

A Leadership Development Plan for Implementation of 4-Year Degree Programs at  
Community Colleges Within the University and Community College System of Nevada

by  
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Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Chemene Crawford under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Fischler School of Education and Human Services and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

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## Abstract

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The purpose of this applied dissertation was to develop a blueprint for community college leaders within the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN) who want to develop 4-year degree programs at their individual institutions. Many of these leaders were not aware of what is involved in preparing a community college to undertake this endeavor, and they were not aware that the process requires more than just curriculum changes. The UCCSN Board of Regents requires that each institution provides information on the feasibility of the program, written proposals, and other in-depth information that addresses the issue in cultural and organizational contexts.

The researcher utilized the development methodology to create a detailed procedural design for the development of 4-year degree programs at community colleges within the UCCSN. This blueprint can be used not only within the system but also outside the system by leaders at other community colleges who aspire to begin offering 4-year degree programs. The development methodology was selected because it allowed for the development of a plan that could be replicated with little or no modification.

An analysis of interview data revealed that although the UCCSN Board of Regents requires certain information before authorizing an institution to go forward to the accrediting agency for approval of the substantive change, the institution must secure a certain level of readiness before submitting a proposal to the Board of Regents. This readiness must include input from all campus constituencies, such as (a) academic affairs, (b) student affairs, (c) finance, (d) administration, (e) students, and (f) members of the community.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

In 2003, the University and Community College System of Nevada's (UCCSN) *Fact Sheet* reported that UCCSN was the fastest growing higher education system in the country. Percentage wise, Nevada is the fastest growing state in the United States and has been for the past 10 years. Along with the state's growth comes the demand for access to higher education. Enrollment within the UCCSN set a record with 93,000 students in the fall semester of 2002. The seven degree-granting institutions in the state of Nevada are challenged to accommodate this continued growth trend through the year 2010. This study was conducted only within the UCCSN. The four community colleges in the system are (a) Community College of Southern Nevada, (b) Truckee Meadows Community College, (c) Great Basin College, and (d) Western Nevada Community College.

Historically, the nation's community colleges have always adapted to the educational needs of the time to meet increasing demands for student access (Walker, 2000). Community colleges were originally founded to provide lower division academic programs, and community colleges have historically adapted to meet the needs of society and the local communities in which they reside. Walker (2001) explained that community colleges are, and should be, closely connected to local needs and can be more responsive than universities to the changes in the local economy, population shifts, and social and political issues.

The mission of community colleges, although broad, has not changed much since their inception. According to Garmon (2000), the question of whether or not community colleges can offer workforce baccalaureates that are competitive with the bachelor's

degrees offered by 4-year institutions should be practically answered, yes.

### *Nature of the Problem*

The problem addressed in this applied dissertation was that the community college leaders within the UCCSN did not have a plan or blueprint to follow during the developmental stages of establishing 4-year degree programs at their individual institutions. The researcher hopes that this study will lead to awareness on the part of all constituencies of the level of preparedness that is required for a community college to begin offering much-needed baccalaureate programs.

### *Purpose of the Project*

The purpose of this study was to develop a blueprint for the use of UCCSN community college leaders who want to develop 4-year degree programs at their individual institutions. The process requires more than just curriculum changes, and many of these administrators were not aware of what is involved in preparing to undertake such an endeavor. Each institution must provide information on the feasibility of the program, written proposals, and other in-depth information that addresses the issue in cultural and organizational contexts (UCCSN, 2003). In this study, the researcher utilized the development methodology to create a detailed procedural design for the development of 4-year degree programs within the UCCSN. This blueprint can be used not only within the system but also outside the system by leaders at other community colleges who aspire to begin offering 4-year degree programs. The development methodology was selected because it allowed for the development of a plan that could be replicated with little or no modification.

### *Background and Significance of the Problem*



Nevada's Master Plan of Higher Education permits community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees if they meet a specific niche or need (UCCSN, 2003). The University of Nevada research institutions have expressed the need and support for community colleges in Nevada to provide specific 4-year degree programs because these institutions do not have the flexibility of resources required to meet the demand for certain baccalaureate degree programs. It is imperative that community college leaders are prepared for more than simple curriculum changes because the creation of a 4-year program has structural, fiscal, and administrative implications. Administrators, teaching faculty, and staff need a shared vision of the direction to take and an awareness of the benefits and pitfalls of such an endeavor.

As stated previously, the problem addressed by this applied dissertation was that community college leaders within the UCCSN did not have a plan or blueprint for developing 4-year degree programs that would bridge the gap between course offerings in the universities and community colleges in the state. The tremendous population growth in the state and within the UCCSN clearly pointed out the direction that community colleges within the system should take.

Two years ago, with significant funding, a new state college, Nevada State College, was formed. UCCSN administrators anticipated that the creation of this college would bridge the gap between the community colleges and the research universities in the state. However, support for Nevada State College has been a controversial issue not only with the public and in the media but also in the UCCSN Board of Regents. Recently, the state legislature cut funding for this state college by almost two thirds.

*Relationship to the Field of Organizational Leadership*

According to Romesburg (2000), the line between community colleges and 4-year colleges blurred a long time ago. Some universities admit students who do not necessarily qualify for full admission at 4-year institutions of higher education and offer remedial work as well. Romesburg noted that throughout the changes that have taken place in higher education, the leaders of community colleges have remained relatively silent; however, there has been a tremendous amount of criticism within the ranks. The researcher believes that if community colleges are to continue to meet their mission and evolve as needed, 4-year degrees are in order. Having all constituencies--administration, faculty, and staff--agree to a plan for such an undertaking is the challenge. Facilities, administrative support, and faculty salaries are issues that must be addressed before a community college can initiate even a limited number of 4-year programs.

In order to “bring everyone on board” with a clear view of the future, community college leaders must enlist the commitment and support of all stakeholders within the college and the surrounding community. This requires a complete understanding of what is required for such an endeavor. To assure system-wide uniformity, a blueprint for implementation of 4-year degree programs at community colleges within the UCCSN was needed.

