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ABSTRACT

A fundamental challenge facing community college presidents and senior-level staff is to create an environment in which diverse qualities of students and staff make positive contributions to the organization. This requires replacing conceptions of leadership as one person at the top who has power with a vision of democratic leadership which creates opportunities for participative decision-making, leadership opportunities for women and underrepresented minorities, and multicultural communities. Graduate programs in community college leadership at the Maricopa County Community College District (Arizona), North Carolina State University, and the University of Texas at Austin are exemplary in their inclusion of the principles of democratic leadership in their training. Based on elements of these programs and the democratic approach to leadership, the following elements can be viewed as essential to leadership preparation: (1) an understanding of organizations as cultures; (2) a sensitivity to individual differences which enables all members of the campus community to contribute to decisions and change; (3) a commitment to empowering diverse constituents, recognizing that equal opportunity is not merely a policy but a vision which can be achieved; (4) a recognition of mentoring as a vital part students' experiences; and (5) an emphasis on team-building through cooperative and collaborative work. (Contains 42 references.) (KP)

The Implications of a Democratic Vision of Community College Leadership

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Introduction

A fundamental challenge facing community college presidents and senior-level staff is to create an environment in which diverse qualities and abilities of students and staff make positive contributions to the organization. Creating such environments involves viewing the organization as a culture and enacting strategies that empower people to participate in decision-making and change. Leadership in the community college is not limited to those in certain hierarchical positions of power. The democratic community college is changed and shaped by all the organizational members and the dynamic social context in which it operates. A strong organization is one that provides opportunities for a wide range of members to assert themselves as purveyors of organizational direction.

This paper examines how leadership has been viewed historically, presents a clear vision of democratic leadership, provides examples of programs designed to prepare community college leaders, and offers a basis for what we believe ought to undergird higher education programs' efforts to ready community college leaders of the future.

Leadership and the Great Man Theory

Educators are reformers at heart. Educators' interest in how people and institutions change is based on their desire to improve the content, processes, and organization of education. The evolution of community and junior colleges is a case in point. These institutions evolved as part of an effort to improve upon the structure and efficiency of higher education (Goodwin, 1971; Ratcliff, 1984, 1987). Given the reformist

orientation of the community college movement, it is natural to seek leadership to effect the reforms and enact the improvements. Such is the positivist spirit upon which the community college movement was founded.

How do such reforms in higher education occur? It may be tempting to attribute educational reform to educational (rather than political, economic, or social) factors. Such attribution gives credence to the importance and prominence of community college education as a profession and field of study. Likewise, it may be reassuring to educators to discover educational leaders were at the forefront of change within higher education. Thus, when it is reported that the faculty gained widespread control and influence over the curriculum and the colleges in the 1960's, an "academic revolution" is proclaimed (Jencks & Reisman, 1968); when little impact is sensed from college administrators in the 1970's and 1980's, lack of effective leadership is lamented (Keller, 1983). Given the reformist orientation of education, it should not be surprising that educational change is often attributed to educational movements and to the individuals who became their spokespersons. Since these persons were white, male, university presidents, leadership gets defined in terms of the actions of a few heroic men occurring within the office of the presidency, particularly the presidency of senior institutions (Amey & Twombly, 1992). In a review of community and junior college literature, Reid (1978) observed:

> Two interesting positions which seem to be major assumptions in virtually all the reporting of this movement [are]: (1) that the movement is best explained by the great man theory, and (2) that the community junior

college grew in response to cultural changes. (p. 143)

The relevance of Reid's observation is affirmed by example in Deegan, Tillery and Associates' (1985):

> Propensity for change in the community college resulted primarily from: (1) a lack of certain academic traditions during its formation years; (2) the diversity of local communities that nurtured the colleges; and (3) the effectiveness of local, state, and national advocates in shaping a new institution. (p. 4)

Books that were most highly regarded by community college presidents and professors of community college education over the past three decades described the development of colleges ideologically rather than historically. In a previous review of literature, Ratcliff (1984) found that all but two of these books were written during a span of fourteen years (1960-74). They were not actually histories of the community college movement, but did contain brief chronological descriptions with numerous historical inferences and interpretations. The other two books, Eells (1931) and Koos (1925) also were not historical works, but were treated as such by the authors of the more current works (Vaughan, 1982). Recent monographs, such as Brint and Karabel (1989) and Eaton (1994) continue to treat Eells and Koos as primary historical works, thereby perpetuating the perceptions of leadership held by these gentlemen of the 1920s and 1930s. Implicitly

Eells' and Koos' interpretation of leaders and leadership still guide the understanding community colleges at the end of the decade.

