productivity decisions made by organizations, including decisions around leadership development and succession planning. Draves and Coates (2007) outline how technology affects more than bottom-line business decisions by suggesting that technology impacts the overall economy, “the nature of work” and “how we prepare young people for the workforce” (p. 24). Fulmer (2005) agrees, suggesting that “the Internet has enhanced the mobility of leadership talent, making it easy for employees to find opportunities elsewhere” (p. 1).

The impact of technology on succession planning can be seen in the evolving complexity of models. No longer is it sufficient to develop a single individual to take a leadership post in a company. Today, savvy companies know they must provide leadership development opportunities as a way of attracting and retaining talented workers who have many more options than they did in the 1900s (Zeiss, 2005; Fulmer, 2005).

Economic Conditions

The years between 1950 and the dawn of the new century supported the continued emergence of industries outside farming. Conte and Karr (2001) illustrate the dramatic

increase in these new industries such as computers, health, and service sectors which grew from 45 million workers to over 129 million workers (p. 2). By the 1980-1990s, the labor force had evolved well beyond the strong agricultural economy to a complex, global, and interdependent economy and organizations began to view the recruitment and development of leaders and talent as a way to remain responsive to market competition and improve business profitability (Wellins, Smith, & Rogers, n.d.).

Early in the twentieth century, the US economy was “at a high, having come out of a recession earlier in the decade” (Draves & Coates, 2007, p. 13). The previously strong economy had allowed that businesses to divert their focus away from developing replacements for key leaders. But the economy would not stay that way for long as evidenced by the Great Depression, from 1929-1940 (Conte & Karr, 2001). These two decades would remind American businesses that organizations simply could not sustain themselves with a single great leader because no company was immune to external forces.

As the economy and the number of qualified workers began to change, businesses and organizations started to rethink employee development needs and allocate more time and money to training employees (Conte & Karr, 2001). This investment in employee development was short lived as the trend began to reverse by the 1970s when the economy shifted once more. Organizations began to drastically reduce HR budgets for talent development and once again, the direct replacement approach became a cost effective alternative to developing multiple leaders.

Today’s leadership experts have made the case for the connection between strong leadership and long-term business productivity (Bennis, 1989; Gardner, 1990; George,

2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Maxwell, 2002; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Spears, 1998). Similarly, experts in succession planning have joined in building the business case for building a deep bench of leadership strength as a key indicator in business sustainability (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Rothwell, 2005). This has resulted in a wealth of literature linking employee development to business profitability (Collins, 2001; Wellins et al., n.d.; Bernthal & Wellins, 2005), which has again prompted organizations to consider strategic, deliberate succession plans that involve the commitment of many individuals in the organization.

Political Environment

During a time when employee options were limited and companies experienced high levels of loyalty and longevity from their employees, the direct replacement method was common place. Just as the society and the economy influenced the way employees were selected to resume key positions, so too did the political environment.

Before the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it was politically acceptable to appoint an individual to a leadership post without opening it for diverse applicants to apply. After that time, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited “employment discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin” making it more difficult to simply appoint a single direct successor without opening the process to other potentially qualified applicants (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [U.S. EEOC], 2007, p. 1).

Today, the EEOC oversees employer compliance with federal regulations and many companies have developed sophisticated legal departments and employee relations staff to assist with succession planning efforts. This ensures that the hiring and selection

process does not subject the organization to unnecessary legal scrutiny. This simple change in the political environment has become a catalyst for many organizations to begin considering broader pools of talent and move away from potentially political hotbeds of direct replacements in succession planning.

Changing Demographics and Workforce

The changing demographics around the globe will inevitably change the future available workforce. The U.S. economy, once driven by 78.2 million baby boomers (born between 1946-1964) who “fueled the labor force for decades” is about to change as impending retirements will create a “sizable hole in the labor market” (Leubsdorf, 2006, p. 51). With more than 77 million baby boomers becoming retirement eligible in the coming decade, some experts predict the U.S. workforce will be short by as many as 10 million workers (Zeiss, 2005).

Rothwell (2007) confirms this dramatic tightening on the labor force suggesting that already “1 in 5 of all senior executives in the Fortune 500 [and] about 50% of the entire US government workforce is eligible to retire” now (p. 2). Like their counterparts in business, educational institutions will also face challenges of replacing key leadership in the coming years as documented by many who have raised concern for academic leadership continuity (Bowen, 2008; Cook, 2005; Leubsdorf, 2006).

While the aforementioned external influences certainly have played a role in the evolution away from succession planning based on direct replacement to talent pools, it is this limited availability of the workforce that is probably the most significant influence on today’s renewed interest in true succession planning. Whereas in 1982, only 38% of a company’s value was attributed to “intangible assets” such as personnel, this would

change by the turn of the century when the figure would rise to 80% as companies began focusing on attracting and developing quality employees as a key business strategy (Wellins et al., n.d., p. 8).

Rothwell (2005) suggests that this shift in demographics and a movement from simple management skills to increasingly complex leadership competencies are two of the key drivers that are prompting organizations to consider comprehensive succession planning to remain competitive in the global marketplace. Among the most published experts who have addressed this issue of sustained organizational greatness is Jim Collins (Collins, 2001; Collins & Lazier, 1992; Collins & Porras, 1997).

More recently, additional experts in succession planning have joined in making the business case for leadership strength as a key indicator in business sustainability (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Rothwell, 2005). Simply stated, the changing workforce has prompted businesses and organizations to view succession planning as a tool and process that can help them remain competitive in a changing world.

Thus far, the literature has illustrated many examples of the external influences that have helped shape businesses and organizational approaches to succession planning since the 1900s. The evolution from early direct replacement models to more sophisticated and comprehensive succession planning models that today focus on competency development and talent management have certainly been impacted by political legislation, economic growth or recession, and technology. All of these external influences have played a key role in how businesses and organizations view succession planning.

Internal Influences on Succession Planning

The shortage of skilled workers is of concern to businesses, so much so, that today's corporate human resources offices are now charged with developing new strategies to attract, recruit and retain a broader and deeper bench of leadership prospects (Rothwell, 2005; Zeiss, 2005). Today's HR professionals operate at the intersection of the external demographic shifts and internal organizational priorities that are designed to give the organization a competitive advantage into the future (Rothwell, 2005; Hattingh, n.d.).

Organizational Priorities

The Bureau of National Affairs indicated a dramatic increase in the recruitment and hiring function of HR departments between the years 1990-2000 when companies began to view employees as a valuable component of their competitive strategy (Byham & Bernthal, n.d.). The desire for sustained success has business executives thinking about succession planning as a top priority. In fact some of the most successful companies showcased in *Built to Last* were at the forefront of their industries for at least fifty years because of one common thread; they had a history of succession and leadership planning (Collins & Porras, 1997).

Other researchers also confirm the growing importance of succession planning in the minds of CEOs and boards as evidenced in a recent survey by Korn/Ferry International that suggests trend-setting organizations (those with assets in the billions) “rated succession planning as the *third most important issue*” [italics in original] falling just short of the importance of “financial results and strategic planning” (Rothwell, 2005, p. 18).

Today's "organizational leaders recognize that it is wiser to focus beyond replacement planning to succession planning to build the long-term sustainability and viability of the organization" (Rothwell, 2007, p. 3). This is in large part, due to the awareness of the connection between succession planning and the business bottom line.

Employee Expectations

Not only have employers noted the value of succession planning as a viable strategy for business prosperity, employees themselves have come to expect development opportunities from employers, making the presence of formal leadership programs a necessity for organizations to remain competitive in an environment with limited talent. In *Get 'em while they're hot: How to attract, develop and retain peak performers in the coming labor shortage*, Dr. Tony Zeiss lists "no growth opportunities" as one of the reasons employees leave organizations (Zeiss, 2005, p. 134). Many have begun to place increasing focus on learning and development, however, succession planning remains largely elusive in most colleges and universities (Barden, 2006; Barden, 2008).

While the origins of succession planning efforts date back to the early 1900s, the evolution of our society, economy, technology and workforce has impacted how these plans are constructed and implemented in today's organizations. The evolution to a comprehensive talent management approaches offers opportunities for employees to develop personal leadership competencies while the organization simultaneously benefits from an overall increase in talent. The result is that organizations now see great value in developing their employees into leaders who will sustain the organization's mission while avoiding risks associated with a presumed single successor.

As external and internal influences continue to diversify the workforce and challenge the way organizations do business, more businesses may make the transition from direct replacement to talent management in order to remain competitive in an evolving society and business climate. Fulmer (2005) asserts that “succession planning will continue to become more integrated into the everyday life of organizations, moving from a formal ‘annual event’ to become a part of the daily fabric of doing business” (p. 3). This shift will propel many organizations into formal succession planning. In the next section, the author examines the interworking of academic organizations and the ensuing implications for succession planning in the academy.

Academic Organizations

Thus far, the author has reviewed the history of succession planning, how external and internal forces have shaped the evolution of business succession planning models, and discussed the importance of succession planning for business sustainability. Are these same forces at play in academic organizations?

To begin exploring this question, the author shifts now to an exploration of the unique aspects of academic organizations; their governance, culture, mission, role of leadership, and decision making processes. This section concludes with a review of how these may influence approaches to succession planning.

Winston (1997) authored an article entitled, *why can't a college be more like a firm*, which poses interesting questions about the operations of higher education institutions that may differ from those found in businesses and corporations. This reference is offered not to debate whether a college *should* operate like a business firm,

but rather to illustrate the unique facets of organizational behavior in higher education and how these may influence succession planning in the academy.

Many have explored the complex organizational structures and unique behaviors of colleges and universities only to conclude that institutions of higher education have distinctive characteristics that require them to function in ways unlike other businesses (Barden, 2008; Birnbaum, 1988; Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003). Fundamental differences in missions, governance structures, and the presence of a collegial culture in academia may be one answer to why colleges and universities operate differently than businesses. In the following pages, the author explores each of these differences including academic governance, missions, culture, leadership and decision making in the academic environment.

Academic Governance

Perhaps Gayle, Tewarie, and White (2003) characterize governance in higher education best by suggesting that the conversation is “both deceptively simple and complex” (p. 108). Colleges and universities are indeed complex organizations with missions and operating structures that must support the interests of multiple stakeholders.

Fish (2007) provides a glimpse into the growing number of these stakeholders in higher education institutions that include "higher education associations, funding organizations, the U.S. Department of Education, related Congressional committees, accrediting institutions, system-level offices, governors, state departments or boards of education, state legislatures, students, alumni, local community members, trustees, senior administrators, faculty leaders and presidents" (p. 9). With so many parties interested in the governance and direction of an institution, it becomes clear that the “fundamental

difference in the management and leadership of a college versus a corporation or other organization is [the] presence of shared governance” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 344). To fully understand the role of shared governance in higher education, the author next recounts a brief history of how this model became so prevalent.

Institutional governance has evolved since the early days of antiquity and the colonial colleges. In the early 1600s, colleges were largely governed by clergy and the courts and the “college president was the unquestioned authority” (Cohen, 1998, p. 43). This model of governance kept faculty power to a minimum until the late 1860s when faculty and administrators began to go separate ways. Cohen (1998) describes the next seventy years as a time when “governance structures shifted notably in the direction of administrative hierarchies and bureaucratic management systems...the faculty gained power...and administrators became business managers” (p. 151).

The ensuing thirty years would witness a growing shift of authority and power away from the president and toward multiple stakeholders including faculty, governing boards, and government. The 1960s marked an important decade that shaped the current structure of shared governance in higher education institutions with the emergence of 2 significant documents. The first, the Higher Education Act of 1965, “forced coordination of all sectors, as state-level coordinating boards of boards of governors were erected or strengthened so that more decisions reaching deeper into institutional affairs were negotiated in state capitals” (Cohen, 1998, p. 241). This Act shifted presidential power and authority out of the institution and into the hands of external agencies.

The second document came just years later in the form of the “Joint Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities” created by the American Association of

University Professors. This landmark document defined shared governance as participation by all constituents within the academic community including faculty, administrators, staff, presidents, trustees (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 6).

But faculty and administrators were not the only internal constituents who wanted to share in the governance of higher education. “By the turn of the twentieth century, student governments had been formed to include honor systems, advisory councils to the faculty, committees with power of discipline, oversight of residence halls, and management of extracurricular activities” (Cohen, 1998, p. 247).

Ultimately though, the only true stakeholder with the power, authority, rights and responsibilities of academic governance are the boards of trustees. While “faculty members, administrators, and trustees all have their own at least somewhat different perspectives as to who is ‘in charge’ and just why ‘they’ are” (Gayle et al., 2003, p. 16), the board of trustees is the only entity with a legal authority for the institution (Birnbaum, 1988; Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

It is evident that numerous constituents want to share in the governance and direction of colleges and universities, either formally or informally. This provides one explanation for why the operations of an academic institution can vary greatly from traditional businesses and similarly, provide great insight into the unique organizational culture that ensues.

Academic Culture

The combination of shared governance and collaborative decision making in the academy has been characterized by Ramsden (2003) as the concept of “collegiality” (p.8)

and by Truskie (1999) as “The Cooperation Culture”; a culture characterized by teamwork, relationships, consensus and cohesiveness (p. 8).

Collegiality presents itself in many forms including faculty academic freedom, decision making that transpires through a process of collegial discussion and debate, and the overall “sense of community” that describes most academic institutions (Ramsden, 2003, p. 23). It is this presence of collegiality and the relationship driven cooperation culture that sets academic institutions apart from many of their counterparts in profit bound businesses and corporations.

The challenge for the academic leader is to “create a climate in which there is pride in making significant contributions to shared goals” despite the origin of power or influence (Gardner, 1990, p.14). Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) propose that “effective presidents understand the culture of their institution” and furthermore that “many new efforts and modifications will occur because of the leadership and initiative of faculty and staff throughout the institution, often through ongoing processes” (p. 357).

In traditional business organizations, relationships and partnerships are necessary when working across functional areas or with external vendors. In fact, in recent years, many corporate businesses have begun to shift toward this cooperation culture recognizing that “cooperation and collaboration make good business sense” (Kouzes & Posner, 2002, p. 243).

In colleges and universities, strong working relationships are an essential everyday ingredient in the collegial culture. Academic institutions, more so than corporations, place greater emphasis on cohesiveness, dialogue, and the search for mutually beneficial solutions as evidenced through long processes and diverse

committees to ensure no perspective has been omitted prior to making decisions related to curriculum, college policies, or student fairness.

Businesses and corporations place “profit generation and shareholder value” high on the list of organizational principles (Gayle et al., 2003, p. 108). On the other end of the spectrum, institutions of higher education, like many organizations in the social sector, tend to focus on providing services to a broad group of constituents; many that simply cannot be measured on a profit and loss statement.

Jim Collins, well-known author of *Good to Great* examined the characteristics of great organizations and suggested that “in the social sectors, money is only an input, and not a measure of greatness” (Collins, 2005, p. 5). Instead of measuring financial returns, social sector organizations, including institutions of higher education, tend to measure their performance relative to how well they are meeting their mission (Collins, 2005). This may be one reason academic institutions have been perceived to operate more slowly and less strategically than their counterparts in business.

Academic Missions

Birnbaum (1988) could be said to oversimplify the difference in corporate missions from those found in academic institutions by stating that the “mission of a business enterprise is to make money” however he does identify one of the “fundamental differences in the missions between business and educational organizations” and that is a quest toward profits versus a mission of service (p. 11).