### *Research Questions*

This applied dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the mission of the community college as it relates to the foundation for 4-year programs?
2. What criteria should be used to determine what types of 4-year degree programs should be offered at a particular community college?

3. What political, organizational, and fiscal barriers are to be expected for community colleges that have chosen to offer 4-year degree programs?
4. What are the costs associated with community colleges offering 4-year degree programs?
5. What evaluation tools are necessary to assure relevancy?

#### *Definition of Terms*

*Academic, Research, and Student Affairs (ARSA) Committee.* This subcommittee of the board of regents is charged with providing guidance in the process of the development, review, and recommendation of academic programs and degrees.

*Board of regents.* The board of regents is the corporate body that sets educational policies in the state and is legally responsible for the control and management of the UCCSN.

*Chancellor.* The chancellor is the chief executive officer of the UCCSN.

*Code.* This term refers to the UCCSN administrative code.

*System.* This term refers to the UCCSN.

#### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to develop a blueprint to help leaders of community colleges within the UCCSN develop 4-year degree programs. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students need a shared vision for the direction to be taken and an awareness of the benefits as well as the pitfalls associated with the endeavor. The researcher anticipates that this study will help all community college stakeholders to understand the process needed to begin offering 4-year degree programs through the nurturing environment of a community college.

## Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

### *Introduction*

The review of literature in this chapter contains (a) a brief history of community colleges in the United States, (b) current facts about community colleges, (c) the transformation of community colleges, and (d) examples of 4-year degree programs at community colleges. The researcher reviewed the literature on these topics to examine the substantive challenges faced by community college administrators who want to begin offering 4-year degree programs. This review of literature also addresses Romesburg's (2000) question of whether the idea of community colleges offering 4-year degree programs is brilliance or "mission blur" (p. 3).

Access to higher education is important to the socioeconomic health of the nation. As the public's demand for greater access to higher education increases and tuition and fees continue to rise, expansion of the mission of the community college to include baccalaureate degrees makes sense. Many existing community colleges already have the necessary infrastructures in place, including faculty, facilities, staff, and ideal campus locations, to provide a solid foundation for degree expansion beyond the 2-year degree. Walker (2001) reported that adding baccalaureate degrees to the offerings of community colleges would help to (a) increase the geographical, financial, and academic success of

upper division education; (b) promote success among nontraditional or returning students; (c) ensure stable family and employment relationships for students while they complete their degrees; and (d) reinforce the community college's commitment to economic and workforce development. The right of community colleges in Nevada to offer 4-year degree programs had been established; however, the researcher believed that a blueprint or plan that set forth the process involved was needed to assure the success of the endeavor.

### *History of the Community College in the United States*

Challenges that faced the United States in the early 20th century made national and local leaders realize that a skilled workforce was required for the country to keep up with global competition. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2003), in the early 20th century, three quarters of high school graduates were choosing not to further their education because they were reluctant to leave home for a distant college. As leaders of local public high schools sought better ways to serve their communities, they began offering teacher training and vocational training. Also, small private colleges, such as Vincennes University in Indiana, created an effective model of higher education that was grounded on the premises of (a) small class size, (b) close student-to-faculty relations, and (c) a program that included academics and extracurricular activities. These types of programs were the beginnings of the community college movement.

Another appealing feature of this new model of higher education was its accessibility to women. The American Association of Community Colleges (2003) reported that in the early 20th century in the state of Missouri, teachers were not required

to have a bachelor's degree. As a result, it was common for more than 60% of community college students to be women, and most of these students were preparing to be teachers.

### *Current Facts About Community Colleges*

According to Phillippe (2000), there are 1,171 community colleges in the United States that offer more than 450,000 associate degrees and confer nearly 200,000 two-year certificates. Total community college enrollment in 2000 was approximately 10.4 million students. Of these 10.4 million students, (a) over one half were women, (b) the majority of students attended college half time, and (c) the average age was 29 years. Phillippe also pointed out that more than half of students from ethnic minorities who attended college began their postsecondary education at a community college.

Phillippe (2000) reported that in 1999, (a) 60.4% of applicants who took the national registered nurse examination to become licensed professional registered nurses were graduates of associate degree programs, (b) 65% of new health care workers nationwide obtained their training at a community college, and (c) 95% of businesses and organizations that utilized workforce education and training programs did so through community colleges. Welfare-to-work programs were offered at 48% of community colleges, and 54% of these community colleges had plans to offer additional programs that were specifically designed for welfare recipients.

### *Reinventing the Community College*

The community college of the future will not be the same as the community college of the past; just as major corporations have had to reinvent themselves to remain relevant and profitable in a changing world, so must America's community colleges (Walker, 2000). Walker (2000) said, "Perhaps the phrase 'two year college' is no longer

relevant, nor should it be, to community colleges” (p. 10). In the future, community colleges may be defined as colleges that serve the needs of the community, and citing cost and access to higher education as factors, the community will demand more than an associate’s degree from such institutions. Walker (2000) cautioned that unless community colleges move beyond the limitation of offering only 2-year degree programs, community colleges will decline and disappear from the academic scene.

Walker (2000) reported that the concept of the community college baccalaureate degree has spread significantly over the past 10 years; legislatures in Arizona, Hawaii, Arkansas, Utah, Nevada, and Florida have addressed the issue. Walker (2000) pointed out that the Community College Baccalaureate Association, which was established within the past 4 years, has a growing membership that represents 12 states and one Canadian province. According to Walker (2000), the community college baccalaureate degree is already a reality and must be addressed when considering the future of education in America.

Critics argue that community colleges do not have the resources to offer 4-year degrees that are academically rigorous. Brophy (2000) noted that S. Ikenberry, President of the American Council on Education, advised students who consider seeking a 4-year degree from a community college to look closely at the facilities. For example, if a student’s goal is a degree in anthropology, Ikenberry pointed out that the student may be better off attending a university. But if the student seeks a degree in an academic area where the community college has been strong traditionally, the community college may be the best choice.

