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ABSTRACT

This study examines the changed and changing mission of community colleges in the 1990s in the United States and Canada. By narrowing the focus to the geographical area of the Pacific/ Western region, the study seeks to identify the development of international cultural connections consistent with the region and to explain how the globalization process affected college behaviors. Seven colleges were visited twice by a team of researchers over a two-year period. Interviews were conducted with key personnel. The researchers found that in the 1990s, community college leaders embraced a liberal technological philosophy of education, which assumes that education is instrumental and that the technology is part of a global economy where advanced education is best oriented to skills development and marketplace relevance. As a result, the mission of the community college became oriented to economic concerns and to the requirements of the private sector. The new vocationalism in the community college mission addressed the needs of the middle class and the engines of the economy. The institutions' mission also encompassed the acquisition of resources and the prudent ministering of their own financial resources. Colleges also gave considerable attention to multiculturalism and diversity, as reflected in hiring practices, curricula, and extra-curricular activities. (Contains 30 endnotes.) (JA)

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The revised institution: the community college mission at the end of the 20th century

The lines of discourse on the mission of the community college in the latter half of the 20th century were several. One strand included a curricular focus, with particular stress upon three domains: academic, vocational, and remedial.[1] Another strand encompassed the purposes of the institution: individual and community development; social and economic mobility of the individual; and social stratification and social reproduction.[2] And, the educational and training role of the community college served as a third strand: the institution as a pipeline to baccalaureate degrees;[3] as a job preparation site;[4] and as a place for potential success and failure in society.[5] James Ratcliff encompasses most of the three strands in his concept of "seven streams" of historical development of the community college.[6] Similar to other scholars and practitioners, Ratcliff did not or could not apprehend the emergence of a new community college mission.[7] Yet, at the dawn of the 21st century, the community college had a new institutional mission.

By the final decade of the 20th century, curricular discussions shifted from curricula as inputs to curricula as outputs in the form of outcomes. With the concept of a learning college[8] emerging as a beacon of change, purposes of the institution decidedly moved from individual and community betterment to economic purposes: development sites for workforce preparation. The emphasis upon the economic role of the community college, however, was attenuated by programming that included socially beneficial activities such as service learning, where community needs were addressed by student projects, demonstrating that the community college was a good corporate citizen.

Organizational behaviors were responses to a global economy, promoted by the State and guided by institutional managers. College administrators reacted to demands from students and business and industry leaders for skills training for employment. Faculty altered curriculum to adjust to marketplace demands, particularly the requirement for employability skills. Along with governing board members, faculty, administrators, support staff and students who served on policy and decision-making bodies conformed to the expectations of business and industry.

These behaviors suggest that in the 1990s, the mission of the community college had less emphasis on education and more on training; less emphasis upon community social

needs and more on the economic needs of business and industry; less upon individual development and more upon workforce preparation and re-training. In short, the mission of the community college by the end of the 20th century was more suited to the rhetoric of the global economy and to its demands.

The Study

This research investigation focused upon the changed and changing mission of community colleges in the 1990s. A qualitative, multiple case study design was used to examine community colleges in two countries—the U.S. and Canada. The use of field methods, including document analysis, interviews, informal conversations, observations, and the use of informants, is one suggested way to understand organizational life and organizational behaviors.[9] Furthermore, investigation of multiple sites or cases was deemed to be particularly appropriate for the understanding of different institutional contexts.[10]

In refining the design, I narrowed the focus to a geographical area—the Pacific/Western Region. This narrowing was intended to capture the concept of international and global economics and trade within what is referred to as the Pacific Rim; and to identify and follow the development of international cultural connections consistent with this region. Furthermore, I assumed that globalizing forces would be more evident in or near large population centers (i.e., Western cities), especially those with relatively large immigrant populations or those that depend upon international trade. I concluded that I would need to understand not only the colleges but also their communities, however defined. Seven sites (i.e., colleges) made up the multiple cases, and the use of more than one site permitted comparisons and offered additional possibilities for generalization and even theory construction.

The formal aspect of the investigation began in April of 1996. The investigative strategy was to study multiple sites in depth through interviews and informal conversations with college personnel and students, through the review and analysis of institutional and government documents, and through observations.