Koos' and Eells' interpretation of the community college movement was shaped by their sources of information: college catalogs, questionnaires, and articles appearing in the prominent literary and educational journals of the day (Koos, 1925, pp. 16-17). These two researchers turned to the words of the prominent contemporary higher educational leaders -- William Rainey Harper, David Starr Jordan, William Watts Folwell -- to discern the purpose and direction of junior college development. Their early historical interpretations dissonantly portrayed the community college movement as a popular, democratic educational reform advocated and led by elitist university presidents who sought to cast off research institutions the burden of educating the lower division of the baccalaureate. However contradictory that interpretation may seem, it rests upon a single explanation of historical causation -- the "great man" theory.

Typified by the Hellenic and Victorian historians, the "great man" theory held that great leaders are primary and direct causes of historical events. Such a view tended "to give insufficient weight to the role institutions play in forming the ideas of leaders, in structuring the problems they faced, and in molding the solutions they might attempt and achieve" (Shafer, 1974, p. 31). Research on college establishment and founding attributed the development of early junior colleges to great men, such as William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago, Alexis Lange at the University of California, and Henry Tappan at the University of Michigan (Gleazer, 1968; Goodwin, 1971). Such research failed to yield information on the complex of social, political, and economic

relationships that existed between college and community. Tomorrow's community college leaders do not simply reside in the president's office and they cannot survive on visions alone; they must understand the complexities of the college's rapidly changing organizational culture and social context.

Organizational Culture and Change

To understand the vision of community college leadership suggested here, we must first explain our conception of organization life. What we suggest is that organizations may be best understood as cultures. As Bensimon (1990) notes: "To view the institution as a cultural entity is to see it as a system of shared meanings, maintained by symbolic processes" (p. 77). Seen in this light, "Organizational culture is the glue that holds the institution together (Rhoads & Tierney, 1992, p. 5). An emphasis on culture as a means to make sense of organizational life is often referred to as the "cultural perspective" or as a "cultural frame" (Bolman & Deal, 1991). Cultural perspectives of higher education have become a popular tool for understanding college and university organizational life (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988; Clark, 1972, 1987; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988).

From a cultural perspective, organizational members who have leadership responsibilities must come to terms with various aspects of the organization's culture. For example, understanding an institution's history and traditions may be vital to correctly interpreting contemporary behaviors of students or faculty. Traditions and "organizational saga" shapes and constrain change within institutions of higher education

(Clark, 1972) and traditions are the "stuff" of history (Slater, 1974). A cultural perspective challenges leaders to be aware of the symbolic aspects of campus life, such as the significance of rituals and ceremonies that often convey deep meanings to those involved. The values and beliefs organizational members hold also are part of the fabric that we call culture and must be understood by leaders. A cultural perspective also has implications for how organizational change is conceptualized.

The role of change agent is a vital responsibility of organizational members assigned to key roles within a community college. From a cultural perspective, introducing change involves confronting values, beliefs, and norms held by various members. This means that in order for change to take root, organizational leaders must recognize the cultural elements (attitudes, values, beliefs, norms, etc...) which will be most affected by change. Since these cultural elements are fundamental to how organizational life is constructed, leaders must recognize that change has a deeply-felt impact on members.

When we think of organizations as cultures -- as systems of shared meaning -- it is easier to understand how organizational change ought to involve collaborative processes. Although high ranking administrators may be able to impose structural changes, such as adding a new position or forming a new committee, altering shared understandings takes more than an executive fiat. Instead, for change to take root members must envision the organization, their role within the organization, and the role of others in a new and perhaps innovative way. If a change in sense-making strategies does not occur, then change is unlikely to take root and a new idea becomes nothing more than a tumble

weed across the organizational terrain.

Because a fundamental change in the way members make sense of organizational life is needed, involving them at the early stages of any change effort is essential to success. This means that change efforts need to be based on more democratic processes involving a wide-range of organizational members and tapping the leadership abilities of diverse campus constituents. Creating opportunities for a broad array of campus voices to be heard also is compatible with emerging views of multiculturalism -- issues community colleges have been slow to address (El-Khawas, 1992).