*Needs Assessment*

With the rising cost of university programs and the universities' quest for research status that requires them to be more selective when admitting students, community colleges will be depended upon even more to provide extended academic services to undergraduates. According to a policy brief prepared by the Education Commission of the States, described by Shkodriani (2004), community colleges must continue to respond to the needs of a broad base of students by provided open access and low tuition. Cook (2000) suggested that the concept of community college baccalaureate degrees is based on the assumption that there is a need for such programs and that distinguishing between anecdotal evidence and documented need for change requires an understanding of how needs have been met previously. Cook also suggested that assessment be done to determine (a) whose needs are being served, (b) which degrees should be offered, and (c) which goals reflect public interest. This endeavor can add significant expense to the cost of 4-year program development for community colleges.

One example of a needs assessment based upon location is that of Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada. Shkodriani (2004) described how the leaders of Great Basin College moved to develop baccalaureate level programs in response to the need for student access and local workforce needs. Great Basin College is located in an isolated area, and the closest university is in another state. In an interview the researcher held with the former president of Great Basin College, R. Remington (personal communication, March 25, 2005) discussed the need for a blueprint for baccalaureate degree formulation at community colleges within the system. He stated that because there was no blueprint or plan, administrators at Great Basin College had to "wing it" at great expense, and the university system had to provide much of the money needed for successful program



development.

#### *Examples of 4-Year Degrees at Community Colleges*

According to St. Petersburg College (2001), the idea of offering baccalaureate and other advanced degrees in a community college setting has become a reality in the past 5 years, aided in part by the distance-learning mode of delivery. Recent examples include Dalton State College in Georgia. Dalton State College has been offering bachelor's degrees since 1999 in (a) industrial operations management, (b) management information systems, and (c) applied science in technology management. Dixie State College in Utah achieved baccalaureate degree status in 2000 and offers bachelor's degrees in business administration and computer information technology. Since 1993, Utah Valley State College, formerly Utah Valley Community College, has offered bachelor's degrees in (a) business management, (b) computer science and information systems, (c) technology management, (d) education, (e) hospitality management, and (e) paralegal studies, just to name a few.

Shkodriani (2004) reported that in the state of Florida, Governor Bush has shown support for 4-year degree programs at community colleges because of the service provided to nontraditional students in career fields that are experiencing employee shortages. Miami-Dade Community College responded quickly to the need to address the teacher shortage by creating and offering baccalaureate degree programs. In 2001, St. Petersburg College was approved to offer baccalaureate programs to fill a need in the state that was not being met by Florida's research-oriented universities (Shkodriani).

#### *Leadership Complexities and Problems*

Senge (as cited in Webber, 1999) said that when the discipline of innovation is

practiced effectively, it occurs in communities among diverse individuals who share a common purpose. Acknowledging the threat and confronting the uncertainty that the process of change evokes is best done with others, not in isolation. It is clear that the entire college community, including individuals in leadership positions, must be prepared for the task. Drucker (1996) said that although “born leaders” may exist, there are far too few to depend on them; therefore, leadership must be learned. Drucker noted that many companies use executive leadership programs to promote that philosophy, from institutions such as Louisiana State University and the University of Texas at Dallas to the United States Department of Health and Human Services and the Niagara Institute in Canada. A university system the size of the UCCSN should consider some type of leadership program for its faculty and staff to prepare for the system-wide impact of 4-year degree programs at community colleges.

Leaders at all levels need to communicate their expectations for the organization and their employees’ behavior through formal systems and structures. Navran (2003) pointed out that this process should include a strategic communication and education campaign to ensure that employees understand the organization’s stated goals and the behaviors expected of them. Senior leaders should take every opportunity to underscore their commitment to the stated goals, positions, and philosophies of the organization and make every effort to assure employees that there is no hidden agenda behind established policies and beliefs (Navran). In a dynamic higher education system such as the UCCSN, high-quality leadership is critical to achieving the community colleges’ goal of offering 4-year degree programs in the future.

Academic transfer, workforce development, and lifelong learning remain the

major elements of the mission of community colleges, but studies indicate that college administrators support the development of a more comprehensive mission based upon the changing needs of the colleges and the communities they serve. In a study conducted by Floyd, Skolnik, and Walker (2004), one fourth of the community college presidents who responded to a survey stated that they had been approached by employers to offer baccalaureate degrees in high-demand areas. More than half of the presidents who were surveyed stated that the concept of a community college baccalaureate degree was not fully understood by policy makers.

### *Development Research*

Van Den Akker (1999) observed that in development research design, complex learning content requires research design that assesses the process as well as the outcome of the intervention. This author further stated that development research

is often initiated for complex, innovative tasks for which only very few validated principles are available to structure and support the design and development activities. . . . The aim is not to elaborate and implement complete interventions, but to come to (successive) prototypes that increasingly meet the innovative aspirations and requirements. (p. 9)

Van Den Akker recommended that the research design should include (a) preliminary investigation, (b) articulation of theory, (c) testing of the intervention, and (d) analysis and documentation of the research findings.

Evaluation standards of the government of Canada reflect the connections among benefits, outputs/processes, and knowledge (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2001). These standards are that evaluation work must incorporate sufficient and appropriate consolidation and where appropriate, apply the advice and guidance of knowledgeable persons. Evaluation efforts must also produce timely and credible

findings and conclusions that managers and stakeholders can use with confidence. The Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat emphasized that the most important evaluation standard is that reports must present the findings, conclusions, and recommendations in a clear and objective manner.

### *Summary*

Access to higher education is important to the socioeconomic health of the nation, and this access may be extended if community colleges expand their offerings to include baccalaureate degrees. Many existing community colleges already have in place the infrastructures that are needed to provide a solid foundation for expansion beyond the 2-year degree. These infrastructures include faculty, staff, facilities, and programs in ideal locations. Garmon (2002) wrote, “As we begin a new century, it appears that the community college baccalaureate will become a logical, innovative addition to higher education” (p. 2).