Ultimately, seven colleges were selected with the assumption that at least one college might drop out after the investigation began. In this event, there would be at least six colleges. Four to eight is a reasonable number of sites for multi-case study research.[11] Given

the duration of the study, a loss of at least one college was a prudent assumption. Nonetheless, all seven colleges remained as study sites: three U.S. and four Canadian colleges.

A group of researchers undertook site visits—from three to five investigators at one site at the same time. The use of a group approach not only assisted in data collection but also in analysis during collection. The multiple viewpoints, the discussion of individual on-site observations, and the confirming and disconfirming of preliminary hunches all contributed to a richer and more accurate understanding of the site.[12]

The study of multiple sites was augmented by the collection and analysis of other related data. These data included state/province legislation, policy, and higher education, labor, and finance reports. Also included were national (U. S. and Canada) federal policies and policy reports. Other government agency documents (local or regional) on the economy, labor markets, or population demographics were collected and reviewed.

In addition to existing public documents, each college was surveyed and asked to provide quantitative information on budgets, students, programs, and graduate employment placements. This survey was intended to provide a comparative guide for the sites as well as a quantitative measure against which qualitative assessments could be compared within sites. This not only provided for a validity check but also enhanced the investigators' understanding of participant perceptions.

The multi-site investigation was both cross-sectional and longitudinal. The first site visit, lasting between four and five days, was on the one hand an extensive examination involving interviews, conversations, and observations, using the concept of organizational change over a five year period as an analytical tool to gain understanding of the present. From this exploration, observations, findings, and conclusions were derived. On the other hand, a second site visit at each college, from between 12 and 18 months subsequent to the first, permitted a longitudinal analysis, enabling the research to address observable change over time, as well as validity check on initial observations.

Procedures: Interviews and Observation

For the first set of site visits, a research team spent from four to five days at each site. During this time, team members conducted individual and group interviews. At each institution, the following college personnel were interviewed: president or chief executive

officer, president's assistant or secretary, chief business officer, chief academic officer, chief student services officers, chief human resources/personnel officer, samples of mid-level administrators (deans, directors), samples of full time faculty and part-time faculty, faculty union president, support staff union president, and 1-2 board members (if available, the board chair was interviewed). Additionally, if a college was part of a multi-college district, the district chancellor was interviewed. As well as formally arranged interviews, more informal interviews and conversations were held with administrators, faculty (full time and part time), support staff, and students.

Formal interviews were taped recorded, unless objected to or inappropriate because of location (e.g., one interview was conducted over lunch in a restaurant), and interview notes were recorded by hand. Interview questions were developed and pilot tested prior to site visits. Questions were both specific and open-ended and invited interviewees to elaborate on and explain their responses. At the stage of interview data analysis, another two research assistants were added to the research team, and their role was to transcribe interview data from tape recordings and interview notes onto a data display sheet organized around the interview questions.

A second set of site visits followed the first set by 12-18 months, all lasting from 2-3 days at each site, with only the principal investigator on site for all site visits, and a collaborator present at a majority of sites. During these site visits, the principal investigator and collaborator interviewed faculty and administrators as well as one or two support staff, using follow-up questions derived from the questions and responses in the first round of interviews. In addition, for those colleges connected to larger systems or multi-college districts, officials of these larger organizations were interviewed. The purpose of the second site visits was to explore a limited number of questions in greater depth and to ascertain the extent of institutional change over a one year period, relative to the changes identified in the previous five years. Questions addressed changes to missions and structures over a one to two year period. Those interviewed included both individuals who were interviewed previously and those not interviewed previously. Interviews were recorded by hand.

In all, interviews were conducted over a two-year period at seven (7) colleges in the U. S. and Canada, in the states of California, Hawaii, and Washington and the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia. Approximately 60 individuals were involved in interviews,

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formally or informally, at each college, for a total of approximately 430 people interviewed, with the majority of formal interviews lasting from 50 minutes to 2 hours.

During both site visits, as the principal investigator, I also used a participant observation approach to data collection and analysis.[13] I kept a journal that included notes from meetings, interviews, and observations of institutional environments and interactions. Meetings included groups reporting to the president, groups reporting to other senior managers, college employee meetings, and governing board meetings. As well, I made notes on my ongoing analysis of data and the generation of observations and working hypotheses. Subsequent to site visits, I wrote detailed case histories, combining analyses of observations, documents, and interviews as well as historical and social analysis.