Democratic Leadership and Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism involves more than merely including diverse peoples within educational settings: multiculturalism also poses a challenge to how we structure those educational settings and the opportunities we create for organizational members to participate in decision making. As Bensimon (1994) maintains: "We must recognize that the perspective of multiculturalism, the struggle to create a more democratic, pluralistic education system in this country, is part of the struggle to empower people" (p. 7).

In terms of how college and university leadership ought to be conceptualized, democratic strategies are obviously more conducive to empowering diverse constituents. This is especially true of community colleges where nearly half of the students are from underrepresented groups. In order to truly embrace multiculturalism, community colleges must create opportunities for diverse perspectives to shape the fabric of the organization.

What we suggest here is that community colleges are not only to be democratizing agents in terms of their contributions to the social mobility of culturally diverse students; just as importantly, community colleges must be democratic educational centers. The perspective we put forth is that community college leaders ought to be guided by a commitment to democratic principles such as inclusiveness and equal opportunity. While prior community college literature advocated participating forms of leadership (e.g. Richardson, Blocker and Bender, 1972), we are suggesting that specific attention needs to be given to building leadership around a concept of "communities of difference" (Tierney, 1993). Contemporary writing on community college leadership still draws on the great man theory. Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) see leaders as individuals with a vision and a capacity to mobilize teams to put that vision in effect on campus. Vaughan (1989) describes community college presidents as leaders who interpret and communicate the mission of the institution, who manage efficiently and effectively according to that interpretation of mission, and would create campus climates that conserve institutional integrity while addressing campus, community, and constituent concerns. Richardson and Wolverton (1994) write of these two works. To a degree, Roueche and his colleagues and Vaughan discuss leadership from the trust perspective, although they also incorporate cultural perspectives.... Neither book offers much help in defining leadership strategies as these might involve ongoing efforts to improve the quality of an institution's performance (1994, p. 41). This means involving a range of voices in debates and discussions about the mission and identity of the college itself. We are not suggesting that we shackle the decision making capability of community college

presidents and other senior-level administrators. What we are suggesting, however, is that over the long haul, the mission and identity of the college needs to be deeply rooted within the culture of the organization and this necessitates involving diverse faculty, staff, students, and community members in a more collaborative process.

Leadership envisioned as the practice of democracy situates the capacity to influence the direction and identity of the institution within all organizational members. This is contrary to popular conceptions of community college leadership, which tend to situate power and influence within the presidency. For example, Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) discuss the importance of a shared sense of vision based on understanding organizational culture, but they limit their discussion of leadership to the role of the president. Their conception of leadership suggests that other organizational members have little influence over the vision and direction of the community college. Likewise, Vaughan (1989) equates the community college presidency with leadership, as if all presidents are "leaders," when in fact leadership oftentimes is situational and context-specific (Bensimon, Neumann, Birnbaum, 1989).

An emphasis on democratic principles such as inclusiveness and equal opportunity requires that we focus attention on groups that traditionally have been excluded from participation in leadership roles within the community college. Such a notion is akin to Tierney's (1993) discussion of the need to build "communities of difference." What he suggests is that democratic communities not only work to ensure that culturally diverse people are present within academic communities, but additionally, communities of difference provide opportunities for all organizational members to participate in

organizational decision making. This means that colleges and universities must rethink traditional practices and organizational structures that tend to limit the participation of groups typically excluded from decision making.

Women and Minorities in Leadership

A commitment to democracy means that community colleges must strive to create leadership opportunities for women and underrepresented minorities. A student population of women, older students, or students of color does not insure a multicultural campus; it may merely manifest the demographics of the neighborhood rather than the commitment of the college. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and other Executive Orders prohibit discrimination on the basis of race or sex in federally assisted education programs or activities. Nevertheless, women and minorities have been grossly underrepresented in leadership roles at colleges and universities (Fulton, 1984). One reason underrepresented groups may not move into administrative positions is due to the lack of minorities and women currently occupying positions of power and authority. "Mentors have traditionally been white males who have not surprisingly selected white men as protegees" (Schneider, 1991, p. 4). Gillett-Karam, Roueche, and Roueche (1991) call this the "concept of reproduction of self" where the person leaving the position hires someone to replace himself, and therefore believes that person should be like himself (p. 30).