There are multiple missions found in colleges and universities, the most commonly cited are those that involve “teaching, research, and service” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 12). The teaching, learning, research and service missions of institutions of

higher education generally guide colleges and universities toward the objective of meeting a societal need rather than on a focuses of generating profits. Public colleges and universities are supported by business models that resemble a combination of non-profit charitable organizations and traditional revenue generating businesses that preclude future budget forecasting and do not encourage revenue surpluses.

The mission and profit –bound business models of private sector businesses may support hierarchical organizational structures and a single source of governance and power. The business of doing business in most higher education institutions will likely differ because of the complex business models, multiple constituents with a stake in shared governance, and the absence of a single absolute power or authority. In colleges and universities, business is best conducted through relationships whereby decision making is collaborative and “is spread among trustees, presidents, and faculty” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 4). Selingo and Carlson (2006) suggest that this may influence the way in which academic institutions approach the development of their employees; a topic that the researcher explores later in this chapter.

Academic Leadership

As Birnbaum (1988) states, “colleges and universities differ in many ways from other organizations” (p. 1). Complex systems of shared governments, diffusion of power and authority, dual business models and distinctive missions differentiate colleges and universities from traditional business organizations. And while the roles and responsibilities of the leadership may be far reaching in academia, there are still some similarities in the characteristics and qualities required of leaders in both businesses and academic institutions.

Educational cultures may be considered more collaborative in decision making than corporate cultures, but these institutions are complex and require leaders who can effectively manage multiple sub-cultures in order to set clear goals that can be shared by all constituents.

Bolman and Deal (2003) suggest that there are widely shared beliefs about the essential qualities of leadership which include the ability to (a) set a strong vision, (b) establish trust and bring about commitment from others, and (c) demonstrate personal strength, passion and conviction. Despite the differences in governance structures, business models and organizational behavior between corporations and academic institutions, these characteristics are not unique to business leaders as evidenced in the similarities to Myran, Zeiss, and Howdyshell (1995) characteristics of new century academic leaders (a compelling vision, an inclusive leadership style, ability to empower others, celebration of team achievements, a focus on collaboration and decentralized structures, and high ethical standards).

Bolman & Deal (2003), Myran et al., (1995) and Ramsden (2003) all agree that an academic leader's ability to build trust and solid relationships among both internal and external constituents is critical to his or her effectiveness.

Academic Decision Making

Fisher (1984) suggests that the academic institution is probably one of the few organizations where the power and authority of the president is more figurative and subject to intense scrutiny from the very people he or she is tasked with leading. The essence of this may be attributed to the presence of faculty power and influence in decision making which simply cannot be overstated.

In describing the difference between the leadership and governance of businesses and social sector organizations, Collins (2005) suggests that “social sector leaders are not less decisive than business leaders as a general rule; they only appear that way to those who fail to grasp the complex governance and diffuse power structures common to social sectors” (p. 10). Executive leadership, as practiced in a business where individual’s positional power and authority can be absolute, does not necessarily translate to the social sector where “no individual leader – not even the nominal chief executive – has enough structural power to make the most important decisions by himself or herself” (Collins, 2005, p. 11).

Succession Planning: Decisions for the Academy

In higher education institutions, it was once believed that the president held sole responsibility for setting the direction, goals and vision of the organization. This is not the case for today’s colleges and universities where many institutional goals are mandated by boards of trustees and legislators. More so, many college strategic plans are largely influenced by stakeholders like faculty, staff, students, alumni, donors, employers and the community (Myran, Baker III, Simone & Zeiss, 2003).

The collegiate leader has a responsibility to align varied constituents with a shared vision. This can be challenging given the disparate interests of faculty, staff, students, employers and others. Rothwell (2005) suggests that the most successful succession plans are those that benefit from a high level of support from the organization’s executives and senior administrators. This support may come more easily in organizations with defined structures of hierarchy whereby governance and the final authority for decisions rest on the shoulders of a few senior administrators and

executives. In academic institutions, however, the role of governance is rarely limited to a single person or even a single level within the institution, making the challenge more formidable for academic leaders.

Selingo and Carlson (2006), quoting the speaker at a recent conference on talent management, stated that educational institutions are slower to react to the need for succession planning. Whereas in business, many corporate leaders respond quickly and make changes that affect the business bottom-line and attract top talent, this is not necessarily the case with the speed of decision making from leaders of higher education institutions.

Some might even suggest that the most effective leaders in academic institutions are not always those who respond quickly with decisions that affect the organization. Birnbaum (1988) indicates that it would be “a mistake for a president to enter office with the belief that they will be able to significantly change the institution” (p. 226). Instead, the presence of a collegial culture suggests that leaders would be best served by delaying decisions until they have spent time developing relationships across multiple groups including administrative leadership, faculty, students, trustees, and many others who have a vested interest in the governance of the institution.

Externally, the president must cultivate strong relationships with legislators, governing boards, accrediting agencies, and trustees. This is because the funding of most public institutions is largely derived from government sources and supplemented by research grants or partnerships with business and industry. Fisher (1984) stresses the need for academic leaders to develop strong relationships with external stakeholders like

“politicians, public figures, and bureaucrats,” which can aid in the passing of educational policies and funding (p. 142).

Internally, the president must also develop strong relationships with multiple constituents and stakeholders. Due in large part to the presence of shared governance and long traditions of faculty power and tenure, “presidents [must] understand that all change is not their personal responsibility as many new efforts and modifications will occur because of the leadership and initiative of faculty and staff throughout the institution” (Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 357). Presidents who can balance the needs of multiple constituents are those who know how to “accommodate the desires of the board and to negotiate with the faculty” (Cohen, 1998, p. 154).

The president, as the top leader of the institution, has the onerous task as quoted by Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) in that the president:

Is expected to serve simultaneously as the chief administrator of a large and complex bureaucracy, as the convening colleague of a professional community, as a symbolic elder in a campus culture of shared values and symbols, and (in some institutions) as a public official accountable to a public board and responsive to the demands of other governmental agencies. (p. 340)

Taking the time to develop trusting relationships with faculty, administrators, trustees, students, legislators, accrediting agencies, alumni, before making significant changes or unilateral decisions may enable a new president to be more effective and successful in the collegiate environment.

Presidents of colleges and universities certainly must be cognizant of diverse constituencies and diverse structures in which they operate, but they must also possess strong leadership capabilities. The effectiveness of a leader depends in large part on the

willingness of his or her followers to be led (Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Bennis, 1989; Collins, 2001; Fisher, 1984; Gardner, 1990; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Ramsden, 2003). This is one area where most leadership experts can agree and an area that may pose challenges for succession planning.

While these challenges and tasks of presidents in higher education may be similar to their counterparts in business, presidents who serve a diverse academic environment may need specific strategies or processes to implement a formal succession plan that will be supported by those who participate in shared governance and by those who represent diverse constituents in a collegial culture.

Before the leader of an academic institution is able to implement significant changes, such as those associated with formal succession planning, the president must gain the support and trust of the affected entities. Gayle et al. (2003) emphasize this point by stating that “building trust within the institution is critical to overall success” (p. 59). This illustrates the importance for the leader of a college or university to have an understanding of this deep rooted culture in the institution, to understand the multiple stakeholders with varying special interests, and to acknowledge the role of each of these constituents in the interdisciplinary and complex web of governance.

Thus the collegial culture, witnessed in the missions, governance structures and in the leadership of many academic institutions, will likely influence how decisions are made by institutional leaders. Though some may perceive that decision making authority in an academic institution resides with the president, executive power is often bounded by the input of external constituents including trustees and outside agencies in addition to internal constituents including faculty and student governments. An experienced college

president, Zeiss (2005) suggests that “veteran presidents also recognize their power is largely illusory. They accept responsibility for the college, but they realize that major decisions and directions for the organization must be collegial and collaborative in nature” (p. 123).

Failing to delay decisions and take time to listen to the stakeholders and multiple sources of authority within this distributed power structure can be disastrous for leaders who are accustomed to positional power or authority. Collins (2005) cites one such example whereby a “corporate CEO turned academic dean” failed when he tried to impose his vision on the faculty by asserting executive or positional authority without getting the collaboration of faculty (p. 10).

Similarly, George Boggs, president of the American Association of Community Colleges advises trustees of the unique role they play in academic institutions. Boggs (2006) states that:

Although trustees may have backgrounds in business and industry, they must learn that colleges cannot be run like private business enterprises...they should understand the authority they share with faculty and staff, the autonomy of the academic departments, the principle of academic freedom, the authority of accreditation commissions, the potential for intrusion on the part of state boards and legislatures, and limitations on the CEO’s authority. (p. 22)

It can be said then that the authority for decision making works differently in educational institutions. Leaders of colleges and universities must work diligently to earn the support and acceptance of discerning internal and external stakeholders who believe they, and not a single executive leader, are keepers over the institution. A “president’s effectiveness is based as much upon influence as upon authority, and influence in an academic institution depends upon mutual and reciprocal processes of social exchange.

Effective presidents influence others by allowing themselves to be influenced”
(Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005, p. 358).

It is also important for academic leaders to recognize that power to control decisions that is often bestowed upon business leaders by virtue of their position may differ within the collegial walls of an academic institution. Presidential power in higher education institutions will come only after the CEO has gained the respect of others who share in the governance of the institution. Fisher (1984) states that:

The degree to which the president is respected and admired by the faculty will be the extent to which he or she is able to inspire trust and confidence, the extent to which he or she is believable and can deliver. (p. 101)

Thus, it is critical for presidents to foster the collegial culture by offering opportunities for faculty, students and staff to participate in the governance and decision making of the institution, but also be ready “to retain final authority and responsibility” for decisions (Fisher, 1984, p. 21).

The multiplicity of stakeholders in the academic institution can easily exceed those found in most businesses or corporations and will always include both internal and external interest groups. Many of these groups not only serve as stakeholders, but also active participants in the governance of the institution creating a formidable challenge for leaders to master relationship building, negotiation, and collaborative decision making. Gayle et al. (2003) suggest that involving internal and external stakeholders in decision making may be important to a president’s effectiveness and success in academia.

Rothwell (2005) explains that effective succession plans require commitment from top management, a thoughtful communication strategy, systematic identification of

those with requisite talent, and organizational commitment to develop leaders.

Succession planning in academic institutions may also require the support from multiple stakeholders beyond a single executive. Determining if and how a formal succession plan is implemented and communicated to employees in higher education institutions may originate with an individual leader, but will likely be influenced by the academic culture that is shaped by those who share in the governance of the institution.

Gaps in Literature

The preceding review of the literature on organizational behavior in higher education has shown that “colleges and universities differ in many ways from other organizations” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 1). Complex systems of shared government, collegial cultures, diffuse systems authority that impact decision making, and distinctive missions differentiate colleges and universities from traditional business organizations. And while there may be some similarities in the characteristics and qualities required of leaders in both businesses and academic institutions, the roles and responsibilities of academic leaders may be far reaching and unique.

The literature in the area of academic leadership was once sparse as noted by Birnbaum (1988) who also states that “most studies of leadership have taken place in business organizations, the military, and governmental agencies, with little attention given to higher education” (p. 22). In the past decade, some have begun to address the unique characteristics, responsibilities and challenges of those who lead non-profit organizations.

Collins (2005) has provided insights for the social sector, but scarcely addresses the complexity of leadership in institutions of higher education. Ramsden (2003) has tackled the issue of leadership in higher education, however, it has been with a concentration on the role of faculty serving at the “middle management level of department head” and not necessarily addressed at executives or presidents (p. xii).

Similarly, upon preliminary review of the literature available on the topics of succession planning and academic culture and governance, the researcher uncovered that while a wealth of resources exist for each topic, most of the research is primarily independent of one another as few have addressed strategies for succession planning within the unique academic organizational culture.

After reviewing the literature in the area of succession planning and academic culture and leadership, the researcher believed there was an opportunity to add to the body of literature on succession planning in academia through this study. In specific, the researcher set out to understand if the unique culture and governance structure found in academic institutions would support succession planning efforts and if so what strategies may be necessary for formal succession planning to be readily accepted. Through this study, the researcher’s findings ultimately extend the body of literature for succession planning within institutions of higher education.

CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY

In this study, the researcher employed a grounded theory approach to understand academic cultures and governance and emerge with insights these influences on an institution's approach to succession planning. The grounded theory methodology supports research studies that seek to explore data in the natural environment with the intent of emerging with a new theory that was already present in the data. The researcher study selected grounded theory as a means to understand current academic cultures and governance with the expectation that theories existed in the data about strategies for succession planning in the academy.

To better understand grounded theory and its applicability to the study of succession planning in higher education, the author first outlines the characteristics of qualitative research and grounded theory as described in the work of Creswell (2003).

Grounded theory first emerged as a qualitative research tradition in the late 1960s through the work of Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss who suggested that new theories could emerge from the actual data or phenomenon being studied if researchers applied a thorough and systematic approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This approach included rigorous coding of existing data and literature to emerge with themes common across all data sets.

Qualitative research and grounded theory research studies are almost always conducted in the natural environment with high levels of participation from the research subjects (Creswell, 2003). Research traditions such as this are rooted in what is known as emic perspectives which is simply described as the "participants' perspective" (Gall et al., 2003, p. 438). Researchers must take great care to ensure that the subject's point of

view is preserved and such focus often requires data collection to take place “primarily through one-on-one interviews, focus group interviews, and participant observation by one of the researchers” (Creswell, 1998, p. 33).

While quantitative researchers begin with a hypothesis and test specific research questions, the questions in a qualitative study often evolve as the researcher becomes more immersed in the environment. In this way, qualitative research and grounded theory can be described as a process that is “emergent rather than tightly prefigured” (Creswell, 2003, p. 181). In this study, the researcher began by posing standard questions to each participant and then allowed additional research questions to evolve as the researcher became immersed in the interviews and needed to explore emerging themes more completely.

Qualitative researchers play a key role in data analysis process and must therefore acknowledge the presence of personal bias in the research process. The data analysis process in qualitative research is an interpretive process whereby the researcher’s views are reflected in the emergent theory. Qualitative traditions require researchers to employ an inductive thinking process that begins with exploring data and ends in broad generalizations or the generation of new theories. (Creswell, 2003) In grounded theory, researchers largely follow the inductive thinking process; however both inductive and deductive logic may be used as the researcher revisits the data multiple times during analysis.

Finally, unlike quantitative inquiry and some forms of qualitative inquiry, grounded theory researchers are discouraged from bringing previous theoretical perspectives or hypothesis to the study (Creswell, 1998). Rather, the intent of grounded

theory research is to generate new theory from the data by systematically coding, re-coding, and searching for interrelated themes.

Grounded theory is thus an appropriate strategy when the intent researcher's intent is to "explore processes, activities, and events" (Creswell, 2003, p. 183) and to "derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants" (Creswell, 2003, p. 14). The strategy is most suited when the outcome is to generate a theory from the data rather than using an existing theory to explain the why the data is the way it is (Gall et al., 2003).

In studying academic governance and culture, this method is appropriate as one of the hallmarks of grounded theory is that it seeks to explain or derive a new theory by looking inward at the phenomenon. As such, many (Creswell, 2003; Dick, 2005; Gall et al., 2003) have described grounded theory as an *emergent theory* whereas many other traditions of inquiry – both qualitative and quantitative – tend to focus on the testing of hypothesis or viewing data through an existing theoretical lens.

Although grounded theory studies are highly interpretive based on the assumption that the theory is embedded within the data just waiting to be discovered, it is important to state that the interpretive process is not to be confused with a disorganized process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In fact, grounded theory dictates a rigorous, systematic process of coding and re-coding to ensure the new theory is verifiable. Researchers form "categories of information and then reassemble the data through systematically relating the categories" (Creswell, 1998, p.33).