The seven colleges in this study were given fictitious names, consistent with the agreement with each college president to maintain relative anonymity of institutions. The seven college were named City Central College (CCC); City South Community College (CSCC); East Shoreline College (ESC); North Mountain College (NMC); Pacific Suburban Community College (PSCC); Rural Valley College (RVC); and Suburban Valley Community College (SVCC).

Data Analysis

In order to determine the ways and the extent to which globalizing forces affected and influenced community colleges, I employed several analytical frameworks to understand organizational behaviors. Principal among these was globalization theory, which provided me with a number of categories for analysis. These included the categories of change in organizations and institutions, such as increasing speed of production facilitated by the use of electronic technologies, alterations in labor as a consequence of productivity and efficiency of operations, and re-structuring of organization and work in order to increase managerial flexibility and control as well as organizational productivity or efficiency, or both. Particular to the postsecondary educational sector, categories of change included less, or diminished, public sector funding for public institutions, increasing associations with and connections to the private sector, and increasing state intervention into the governance and operations of the institution.

Analytical frameworks were developed from both globalization theory and organizational theory, as well as upon recent applications of globalization to higher

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education.[14] The goal of these frameworks was to identify patterns and themes that helped to explain the effects of globalizing forces and how the globalization process affected college behaviors.

Interview data, document data, observational data, institutional questionnaire data, and government document data were analyzed using an analytical framework drawn from globalization literature. Data were coded according to the categories noted in Exhibit 1, drawn from globalization literature (e.g., internationalization, public sector funding constraints, and commodification). Procedures for coding and then drawing conclusions followed the advice of Miles and Huberman.[15]

	Category	Abbreviation Code
A.	Internationalization (students, curriculum, delivery)	[I]
B.	Workforce training	[WT]
C.	Electronic Technology--real time communications	[ET]
D.	Labor alterations (e.g., additional work)	[LA]
E.	Productivity and Efficiency	[P/E]
F.	Public Sector funding constraints	[LPS]
G.	Restructuring	[R]
H.	State intervention	[SI]
I.	Private Sector interaction	[PR]
J.	Partnerships	[PA]
K.	External competition	[C]
L.	Homogenization	[HOM]
M.	Commodification	[COM]

Exhibit 1: Globalization Categories

Furthermore, national and state and provincial policy document data underwent a second iteration of coding and thus another analysis process. First, documents were categorized according to their jurisdiction: Federal Canada; Federal U.S.; state; or province. Second, documents were categorized according to their source, and these categories included government; government affiliate; non-government body; non-government organization; institution; and private. And, finally, documents were categorized by type, including legislation; policy: formal policy; policy discussion; policy background; policy draft; review

of legislation; review of policy; research; and report. Analysis then proceeded to include coding, using a modified pattern of globalization categories discussed previously.

After pattern coding, content analysis of the extracted data included counting of coded data by category and the identification and explanation of specific themes. Counting ensured that there was a substantial quantity of data for the established patterns. Thematic analysis led to a clearer understanding of the meaning of the patterns.

Observational data were analyzed both during site visits at each college and following site visits for all colleges. During site visits, I recorded my observations and subsequently began to conceptualize these data working toward hypotheses and theory-building, not unlike the approach recommended by Glaser and Strauss.[16] Observational data were thus treated in two distinct ways. On the one hand, observational data served as evidence of the presence of patterns related to concepts consistent with those drawn from globalization literature and theory. On the other hand, observational data were coded using categories derived from globalization theory, as noted in Exhibit 1, and used in conjunction with other categories of data (e.g., interviews).

Finally, interview and journal data were coded thematically, relying upon patterns identified as those connected to college mission and college structure changes, such as mission alteration that favors higher level programming in instruction and structural changes to institutional decision-making. These themes and patterns were then used to explain alterations to institutional mission and structures.

In addition to a globalization analytical framework for data analysis, I employed analytical frameworks drawn from organization theory. One of these was provided by Levy and Merry[17] who develop a conceptual framework for organizational change, premised upon the concept of second-order, fundamental, and enduring change. Four categories of change are used in their framework: paradigmatic change, mission and purpose change, cultural change, and change in functional processes, including structures, management, technology, decision-making and communication patterns. In using this framework for community colleges in the 1990s, I applied these categories to the seven cases.