### Chapter 3: Methodology and Procedures

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures used in this study: (a) criteria development and validation, (b) product development and validation, (c) data collection and analysis, and (d) the procedures used to answer the research questions. The implementation process, timeline, evaluation design, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and potential outcomes of the study are also outlined in this chapter. The development methodology was utilized to create a detailed plan, or blueprint, for the development of 4-year degree programs within the UCCSN.

In a review of the literature on this topic, the researcher found that there are only a few community colleges in the United States that offer 4-year degree programs, and the

literature provided no available plan for community college leaders who want to take on such an endeavor. The literature review, which was focused on the research questions, included (a) a brief history of the community college in the United States, (b) current facts about community colleges, (c) changes that are taking place in community colleges, and (d) examples of 4-year degree programs at community colleges.

The researcher conducted interviews with past presidents of community colleges in Nevada, two members of the UCCSN Board of Regents, and vice presidents of community colleges within the system. These leaders explored the barriers, political issues, and the costs associated with the development of 4-year degree programs at community colleges.

#### *Criteria Development*

The formative committee members who assisted with this study were (a) the vice president of finance and administration for the Community College of Southern Nevada, (b) the interim vice chancellor for academic and student affairs at the UCCSN, and (c) two past community college presidents from within the system. Research questions to assure relevancy of established standards for this project were developed by the researcher with the assistance of members of the formative committee. These individuals were well versed about the workings of the system and familiar with the operation of the board of regents. These individuals will be the “key players” when 4-year degree programs are implemented at community colleges in the state.

The summative committee consisted of members of the formative committee with the addition of two members of the board of regents who were added to provide contrasting views and opinions regarding community colleges offering 4-year degree

programs. The two regents raised questions that have not been asked previously and provided crucial feedback regarding development of the blueprint. The summative committee reviewed the blueprint to assure relevancy and to recommend the best way for baccalaureate degrees to be established at community colleges within the system.

#### *Criteria Validation*

The criteria for the summative committee's evaluation of the blueprint included input from the following stakeholders: (a) the community, (b) students, (c) faculty, and (d) staff. The board or regents requires that the establishment of new programs be supported by research data. The benefits of this endeavor to the state of Nevada, the UCCSN, and the communities served by community colleges within the state were established, and the summative committee was responsible for validating the criteria established by the formative committee, the regents, and the chancellor.

#### *Product Development*

Interview questions were designed with the assistance of the formative committee. As stated previously, members of this committee were chosen because of their experience with the development of 4-year degree programs and their knowledge of student affairs, academic affairs, finance, and administration within the system. Each member of the formative committee was given the research questions for this project and asked to provide relevant feedback. The formative committee members were also asked to recommend interview questions that would provide the information necessary to create the blueprint.

#### *Product Validation*

Members of the summative committee answered the questions formulated as a

result of the formative committee's recommendations. If additional questions were asked, the summative committee provided direction in that area to fill in possible gaps in the blueprint of the 4-year degree development process. The contributions of the summative committee significantly impacted the usefulness of the blueprint and made it, indeed, a living document. The researcher emphasized to the summative committee members that the blueprint was to be a plan for use by institutional leaders; the plan was not intended to be a philosophical statement.

### *Subjects*

The 12 subjects in this study were former community college presidents within the UCCSN, community college vice presidents, and members of the board of regents. These individuals had firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of community colleges within the system and had the expertise necessary to answer questions related to this development research project.

The subjects in this study were selected upon recommendations of the summative committee members. All of the individuals who were selected had higher education experience with community colleges in the state. Opposing views were represented among the interviewees. The two regents who were interviewed had gone on record with opposing views about 4-year degree programs at community colleges. The community college presidents, past and present, who responded to the interviews had historically campaigned for 4-year degree programs at their institutions. Subjects were contacted by e-mail or phone to secure their participation in the study.

### *Data Collection*

The instrument for this project was a list of interview questions that was created

by the researcher to address the research questions of the study (see Appendix A). As part of the interview process, past community college presidents; vice presidents who represented leadership in the areas of finance, administration, academic affairs, and student affairs; and members of the board of regents were asked to answer the research questions developed for this project and contribute their opinions regarding political, organizational, and leadership challenges associated with the development of 4-year degree programs at community colleges within the state.

The researcher completed a review of literature that included information from the UCCSN Master Plan for Higher Education as well as data collected from other institutions that had previously initiated 4-year degree programs. The question of whether the offering of 4-year degree programs at community colleges is a global issue or merely a local market issue was addressed. Interviews were used to gather data regarding the impact of 4-year degree program development procedures on areas within the college and to identify which areas required attention or additional resources.

Data were collected regarding the protocol involved with starting 4-year degree programs at community colleges and the overall political climate at the executive level. Key factors in developing 4-year degree programs at community colleges are the attitudes and perceptions of the external college community as well as the internal college community. The individuals who were surveyed were asked to expound on their experiences with regard to leadership preparation, community input, and unexpected issues that were relevant to the success and maintenance of 4-year degree programs in community colleges. The interview consisted of 16 demographic and open-ended questions. The participants' responses remained anonymous unless one of the subjects



specifically requested that his or her identity be made known.

### *Data Analysis*

Two levels of data analysis occurred. First, the interviews were conducted; the respondents answered questions regarding the current demand for 4-year degree programs at community colleges and the political climate surrounding those programs. Data from the ARSA Committee of the UCCSN were used to validate the support, or lack of support, for the proposed programs and the academic affairs requirements for this type of endeavor. Because this type of program development represents a substantive accreditation change, accrediting agency criteria were used to determine step-by-step procedures and the timeline for degree program start-up. The researcher analyzed interview responses to discover patterns and categories. From this information, the researcher drew conclusions that she used to answer the research questions posed in this study.

### *The Research Questions*

*Research Question 1.* What is the mission of the community college as it relates to the foundation of 4-year degree programs? The researcher conducted a review of literature to examine the need for and the support for such programs in community colleges.