The process of conducting grounded theory most often follows a process that could be illustrated by Figure 2. Researchers begin by collecting data, followed by

thorough analysis through a series of systematic coding processes, until themes finally emerge and the researcher reaches a point at which no new themes are emerging.

Figure 2

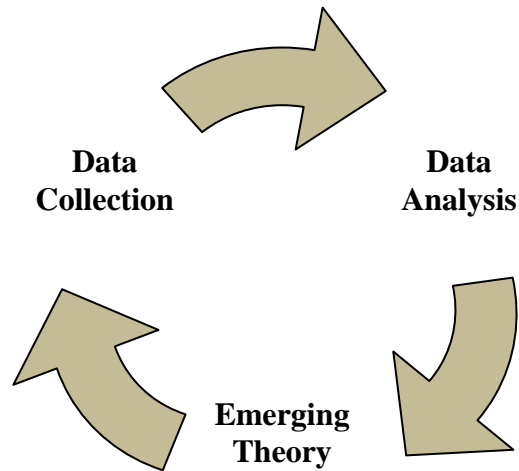


Figure 2. Grounded theory cyclical process.

The culmination of well constructed grounded theory studies should thereby result in a theory as the end-point of the research. Gall et al. (2003) define this as *theoretical saturation*:

The point in data collection when the researcher concludes that no new data are emerging to call into question established coding categories, no additional categories are necessary to account for the phenomena of interest, and the relationships between categories are well established. (p. 639)

In this grounded theory study, it was critical for the researcher to engage in a similar cyclical process of data collection and analysis by taking notes, coding themes, and using memoing as a means to compare themes from each of the interviews (Dick,

2005, n.p.). Dick (2005) suggests that “memoing continues in parallel with data collection, note-taking and coding” and may be best described as a process by which the researcher writes down keywords and thoughts about emerging categories on separate cards, only to return to these written memos to determine which emerging themes may be primary, supporting or sub-themes, and to determine inter-connected relationships of the memos (n.p.). Following this process allowed the researcher to develop a set of assumptions and theories about what conditions in governance or culture might have influenced decisions around succession planning in the academic institution.

By following the rigorous process outlined by grounded theory approaches, this study was well positioned to explore emergent theories on succession planning in higher education while also extending the existing literature in this area.

Sample Population

The sample population in this research study included senior executives at 6 colleges and universities across the United States. The institutions characterized a cross-section of public 4-year colleges and universities, 2-year community and technical colleges, and 4-year private institutions that varied in governance model, size, and geographic location within the United States.

Most of the participants agreed to participate in the study by indicating an interest in the idea of succession planning in higher education and to assist the researcher in identifying new strategies that may be applicable to colleges and universities. Some of the participants were individuals with whom the researcher was acquainted through professional association or networking within the field. Others were recommended by a

colleague or acquaintance. The researcher carefully identified participants who could represent the spectrum of public and private institutions as well as institutions that were geographically dispersed.

Subscribing to the literature from Rothwell (2005) that suggests successful succession planning occurs when there is a high level of executive or senior administration support, the researcher limited participation to individuals who held executive positions within their respective college or university. Participants included 5 presidents and 1 senior executive since these individuals play an important role as decision makers in matters of leadership development and succession planning and their positional knowledge would allow them to speak broadly about institutional governance, culture, leadership and decision making.

The purpose of the study was to explore whether governance structures and academic cultures influenced how an institution considered succession planning, if at all. As such, it was not necessary for the participating institutions to have a formal succession plan in place but rather it was more important for the participants to provide the researcher with insight into the institution's culture, governance and decision making. From this data, the researcher coded and recoded the data in the analysis process to allow themes to emerge that generated themes about institutional approaches to succession planning.

Research Questions

The study sought to answer questions about organizational governance and culture, and whether these influence an institution's decision to engage in succession

planning. When appropriate, the researcher also posed questions to uncover current or future strategies for succession planning that the respondents thought might be best supported by the institution's culture. The researcher began with 3 primary questions that included

1. Has your institution considered implementing a formal succession plan?
 - a. If so, how is your institution approaching the process of succession planning?
 - b. If not, what has been a factor in your decision not to engage in a formal succession plan?
2. To what extent, if any, does the governance structure of the institution influence decisions on succession planning?
3. Based on the institutional culture, what process, methods or strategies for succession planning might be best supported by the institution?

As is typical in all grounded theory studies, the researcher was encouraged to probe deeper with participants by asking follow-up research questions as necessary to fully explore emerging themes. This study followed a similar protocol as the researcher added new research questions throughout the data collection process to uncover all potential themes.

Data Collection Strategy

Prior to collecting data, the researcher e-mailed each participant a summary of the proposed study and obtained a signed informed consent. Upon consent, face-to-face and telephone interviews were set up with presidents and senior executives at 6 institutions of

higher education. Whenever possible, the researcher conducted in-person interviews, however, telephone interviews were also used to interview participants in geographically disperse locations. All interviews were recorded and coded to capture themes relating to organizational culture and governance along with any other factors that surfaced regarding institutional decisions around succession planning.

Data Collection Process and Tools

Data for this study was collected in a cyclical manner intertwining the collection of data from interviews with the data from literature, coding for themes and then returning to the data collection process as necessary to continue exploring themes. This reflects the cyclical process of grounded theory as referenced previously in Figure 2.

The researcher contacted senior leaders at the sample institutions to explain the purpose of the research study and requested agreement to participate. Appropriate IRB forms, including the informed consent were emailed to each participant and received prior to each interview. Upon verbal agreement to participate, the researcher then scheduled a time for the 30- to 60-minute interviews.

Of the 6 interviews, 3 were conducted in a face-to-face environment and 3 were conducted by phone. E-mail is not a preferred method of collecting data in the grounded-theory approach as it is difficult to ask redirecting questions in a timely manner and subsequently makes it challenging for researchers to follow up on emerging themes. As such, email was only used for the purpose of clarifying responses gained through verbal phone or face to face interviews, such as confirming executive's length of service and institutional profile information.

The data collection tools in this study included unstructured interviews using open-ended questions. Open-ended questioning is critical in grounded theory studies as the purpose of the data collection is to allow the theory to emerge from the participants' responses. Use of unstructured questions was also important to expand the researcher's knowledge of the institution's culture and governance and allow the participants to reveal information that may not otherwise be uncovered through structured questioning. Interviews were recorded and transcribed for content analysis using the principles of grounded theory coding as outlined in the data analysis section.

Ethical Considerations

Because of the nature of these research participants' positions in the institution, an informed consent was the only document necessary for Institutional Review Board approval. The researcher obtained signed informed consent forms from each of the 6 participants prior to interviewing. Participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about the study prior to and throughout the data collection process.

During the interviews, the researcher protected the anonymity of all participants by recording information on paper and recorded tapes as Institution A, Institution B, and so on. This allowed participants to speak candidly and disclose confidential or private insights about the governance structure or culture of their institution, which many did.

While interviews were recorded, the anonymity of respondents was kept safeguarded throughout the data collection process by transcribing and coding using the alpha-codes A-F. All documents were stored in the researcher's private home and laptop using a secured log-in. Furthermore, all published documents, including drafts, referred

to respondents through alpha-codes A-F and did not disclose the identity of institutions or individuals interviewed.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in grounded theory studies follows a prescribed protocol whereby researchers analyze data through a series of systematic coding exercises until a saturation point has been reached and no further analysis is required. Creswell (1998) proposes 3 distinct and sequential means of coding data.

The first step in the process is open coding whereby “the researcher forms initial categories” or themes of the data reports (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). Once the initial categories are conceived, the researcher must then “assemble the data in new ways” to determine what phenomenon lies at the core or center of the study, the influences on the central phenomenon (causal conditions), the results of the central phenomenon (strategies) the (intervening conditions) that influence the strategies, and finally the outcomes (consequences) of the strategies (Creswell, 1998, p. 57). This process is referred to as axial coding and is a unique regenerative process of grounded theory.

When themes emerge from the axial coding process, the researcher then enters the final stage of data analysis whereby the “story line” is identified that brings together all of the themes of the analysis process (Creswell, 1998, p. 57).

One way to analyze data in a grounded theory study is through a process of note-taking, coding, and using memoing to assist in sorting through potential themes (Dick, 2005). Dick (2005) describes memoing as a process by which the researcher uses cards, “in parallel with data collection, note-taking, and coding” to compare themes across

different interviews and determine which emerging themes are primary versus secondary (n.p.). This cyclical process is critical because the essence of grounded theory is for the researcher to identify the theory that is in the data itself and this theory could come at any point in the data analysis process (Dick, 2005). Note-taking and using memos can take place during open coding, axial coding, or selective coding to note where patterns are present.

Because the intent of grounded theory is to allow a theory to emerge from the data, researchers who choose this methodology must enter the data collection and analysis process without pre-determined hypothesis and without a theoretical framework in mind. This may pose a challenge to many who explore issues and problems based on a presumed hypothesis or expectations of causal relationships. Researchers may also be challenged by the grounded theory analysis process in that it requires strict adherence to the systematic process outlined earlier, to ensure no themes are excluded and to ensure the researcher reaches saturation before confirming the substantive theory (Creswell, 1998).

Finally, unlike other forms of qualitative or quantitative research, grounded theory researchers face the ultimate task and challenge of establishing validity or verification in the study. This can be established by following the prescribed process of data analysis. Creswell (1998) confirms that “the responsibility for establishing verification in a [grounded theory] study rests with the researcher” (p. 209). Strauss and Corbin (2005) offer advice to researchers to consider using the axial coding process to look for connections and relationships between data sets and therefore establish verification (Creswell, 1998, p. 209).

Anticipated Results

It was not known if institutional governance and culture would influence how institutions approached succession planning. Furthermore, grounded theory studies discourage researchers from entering the study with preconceived ideas about what the results may be. As such, the researcher did not predict specific results prior to entering the data collection phase, but did anticipate themes would emerge that would result in new ideas about succession planning.

The researcher hoped to explore the research questions through the data collection process and emerge with new thoughts about what may be present that would support or prohibit formal succession planning in higher education. It was anticipated that this study would provide new insights regarding the influence of institutional governance, academic culture and decision making higher education institutions. Additionally, the researcher anticipated the study would yield some strategies or processes for academic institutions that had committed to formal succession planning efforts.

Finally, the researcher anticipated that this study would extend the literature on succession planning strategies in higher education and provide opportunities for additional research to be conducted in the future.

CHAPTER 4. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the culture and governance of institutions of higher education and understand if an institution's decision to engage in succession planning was influenced by cultures of collegiality and shared decision making. Additionally, the researcher sought to understand if, and how, institutions were approaching succession planning and emerge with strategies that may be applicable for other institutions of higher education. The following chapter outlines the process of data collection and presents an analysis of the collective results.

Data was collected from 5 presidents and 1 vice-chancellor at 6 institutions of higher education; each varying in size, structure, funding sources, governance models, and geographic location across the United States. The researcher collected the data according to the prescribed protocol which included in-person and telephone interviews, all of which were recorded and transcribed to validate themes during ongoing analysis. In each of the 6 interviews, the researcher asked a series of open-ended questions to arrive at answers or common themes for the 3 main research questions which included

1. Has your institution considered implementing a formal succession plan?
 - a. If so, how is your institution approaching the process of succession planning?
 - b. If not, what has been a factor in your decision not to engage in a formal succession plan?
2. To what extent, if any, does the governance structure of the institution influence decisions on succession planning?

3. Based on the institutional culture, what process, methods or strategies for succession planning might be best supported by the institution?

The researcher began data collection with an in-person interview on February 5, 2009 and continued data collection over a 4-week period with the final interview occurring in-person on March 6, 2009. Data analysis began after the first interview and continued throughout the data collection phase and for 9 weeks post interviews to ensure themes were fully explored. To protect the confidentiality of the respondents, responses from each institution were captured by assigning identifiers such as College President A and University President B. These references which extend from A through F are used throughout the remaining chapters.

Institution Profiles

Of the 6 participating institutions, 3 were public colleges or universities and 3 were private institutions. The governance of public institutions is traditionally influenced by state legislation and funding is often appropriated through the state governor's office or state board of education. Public institutions receive at least some portion of state subsidy for tuition and institutional operating expenses. While private institutions must also work with state legislatures and government, these institutions rely primarily on tuition revenues, endowments, and private sources of funding for the institution's operating budget and typically do not receive subsidy for tuition revenues from the state.

The participating institutions ranged in size of the student body from a couple thousand students to over 70,000. Institutions ranged in size of physical facilities from a single campus to 6 campuses, and from a single geographic location within the US to

institutions with several satellite facilities or campuses abroad. Some were comprehensive universities that offered athletic programs, extension and outreach activities, residential facilities, and other campus services. One interviewee represented a system of smaller colleges while another was a president within a larger university system structure. Table 1 provides an example of the institutional profiles and additional detail is provided in the brief descriptions that follow.

Table 1. *Institutional Profiles*

Characteristics	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Public	X			X		X
Private		X	X		X	
2-year	X					X
4-year		X	X	X	X	
Location(s)	6 in SE	2 in NE; 1 in Canada; 1 in Ireland	1 in SE	1 in SE	1 in NE; 2 in SE; 1 in Midwest	4 in Midwest
Interviewee years of service	15+	10+	7	9	6	5
Independent Corp. or Corp. Board of Trustees			X		X	

Institution A is a public, 2-year community college located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The college is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The institution has multiple

campuses and offers programs from workplace basic skills to associates degrees, transfer programs, and continuing education. The researcher conducted a sixty minute in-person interview with the college president of more than fifteen years. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as “College President A”.

Institution B is a private, comprehensive university offering undergraduate, graduate, executive, and continuing education programs. The institution has multiple campuses with its main campus located in the Northeastern region of the United States and additional campuses throughout the Northeastern U.S., Canada and programs in Ireland. Accreditation for the main campus is granted by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools to award bachelor’s masters, specialty, and doctoral degrees. The researcher conducted a sixty minute phone interview with the university president of more than 10 years. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as “University President B”.

Institution C is a private, comprehensive university offering undergraduate, graduate, and continuing education programs. The institution has one campus in the Southeastern United States. Accreditation is awarded through the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to award associates, bachelor’s, and masters degrees. The researcher conducted a sixty minute in-person interview with the university president of nearly 7 years. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as “University President C”.

Institution D is a large, public, comprehensive, research, land-grant University. The institution has a single main campus located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern

Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and awards bachelor's, masters, specialists, and doctoral degrees. The researcher conducted a sixty minute phone interview the university president of 9 years. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as "University President D".

Institution E is a private, 4-year university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees. The institution has a main campus in the Northeastern region of the United States with 2 campuses in the Southeastern region and an additional campus in the Midwest. The university is governed under a corporation with an independent board of trustees and campus presidents at each location. All campuses are accredited by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Inc. (NEASC), through its Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The researcher conducted a sixty minute in-person interview with the campus president in the Southeastern region who has served in this capacity for 6 years. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as "University President E".

Institution F is a public, 2-year technical college system located in the Midwestern United States. The system is comprised of independently accredited colleges by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). This public institution does not have a local tax base and is currently undergoing a structural and business model transformation that will allow it to operate with less dependence on state funding, none of which will be derived from the production of student contact hours; rather, it will be derived through an outcomes-based formula. The system has 4 colleges and offers technical degrees as well as continuing education programs. The researcher conducted a sixty minute phone interview with the vice-

chancellor of the system office responsible for Human and Organizational Development. Data and quotes from this institution are noted as "College Vice-Chancellor F".