Mission Alteration

Although community college organizational members claimed that the mission of their institution was unchanged in the 1990s from the previous decade, organizational behaviors suggested otherwise. While maintaining many of the facets and characteristics of their former mission as well as much of the rhetoric associated with this former mission, community college leaders embraced a liberal technological philosophy of education,[18] and institutional members adopted the norms of a global economy. As a result, the mission of the community college became oriented to economic concerns and to the requirements of the private sector.

This liberal view of a technological society assumes that education is instrumental and that the technology is part of a global economy where advanced education is best oriented to skills development and marketplace relevance. The president of North Mountain College made this view the rationale for organizational action.

> We are trying to inculcate at least some of these economy skills thoughout our curriculum. That means fundamental revision to re-vamping the curriculum...Education institutions...these are knowledge industries...companies...In this highly competitive environment, you feel enormous pressure to be adroit, nimble, flexible, and to respond to rapidly shifting corporate, government, student demands and needs. It takes years. We just had to...operate in a far more business-like way: become a pattern now. The collegial culture suffers, consequently...You have no choice.
> (College president, North Mountain College, interview, 1997)

This view fits into the "high skills/high wages" concept of education and employment. In recent literature on the community college,[19] this liberal technological perspective was promoted in the 1990s. To what extent did practice follow along these lines? Did community colleges alter their mission, and, if so, in what directions?

Organizational members at seven community colleges—in excess of 400 individuals—addressed these questions. They compared the present decade to the previous one, and articulated considerable change to college mission. Furthermore, institutional documents were also analyzed to determine the alteration to mission. Tables 8.1. to 8.7.

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display these views, exhibiting specific alterations to the college's mission and the perceived determinants of these alterations.

Mission Alterations	Determinants
• Greater focus upon learner, customers, and consumer needs	←To meet learner needs, to fit conceptions about market demands
• Curtailing adult basic education; underplaying ESL	←To preserve image as leader in education and as a prestigious institution
• Emphasis upon high-tech, multiculturalism, internationalism	←To meet student needs; to attract students; to meet community expectations
• More business-like; more productivity oriented; less emphasis upon lower skills and more on technology	←Need to attract students and increase enrollments; to deal with funding constraints
• Remediation for underprepared students; serving working adults (especially increased use of distance education)	←Increase enrollments, meet student needs, meet employers' needs
• Survival, increase productivity, innovation	←Combat funding shortfalls, limits, and decline in enrollments
• Decrease community focus	←Loss of non-credit programs because of need for resource acquisition; focus upon requirements of business and industry
• Confused mission; mission under review	←"Like rats running in a maze"--too much work, too many contributors to change; deterioration of labor-management relations

Table 8.1. Suburban Valley Community College

Mission Alteration	Determinants
• Broadening of mission to include baccalaureate degree programs	←Provincial government legislation; organizational members' lobbying and developmental work; local demand
• Contraction of vocational trades programs	←Decreased demand; changing workplace requirements
• Increase in international outlook	←Increased opportunities for revenues, for student placements, for faculty development
• More provincially managed: more centralized in managerial decisions; follows provincial goals	←Establishment of provincial collective bargaining structure; more provincial government direction through policy and funding; provincial government strategic plan
• Privatization: establish an international secondary school	←Revenue needs to support college growth
• Marketplace orientation	←Respond to private and public sector demands; increase revenues; provincial government strategic plan

Table 8.2. East Shoreline College

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Mission Alteration	Determinants
• Broadening, to accommodate more diverse students; less emphasis upon vocational, more on basic skills and adult education including English as a Second Language	←Decline in vocational program enrollments; changing local demographics; new immigrants; new college leadership
• Expand technological emphasis and increase use of information technologies	←Adjust to environment by developing programs that lead to employment; achieve greater efficiencies; capture new enrollments through distance and on-line instruction
• Focus upon student as customer	←Changing needs, demographics of student population; Welfare-to-Work students; increase in part-time working adults, new high school graduates and problem students
• Confused mission, going through transition	←Re-structuring action of 1995; decline in enrollments; lack of academic focus and decline of vocational programs; formalization of task force on mission
• Fluctuating job training function	←Changing workplace; state economic boom and bust cycles; changing leadership; declining revenues
• Multi-cultural focus	←State board mandate for actions on diversity issues; changing student population; new college leadership; and actions of faculty