Another factor seen to contribute to difficulty in hiring underrepresented groups is the "dry pipeline" -- a lack of women and minority applicants available and applying for

positions (Parsons, 1992, p. 6). This is a particular concern of rural community colleges and those where cultural diversity is limited. What is clear however, is that multiculturalism calls attention to the fact that for community colleges to achieve cultural diversity involves much more than mere recognition that women and minorities are underrepresented; multiculturalism involves hiring underrepresented faculty and staff and including their diverse views in how the organization is structured (Rhoads & Valadez, in press). Effective affirmative action plans must aim to create multicultural community colleges rather than hiring one or two minority representatives here and there as a token gesture. Diversity can be a powerful force when used to create the democratic community college of the future and not merely to meet outside mandates, quotas, and political pressures (Gibson-Benninger & Ratcliff, submitted for publication). Ways to eliminate the problem of the "dry pipeline" include recruitment of dual career couples, expanding the search in national advertisements, including minority representatives from the community on search committees, and calling upon women and minorities employed by the institution to recruit.

The search committee itself can be a powerful tool in the advancement of minorities and women. According to Fulton (1984), there are two obstacles to hiring unrepresented groups. One is the small size of the pool, and the other is the failure of administrators to hire such candidates when they are recommended by the committee. Although Affirmative Action requires the 'consideration' of minorities and women, institutions often make no effort to actively recruit and hire from these groups. A matrix of qualifications can be designed to assist the search committee in recognizing the needs

of the institution as well as those of the specific position. One area which should be included is the appreciation for and commitment to the open access mission and goals of the institution. One way this can be accomplished is by the inclusion of women and minorities on campus.

Some barriers to attaining a leadership position for women and minorities are the lack of mentoring, non-supportive supervisors, feelings of isolation, limited upward mobility, the difficulty to achieve recognition, and being excluded from informal networks (Capozzoli, 1989, p. 5). In a survey of women community college administrators, Capozzoli (1989) found that, "Having mentors may be the single most important factor in an administrator's career development" (p. 7). Schneider (1991) concurs, adding that evidence indicates women in positions of authority often do not mentor other women. Her analysis of mentor-protegee relationships shows mentoring women differs from mentoring men, and that "differences lie along lines of gender rather than racial or ethnic background" (p. 6). Women tend to require a longer period of time in a mentoring relationship as they desire more feedback, more frequent monitoring, more mentor initiated contact, and remain in readiness phases longer without having the assurance to move on to the next stage.

Community college education was meant to be egalitarian. But what was designed by the Truman Commission as an egalitarian institution -- a harbinger of democratization with opportunities for all -- may painfully strive to achieve this for its students but overlooks these principles when hiring new employees. Most educators agree that new leadership is needed. Leadership has for many years been seen in the

traditional model (Gillett-Karam, Roueche, & Roueche, 1991). The current paradigm for leadership is based on a male model which rewards aggression, independence, and autonomy. Leadership focuses on the leader-follower relationship and interdependence. The leadership styles of women and minorities may offer alternative perspectives and add much to a democratic community college of the future.

A democratic vision of community college leadership stresses multiculturalism and the inclusion of women and underrepresented minorities. Community colleges committed to principles of democracy must work to create opportunities for these groups. Graduate programs in higher education also can play a role in how future community college leaders are prepared and the role that they might play in creating more democratic settings. In what follows we first examine some current higher education program practices and then highlight the implications a democratic vision of community college leadership might have for how future community college leaders are prepared.

Graduate Programs in Community College Leadership -- Best Practices

A number of graduate programs exist to prepare individuals to work in community college settings and equip graduates to work with the diverse student of today. Various institutions approach the task of educating community college leaders in different ways. Alfred & Linder (1992) found graduate preservice programs in community college education offering courses on topics such as governance, planning, assessment, and research. Such topics may be more appropriate for those planning

administrative careers rather than aspiring faculty members. Among the programs selected by the authors as those with exemplary reputations in this area are Maricopa County Community College, North Carolina State University, and the University of Texas at Austin.

Maricopa County Community College District in Arizona offers training programs developed by the National Institute for Leadership Development. Seminars are targeted for various groups such as faculty and administrative women, women who are considering the CEO position, men and women who want to work on a gender-based team, and minority women educators.

A program known as Kaleidoscope assists African American, Asian, Latina/Hispanic and Native American women educators. It is intended to help people in leadership roles at community colleges become aware of ethnic differences and similarities and use this understanding to improve leadership skills. Understanding and connectedness is stressed through teaching and modeling. Gender-based team building focuses on leadership differences between men and women and ways to use differences to compliment and augment styles. Those who wish to become CEOs and those already working as CEOs can network and explore contemporary issues facing higher education. Capozzoli (1989) interviewed women who had participated in Maricopa's "Leaders for the 80's" program and found the seminars offered support and encouragement, improved self-confidence, and provided role models.