Research Questions

The researcher began with a set of open-ended questions and added new questions as needed to explore emerging themes around institutional culture, governance and decisions around succession planning. The focus of this study was to explore whether organizational governance and culture influenced an institution's decision to engage in succession planning. For institutions that responded favorably to having a formal succession plan in place, the researcher sought to uncover what approaches were best supported by the institution's culture and in the participant's perspective what allowed successful implementation of such a plan. The researcher set out to answer 3 primary questions that included

1. Has your institution considered implementing a formal succession plan?
 - a. If so, how is your institution approaching the process of succession planning?
 - b. If not, what has been a factor in your decision not to engage in a formal succession plan?
2. To what extent, if any, does the governance structure of the institution influence decisions on succession planning?
3. Based on the institutional culture, what process, methods or strategies for succession planning might be best supported by the institution?

To arrive at the answers and themes for these primary research questions, the researcher asked all institutions a total of 9 initial open-ended questions (Appendix A) and used additional follow up probing questions to fully explore factors contributing to each answers.

Due to the nature of unique responses and the need to probe different initial responses, the unstructured probes varied across respondents and are therefore not included in the appendix. The use of unstructured probing questions was important to expand the researcher's knowledge of the institution's culture and governance by allowing the participants to reveal information that may not otherwise have been uncovered through structured questioning.

This questioning is critical in grounded theory studies as it is during the data collection process that theories emerge from the participants' responses. Creswell (2003) describes this process as an attempt by the researcher to "derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants" (p. 14).

Data Analysis

In grounded theory studies, researchers are encouraged to look for themes within the data through a cyclical process of capturing keywords, writing memos and coding responses from each interviewee. During this process, the researcher identifies key messages and themes during each interview and forms initial categories to then explore at length in subsequent interviews. It is not necessary to record or transcribe interviews verbatim (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), however, the researcher did record all interviews and transcribed each to verify and validate notes that were collected during the interviews.

The researcher believed this was important to mitigate any limitations that may have otherwise resulted from conducting some interviews in-person, and others over the telephone.

The researcher began with note-taking, then made memos to capture initial categories of themes that were then tracked in a spreadsheet that categorized key responses from each interview. Dick (2005) describes this multi-faceted and cyclical process as a critical element in grounded theory studies as it allows categories to emerge from within the data collection process rather than forming categories from the literature. These categories usually emerge from the researcher's own notes and themes can emerge at any time.

The researcher began identifying keywords and concepts in the first interview and used these to categorize similar themes from each subsequent interview. Creswell (1998) describes this "process of taking information from data collected and comparing it to emerging categories" as the data analysis process known as constant comparative (p. 57). When a keyword or concept was repeated, it was so noted in the spreadsheet by denoting an "x" in the institution column. As new themes emerged, the researcher added each keyword or concept to the list of potential themes and tracked against each subsequent interview.

The researcher then cross-referenced and compared these themes across additional interviews or other data sets. Creswell (1998) describes this zigzag process as one whereby initial themes begin to emerge and data is collected and analyzed multiple times. Table 2 provides an example of the coding process in which various themes were

identified by tracking keywords in participant responses. The full table is included as Appendix B.

Table 2. *Sample Table of Coded Themes*

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Current Succession Planning Practices						
Informal practices	X	X	X	X	X	X
Formal policies			Crisis only			
Governance and Culture						
Collaborative/inclusive	X		X	X	X	X
Corporate-influenced/ Revenue driven		X	X		X	X
Faculty have advisory role	X	X	X	X	X	X
Influences on Succession Planning						
Demographic changes	X	X				
Institutional culture		X	X	X	X	X
Will Institution Support Succession Planning						
Yes	X	Not direct replacement	X		X	X
No				X		
Succession for administrators more so than faculty		X	X	X	X	
Leadership development programs	X	X	X	X	X	X

Table 2. (continued)

Sample Table of Coded Themes

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Strategies for SP in the academy						
Subtle communication	X	X		X		
President commitment	X	X	X		X	X
Strategic HR champion	X		X	X	X	X

After all interviews were complete, the researcher returned to the recorded tapes and transcribed each interview to determine if earlier respondents also mentioned the same themes. This cyclical process of coding themes was important to ensure theoretical saturation. Similarly, the process of recording interviews and subsequently transcribing them in search of new themes became essential in not only validating the emergent themes but also determining if there was support for the theme across all participating institutions or just a select few.

For example, when asked to describe their institution's culture as related to decision making, 5 of the 6 participants used the words collaborative or inclusive. This led the researcher to develop the first theme related to institutional culture which was the presence of collaboration and inclusion of multiple constituents in the decision making process.

Similarly, when posing the question about the presence of a formal succession plan at the institution, several respondents indicated that the institution did not have a

formal written policy; however, there were activities that, in practice, demonstrated the institution's commitment to succession planning. This led to the categories of formal succession planning versus informal succession practices.

The emerging categories or themes were then “compared with personal experiences or with existing literature” through a systematic process of coding as described by Creswell (2003, p. 133). Through note-taking, use of memos and coding the number of times respondents referenced a succession planning *practice* vs. a *policy*, the researcher was able to emerge with the conclusion that institutions may have practices that support succession planning, however, using the term in a formal sense may pose too many obstacles in the academic culture.

Through this same process coding key words across all 6 interviews and returning to the transcribed recordings to validate themes, the researcher was able to answer the 3 primary research questions by capturing themes that were repeated by multiple respondents. These themes extended across the primary research questions making it difficult to limit the discussion of each theme under each specific research question. As such, the researcher restates the research questions first and then discusses the emergent themes that resulted from the interviews in total.

Emergent Themes

The research questions focused on (a) the presence of a formal succession plan at the institution, (b) the influence of the institution's governance structure on succession planning, and (c) specific strategies that may be followed to allow succession planning to

be supported in the institution's culture. Through the process of answering these primary research questions several themes emerged to include the following:

1. There is evidence of succession planning practices at each institution, although participants did not necessarily describe formal written plans. Instead, most institutions cited the presence of leadership development practices without clear evidence of full succession planning activities or policies;
2. Governance structure appeared to have at least some influence an institution's approach to succession planning. Institutions with a corporate board or corporate influenced governance structure were more likely to have a systematic process for succession planning. Additionally, several respondents indicated that the concept of shared governance was often as illusory with formal decisions residing in the hands of executives and boards of trustees;
3. The literature review which characterized academic cultures as "collegial" or collaborative was further substantiated by all 6 institutional respondents. Furthermore, several respondents indicated that the role of faculty within the academic culture may hinder the ability to do succession planning from faculty to administrative positions. It was therefore determined that although all participants responded that formal succession planning could be adopted within the academy, this may be challenging given the unique culture.

Finally, the researcher uncovered additional strategies and recommendations that may be necessary for succession planning to have a reasonable chance of success within academic institutions. The researcher presents findings toward these themes here in

Chapter 4 and then discusses specific recommended strategies for succession planning in Chapter 5.

Theme 1 – Succession Planning Practices

All respondents indicated that their institution had considered implementing a formal succession plan, but not all institutions had a *formal* plan in place at the time of the study. All 6 institutions responded favorably to having *practices* in place that would yield potential succession candidates, however, only 2 institutions indicated the presence of a formal *policy* for succession planning.

During the data collection process, this question almost always required the researcher to provide additional clarification in defining *formal succession plan*. This was the first indication that there may be a theme emerging around what constitutes succession planning in the institution. All institutions wanted it known that there were certain activities in place to promote leadership development, but many struggled to answer affirmatively to having a formal succession plan. To quote University President E:

We do have a succession plan, but it's the word *formal* I pause on. We do have a succession plan but I don't think it's written down. We don't have a document or policy that is the succession plan but we periodically go through exercises with individuals in the university office, campus by campus, to talk about who are likely individuals to come into the succession process.

Similarly, University President D suggested that formal succession planning implies the involvement of many constituents to gather input similar to a strategic planning process which may be too formal for higher education. To quote this

respondent, “I think ‘succession planning’ is too formal of a word for what can work.

Succession discussion; succession thinking; succession conversation – yes.” University

President C offered a similar perspective stating:

I would say that we don’t have a formal succession plan. I think I have identified 3 VPs who could potentially be my successor and I do keep that in mind when I hire and develop people. I look at [one person who I think has the potential to be my successor] through a lens of what development experiences does he need to be ready?

As a result, formal succession planning was subsequently defined through the data collection and analysis process as a written document or policy that was widely understood within the institution. It was subsequently determined that only 1 institution had such a formal written policy, and that policy was primarily focused on crisis planning for replacing the president in an emergency. A second institution indicated it had a formal plan, although it was not written as such and had evolved into more of a leadership development plan for a select group of employees. While exploring this question around formal succession planning policies and practices, the researcher realized that there was another theme emerging; leadership development opportunities versus comprehensive or systemic succession planning efforts.

What this study uncovered was that while many institutions responded in the affirmative to practicing succession planning, when pressed for specific examples, most respondents could only cite leadership development activities. Few addressed succession planning as defined by Rothwell (2005) as a “deliberate and systematic effort” to “retain and develop” individuals and few could give examples of how they systematically identified talent pools or processes to identify potential succession candidates (p. 10).

Instead, the respondents expressed an institutional commitment toward the development of employees either through internal or external leadership development opportunities and several emphasized the importance of developing leadership across multiple levels in the institution. University President B was quoted stating that, “I am deeply concerned with leadership development” and furthermore that “even though right now we don’t have a formal succession plan, I can tell you of about a dozen people who I continually encourage and offer opportunities to take on additional responsibilities.”

University President E stated “I have a real obsession with this notion of ‘the next generation’ and leadership ...at all levels. We’re investing in them and you’ve got to have that mindset. It’s tragic when it’s not there and you’re in education.”

One institution indicated that while there was no current effort to formalize succession planning into a policy, the institution was committed to a variety of leadership development opportunities that were occurring on an informal basis; “No formal announced succession planning process, but there are a lot of things building...things that serve to develop leadership in a very informal way” (College Vice-Chancellor F). Responses like these were typical across all participating institutions.

In fact, this commitment to leadership development even extended beyond offering internal leadership development to include mention of external leadership training programs. As seen here, both College President A and University President B indicated that their commitment to developing leadership through organizations like the Harvard Executive Institute, League for Innovation, and American Council on Education. “Through our succession plan we have all sorts of leadership activities externally [Leadership NC, ELI through League for Innovation] and of course, internally we’ve

created our own leadership development opportunities [President’s Leadership Institute].”

Only 2 institutions were able to provide evidence that, in addition to leadership development opportunities, their institution also focused on the identification of talent as part of the succession planning process. Interestingly, both of these institutions were heavily influenced by corporate boards which gave way to a second theme and one of the pre-study assumptions that governance and culture may in fact influence approaches to succession planning. This finding began to answer the second research question about the influence of governance structure on succession planning.

Theme 2 –Governance, Culture and Decision Making

In Chapter 2, the researcher described some of the unique elements of academic culture that included shared governance and collaborative decision making. Furthermore, the researcher cited extensive literature that colleges and universities are complex organizations with missions and business models that must support the interests of multiple stakeholders. Birnbaum and Eckel (2005) describe some of the challenges by suggesting a “fundamental difference in the management and leadership of a college versus a corporation or other organization... [is the] presence of shared governance” (p. 344).

Through this study, the researcher looked further to understand if the different governance structures and cultures might influence how institutions approached succession planning. In collecting data around the question of governance; *To what extent, if any, does the governance structure of the institution influence decisions on*

succession planning?, the researcher noted several themes. First, the researcher collected a wide variety of responses and opinions around the definition of *shared governance* and whether or not it actually existed across various constituent groups. Secondly, the researcher noted patterns in approaches to succession planning based on differing governance structures. Each of these is further described in the words of the respondents.

Regarding academic governance, some acknowledged its presence while others considered it a non-issue. College President A described shared governance and decision making at a public community college:

We don't have shared governance. That was a term from the 80s and I don't think it's pervasive anymore. You cannot share governance – by law, my board cannot share their responsibilities. They have to be responsible by statute. Are we collegial? Do we collaborate? Absolutely.

This statement was supported by the literature that suggests while “faculty members, administrators, and trustees all have their own at least somewhat different perspectives as to who is ‘in charge’ and just why ‘they’ are” (Gayle et al., 2003, p. 16), the board of trustees are the only entity with a legal authority for the institution (Birnbaum, 1988; Kaplin & Lee, 2007).

But University President C situated in a private institution suggested that their institution faced a considerable challenge balancing governance across administration and faculty. In this president's words, the university was:

Currently working on a formal definition of shared governance for the faculty because we've had a few bumps along the way and misunderstandings about what are purely administrative decisions and what are faculty decisions and what decisions are best made together.

This president's comment illustrates the complexity of the academic culture which is wrought with the voices of multiple constituents; each of whom has a vested interest in the direction of the institution. Leaders of colleges and universities must work diligently to earn the support and acceptance of discerning internal and external stakeholders who believe they are keepers of power and authority over the institution. This may be of particular importance in decisions around succession planning that one respondent claims "flies in the face of the academy" (University President D).

In analyzing themes around governance and decision making, it became evident that while faculty may play an advisory role in some curriculum or institutional decisions, all 6 institutions suggested that decisions around leadership development were reserved for the president and in many cases the board of trustees. This was confirmed in coding responses from all 6 participants who indicated that they often consult with various constituents including faculty, staff, and the board when making executive decisions but that ultimately decisions of governance rested with the board of trustees or executives.

While the true *governance* of an institution was largely left in the hands of boards and executives, the presence of shared *decision making* was prevalent at all 6 institutions. The researcher noted in coding responses that all 6 participants described a consultative or inclusive process of gathering input for decision making, but that actual decisions were the purview of the executive team. University President C summed up the struggle between faculty and administration when discussing shared governance, by stating:

I don't think faculty have a shared commitment in decision making for [other positions]. I think that is an administrative decision. In talking about succession planning for the president, I think it's the board's primary responsibility and they should solicit faculty input.

As the researcher probed further into questions of culture and governance, another theme emerged among institutions with a certain level of corporate influence either through an independent board of trustees or members of the board with strong corporate backgrounds. University President E suggested that “because we’re in academia but we behave more like corporate, some folks from ‘outside’ have a harder time transitioning understanding the culture of decision making and governance.”

University President C, also from a private university indicated their institutional culture and decision making was also highly influenced by corporate-minded individuals stating that:

We have a very corporate board and they come from organizations with very sophisticated succession plans, and I serve on 3 corporate boards, so I participate in organizations with very sophisticated succession plans. And because they’re so engaged, and I understand it – we’re probably philosophically more apt to embrace the concept more.

Both of the private institutions with corporate influences described a more systemic and deliberate approach to succession planning. Additionally, a third institution also mentioned activities of a formal succession plan to include talent identification. Interestingly, this institution was a public community college that might on first glance appear not to have as strong of a corporate influence. Upon further probing and exploration of the influences impacting their decision to implement a succession plan, it was noted that the board did include several corporate trustees and additionally, the president was highly committed to planning based on external influences like the Department of Labor and authoring two books on the topic of an aging workforce and the need for talent recruitment.

When pressed for examples of the internal and external influences that had contributed to this public institution's decisions to adopt succession planning, College President A offered the following comments:

Every organization, private or public, has to get involved in this because the baby boomers are retiring. I asked our HR folks to conduct some research to determine how many of our people (particularly faculty and administrators) were eligible to retire in the next 5 years and 10 years. When we got those statistics, it just underscored the urgency of putting a real meaningful succession plan in place.