Table 8.3. City South Community College

Mission Alterations	Determinants
• Greater attention to students as customers	←Decreasing enrollments; increased awareness of multi-culturalism and diverse needs of students; more adult students
• Drifting away from local community	←Few structures within college that connect to community; not required in the past
• Marketplace orientation	←Loss of government revenues
• Commodification of education and training	←Generate revenues by contract training; selling of program by distance education
• Narrowing mission: no longer "everything to everyone"	←Drop low performing areas; eliminated secretarial science
• Increasing emphasis upon multi-culturalism	←Sensitivity to student and community needs; increase enrollments; faculty value system

Table 8.4. Pacific Suburban Community College

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Mission Alterations	Determinants
• Further and greater emphasis upon basic education, language training, remediation, and developmental education	←Loss of third campus and its instructional areas and personnel; local community needs; government funding
• Emphasis upon students increases	←Meet provincial standards and expectations; retain student enrollments; student demographics change to include more "problem" students
• Increasing focus upon economic survival, with greater attention to the marketplace	←"Trying to do something so we don't lay people off"; fiscal constraints drive along with government "under-funding"

Table 8.5. City Center College

Mission Alterations	Determinants
• Baccalaureate degree granting; "moving toward a university model"; "re-defining what it is to be a university-college"; "becoming traditional college" in the community	←Provincial government legislation; college request to government ministry; local demand; new faculty
• "Losing community"; not as responsive to local needs	←Establishment and development of college as university-college, i.e., four-year degree granting
• "Still a community college, will never be a four year university"	←Internal divisions, e.g., between community college values and university values; faculty educational backgrounds limited; organizational members' value system
• Marginalization of college areas, such as trades, ESL, Office Administration, and non-university-college programs; creation of new sub-culture--university-college and community college	←Limited resources; decisions to support degree programs

Table 8.6. Rural Valley College

Mission Alterations	Determinants
• Four-year degree granting, "undergraduate college," but distinct from a university	←Government policy; public demand for higher credentials; college management aspirations
• Respond to the marketplace, "new economy skills" and "applied skills"	←Government mandate; management strategy; presidential vision and authority; local business and industry requirements
• Emphasis upon global and international	←Generate revenue; presidential strategy to raise profile of college
• "Removal of remedial programs" to non-credit, self-funded	←Government cutbacks; need to generate revenue; movement of institution to higher status
• Emphasis upon job preparation, electronic technology, and high level skills and away from traditional liberal arts and sciences, away from "second chance" institution image	←Government policy; business and industry requests; management strategy

Table 8.7. North Mountain College

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Organizational Change: Mission and Purpose

Mission and purpose refer to intentionality of organizational members and other stakeholders with respect to organizational actions and outcomes. Fiscal resources, organizational identity, and organizational culture were three arenas of action where there was evidence of alteration to mission and purpose. College members, especially administrators, pursued fiscal resources more deliberately and aggressively than in the past; college officials praised and valued entrepreneurial behaviors of organizational members and organizational units. College administrators endeavored to increase enrollments not because mission expansion motivated such action but rather because student numbers were economic commodities. Government funding in one way or another was tied to enrollments--a drop in these, for example, equaled a drop in government fiscal allocations.

At Suburban Valley Community College, emphasis upon productivity, curriculum driven by private sector interests, and the loss of collegiality reflected an altered institutional ethos. One instructor noted that "productivity is the word--bigger classes, more students." Mark, a faculty union leader, asserted that "programs [are] set up for business interests." Ed, a faculty senate leader, reflected upon a changed institutional environment where there was a "a labor-management mentality or atmosphere. [Both sides] bring out the contract: 'What does it say?' [The institution] is no longer collegial."

At City South Community College, productivity and efficiency behaviors applied to a variety of institutional areas. Three presidents during the decade attempted to improve cost effectiveness of college operations: the first by reducing employees and costs; the second by altering governance to induce more employee participation in decision-making, with the anticipated outcome of a rise in productivity. The third president pursued a combination of efficiency measures, including the "streamlining of operations," such as the elimination of redundancy or inefficiencies of personnel, or both, the renewed efforts to capture greater numbers of students and provide services for local business and industry, and the rationalization of programs, including major program revisions or elimination. Furthermore, at City South, the use of distance education was viewed by managers as a cost effective way to provide instruction and a key component of college strategy to improve productivity.