The central goal of the Kaleidoscope program is to prepare students to be effective community college leaders who use teams successfully without compromising

cultural differences. Diverse leadership styles are recognized, while competition is minimized. Leaders are believed to be more effective when they employ cooperation and team approaches that support and encourage others. Such views are compatible with the democratic vision of leadership presented in this paper.

North Carolina State University boasts the Academy for Community College Leadership, Advancement, Innovation, and Modeling (ACCLAIM). It operates as a part of the Department of Adult and Community Education at NCSU and assumes a leadership role in community college issues in the four state region that includes Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Virginia. ACCLAIM's doctoral program focuses on preparing leaders who are grounded in, understand, and are committed to community-based programming as a central function of the community college. The program focuses on helping participants acquire competencies needed by CEOs and other administrators committed to community-based programming.

One course offered at North Carolina State called 'Leadership in Higher and Community College Education' pays attention to the role of organizational culture in improving management and institutional performance in the entire spectrum of higher education institutions. Another course encourages collaboration and a democratic view of leadership by focusing on group behavior in administration.

The Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin is the oldest and largest graduate program for community college administrators. In a survey conducted by community college President Lee Betts (1992) this program was most often cited as providing valuable leadership and service. More than 450 students

have graduated from this program since it began in 1944. CCLP focuses on the development of leaders for community colleges, a field-base for student recruitment and graduate placement, and a research agenda focusing on teaching, learning, and student services in open-door institutions.

The CCLP is arranged in a nine-hour community college block core program where students familiarize themselves with relevant literature, problems facing community college leaders, and problems typical students in open-door institutions face. With the help of mentors, graduate students develop a group strategic plan which is intended to guide their learning activities. This encourages team building through cooperative and collaborative work with others. Practitioners attend group meetings to discuss real problems faced on the job. Students visit Texas community colleges where they talk to college personnel as well as students, and they investigate topics of interest which they report to their groups. CCLP also requires an internship in which the student observes a leadership style and problems occurring during time spent with an experienced community college president.

The block core reinforces the ideals of a democratic view of leadership through the focus on learner and mentor collaborations and the encouragement of group decision-making. The approach builds competencies as administrators and fosters and reinforces cooperative team-building strategies. Throughout the block experience students encounter the concept of administration as "persons-in-positions." This professional personhood development focuses on the interpersonal issues of administration and how the position occupied modifies the person toward

professionalism as a dominant ethos. Knowing yourself and understanding others is as important as writing and speaking.

Since 1970, each CCLP class has been comprised of at least 50 percent minorities and women. Currently minorities and women represent 60 percent of the class, allowing the entrance of more diverse leaders to prominent positions in community colleges. The support of women and minorities is a priority at the University of Texas at Austin and they have been aggressive in seeking funding for the training of their students (Rodriguez, 1993). The Kellogg Foundation, for instance, has provided financial support for programs who wish to train administrative leaders (Hawthorne, 1994).

Communication between community college faculty and administrators and the faculty and administrators at universities is not widespread. Therefore sweeping changes are not likely (Hawthorne, 1994). The inclusion of these "best practices" and their proven as well as future successes should attest to the important role graduate programs can play in preparing future community college presidents.

Implications for Graduate Programs

Based on what we know from the preceding graduate programs and the vision of democratic leadership suggested, a number of implications can be derived for structuring community college leadership preparation. First, an understanding of organizations as cultures must be achieved. Not only will this make symbolic aspects clear, but it will also give leaders a foundation on which to base future institutional change. Second, administrators need to be sensitive to individual differences in ways that enable all

members of the campus community to contribute to decisions and change. Third, leaders must make a commitment to empowering diverse constituents and understand that equal opportunity is not merely a policy but a vision which can be achieved. Forth, the mentoring process should be a vital part of each student's experience. Mentors should be encouraged to step out of their "reproduction of self" comfort zone and welcome women and minorities as protegees. Finally, team building through cooperative and collaborative work should be encouraged. An appreciation of individual differences and respect for differing and unique values and ideas can inspire more democratic organizations.

Leadership does not rest solely in the hands of the community college president. Our vision of leadership views the "democratic environment" as the vehicle for transformational change, rather than the "great man" of past generations. Programs preparing students for the community college presidency are challenged to train future leaders who will understand the importance of all organizational cultures and members.

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