*Research Question 2.* What criteria should be used to determine the types of 4-year degree programs that should be offered at a particular community college? The researcher found answers to this question in the UCCSN Master Plan for Higher Education and in the interview responses of the subjects.

*Research Question 3.* What political, organizational, and fiscal barriers are to be

expected for community colleges that choose to offer 4-year degree programs?

Information to answer this question was collected from interviews with the study subjects. The subjects also discussed regional political issues that were related to the topic.

*Research Question 4. What are the costs associated with community colleges offering 4-year degree programs? Executives at community colleges within the UCCSN were interviewed to determine the fiscal implications, requirements, and considerations for community colleges that aspire to offer baccalaureate degrees.*

*Research Question 5. What evaluation tools are necessary to assure relevancy?* As part of the interview process, vice presidents of finance and administration at community colleges within the UCCSN were asked to respond to this question. Information was also collected from the UCCSN with regards to system-level fiscal requirements for development of new degree programs. Members of the board of regents who were interviewed described the fiscal requirements for community colleges to obtain approval to offer baccalaureate degree programs.

#### *Implementation Process and Timeline*

This study was implemented over an 8-week period. During the 1st week of implementation, the formative and summative committees who were selected by the researcher assisted with the development and finalization of the interview questions to be asked of the research subjects. These questions were directed to the participants in this study because of their knowledge of and relationships to the development of 4-year degrees programs at community colleges within the UCCSN.

During the 2nd week of this study, the interviews with the subjects were set up to

coincide with meetings of the board of regents to ensure subject availability; some of the subjects resided in other parts of the state. The researcher did not need to use focus groups because the subjects made themselves available for the interviews.

During the 3rd, 4th, and 5th weeks of the study, the interviews were conducted. Subjects who wished to complete the interview via means other than a face-to-face meeting with the researcher were accommodated; however, as recommended by the formative committee, interviews with members of the board of regents were conducted one on one. Interviews with college presidents, past or present, were conducted anonymously in an effort to encourage them to be more candid in their responses.

The interview results were shared with members of the summative committee during the 6th week of the study. Because the researcher designed the interview questions with guidance from members of the formative and summative committees, the summative committee required no additional questions. In the 7th week of the study, the researcher wrote a report of the results and prepared a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation of the results for the summative committee, some of whom were members of the UCCSN ARSA Committee. The blueprint was e-mailed to members of the ARSA Committee during the 8th week of the study. It was at this point that the researcher solicited recommendations from members of the ARSA Committee to fine-tune the blueprint for use within the UCCSN and incorporated the changes into the results analysis in chapter 5 of this report.

### *Evaluation Design*

The success of the blueprint for development of a community college baccalaureate degree will ultimately be decided by program approval through the

accreditation process. According to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges (2004), the Commission on Colleges and Universities monitors proposed changes whenever an accredited or candidate institution plans a substantive change in its mission, goals, scope, control, area served, or other significant matters. A community college's proposal to offer a baccalaureate degree is considered a substantive change.

Determination of whether this blueprint achieves the desired outcomes will depend upon final approval for the major substantive change by the accrediting agency. For this approval to be considered, significant documentation must be submitted to the accrediting agency. If the commission approves the proposal, the institution will be granted the substantive change required to offer baccalaureate degrees. It is important to note that the accrediting agency requires that the local governing board must approve proposals for substantive change before the accrediting agency will consider the institution's proposal for change. An optional ARSA Committee training session was held so the researcher could present the committee members with the final blueprint. Committee members engaged in discussion at the completion of the presentation. The results of the discussion are included in chapter 5 of this report.

### *Assumptions*

This researcher assumed that administrators in the UCCSN had an interest in the development of 4-year degree programs at community colleges within the system. The researcher also assumed that participants in this study had a clear-cut understanding of the necessary components for successful program implementation. It is important to note that this blueprint references the accreditation process but does not outline the extensive process associated with approval of new programs.

### *Limitations and Delimitations*

The diversity of the UCCSN makes it very difficult to study the system comprehensively. Each institution handles its financial and academic matters differently, and these differences are very pronounced, even among the community colleges. This development plan or blueprint will need to be adapted to individual institutional processes as well as the organizational structure of the colleges. Use of this development plan may require additional resources that are not readily available. Another limitation of this study is that the plan/blueprint is not program specific. This plan is intended to assist organizational leaders in the development of 4-year degree programs, not to help them decide which programs to forego. Delimitations of this study are that the plan/blueprint can be implemented by administrators at 4-year universities that already offer baccalaureate degrees, and the investigative principles inherent in the plan may be applicable to the development of other programs and services at other higher education institutions.

### *Potential Outcomes of the Study*

The primary anticipated outcome of this project was the development of a blueprint that will help community college leaders in the UCCSN to create well-researched and well-developed 4-year degree programs at their institutions. Although the leaders of some of the community colleges in the state had already developed such programs, their concerns about development costs and the amount of time required to “stumble” through the process warranted the development of this blueprint. The researcher also anticipates that the board of regents will recognize and recommend this blueprint as a valid tool for use within the UCCSN.

*Summary*

In this chapter, the development methodology and procedures that were used in this study were described. The implementation process, timeline, evaluation design, assumptions, limitations and delimitations, and outcomes of the study were also addressed.

The purpose of this study was to develop a plan to help the leaders of community colleges within the UCCSN prepare to begin offering 4-year degrees in specific program areas. Preparing a community college to undertake this task requires more than simple curriculum changes. Administrators, faculty, staff, and students must share a vision for the direction to be taken and be aware of the benefits as well as pitfalls associated with the process. The researcher hopes that this study will lead to awareness on the part of all college stakeholders of the level of preparedness required to begin offering much-needed 4-year degree programs through the nurturing environment of a community college. The outcome or final product of this study is a plan that can be used by administrators at any community college who aspire to offer 4-year degree programs as part of their institution's curriculum.