College members devoted more time to organizational image and status within the education sector than in the past. Suburban Valley Community College expended

considerable energy in fostering an external image and in reinforcing that image internally among organizational members. The message at Suburban Valley Community College was that the institution was an innovative, high tech, and university transfer-oriented institution, superior to all competitors. North Mountain College administrators, board members, and some faculty promoted their institution as a superior "undergraduate institution," characterized by sophisticated programming and technology. On a national basis for the U.S. and including Canadian community colleges, which has one selected member out of a total of less than two dozen member colleges, the League for Innovation in the Community College is touted as "an educational consortium of leading community colleges in the United States and Canada dedicated to experimentation and innovation."[20] League members view themselves as exemplars of the progressive spirit of the community college, making them images for emulation. Member institutions claim that electronic technology use enhances, and to some extent drives, innovation, claiming that League colleges have the reputation of being at the forefront of "transforming teaching and learning through technology."[21]

Finally, colleges gave considerable attention to multiculturalism and diversity. Hiring practices, curricula, and extra-curricular activities reflected this change in purpose from largely passive in the previous decades to active in the 1990s. For example, City South Community College formalized a curricular requirement that associate degree students complete a cultural studies course. Special units or structures, such as First Nations centers, meditation rooms, and affirmative action committees, were either created where they previously did not exist or were enlarged and formalized where they did exist in the past. With large numbers of minority students in the U.S. and increasing numbers of students who are immigrants or second-generation immigrants in both countries attending community colleges, practices and structures were modified to address student needs.

At City Center College, in Canada, there was a large immigrant population both within the college and in the community. Included in this population were recent immigrants from war-torn countries (e.g., Bosnia), from Asian countries where the standard of living did not match Canada's, and from countries where there were relatives of Canadian citizens (e.g., Hong Kong, Korea). This population, in need of English language skills for employment as well as for citizenship and for coping with an anglophone society, drove college enrollments and programming. This population was a large group within the overall urban community, and in serving its community City Center College endeavored to meet the

needs of a highly diverse population, one which had altered over time. Native speakers of English constituted 79% of the urban population in 1986, 72% in 1991, and 64% in 1996. Native Chinese language speakers rose from 5.75% of the population in 1986 to 13% in 1996, and native Punjabi language speakers rose from just slightly less than 2% in 1986 to 4% in 1996.[22] Thus, a large immigrant population was influential in the college's sensitivity to multiculturalism and diversity as well as its focus on job preparation and skills development.

Suburban Valley's implementation of a "learning community" philosophy and organizational structure was the most dramatic and far-reaching of college initiatives in altering the institution. In part to deal with what the college president referred to as "changing pedagogy" to respond to a problem of "student engagement," the learning community concept evolved into "changing structures around the curriculum," that is, organization of work units around curricular themes. In curriculum and in instruction, this philosophy was a "multicultural emphasis with a focus upon value; " it was publicized as "preparing students for a global society." Thus, the rhetoric of college members and college publications, such as the annual report, combined with institutional behaviors and actions, tied multiculturalism to globalization.

Multiculturalism spread into formal governance of these institutions, where both ethnicity and "voice," the views of the traditionally excluded, became important factors. At City South Community College, the college president from 1995 to 1997 became the district chancellor, responsible for the management and governance of three community colleges, the first person of Asian origin to occupy such a role, not only in that college district but in the state. At Suburban Valley Community College, the college hired its first female president, and the district board elected an individual with Asian ancestry as its chair. In the three British Columbia colleges, government appointed board members reflected the considerable diversity of the local population, including Asian and Indo-Asian members, those who were individuals with disabilities, aboriginal people, and an equal or majority representation of women. Furthermore, legislation changed in the mid-1990s to include faculty, students, and support staff on the governing board. At City Center College, the board chair in the mid-1990s was a woman with a disability; by the end of the decade the board chair was another woman employed by the college in a support staff role. At Pacific Suburban Community College, a former female president of the college ascended to the role

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of chancellor of the entire state community college system in the mid-1990s. These alterations, unique in the history of these institutions, signaled greater tolerance for people from different cultures, for people with differing backgrounds, gender, sexual orientation, visible characteristics, and people with disparate communities of interest.

Colleges altered their cultural emphases, becoming more attentive to students' cultural differences, more responsive in curriculum and instruction to multicultural needs, and more active in altering past practices of discrimination, with some colleges more pluralistic in their approach to both hiring and governing the institution. These changes served a number of purposes, from meeting student needs to benefiting the college through student recruitment and retention of students once in the institution. Additionally, cultural awareness and sensitivity were important qualities in international initiatives for colleges to secure work contracts and recruit students. Cultural change was consistent with a marketplace orientation, reflecting the preferences of resource providers, such as governments, students, and employers.