Of the 6 participating institutions, these 3 were the only ones to describe specific activities that their institution used to identify top talent and potential successors or link such activities to business results. The presidents of the private institutions spoke candidly of their ability to have an open conversation about succession planning that may have been attributed to the smaller size of the institution, the relationship with the board, and the presence of a corporate influence. These conversations are challenging in other traditional academic environments.

University President C indicated that they have a succession planning model that follows the "talent pool" concept as previously defined by Rothwell (2005) stating:

We do have that talent pool concept. We do go through a process of identifying high potentials and I ask the management team to tell me what they're doing to retain and develop those high potentials; but we're small. We're small enough that we can get together in a room and talk about it...we know the values of the institution.

The president of University B, a private institution which did not have a formal succession plan, suggested that succession planning strategies for public institutions may

be different than those found in private institutions. He attributed this to the focus on revenues in private institutions – revenues that drive operating budgets that are similar to the business models of most corporations. In the words of University President B, succession planning in a corporate culture is:

Qualitatively different in that particularly in the corporate community, they are driven by Chairman of the Board rather than the president. The board is very concerned with sustainability and ongoing revenue. It is that revenue priority [that drives succession planning] because the financial stakes are far higher in the corporate environment.

The president of University C who is highly involved in corporate boards and has seen sophisticated succession plans had in fact applied similar principles from corporate succession planning to that institution. This president commented on the importance of having tough conversations about potential successors and the need to take actions to develop top talent while removing poor performers.

We have a talent review at a retreat and managers have to justify their ratings to the other VPs. Non-performers are gone in two weeks. [This] cross-functional review of talent is helpful to make sure everyone is on the same page about what valued around here, and what constitutes a high-performer.

University President E commented that the need to have these tough but critical conversations may be indicative of private institutions where the bottom line is largely influenced by business models similar to that of private corporations. “We’re in academia but we behave more like a corporation. We’re tuition-driven. You want to make sure you have the right person leading.” Still, both presidents of private institutions

suggested that traditional academic culture posed challenges to follow a purely corporate model of succession planning. Again in the words of University President E:

I believe that traditional academia does not value a succession planning model. I think that is rooted in faculty governance. Faculty believe they run the university and they tolerate the administration. I don't think they would value an organized corporate style succession plan.

These private institutions also demonstrated a commitment to deliberate and strategic succession planning by including identification of top talent in their plans. Interestingly, both commented that having the right people in place had resulted in a higher rate of internal promotions and a greater focus on systemic succession planning than most of their public counterparts that failed to mention additional elements of succession planning beyond leadership development. Even these private institutions commented that the academic cultures are not likely to support messages of guaranteed placement or entitlement. As University President B states, "I think the process of identifying individuals as part of a plan with the understanding that they're going to move forward into specific positions would be very difficult in higher education."

This led the researcher to conclude that governance did in some way shape the comprehensiveness of an institution's succession planning efforts. Those with corporate-minded influences were more likely to have comprehensive, deliberate and systemic approaches than their public counterparts. Ultimately, formal use of the term succession planning may be better expressed as leadership development in colleges or universities with less corporate-like structures.

This finding also led the researcher to further explore how formal succession planning might be best supported across a variety of academic cultures; both public and private. The third question asked participants to comment on the process, methods or strategies for succession planning might be best supported by their institutional culture. Responses to this question are described next.

Theme 3 – Succession Planning in Academic Cultures

Researchers such as Ramsden (2003) and Truskie (1999) have described academic cultures as “collegial cultures” or the “cooperation culture”; terms used to characterize multiple voices in decision making, teamwork, relationships, consensus and cohesiveness. The presence of such collegiality and relationship driven cooperation cultures distinguishes academic cultures from many profit driven businesses and corporations.

As the researcher explored the topic of academic governance and the influence of collegial cultures, a final area emerged related to an institution’s ability to embrace succession planning. The researcher posed questions about the impact of academic missions, governance structures, and the presence of a collegial culture on executive decision making in the area of succession planning.

Of the 6 institutional executives participating in this research study, all 6 indicated that key decisions were made by the institution’s executive team and yet all participants also indicated that their culture was one that required collaboration and inclusiveness in decision making. This was further supported by the literature review that suggested the collegial culture is one that is unique to academia whereby executives must consult with a

variety of constituents and yet final decisions rest with a few key administrators. In colleges and universities, the business of doing business is conducted through relationships whereby decision making is collaborative and “is spread among trustees, presidents, and faculty” (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 4).

College President A describes this college’s culture as a “culture of shared ownership in decision making process. It’s a collaborative culture” but it is also important to note that this was not synonymous with shared governance.

University President B commented that “the culture [faculty participation, giving people opportunities] does influence the whole attitude even if they don’t have a formal written [succession] plan, there is a sense of progression.” But this president, like the others, also stated that the decisions and process for succession planning falls to the president and board of trustees.

This final theme was one that was wrought with paradox. While 5 of the 6 respondents indicated that they were personally in favor of succession planning and the remaining respondent indicated support for it, all respondents suggested doing formal succession planning would be a challenge to implement in any environment; corporate or academic. In the words of University President D:

[It is] very hard to do succession planning in both [academic and corporate] environments. It flies in the face of the academy [where] you want everything to be open; you want everything to be discussed. But, this is one of those things that in my experience can’t be or it simply won’t work.

This president went on to state that “this whole idea is a whole lot easier to talk about than it is to do” and suggested that it was particularly “difficult to talk about in

academic environment.” University President D even suggested that true succession planning does not even work in the corporate environment because it “goes against human nature” to identify one’s replacement. This finding is further explored in Chapter 5 where the researcher offers recommendations for dealing with such paradox.

For most presidents who indicated personal support for succession planning, several suggested that they would also need board support. Again, in the words of University President B:

I am personally for [succession] planning. [My role] would be directing the process under the affirmation and encouragement of the board. I work for the board. If it’s a priority for me, I have to make it a priority for the board.

University President E concurred stating that campus leadership positions are “decided by the university president. The university president drives the decisions on leadership, identifying talent, and potential for succession.” Similarly, University President B stated that the primary responsibility of the board “has to do with hiring and firing of leaders.”

Whether or not presidents believed succession planning could be fully adopted in the academic environment was contingent upon their institutional culture and board support for planning. The majority, 5 of the 6 institutions, suggested that succession planning could be supported in academic institutions, although 2 of these participants indicated that it could not be in the form of direct replacement or entitlement. University President D states “you can’t anoint someone.... you have to have an open search” and College President A suggests that succession planning in academic environments is difficult and that “even private organizations have their limits.”

Executive commitment was deemed essential for succession planning to succeed by 4 of the 6 participants. A fifth respondent indicated that board support was essential and the final participant indicated that while the president's support was not essential, succession planning would be "greatly enhanced with presidential sponsorship" (College Vice-Chancellor F).

In addition to president and board support, 3 of the respondents suggested that succession planning requires a high level strategic champion in the Human Resources department. Such level of support is not often found in institutions of higher education where much of the human relations focus is on compliance and employee relations. As noted by University President C, "In our organization and probably in a lot of academic institutions, HR is treated as a transactional function rather than a strategic function."

This president went on to suggest that institutions need both strategic HR thinkers to raise the priority of succession planning as well as tactical HR employees who have the time and knowledge to implement a plan within the academic culture:

I don't think we have a strategic thinker in our HR area because we've not been willing to allocate resources and think strategically about developing our people. You can tell where your priorities are by where you spend your money.... We put money a lot of places and we haven't put it there. Not having that function [strategic HR] represented at the table is a deterrent for us.

College President A described their institution's attempt at succession planning and subsequent challenges absent such a champion.

It's gotta be from top down. We false started this thing at least 3 times. I don't think they understood the real commitment and the real importance of it. We also had a change in our Human Resources group and that helped us a lot because [the new AVP of HR] got it and understood it.

In similar fashion, University President C suggested that even with presidential and board support and strategic HR champions, succession planning also requires a tactical Human Resources individual to implement such an initiative:

I can cast the vision for it and get the board's unanimous support, even my management team's support, but without someone [in HR] to drive it day in and day out as a philosophy and culture, I wouldn't give it much chance of success.

University President E suggested that succession planning would be better suited if endorsed at a senior level within the Human Resources function stating, "I do believe in a general sense, that institutions of higher education would be better off if they had a conscious plan within their HR function or senior VP of Administration."

Finally, College Vice-Chancellor F acknowledged the need for executive commitment and indicated that a succession plan "could survive, but is greatly enhanced with presidential support." This individual further suggested that the role of the executive is to layout the vision and then empower another champion to implement the plan:

I see them [presidents] articulating that vision of what the future of the organization looks like, and I think that's the most important part. There are other people that can identify what skills/competencies it will require.

While there was no consensus among the 6 institutions on whether or not succession planning could be fully adopted in their culture, 5 of the 6 participants indicated that it probably could be and furthermore, suggested it was an institutional responsibility of the top leadership to ensure future leadership continuity. Several

presidents suggested the importance of planning and University President D stated that the “overriding issue is if you don’t do this, you’re not serving your institution well.”

In the words of University President C, “I think its good stewardship for presidents and colleges to do succession planning; that’s the greatest gift I could give this institution.” Similarly, University President E stated:

One of the [presidents] primary responsibilities is making sure that the leadership of the institution is of top quality, but then that there are people in the queue, and [that they build] in systems to ensure that there are opportunities for people to grow in their positions, take on new responsibilities.....I think that’s a primary responsibility of a university leader.

College President A of a public community college that was one of the few institutions with a formal succession plan, stated that institutions should plan regardless of size or governance structure. To quote this president, institutions without such a succession plan are neglecting a top priority:

The first thing I would tell the top leadership is that they’re being negligent in one of their most important responsibilities and that is to ensure the continued success of the college. The second thing I would tell them is if you haven’t created one, you’d better take a look at those of us who have and assign a top priority to ramping it up.

With 5 of the 6 institutions indicating the need for succession planning and 4 suggesting executive commitment as a necessary component, the researcher then asked for these executive’s recommendations for how succession planning might be best supported in the institution. A common theme among most participants was that the communication strategy may help alleviate some of the paradox that presidents face when

it comes to managing the need for succession planning against the collegial culture that may not support such formal strategy.

In the words of College Vice-Chancellor F, communicating succession plans in a traditional academic culture must be “very diplomatic, politically correct...I see very much an entitlement philosophy.” Communicating a succession plan should be done in a very subtle way in order for it to work in the collegial environment. University President B suggests “I’m not sure it can be a highly verbal commitment. [Institutions] should create an environment where people say, yeah, I want to learn that.”

Similarly, University President D offers the following advice about communicating succession plans:

Don’t write it or [make policy]. I don’t think it serves the university well to have it in that clear of a light. It is by nature working counter to the way the university wants to operate, but if you don’t do it that way [subtle, less formal], it could be detrimental.

The emergent theme across all respondents was that succession planning may be able to work in institutions of higher education, but the communication should be carefully constructed to convey the importance and value of all employees rather than a message of exclusiveness or entitlement for a select few. This theme was important in that it supported the first finding in this study which indicated that few institutions have *formal* succession plans and yet most institutions readily provided examples of leadership development practices for the development of many. It also confirmed literature on the collegial culture and the second theme that suggested shared governance and decision making could influence succession planning practices in the academy.

The researcher concluded that the communication of succession plans is a key component for executives who find value in succession planning, but who must also honor the collegial culture of cooperation and inclusion. University President B provides a great perspective for how succession planning should be communicated within the academic environment:

I would like to announce to the community, that there is [a plan] but I wouldn't call it a succession plan – [rather] an attitude and a plan for individual development. I want everyone to view that there are opportunities to advance in knowledge, skills and position. [We] have to communicate that people are the most important thing. [The] core message is that people are important around here.

The importance of communication and executive commitment were anticipated themes that were also supported by the literature review on the unique governance, structure and cultures present in academic institutions.

The last area to emerge relative to whether or not succession planning could be fully adopted by academic cultures was unexpected and there is no known research to substantiate this finding. Several respondents commented that while succession planning may be adopted within the academy, there may be limits on such planning for faculty who seek administrative positions.

Perhaps the only evidence for this finding can be found in the work of Cohen (1998) who describes the demarcation between faculty and administrative positions in the academy resulting from a time when “governance structures shifted notably in the direction of administrative hierarchies and bureaucratic management systems...the faculty gained power...and administrators became business managers” (p. 151).

This distinction between leadership in teaching and administrative leadership was noted as a challenge by several participants, and is best described in the words of University President D who suggested that leadership development could ultimately be the “kiss of death” for faculty.

University President E expanded on this notion suggesting that faculty probably do not want to be considered in formal succession plans anyway because “most faculty members look down on the role of what administration has to do.” This respondent went on to cite an example of a former colleague who was “always suspicious of a faculty member who asked him to help him become chair of a university committee because this person clearly has an agenda and that immediately disqualifies the person.”

This was a surprise to the researcher, who is an administrator with a nineteen year career in administrative leadership positions. It was a startling and unexpected outcome of this study that some might view administrative leadership as a negative role within the academy. Regardless, the notion of administrative succession planning versus faculty succession planning surfaced as another area that may be applicable for future studies.

Finally, 4 of the interviewed executives suggested that formal succession plans should include strategies for on-going conversations with the employees that go beyond the traditional annual performance discussion and that organizations include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan for the institution and the development of the individual. This outcome helped shape the researcher’s recommendations in Chapter 5.

University President C stated, “I’ve seen really a good process and it takes buy-in and accountability....I need to know *how* you’re developing people.” Similarly, University President D suggests that institutions must “make it a part of the annual

evaluation [and] have a conversation with each of my direct reports around their successors. [You] can't let what happened last week determine it.”

This supports the need for deliberate and strategic succession planning which includes the full spectrum of activities to include talent identification, on-going communication, and measures of accountability for individuals and the process itself. These are the essential components of effective succession planning that Rothwell (2005) and Hirsh (2000) mention; that along with executive commitment, strategic and tactical HR involvement, and the importance of carefully crafted communication will allow such planning to be embraced in the academy.

Summary of Themes

The outcomes of this study confirmed existing literature that characterized the cultures and complex governance structures found in academic institutions. Additionally, the researcher uncovered several themes to support the initial research questions.

The first research question sought to understand if institutions had a formal succession plan and if so, how it was being implemented. The findings were that all 6 institutions expressed evidence of succession *practices* that were aimed at leadership development; however, only 1 institution suggested the presence of a formal *policy* for succession planning.

The second research question explored whether the governance structure of the institution influenced decisions around succession planning. All 6 participants also indicated that their culture was one that required collaboration and inclusiveness in decision making. Institutions that described deliberate and systemic succession planning

activities (those that included identification of top talent, leadership development, and evaluation) versus traditional leadership development activities often attributed this strategic planning to some type of corporate influence and bottom-line revenue focus.

As captured by University President E, succession planning can be a sign of a healthy organization and good business model:

I do think educational institutions should adopt succession planning because it's good for the health of the organization and you will have opportunities for promotions from within. It's good because it promotes leadership development opportunities, skill development, and it's probably less expensive.

The study also concluded that all 6 institutions reserved decisions around leadership development to the president and in many cases the board of trustees, but acknowledged the need for such decisions to support the collegial culture.

The final research question sought to uncover strategies for succession planning in the academic culture. It was determined that executive commitment was essential or would greatly enhance the effectiveness of a succession plan. Several respondents suggested a strategic champion at a senior Human Resources or executive level within the administration as well as the need for a tactical HR function to successfully implement a plan.

All 6 institutions suggested that communication of a succession plan should be carefully constructed so as not to communicate exclusivity but rather honor inclusivity of the academic culture. Finally, a few institutions indicated that succession planning may be best limited to administrative roles and out of the faculty ranks of an institution.