## Chapter 4: Results

Results and relevant data from the study are presented in this chapter. The chapter is organized by research question. Each research question is presented separately, followed by the results.

### *Demographic Characteristics of Subjects*

The interviews of the 12 subjects of this study began with four demographic questions, Questions 1-4, to validate the experience and breadth of knowledge of the interviewees. The results of these interview questions supported the selection of these specific subjects to participate in the study by outlining their expertise with community colleges and higher education in general. All of the individuals interviewed were at some time, decision makers within higher education, particularly community colleges.

Of the respondents, 66% had been associated with higher education for more than 10 years. All but two of the respondents were employed at the vice presidential level or above, and 66% of the respondents had been teaching faculty for 10 years or more. One respondent had been a member of an administrative faculty for over 6 years, and two respondents were members of the board of regents. One of the board of regents representatives was also on the teaching faculty at the University of Nevada.

Collectively, the respondents had been associated with community colleges for more than 133 years; two thirds had been associated with community colleges for well over 10 years. Fifty percent of the respondents had worked outside of the community college area. One respondent had never been employed within higher education but had been associated with education for 7 years.

### *Mission of the Community College as It Relates to 4-Year Degree Programs*

Answers to Research Question 1--What is the mission of the community college as it relates to the foundation for 4-year programs?--were provided by a review of literature that was conducted to examine the historical mission of community colleges and the support that existed for offering 4-year degree programs at community colleges.

Challenges faced by the United States in the early 20th century made national and local leaders realize that a skilled workforce was required for the nation to compete globally. According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2003), in the early 20th century, three quarters of high school graduates chose not to further their education because they were reluctant to leave home for a distant college. Seeking better ways to serve their communities, leaders of local public high schools began to offer teacher training and vocational training programs. These programs were especially popular with women, many of whom wished to become teachers. These early programs were the origins of today's community college. The growth of the community college movement was extensively described in the literature (Brophy, 2000; Cook, 2000; Floyd et al., 2004; Phillippe, 2000; Shkodriani, 2004; Walker, 2000).

#### *Factors for Selection of 4-Year Degree Programs at Community Colleges*

Answers to Research Question 2--What criteria should be used for an institution to determine what types of 4-year degree programs should be offered at a particular community college?--were obtained from interviews conducted with members of the formative and summative committees as well as other administrators within the system who would be involved with the development of 4-year degree programs. The interview respondents addressed specific issues related to the development of baccalaureate degree programs at community colleges within the UCCSN. Respondents stated that it is



imperative to assure that each college meets the needs of the community it serves. Results of the interviews indicated that factors that should be considered include the availability of existing baccalaureate-degree-granting institutions and cost benefits. Is there the opportunity for the community college to respond to an identified need at a more reasonable and economic cost than other alternatives, and are existing facilities and faculty in place that would make offering the program at a college more efficient?

Respondents agreed that programs should be offered that assure access to students and fulfill the community's need for workforce development with consideration of location to other baccalaureate-degree-granting institutions, community support, and the college's mission. All respondents stressed the importance of support from the board and a sound strategy. The importance of fiscal feasibility was also emphasized. The respondents said that for a program to be considered, it should teach professional skills that are in great demand or are unique. The respondents added that these programs should also be ones that local 4-year institutions do not adequately support. The driving factor should be the need to provide baccalaureate degrees at a significant cost savings while maintaining the quality of education. Respondents concurred that the first and foremost consideration should be what benefits the students. Respondents also agreed that the convenience, practicality, and flexibility of having the programs offered at community colleges are of great benefit to students. The faculty workload and efficiency of community colleges not only make sense but also save dollars.

When asked what formal mechanisms should be used to determine the types of 4-year degree programs that should be offered, respondents noted that formal processes should include (a) an assessment of community need, (b) availability and qualifications

of faculty, (c) review of the fiscal impact and funding mechanisms, and (d) accreditation issues (regional and/or specialized). Other recommendations were that (a) outcomes of the assessment should be provided to governing boards and if appropriate, legislative committees; (b) surveys, employment opportunities, and meetings with representatives of businesses, industry, and education should be conducted; (c) contact should be made with other colleges that have begun to offer 4-year degrees; (d) the college should join the Community College Baccalaureate Association; and (e) a team should be organized on campus that will promote faculty and community input. Community needs and student desires play an integral role in the decisions about what degree programs should be offered. The availability of resources necessary for a particular discipline should also be a mitigating factor in deciding which degrees to offer.

#### *Political, Organizational, and Fiscal Barriers*

Answers to Research Question 3--What political, organizational, and fiscal barriers are to be expected for community colleges that choose to offer 4-year degree programs?--resulted from respondents' discussions about the barriers that can be encountered by community colleges within the system that seek to offer 4-year degrees. Attitudes and perceptions were also addressed in the responses. According to respondents, barriers may include the perceived view that the main functions of a community college's are to prepare students for transfer to universities and to provide vocational/occupational programs. These barriers can best be overcome through emphasis on the high-quality educational benefits that can be realized through attendance at community colleges. Respondents noted that true understanding of the potential of community colleges is unknown and unrealized. Two other concerns mentioned by the

respondents were encroachment of the community college upon the local university's mission and the potential for the community college to lose the vocational/occupational focus of its mission.

Interview respondents also noted that is important for administrators at the community college to check the state constitution. Some state constitutions, such as those in Oregon and Washington, forbid 2-year colleges from offering upper division credit. In those cases, it is important to get some advocates in the legislature. Massive opposition from 4-year colleges should be expected; therefore, persistence and determined personnel with money to fight prolonged battles is crucial.

Another barrier noted by the interview respondents is the concern of university administrators about losing funding associated with decreased university enrollments when students opt to earn their baccalaureate degrees at community colleges. The interviewees suggested that the supporters of university presidents might work to prevent this from happening. The way for community colleges to overcome this barrier is through education about the advantages of community colleges, not only for the educational system but also for the students.