Institutional Change and The New Mission of the Community College

Institutional change suggests an historical departure from the patterns of institutional behaviors and identity associated with specific "institutional fields."[23] Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel argue that institutional change, indeed, transformation, occurred for community colleges in the 1960s, with a dramatic shift from a liberal arts orientation to a vocational one.[24] I extend this transformation further, although I am not convinced that the one in the 1960s that Brint and Karabel identified was either lasting or universal. Furthermore, the evidence of a liberal arts orientation for community colleges is limited and confined to the early 1900s, applicable to approximately 200 existing institutions, of which only 70 were public ones in 1921.[25]

The evidence from the 1990s indicates that significant cultural change occurred in community colleges, altering "repertoires,"[26] those behaviors that manifest the values and beliefs of a collective, in this case those of community college practitioners. The "practitioners' culture" of the decades prior to the 1990s, identified by Dennis McGrath and Martin Spear, became more of a sub-culture in the 1990s, practiced more by long-serving organizational members.[27] Formerly a "consensus culture,"[28] by the beginning of the 1990s

and more evident by the mid-1990s, the "practitioners' culture" gave way to business and corporate cultures, where economic and system values prevailed. The observation and articulation within community colleges of a globally competitive environment, economic in nature and capitalistic in ideology, opened the doors to more business-oriented practices and a corporate-style of management. The former mission of community colleges, while vibrant in rhetoric, was becoming obsolete.

The new mission of the community college was a departure from that of previous decades, where community implied all facets and interests of local populations. Pointedly, the evidence suggests that the community college mission shifted in the 1990s from serving local communities to serving the economy, specifically serving the interests of capital by producing labor and reducing public sector spending. The new mission, however, is not so easily simplified. There is complexity in the ambiguous nature of a mission that claims to serve local needs. This complexity involved, for example, the outcomes of instruction and the extent to which education and training were responses to learning needs or to the values of business and industry, and the expectations of government, whereby education and training were more of inculcation of acceptable behaviors to serve employers, rather than the needs of individual learners. At Suburban Valley Community College, a palpable tension was present within the college between the drive to increase enrollments in order to capture greater state funds and the desire to maintain a high profile image as an innovative, prestigious institution. This tension could be seen in the conflicts over staffing the Technology facility and in hiring full time faculty for the Arts and Sciences. Some organizational members attempted to mollify the tensions by promoting technology as the vehicle of access, the means of improving student learning, and as a strategy to increase enrollments and thereby gain the needed fiscal resources to support education. North Mountain College, similar to Suburban Valley, pursued recognition as an advanced postsecondary institution with emphasis upon high level skills and the use of technology, reflecting a mission of serving the local community but an upwardly mobile class within that community. Its tacit mission was to meet the economic needs of business and industry.

These examples suggest that a new vocationalism gained prominence in the community college mission. Unlike the reputed vocationalism of the 1960s to the 1990s identified by scholars such as Brint and Karabel and Clowes and Levin, the new vocationalism addressed the needs of the middle class and the engines of the economy.[29] It

was more in line with the prescriptions of Robert Reich for work in the 21st century: the preparation of symbolic analysts—research scientists, design engineers, software engineers, public relations executives, investment bankers, lawyers, and real estate developers at the high salaried end and technical support staff at the lower salary end.[30] The goals of community college education and training shifted in the 1990s to these vocations, either by preparing students for work and further education or by programming options and the curricular emphasis upon "new economy skills," "employability skills," and "applied skills."

The new vocationalism was but one-half of the new community college mission. The second followed the pattern of previous decades—that of an institution that is responsive. In the decade of the 1990s, community colleges became more overtly connected to the marketplace and to the ideologies of the neo-liberal state. That is, community college behaviors resembled those of private business and industry, pursuing competitive grants, relying more and more on the private sector for its revenues, privatizing services and education, securing contracts with both the private and public sectors, and simply "economizing": letting financial rationales take precedence over others. The institution's mission actually encompassed the acquisition of resources and the prudent ministering of its own financial resources. Together, the new vocationalism and "economizing" characterized a new mission for the community college at the end of the 20th century.

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