In Chapter 5, the researcher outlines recommendations for future research based on these emergent themes.

CHAPTER 5. RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

At the onset of this study, the need for strong leadership in businesses and organizations (Bennis, 1989; Gardner, 1990; George, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Maxwell, 2002; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Spears, 1998) and the urgency for organizations to engage in succession planning to sustain future leadership talent were noted (Rothwell, 2005).

Several publications and presentations from conferences were cited that suggested institutions of higher education may be ill prepared to address emerging leadership because of a lack of established succession planning policies or practices. Among these sources was a 2006 report by *The Chronicle of Higher Education* that indicated “many colleges are poorly prepared to replace the administrators who will soon depart” (Leubsdorf, 2006, p. 52) and a joint association meeting among 3 higher education professional associations whereby leaders discussed the critical need for succession planning:

Unless college leaders do more to identify and nurture new talent, higher education will face a leadership crisis in the coming decades as the baby-boom generation of college officials retires, and the pool of potential replacements shrinks. (Selingo & Carlson, 2006, p.25)

Several years later, the *Chronicle of Higher Education* once again reported that still “an astonishing number of institutions have no succession-planning process in place” (Bowen, 2008, p.1). Upon the conclusion of this study in 2009, significant conversations continue about the need for succession planning, while their remains little strategy or

agreement on the best approaches for succession planning to succeed in the academic culture (Barden, 2009).

The combination of literature suggesting the need for succession planning paired with limited research on institutions that have successfully implemented succession plans in the unique academic culture ultimately led the researcher to this study which explored the relationship between succession planning and academic cultures.

In this final chapter, findings from a grounded theory study of 6 institutions of higher education and their efforts toward succession planning are discussed. The researcher details several themes that emerged to include (a) the conclusion that there is limited formal succession planning occurring in colleges and universities, although many report activities toward leadership development, (b) the confirmation that an institution's governance and culture can influence how succession planning is carried out in the organization and (c) considerations for institutions that may pursue formal succession planning. The researcher also addresses a number of areas for future study to continue filling the gaps in literature on succession planning within institutions of higher education.

Results of Research

Rothwell (2005) has defined effective succession planning as a process that includes a "deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement" (p. 10). This study found that few institutions were able to demonstrate such a deliberate and systematic effort toward

succession planning. Rather, what many participants of this study described as succession planning was often represented by descriptions of leadership development activities without the strategic identification of high potentials or talent pools which are characteristic of formal succession planning.

This finding was not unique to this study, however. Recent research studies have cited similar findings when examining succession planning practices (Hassan, 2008; Lopez-Molina, 2008). In fact, the participants in this study offered perspectives similar to those in previous studies who expressed difficulty defining *formal succession planning* components characterized by examples of a wide spectrum that includes some talent identification, in most cases career development opportunities, promotions or discrete components of the total process (Fancher, 2007; Lopez-Molina, 2008).

In these previous studies, “most participants shared a common view of the purpose of succession planning but had difficulty in describing its parameters, contents and characteristics” (Fancher, 2007, p. 77). Upon further review of the results of recent studies (Fancher, 2007; Lopez-Molina, 2008) along with the results of this study, it was determined that few institutions actually had this level of comprehensive succession planning in place and in some cases, those that claimed to have plans may have confused succession planning with leadership development terms as well.

While most institutions indicated they offered some form of internal or external leadership development programs for faculty, staff, or administrators, few respondents spoke of comprehensive or systematic efforts that also included evaluation of the strategy itself or assessment of an individual’s development. It was almost as though the broader concept of succession planning had been replaced with the single component of

leadership development without regard for how individuals would be selected or measured in their progress toward specific development goals.

In fact, only 2 of the 6 institutions were able to describe components of *formal succession plans* which included the full spectrum of identifying candidates, selecting a pool of talent for development, offering a variety of leadership development opportunities, and using the results to make decisions about future personnel. As consistent with early forms of succession planning or replacement planning (Rothwell, 2005), 2 of the 6 institutions in this study indicated that formal succession planning was limited to crisis planning that identified who could replace an executive leader in the event of a crisis or incompetence.

While only 2 institutions provided examples of *formal* succession plans, all 6 institutions indicated that leadership development was critical to their organization and all 6 respondents indicated that they took part in *informal succession planning practices* even though there was no formal institutional policy on succession planning. University President E, who paused on the word *formal* when describing the institution's approach to succession planning stated that "at the leadership team level [directors/deans] know there is a succession plan" although this participant also clearly stated that there was nothing in writing.

Based on responses to questions about institutional efforts toward succession planning, the researcher concluded that overwhelmingly institutions do not have formal succession planning initiatives as described by Rothwell (2005), however, leadership development opportunities seemed to position the institution in the face of retirements and the need for emerging leaders.

The second result of the study was confirmation of existing literature and research about the complexity of academic cultures and the challenge it creates for succession planning to be effectively embraced in the academy. The researcher entered into the study with assumptions that institutions of higher education were multifaceted organizations that operate differently than businesses. During the literature review, numerous researchers were cited who previously explored these complex organizational structures and concluded that institutions of higher education have distinctive characteristics that require them to function in ways unlike other businesses (Birnbaum, 1988; Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003).

Data from this study supported claims that shared governance and collegial cultures do exist, and in fact may influence how institutions approach decision making; and particularly decisions around succession planning. Of the institutions that described efforts of talent identification as part of their succession planning practice, 2 suggested that their decisions may have been influenced by corporate succession plans, corporate boards, and cultures that allowed them to operate more like a corporation than a college.

Another respondent suggested the business model was significant in identifying individuals for succession plans stating that “if you went to look for high performers under an activity based model, they would be different than those in a results based model” (College Vice-Chancellor F). This suggests the importance of governance and culture in determining appropriate successors and the targeted leadership development opportunities.

With respect to governance and decision making, the researcher found that institutions with strong influence by virtue of corporate governance or corporate boards

were more likely to have deliberate and systematic succession plans that encompassed all aspects of succession planning beyond traditional leadership development opportunities. Furthermore, these institutions self-identified the influence of corporate models and consideration of fiscal responsibilities as having at least some influence on their succession planning efforts.

This finding confirmed the literature where succession planning experts have also tied leadership bench strength to business sustainability (Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Rioux & Bernthal, 1999; Rothwell, 2005).

It is clear that there is a direct connection between such deliberate and systematic identification, engagement, and retention of potential leaders and talented performers, and the achievement of targeted results. There is strong relationship between leadership bench strength and financial success. (Thompson & Smith, 2006, p. 3)

The results of this study further clarified characterizations of the collegial culture that is prevalent in most types of higher education institutions. Participants provided clarification on the distinction between cultures of shared governance and those with single governance (typically by board or executive) that also employed shared decision making in an inclusive culture.

All 6 respondents indicated that decisions requiring formal voting or true *governance* were limited to executives and boards of trustees. Yet, all respondents also indicated that faculty and other groups were often consulted or played an advisory role in the decisions at many institutions. All 6 institutions described decision making processes that were collaborative or inclusive and all indicated that they consult with various constituents including faculty, staff, and the board when making executive decisions.

While descriptions of collaborative decision making were widespread, in the end, 5 of the 6 respondents indicated that decisions of succession planning would be ultimately in the hands of the president in consultation with the board of trustees. As stated by University President E when asked to comment on their succession planning practices, “the university president consulted broadly...even [holding] an open meeting of leadership from central office and all campuses. Ultimately, the decision was made by the university president. All key decisions regarding leadership development take place in the university officer level.”

The researcher concluded that presidents or executives may face significant challenges as they balance the need for succession planning as a business strategy while working in cultures that may not support formal plans.

The final outcome of this study led to recommended strategies that may help institutions move forward with succession planning processes that are deliberate and systemic. Through results of this study and the literature review, the researcher was able to identify 5 components as having significance to a succession planning process in higher education institutions. These are briefly discussed here as results, and are further detailed in the recommendations for the 5C strategies proposed later in this chapter.

To begin, institutions or executives considering implementing a formal succession plan should carefully consider the academic environment before embarking on such a task. For succession planning to work in higher education, one must first understand the institution’s culture, governance, and determine what level of support it will offer to a formal plan and how it might be implemented. Included in the discussion of culture, is

the opportunity to align such efforts with the institution's mission, vision and values and create a communication strategy that supports the culture, be it corporate or collegial.

The next recommendation is to identify the key champions who will ultimately aid in its successful implementation. The plan must involve support of the most senior executives along with key Human Resources personnel who can not only create a strategy that will be supported by the institution's mission and values, but more importantly, develop a strategy that includes careful communication of these policies or practices that honors the institution's culture.

The succession plan should give consideration for how individuals will be identified, again with consideration for the communication of those in the talent pool and those who are not. Careful communication strategies will help alleviate perceptions of direct replacement or entitlement and are more likely to position the plan for success in these collegial and inclusive cultures.

Institutions and executives should consider not only providing a variety of leadership development activities internally and externally, but be strategic in identifying which leadership development activities are appropriate to develop the talent pool in areas that will help sustain or grow the organization in the future. In this way, succession planning and strategic planning can be complementary activities that align organizational goals and competencies to the leadership competencies required of future leaders.

There are several studies on the leadership competencies of community college leaders, but additional research needs to be conducted on the necessary competencies across all types of higher education institutions. Regardless, competency-based succession planning can not only elevate the level of an individual's leadership capacity,

but also ensure alignment with organizational goals. As quoted by Horvath and Ellis (2008):

Aligning competencies to the overall goals of the business gives an organization or business unit an overarching and common umbrella for talent management, branding, and leadership development and gives managers a common language for hiring and performance assessment. (p.4)

Finally, institutions should avoid viewing succession planning as a one-time initiative. Effective succession plans should include on-going evaluation of the people being developed and the processes by which the succession plan was established. Several participants commented on the importance of discussing succession planning more deliberately and more often than simply at an annual review. Doing so can ensure continued leadership development of the right people toward the right organizational objectives.

Conclusions

At the onset of this study, the researcher posed a series of questions to better understand (a) whether institutions were currently engaged in formal succession planning and if so, how this was being implemented, (b) to explore whether the culture and governance structure of institutions influenced decisions around succession planning and finally (c) to uncover what strategies for succession planning might be best supported by academic institutions.

Upon the conclusion of the study, the researcher was able to report that while only 1 institution offered evidence of a formal *policy* for succession planning, all 6 institutions

expressed evidence of succession *practices*; practices that were aimed at leadership development rather than systemic succession planning.

The researcher also concluded that all 6 institutions described collegial or inclusive cultures that shared in decision making at some level, but all 6 reserved final decisions around leadership development to the president and in many cases the board of trustees.

Finally, the researcher was able to emerge with specific recommendations for succession planning that include (a) succession planning activities should be customized to the institutional culture, mission, vision and values, (b) the support of key executives including the president, board of trustees, and HR champions are necessary for succession planning to become a strategic priority and fully implemented program; (c) carefully crafted communication around succession planning is necessary to honor the inclusive culture of the academy; (d) competency-based succession planning that aligns leadership activities with organizational competencies or strategic plans may best position the institution to meet business or service objectives; and (e) succession plans must continuously evaluate both the people involved and the processes to ensure continuous alignment with desired objectives.

These conclusions were consistent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 suggesting that the missions, governance structure, and the presence of collegial cultures in institutions of higher education may require them to function unlike other businesses (Birnbaum, 1988; Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003). And while some institutions with corporate models or influences were able to approach succession planning with more deliberate strategy, this study also

concluded that all institutions expressed concern for how plans would be communicated in a way that honors the cultures found in most colleges and universities.

This study, along with findings from recent researchers, has concluded that communication and culture may be two of the most important considerations for succession planning in higher education institutions. Citing a recent dissertation on the influence of culture on succession planning, it was noted that “the planning process is more important than the result” and furthermore that failure to succeed is often found in the execution (Fancher, 2007, p.3).

This study confirmed Fancher’s (2007) findings as well as previously cited literature that describes the unique nature of academic institutions versus traditional corporate business models. As University President E describes:

I’ve seen it happen... two failed [external] searches where they hired big name people and they’ve been total disasters. [There was] no match on the culture, no match on the governance, [and they] didn’t understand relationship of the school to the university structure.

Similarly, this study supported recent literature noting a lack of formal succession planning in academic institutions (Barden, 2009). The researcher found that only 1 institution that had a formal succession plan in place and concluded that the institution’s governance and culture can make it challenging for formal succession planning to occur within most academic institutions. In fact, this study provided quotes from several respondents who indicated that formal succession planning may be “counter-culture” to the academic environment and much easier to talk about than to actually do.

Finally, this study confirmed that organizations with a focus on business results are more likely to see the value of succession planning. Rothwell (2005) described the

importance of succession planning in the minds of CEOs and boards who “rated succession planning as the *third most important issue*” [italics in original] falling just behind the importance of “financial results and strategic planning” (p. 18). This study reported similar findings relative to the importance of succession planning initiatives by both public and private institutions that were concerned with business results.

University President E, of an institution with strong corporate influence concurred stated “I think a well run organization is going to have succession planning and leadership development, especially in a large institution...that’s a sign of a healthy organization.”

Several respondents suggested there may be value in approaching succession planning much like strategic planning. In fact, when asked if the priority for succession planning would change given external influences like the economic recession, few presidents pulled back on the importance of succession planning equating it to initiatives like strategic planning. In the words of University President C, “I think succession planning has a much longer term strategic priority. Succession planning is a strategic issue. Leadership development and succession planning is a compass issue; a directional issue, so I don’t think it’s impacted by the economy.”

Similarly, College President A suggested the challenged economy would not change the priority or importance of succession planning:

I think if anything it [economy] will give some of those organizations that have been slow to adopt a succession plan or develop a succession plan, a little more breathing room to put one together in a formal fashion. The train’s coming down the tracks and eventually they’re going to have to replace someone.

Recommendations

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous researchers who have illustrated the need for good succession planning in higher education. This study, like the others, has noted the importance of the design and execution of formal succession plans. For deliberate and systemic succession planning to exist in academic institutions, it requires executive commitment, an approach not unlike strategic planning, and careful construction of communication along with close ties with institutional cultures, missions, and values.

As such, the researcher offers the following recommendations for institutions that want to move beyond a leadership development paradigm and into one that includes a deliberate and systemic succession plan complete with the full spectrum of succession planning activities.

The researcher proposes institutions give consideration to 5C's as they approach succession planning in the academy. These include (a) Culture: succession plans should be closely integrated with the institution's culture, mission, values, and business model; (b) Champions: executive support is essential for a succession plan and should include the president, board of trustees and HR, along with the inclusion of a tactical champion implement the plan; (c) Communication: any succession planning should be carefully communicated within the collegial culture and academic institutions must balance perceptions of entitlement for a few with leadership development for many; (d) Competency-based: aligning succession planning to organizational goals and identifying people based on specific competencies may help institutions move toward more strategic and deliberate planning and help the organization sustain itself into the future; and finally

(e); Continuous: deliberate and systemic succession planning does not end with the identification or development of an individual, but rather that effective assessment of the individual and the plan itself to ensure on-going success. These strategies for academic succession planning are represented in Figure 3 and each element is further detailed in the next section.