When asked about organizational barriers, respondents stated that objections from universities, vocational/occupational advisory groups, and accreditation agencies are to be expected. Community college faculty members who are fearful of losing their programs and funding to baccalaureate programs should also be anticipated. Respondents noted that faculty members are often resistant to change, so it is important to organize a work group or team to address this problem and allow from 18 to 24 months for the proposed change to be made and accepted. Again, education is needed to reassure

resistant faculty members that they will not suffer and their positions will not be eliminated as a result of the change.

When respondents were asked about fiscal barriers to be expected, all of them combined their answers to Research Question 3 with their answers to Research Question 4--What are the costs associated with community colleges offering 4-year degree programs? Only those who were familiar with the financial aspects of community colleges responded to these questions. Respondents stated that from a fiscal perspective, a number of barriers or factors for consideration should be noted:

1. How is the institution funded? Does the funding formula accommodate for differentiation between upper division and lower division caseloads?
2. Are student-to-faculty ratios a component of funding, and if so, what consideration is provided for the difference in upper and lower divisions?
3. What factors/considerations are provided for additional resources to meet critical student service needs, such as (a) counseling/advising, (b) financial aid, and (c) admissions?
4. Is there a funding mechanism that requires differentiation of student registration fees and nonregistration costs? Many 4-year institutions charge higher fees than community colleges.
5. How is revenue assessed? How are expenditures linked? If the institution does not receive funding through a formula mechanism, what consideration is provided for baccalaureate programs?
6. If the institution receives funding based on full-time enrollment, is a consideration provided for an augmented level for the upper division component?

The respondents also pointed out the need for (a) more instructors with doctoral degrees; (b) more or different types of comprehensive financial aid; (c) additional library acquisitions (i.e., a minimum of \$100,000 for program start-up); (d) more statewide and out-of-state recruiting; and (e) hiring of an admissions and records officer, a curriculum specialist, and a dean or lead faculty member to administer the new program.

The majority of the interview respondents did not see a fiscal barrier from the standpoint of the community college. They mentioned that Great Basin College, in Elko, Nevada, received close to \$1.5 million from the state to begin to offer baccalaureate degrees. A major cost that must be considered when a new program is planned is faculty salary. Are increased salaries needed to support the upper divisional component for the educational program? Workload for faculty is another factor for consideration that is especially critical as enrollments grow and as faculty are hired. Does the institution have adequate resources in place to address programmatic needs, such as equipment and materials, to support the academic program? Are the library reference materials adequate to support the academic program? Are counselors/advisors knowledgeable enough to address the upper division requirements? What financial aid is available? Staffing needs must be evaluated, and additional positions may be needed (i.e., an admissions and records officer, a curriculum development specialist, and a dean-level administrator). Library holdings and the degree level of faculty must also be evaluated and possibly augmented. Following the initial start-up costs, the ongoing cost of offering a 4-year degree program at a community college should be less than the cost of offering the same degree in a university setting.

#### *Additional Considerations*

Interview subjects were asked about academic affairs and student affairs decisions that must be made when considering 4-year degree programs for community colleges. One third of the respondents said that they did not feel comfortable addressing this issue because academic affairs was not their specialty; the remaining respondents stated that faculty credentials and accreditation issues are important matters to be considered when developing baccalaureate degree programs. Through extensive research, administrators at the community college must select the appropriate academic areas for the new baccalaureate degrees. The blueprint produced through this applied dissertation should be helpful during the degree selection process. Respondents concurred that it is important to make sure that the student orientation of the community college is not lost and that faculty members do not make unrealistic demands on students in an effort to prove the new community college program is not inferior. Considerations that must be addressed include the availability of qualified faculty and resources to be able to deliver the educational product to the students. These concerns are basically the same as the concerns that need to be addressed in a university setting.

Respondents were asked about student affairs issues that must be considered when a community college seeks to offer 4-year degree programs. One third of the respondents did not address this question because student affairs matters were not their specialty. However, those who did respond stated that the student affairs concerns associated with offering 4-year degree programs include the need for the following: (a) a higher level of financial aid, (b) an admissions and records officer, (c) additional recruitment efforts, and (d) a higher level of counseling. When 4-year degree programs are added, dormitories and a health clinic may be needed and thought may need to be

given to whether the institution will want to provide sport programs. These types of decisions can be made by a work group/team with input from the college community. Respondents commented that traditional 4-year universities seem to put up barriers for students, whereas community colleges attempt to support and nurture students. Respondents also said that faculty advising at traditional 4-year universities is vastly inferior to the professional counseling received by students at a community college.

#### *Evaluation Tools to Assure Relevancy*

All interviewees responded to Research Question 5--What evaluation tools are necessary to assure relevancy?--by discussing the use of evaluation tools to assure relevancy and measure success of the endeavor. The review of literature indicated that the adoption of 4-year degree programs has only been done by a limited number of community colleges. Interview respondents stated that as this option continues to grow, focus should be placed on community and workforce development programs. Because universities are becoming more focused on the development of research initiatives and research-related programs, the baccalaureate degree is not as much at the forefront of the university mission as in previous years. However, because the baccalaureate degree is essential to many employment fields, the demand for graduates with these degrees will continue to grow, and community colleges in many states have the qualified and talented faculty necessary to meet this demand. Administrators of community colleges can offer high-quality education in a cost-efficient manner by keeping abreast of what is needed in the service area, retention and graduation rates, and the postcollege employment of their graduates.

Accreditation from the institution's accrediting agency is another indicator of the

relevancy of the community college baccalaureate degree. Support from the community is an indicator as well. Relevance is a function of community needs being addressed by specific instructional programs, such as nursing and teacher preparation. The relevancy and success of baccalaureate degree programs can be measured by student demand, interest, and satisfaction.

Another measure of success is the job placement rate of graduating students; therefore, evaluation tools that are necessary parts of the development process include outcome assessments regarding job attainment. This function is best performed by an academic officer, community leader, or institutional research professional.