Figure 3

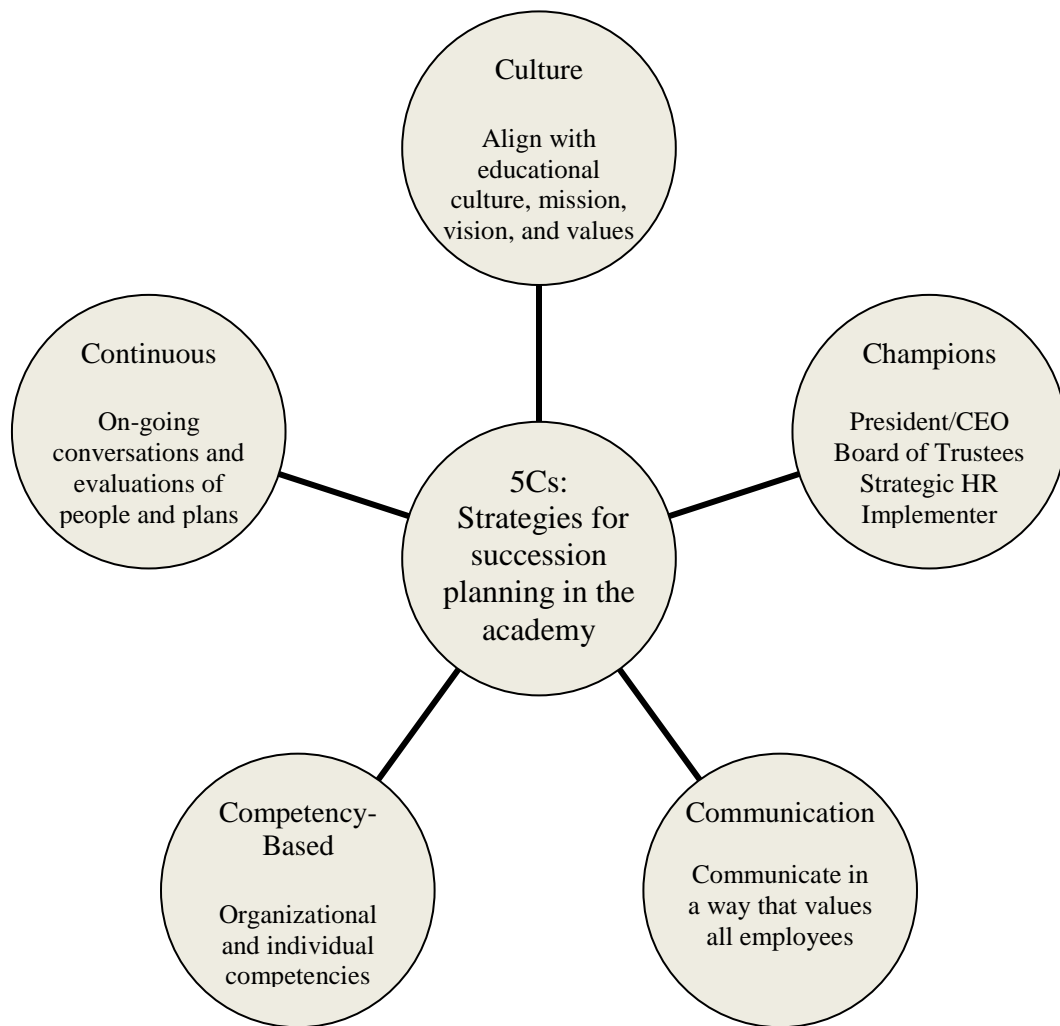


Figure 3: 5C's: Strategies for succession planning in the academy.

Culture

The academic culture offers unique challenges and opportunities as noted by many (Barden, 2008; Birnbaum, 1988; Birnbaum & Eckel, 2005; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen, 1998; Ramsden, 2003; Winston, 1997). While the institutional cultures differed across the public and private institutions in this study, one component remained essential to succession planning in the academy; any strategic initiative such as succession planning must be tied to the mission, vision, and business operations of the particular institution.

University President B commented that “academic institutions are not agile; they don’t change easily” and that it would be prudent for executives to approach succession planning just as they would any other strategic planning initiative. The president of College A, an institution which had successfully implemented a succession plan, offered this advice: “Whenever I pitch a new change, I always tie it to a core value. That’s one of the secrets to getting people to accept change. I tied succession planning to a couple [of our institution’s] core values.”

Similarly, University President E offered suggestions that those developing a succession planning strategy should consider how it fits into the institutional “mission statement, accreditation, board of trustees [and] what they want.” Likewise, College Vice-Chancellor F commented that this may change based on the institution’s unique culture and values, stating “we have four colleges in our system and you may pitch it differently at each one based on the team, the opportunities they have in front of them, their vision, their demographics, etc.”

The conclusion was that it would be prudent for institutions to follow a deliberate and systematic strategy for succession planning, but that this strategy must be closely aligned to the institution's culture, mission, vision and values. For any strategic, systemic or deliberate initiative such as a succession plan to be fully embraced by the organization, it must fully embody the culture, mission, vision and values of those it serves.

There is no simple template for putting a succession planning process in place. Every organization is different, and each organization must develop a succession plan that fits its specific needs. Management must guide this process and the human resources department must oversee it. And both must focus heavily on organizational culture. (Butler & Roche-Tarry, 2002, p.4)

Champions

Regarding champions of succession planning, 5 of the 6 participants indicated they were personally in favor of succession planning and the remaining respondent indicated support for it but that it would be a challenge in any environment; corporate or academic. University President E indicated that "I think there is value to having a succession plan in place" and University President C stated "I think my role is to identify great people and give them lots of support and encourage them to hire great people. I encourage them strongly to identify people who could be their successor."

This study confirmed the importance of executive commitment to the process of succession planning, however, College President A sums up the challenge for executives in the comment, "that conjures up the notion: Which is better? Train your people and lose them or not train them and keep them? I'd rather have them trained for whatever time I have them."

The other struggle for executives of academic organizations was noted by 5 of the 6 participants who suggested that another critical component for succession plans to work is to make it both a strategic issue and tactical concern for Human Resources. In the words of University President C:

I don't think we have a strategic thinker in our HR area because we've not been willing to allocate resources and think strategically about developing our people. You can tell where your priorities are by where you spend your money. We put money a lot of places and we haven't put it there. Not having that [strategic HR] function represented at the table is a detriment for us. [Similarly], nobody [has] had the bandwidth to implement them.

College President A also shared similar words of advice regarding the strategy of including a strategic HR thinker in the process. This president's recommendation for the first place to start is to "get your most innovative and enthusiastic HR person who is a get it done person." This was also the president who commented on the need for strong cohesion between the executive team and HR to effectively communicate the importance of the plan so employees understand its priority and importance.

Communication

Consideration for the way in which succession planning efforts are communicated surfaced from the collective sample and this was closely connected with the collaborative culture. Only 3 of the 6 institutions expressed concern for the word *formal* succession planning, however, all 6 suggested that any attempt at succession planning must be communicated in a less formal manner to succeed in the academy.

Similarly, all 6 respondents offered strategies for communication and implementation that focused on leadership development opportunities for the majority of employees rather than messages of direct replacement or entitlement for a few. In the words of University President B:

I'm not sure it can be a highly verbal commitment. I would like to announce to the community, that there is...but I wouldn't call it a succession plan, [rather] an attitude and a plan for individual development. I want *everyone* to view that there are opportunities to advance in knowledge, skills and position. Academic culture [just] doesn't support entitlement. [You] have to communicate that people are the most important thing.

This conclusion led the researcher to believe that carefully crafted communication plans may be the single most important component for succession planning to succeed in the academy. These communication plans must consider not only the messages that are communicated to the selected talent pool candidates, but perhaps more importantly, the communication to those who are not.

Competency-based

Recent research has identified the important role of competencies in both talent identification and aligning succession plans to organizational strategy (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2006; Horvath & Ellis, 2008; Thompsen & Smith, 2006). In this study, few institutions had formal succession plans in place, which limited the researcher from fully exploring the topic of competency-based succession planning in academic institutions. This has been suggested as an area for future research and the researcher believes this to be an essential component of any succession plan and may help academic institutions identify and develop individuals who will best support the organization's goals. This recommendation is supported by other succession planning experts (Eichinger &

Lombardo, 2006; Fulmer & Conger, 2004; Hassan, 2008; Rothwell, n.d.) who have suggested identifying competencies is an essential ingredient for effective succession planning in any environment; business or academic.

Colleges or universities that commit to the full spectrum of succession planning activities should also invest the necessary resources in aligning the competencies of future leaders to strategic organizational initiatives. In this way, succession planning can be closely tied to business outcomes as noted by Butler and Roche-Tarry (2002):

In today's highly competitive global environment, human capital is an organization's most important asset, often differentiating highly successful businesses from those that struggle. Yet, in the ongoing effort to develop a strong and capable workforce, many organization focus almost entirely on hiring and training. They neglect succession planning – perhaps the most essential ingredient in building an organization that is capable of achieving its strategic goals. (p.1)

Continuous

Finally, several respondents in this study commented on the need for succession plans to be based on continuous evaluation of people and organizational goals, and cautioned against making leadership decisions on most recent performance or isolated activities. Some of the respondents even commented about the need for more frequent conversations than annual reviews.

In addition, the collegial culture demands continuous dialogue from a variety of constituents and the ability for new individuals to move into consideration for leadership posts. This permeable talent pool concept is one that has been described by other succession planning experts (Eichinger & Lombardo, 2006; Fulmer & Conger, 2004;

Rothwell, 2005) and may be one strategy to reduce perceptions of entitlement and ensure a continual dialogue about succession candidates.

As such, the researcher recommends institutions that make the decision to move beyond leadership development and into systemic and deliberate succession planning, give consideration to continuous evaluation of both the people in the talent pool and the process that make up the succession plan to ensure both are meeting the desired organizational objectives.

The researcher believes that colleges and universities are fundamentally committed to leadership development and that if tailored to the specific academic culture, broader succession planning activities could be embraced. Most institutions simply need customized plans on *how* to go about succession planning in a systematic and deliberate manner that still honors traditions of the academy.

Strengths and Limitations

The researcher anticipated that this study would have limitations including the ability to generalize these findings across an array of academic institutions. To minimize this risk, the researcher interviewed executives representing public and private institutions ranging from community colleges and technical colleges to public state universities, and private non-profit universities. Furthermore, institutions varied in geographic location throughout the United States.

Although the sample population was small (6 institutions), the selected institutions did represent a broad spectrum of both public and private, 2-year and 4-year institutions. Additional studies conducted with a larger sample size may allow for

broader conclusions and the ability to further generalize these findings across all types of higher education institutions in the United States.

The researcher limited this study to participants who were presidents or senior executive responsible for succession planning initiatives at the institution. This decision was based on the work of Rothwell (2005) who suggests CEO commitment is paramount to the success of a succession plan and was also based on the researcher's assumption that executives would have broad perspectives about succession planning and be able to speak on behalf of the institution as a whole. The results of this study are therefore, shaped in the perspectives of executives and not in the operational perspective of those who may be selected as talent candidates or by those who may be asked to implement a plan once conceived.

The researcher believes limiting the participants to executives ultimately strengthened the study in that the responsibilities of these executives require extensive knowledge of an institution, its multiple constituents; both internal and external. As such, these executives were more likely to give thought to additional implications or influences that may impact succession planning and to think strategically about complex issues and interconnected relationships. Ultimately, the emergent themes of this study were generated from an emic perspective; shaped in the views of the executive participants whose knowledge and scope of influence reaches across many functional areas of the institutions.

Another anticipated limitation of this study was the concern of conducting phone interviews with some participants and face-to-face interviews with others. The researcher mitigated these limitations by recording and transcribing all interviews. The researcher

returned to the transcribed notes and memo cards multiple times to ensure all themes were captured and theoretical saturation was achieved.

The greatest challenge of this study was unanticipated and presented itself in the interpretation of terms participants used to describe succession planning and leadership development activities. Many participants used the term succession planning to describe typical leadership development activities like training, mentoring, job shadowing, and coaching. The definition of succession planning referred to in this study was intended to encompass a broader, deliberate and systemic process that included identifying potential candidates, determining the competencies for leadership development activities, measurement or evaluation of the candidates' readiness to take on new responsibilities, and an assessment or evaluation of the process itself. These activities and others as described by Rothwell (2005) and Hirsh (2000) differentiate systemic succession planning from leadership development activities. As such, the researcher was often asked to clarify questions about what constituted *formal* succession planning.

Recommendations for Future Research

Upon completing the data collection and analysis of this study, the author returned to the available literature to determine if additional studies had been conducted on the topic of succession planning in higher education that may fill some of the research gaps. Only a handful of additional studies surfaced (Fancher, 2007; Hassan, 2008; Lopez-Molina, 2008; Mackey, 2008) and several of these were limited to community colleges. As such, the following areas are recommended for future research on the topic of succession planning in higher education.

The first area that would be helpful to bridge gaps in the available research is the study of succession planning practices across a large number of higher education institution types. This study began to provide common themes, but given the limited sample size, may not provide adequate opportunity to generalize the findings across the thousands of educational institutions in the United States. Future studies of current and effective succession planning strategies in each type of institution including public, private, proprietary, research-based, community, technical, 2-year, and 4-year universities would be of great value to better understanding how strategic succession planning can be implemented in academia.

Because the findings of this study yielded different perspectives of what constituted formal succession planning versus leadership development, this study did not fully explore how institutions approached other components of succession planning to include (a) the identification of desired competencies for academic leaders, (b) how to identify emerging leaders who may be best suited to lead institutions in the future, and (c) how to assess or evaluate leadership development initiatives and the individual's progress toward development goals. Each of these areas could be explored in future research studies.

The American Association of Community Colleges commissioned the *Leading Forward* study which identified 6 competencies for community college leaders (Author, n.d.) and recent studies have extended the original AACC research (Hassan, 2008). It is important to again note though, that research on competencies has in large part been limited to community colleges and therefore is not applicable to private institutions or public 4-year institutions. As such, the area of defining leadership competencies for all

academic leaders may be another area for future research. This could include a stratification of essential competencies by level (executive, mid-level, first line manager) across 2-year and 4-year colleges and universities.

Another area for research may be to explore the relationship between succession planning and strategic planning; particularly as related to the alignment of organizational competencies and leadership competencies. Are institutions with strong strategic plans and strategic planning processes more likely to be successful implementing strategic and deliberate succession plans? Further research on this topic may uncover similarities between the process used for strategic planning and succession planning and explore how future trending techniques could apply to the identification of both organizational and leadership competencies.

Similarly, few studies, if any have addressed the complex challenge of how, or if it is even possible, for institutions of higher education to have frank conversations about talent candidates; how to identify these individuals, how to assess current abilities, and how develop specific competencies through targeted activities. A study into this area would pave new ground for moving toward truly comprehensive, customized systemic succession planning and away from nonspecific leadership development for the masses.

As noted in several respondent quotes, the role of Human Resource professionals in higher education is often focused on the day-to-day operations and is therefore more transactional than strategic in nature. Could the academy embrace a shift away from the transactional HR person and toward the strategic HR professional? Future studies on the role of Human Resources as strategic champions may ultimately result in more support for succession planning within the academy.

And finally, this study began to uncover another potential area for future research that might further explore the notion of succession planning across both faculty and administrative positions. Is it possible to create succession plans that include faculty and give opportunities for them to cross into administrative roles, or is this as one participant stated, “the kiss of death” for faculty? Additional research on the ability to include faculty in succession plans may help build these bridges in the future.

Summary

There remains little debate about the need for colleges and universities to develop future leaders who are well positioned and ready to assume leadership posts at colleges and universities across the country. The competition for talent has been underway for years and will only increase as more and more seasoned leaders retire. Colleges and universities without deliberate strategies for attracting, developing and retaining existing or new talent could suffer leadership shortages in the future.

How institutions of higher education approach the task is wrought with challenges and complexities that only those who fully understand academic cultures can appreciate. Deliberate and systemic succession plans that are easily communicated or implemented in business and corporations could fail miserably in the open and inclusive collegial culture that defines the academy.

This study has shown that while evidence of formal succession planning is not prevalent in higher education, most colleges and universities are concerned with and are addressing leadership development opportunities for employees. The question then remains; can succession planning be fully adopted in the academy?

Presidents and executives of the 6 sampled institutions in this study suggest that it can and probably should be, but it is not likely that a formal written document would be supported in the academic culture. The researcher suggests that institutions with aspirations of moving toward a more deliberate and systemic succession planning model as an umbrella for targeted leadership development should adopt a new paradigm for succession planning that honors the essential elements of an effective succession plan while valuing the collegial culture and presence of shared decision making.

Giving consideration to a succession planning strategy that includes the 5C's, may position institutions for the greatest chances of success. These include: (a) aligning succession planning efforts to the institution's culture, (b) enlisting the strategic guidance of executive champions, (c) customizing communication plans to support the academic culture, (d) using a strategic and competency-based approach to identify the organization's goals, the people and the leadership development activities, and (e) including on-going evaluation of both the people and processes.

Ensuring each of these elements are present and aligned to the collegial culture found in academic institutions may allow institutions to make the leap from the leadership development paradigm and into a new paradigm of deliberate and systemic succession planning.

REFERENCES

- American Association of Community Colleges. (n.d.). *Competencies for community college leaders*. [Brochure]. Washington, DC: Author.
- Amey, M. J., & VanDerLinden, K. E. (2002). Career paths for community college leaders. (Leadership Series 2). Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Barden, D. M. (2006, March 17). The internal heir apparent: Succession planning is all the rage in the corporate sector, so why not in higher education? [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from www.chronicle.com
- Barden, D. M. (2008, May 5). The internal-candidate syndrome: All the parties involved in an open, national search are vulnerable when the applicant pool includes an insider. [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved November 7, 2008, from www.chronicle.com
- Barden, D. M. (2009, June 5). Your next few leaders: The time has come for colleges and universities to get serious about succession planning. [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved June 8, 2009, from www.chronicle.com
- Bennis, W. (1989). *On becoming a leader*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bernthal, P. R., & Wellins, R. S. (2005). *Leadership forecast 2005-2006: Best practices for tomorrow's global leaders*. Pittsburgh, PA: Development Dimensions International.

- Birnbaum, R. (1988). *How colleges work: The cybernetics of academic organization and leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Birnbaum, R., & Eckel, P. D. (2005). The dilemma of presidential leadership. In P. G. Altbach, R. O. Berdahl, & P. J. Gumport (Eds.), *American higher education in the twenty-first century: Social, political and economic challenges* (2nd ed., pp. 340-365). Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Boggs, G. (2006). *Handbook on CEO-board: Relations and responsibilities*. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Bolman, L. G., & Deal, T. E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Bowen, W. (2008, March 28). The successful succession: How to manage the process of picking a president. [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved September 7, 2008, from www.chronicle.com
- Butler, K., & Roche-Tarry, D. E. (2002, February). Succession planning: Putting an organization's knowledge to work. [Electronic version] *Nature Biotechnology*, 20, 201-202. Retrieved June 17, 2009 from <http://www.biotech.nature.com>
- Byham, W. C. (n.d). *Taking your succession management plan into the 21st Century* [White Paper]. Bridgeville, PA: Development Dimensions International.
- Byham, W. C., & Bernthal, P. R. (n.d). *The case for internal promotions* [White Paper]. Bridgeville, PA: Development Dimensions International.

- Byham, W. C., Smith, A. B., & Paese, M. J. (2002). *Grow your own leaders: How to identify, develop and retain leadership talent*. New York: Prentice Hall.
- Clunies, J. P. (2007). Benchmarking succession planning and executive development in higher education: Is the academy ready now to employ these corporate paradigms? *Academic Leadership*. Retrieved October 4, 2008, from www.academicleadership.org
- Cohen, A. M. (1998). *The Shaping of American higher education*. San Francisco: Wiley.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Collins, J. (2005). Good to great and the social sectors: A monograph to accompany *Good to great*. Author.
- Collins, J. C., & Lazier, W. C. (1992). *Beyond entrepreneurship: Turning your business into an enduring great company*. Paramus, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Collins, J., & Porras, J. I. (1997). *Built to last: Successful habits of visionary companies*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Conte, C., & Karr, A. R. (2001). Outline of the U.S. economy. *U.S. Economy*. Retrieved November 23, 2007, from <http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/oecon/chap3.htm>
- Cook, V. (2005, Summer). The future of leadership: Exploration of leadership competencies. In Karre, I. (Ed.), *Leadership*, (pp. 3-12). Mesa, AZ: The Chair Academy.

- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Dick, B. (2005). *Grounded theory: A thumbnail sketch*. [Electronic version]. Retrieved February 6, 2008, from <http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/arp/grounded.html>
- Draves, W. A., & Coates, J. (2007). *Nine shift: Work, life and education in the 21st century*. River Falls, WI: Learning Resources Network (LERN).
- Eichinger, R. W., & Lombardo, M. M. (2006). *The leadership machine: Architecture to develop leaders for any future*. Minneapolis, MN: Lominger Limited.
- Fancher, L. P. (2007). *The influence of organizational culture on the implementation of succession planning*. (Doctoral dissertation, Georgia State University, Georgia). Retrieved June 4, 2009, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (AAT 3257850)
- Fish, S. (2007). Shared governance: Democracy is not an educational idea. *Change*, 39(2). Retrieved February 3, 2008, from ProQuest.
- Fisher, J. L. (1984). *Power of the presidency*. New York: MacMillan.
- Fulmer, R. M., & Conger, J. A. (2004). *Growing your company's leaders: How great organizations use succession management to sustain competitive advantage*. New York: AMACOM.

- Fulmer, R. (2005, January). Keys to best practice in succession management. [Electronic version]. Retrieved October 31, 2007, from www.humanresourcemagazine.com.
- Gall, M. D., Gall, J. P., & Borg, W. R. (2003). *Educational research: An introduction* (7th ed.). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Gardner, J. (1990). *On leadership*. New York: The Free Press.
- Gayle, D. J., Tewarie, B., & White, A. Q. (2003). *Governance in the Twenty-First-Century university: Approaches to effective leadership and strategic management*. ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report, 1(30). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- George, B. (2003). *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the secrets to creating lasting value*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Hassan, A. M. (2008). *The competencies for community college leaders: Community college presidents' and trustee board chairpersons' perspectives*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Florida, Florida). Retrieved June 4, 2009, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (AAT 3347338)
- Hattingh, B. (n.d.) *Put success into succession planning*. [Electronic version]. Retrieved September 15, 2007, from www.cycan.co.za.
- Hirsh, W. (2000, October). Succession planning demystified. [Electronic version.] *Institute for Employment Studies*, IES Report 372. Retrieved July 19, 2007, from www.employment-studies.co.uk

- Horvath, F. & Ellis, K. (2008). *Leveraging leadership talent pools to win the talent war* [White Paper]. Human Capital Institute. Retrieved July 5, 2009, from www.halogensoftware.com
- Kaplin, W. A., & Lee, B. A. (2007). *The Law of Higher Education* (4th ed.). San Francisco: Wiley.
- Kirby, C. (2004, Fall). Survey of “Grow your own” leadership opportunities in Illinois community colleges. In *Update, 1* (16). Retrieved September 15, 2007, from <http://occr1.ed.uiuc.edu>
- Knott, J. H., & Payne, A. A. (2001). *The impact of state governance structures on higher education resources and research activity*. Champaign-Urbana, IL: University of Illinois, Institute of Government and Public Affairs.
- Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2002). *The leadership challenge* (3rd ed.). San Francisco: Wiley.
- Leubsdorf, B. (2006, September 1). Boomers’ retirement may create talent squeeze. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from www.chronicle.com
- Lopez-Molina, G. (2008). *Leadership reconsidered: A mixed methods study of developing future leaders in the community college*. (Doctoral dissertation, Capella University, Minnesota). Retrieved June 4, 2009, from Dissertations & Theses, Capella University database. (AAT 3315239)
- Lucas, C. J. (2006). *American higher education*. New York: St. Martin’s Press.

- Mackey, J. A. (2008). *Community college leadership succession: Perceptions and plans of community college leaders*. (Doctoral dissertation, Northern Arizona University, Arizona). Retrieved June 4, 2009, from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (AAT 3318486)
- Maxwell, J. C. (2002). *Leadership 101: What every leader needs to know*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.
- Myran, G., Baker III, G. A., Simone, B., & Zeiss, T. (2003). *Leadership strategies for community college executives*. Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Myran, G., Zeiss, T., & Howdyshell, L. (1995). *Community college leadership in the new century: Learning to improve learning*. Washington, DC: The American Association of Community Colleges.
- Personnel Decisions International. (n.d.). *Leadership Advantage Forum*. [Brochure]. Minneapolis, MN: Author.
- Ramsden, P. (2003). *Learning to lead in higher education*. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Rioux, S. M., & Bernthal, P. (1999). *Succession management practices*. Bridgeville, PA: Development Dimensions International.
- Rothwell, W. J. (2005). *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within* (3rd ed.). New York: AMACOM.

- Rothwell, W. J. (n.d.). Competency-based succession planning: Do I fit in? The individual's role in succession planning. *Career Planning and Adult Development Network*. Retrieved July 17, 2008, from www.careertrainer.com
- Rothwell, W. J. (2007). *Ten key steps to effective succession planning* [White Paper]. Rothwell and Associates. Retrieved August 1, 2008, from www.halogensoftware.com
- Selingo, J., & Carlson, S. (2006, July 21). The campus of the future: Financially sound and well-designed, with potato-starch cutlery. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. Retrieved February 10, 2008, from www.chronicle.com
- Spears, L.C. (Ed.). (1998). *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit and servant-leadership*. New York: Wiley.
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. M. (2005). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Thompsen, J. A., & Smith, A. E. P. (2006, Summer). Building leadership bench strength: Current trends in succession planning and management. *The Catalyst*, 2(35). 3-7.
- Truskie, S. D. (1999). *Leadership in high performance organizational cultures*. Westport, CT: Quorum Books.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission [U.S. EEOC]. (2007). Retrieved November 23, 2007, from www.eeoc.gov.

- Wellins, R. S., Smith, A. B., & Rogers, R. W. (n.d.). *The CEO's guide to talent management: Building a global leadership pipeline*. Bridgeville, PA: Development Dimensions International.
- Wellins, R. S., Smith, A. B., Paese, M. J., & Erker, S. (2006). *Nine best practices for effective talent management* [White Paper]. Bridgeville, PA: Development Dimensions International.
- Winston, G. C. (1997, September-October). Why can't a college be more like a firm? In *Change* 5(29), 32-38. Retrieved February 14, 2008, from EBSCOhost.
- Wolfe, R. L. (1996). *Systematic succession planning: Building leadership from within*. Menlo Park, CA: Crisp.
- Zeiss, T. (2005). *Get 'em while they're hot: How to attract, develop and retain peak performers in the coming labor shortage*. Nashville, TN: Nelson Business.

APPENDIX A. SAMPLE PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Please describe your institution's structure of governance
 - a. Public, private, 2yr, 4yr
 - b. Faculty governance, student governance, union, etc
2. How would you describe your institution's culture with regard to:
 - a. Decision making
 - b. Shared governance
 - c. Leadership development
3. Does your institution currently have a formal succession planning program?
 - a. If so, how are you approaching this task?
 - i. How has it been received by employees?
 - ii. What hurdles or enablers have you experienced?
 - b. If not, have you ever considered implementing a succession plan?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - c. What factors have contributed to your decision?
4. Do you think the organization's culture or structure of governance has influenced how your institution approaches the topic of succession planning?
 - a. How or why not?
 - b. To what extent?
5. Are you personally in favor of, or against a formal succession plan for your institution?
 - a. What has influenced your position?
 - b. What do you see as the role of the president/CEO in succession planning?
6. What factors have contributed to your institutional decisions around succession planning?
 - a. External (economy, demographics, politics, technology, etc)
 - i. Has the current economic climate changed your approach or priority for succession planning?
 - ii. Are there other external influences driving succession planning?
 - b. Internal (employee expectations, personnel, culture/climate)
 - i. How, if at all, do you think collective bargaining systems influence succession planning?
 - ii. Do you believe employee expectations influence succession planning?
7. Do you think succession planning can be fully adopted by educational institutions?
 - a. Why or why not?

- b. In your opinion, can an academic succession plan include identification and development of a presidential replacement?
 - i. If not, what levels can/should be included?
 - c. Do you believe succession plans in higher education institutions require a different approach or strategy than those used in corporations?
 - d. What do you believe are the key elements/strategies needed for a succession plan to be implemented in academia?
8. For your institution in specific, what processes, methods or strategies would be necessary to support a formal succession plan?
- a. Are these strategies specific to your structure of governance or culture?
 - b. Why are these unique?
9. Is there anything else you would like to share with me regarding the topic of succession planning higher education?
- a. Any advice for other institutions of similar structure?
 - b. Topics of literature to explore?

APPENDIX B. FULL TABLE OF CODED THEMES

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Current Succession Planning Practices						
Informal practices	X	X	X	X	X	X
Formal policies			Crisis only			
Formal succession plan that includes selection and development	X	Talent Pools			Promote from within; no plan	
Leadership development activities/plans	X	X	X	X	X	X
Governance and Culture						
Collaborative/inclusive	X		X	X	X	X
Corporate-influenced/ Revenue driven		X	X		X	X
Independent Corp. / Corp. Board of Trustees			X		X	
Faculty have advisory role	X	X	X	X	X	X
Key decisions made by Executive Cabinet	X	X	X	X	X	
Formal voting limited to Executive and Board	X	X	X	X	X	X

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Influences on Succession Planning						
Demographic changes	X	Lost pipeline				
Institutional culture		X	X	X	X	X
Economic changes	Not negatively	Not negatively	Not negatively	Larger talent pool now		
Retirements	X	In 1980s				
Employee expectations		X		X	X	
Collective bargaining/Union		Don't have, but it could				
Accrediting agencies		X			X	
Organizational health/business bottom-line		X	X	X	X	
Institutional Support for Succession Planning						
Yes	X	Not direct replacement	X		X	X
No				Counter-culture		
Leadership development programs	X	X	X	X	X	X
For president		National search	X	National search		X
Faculty commitment not necessary	X		X	X	X	X

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Executive role in Succession Planning						
President commitment essential	X	X	X		X	Greatly enhanced with
Board commitment necessary		X	X	X		
Faculty commitment necessary			For academic VP only		Only for Deans & above	
Executive is personally in favor of succession plans	X	X	X	Somewhat	X	X
Strategies for Succession Planning in the Academy						
Subtle communication important	X	X		X (formal won't work)		
Strategic HR champion	X		X	X	X	X
Institutional priority for president/executives		X	X			X
Involve Board of Trustees	X	X	X	X	X	
Align to institution's vision, mission, values, goals	X		X			X
Include assessment for retirement risk	X					X

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

Theme and keywords	College A	Univ. B	Univ. C	Univ. D	Univ. E	College F
Strategies for Succession Planning in the Academy						
Include accountability measures		X	X			X
Design for large number of employees vs. direct replacement (talent pools)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Incorporate retention tools	X				X	
Must be on-going / more than annual conversation		X	X	X	X	
Strategies may be different for 2-yr vs. 4-yr institutions	X		X		X	X