As with any program that the institution offers, the 4-year degree program must meet accreditation standards. Self-study, student completion rates, measures of student learning independent of grades (portfolio and assessment reviews), and assessment of employers of graduates can also be helpful evaluation measures. Respondents said that the best evaluation tools are interviews and surveys, administered both before a student begins a program and after the student graduates. Contact with employers to see if their needs are being met through the education received by the community college graduates will assure long-term relevancy of the program.

#### *Other Factors for Consideration*

During the interviews, respondents expressed additional concerns related to the community college baccalaureate degree: (a) legislative perception, (b) library quality, (c) faculty support, (d) resource availability, and (e) accreditation agencies. The respondents stressed that there is never a good reason to duplicate what another college is already doing. Several respondents emphasized the importance of allowing significant time for



development of a baccalaureate degree program at a community college. Other related factors discussed by the respondents included (a) addressing the need for distance education, (b) selecting the most beneficial location, (c) deciding which niche to follow, (d) setting high standards and holding to them, and (e) adapting to possible changes in the mission of the community colleges that may result from a shift in emphasis from student success to academic standards.

Respondents noted that another factor to be considered is the availability of resources from both the public sector and the private sector. The outlook for growth of student population and the demands of future students need to be considered as well. The availability of offerings as it relates to location is extremely important. In Nevada, there are two universities and one state college. The proximity of students or potential students to these institutions is a factor that should be considered.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This chapter includes (a) a summary of the study, (b) interpretation and discussion of the results as they related to the research questions, (c) implications of the findings, and (d) recommendations for practice and for future research. The review of literature is discussed as it related to the research questions.

### *Introduction of the Study*

The Master Plan of Higher Education in Nevada permits community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees if they meet a specific niche (UCCSN, 2003). The two University of Nevada research institutions have expressed the need and their support for community colleges in Nevada to provide specific 4-year degree programs because the universities do not have the flexibility of resources required to supply the demand for certain baccalaureate degree programs. Such programs would bridge the gap in course offerings between the universities and the community colleges in the state. This applied dissertation was undertaken, over an 8-week period, to create a blueprint for the development of these 4-year degree programs at the community colleges that would guide community college administrators through the necessary structural, fiscal, and administrative aspects of the development process.

The tremendous growth within the UCCSN has created a niche in Nevada's higher education system. The growth within the state of Nevada and the creation of Nevada State College pointed out the direction that some community colleges within the system should take. The researcher utilized the development methodology to create a detailed procedural blueprint for the development of 4-year degree programs within the UCCSN. The blueprint can be used not only within the system but also outside the

system by leaders at other community colleges who may aspire to begin offering 4-year degree programs. The researcher hopes that the board of regents will recognize and recommend this blueprint as a valid tool for use within the UCCSN.

The study was conducted only within the UCCSN. Community colleges within the system are (a) the Community College of Southern Nevada, (b) Truckee Meadows Community College, (c) Great Basin College, and (d) Western Nevada Community College. Subjects in the study were 12 former community college presidents within the UCCSN, community college vice presidents, and members of the board of regents. These individuals were recommended by the formative committee for interviews because of their firsthand knowledge of both the political climate in the system and the inner workings of the community colleges.

The subjects in this study were asked to respond anonymously to 16 demographic and open-ended questions. Due to the potential subjects' significant breadth of experience in higher education, particularly with 4-year degree programs at community colleges, each was asked to share his or her experience in the areas of finance, student affairs, and academic affairs with regards to 4-year degree programs at community colleges.

The formative committee members included (a) the vice president of finance and administration for the Community College of Southern Nevada, (b) the interim vice chancellor for academic and student affairs of the UCCSN, and (c) two past presidents of community colleges within the system. Questions to assure relevancy of established standards for this project were developed by the researcher with assistance from the formative committee. These individuals were well versed in the workings of the system and familiar with the board of regents. When 4-year degree programs are implemented at

the community colleges in the UCCSN, these individuals will be the key players.

The summative committee consisted of members of the formative committee plus two members of the board of regents who were added to provide contrasting views and opinions regarding community colleges offering 4-year degree programs. The two regents posed questions that have not been asked previously and made substantial contributions to the final development of the blueprint. The summative committee reviewed the blueprint to assure relevancy and recommended the best ways for baccalaureate degrees to be established at community colleges within the system. The interview results were shared with members of the summative committee. The summative committee did not require that additional information be collected to add to the survey results. The researcher prepared a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation of the final blueprint for presentation to members of the ARSA Committee to solicit their recommendations for fine-tuning the blueprint for use within the UCCSN.

### *Discussion*

The purpose of this study was to develop a blueprint for use by community college leaders within the UCCSN who desire to extend the mission of their institutions by offering 4-year degree programs. Because of the growing demand for greater access to higher education and the increased costs of university attendance, expansion of the services of community colleges to include 4-year degree programs will be crucial to the status of higher education (AACC, 2003). Many postsecondary students leave high school underprepared for the world of work or for college attendance, and the nurturing and supportive environment of a community college can provide them with the training they need to further their education and to become productive citizens.

Early in the 20th century, national and local leaders realized that for the United States to compete globally, a skilled workforce was essential (AACC, 2003). This workforce will be made up not the societal elite but average citizens who can contribute to the prosperity of the nation by becoming skilled workers. America faces even stronger global competition in the early 21st century. Instead of creating a new layer of higher education, it seems wise to develop and expand the community colleges that already exist.

Reinventing the community college for the 21st century is very similar to what corporations do with human capital to remain relevant in the changing world (Walker, 2000). This brings to mind the transformation of the junior college to the community college. The mission of the community college is to serve the needs of the community. Although the concept of the community college baccalaureate degree has spread significantly over the past 10 years, there are still those who believe that such programs will cause what Romesburg (2000) called “mission blur” (p. 3) and should not be considered as a viable option for students. The researcher agrees with the findings of the literature review that 4-year degrees within the community college must be seriously considered to ensure the future of the nation’s citizens and higher education.

Rising costs of higher education force potential students to seek out the “better deal” for their education dollar. As universities seek research monies to fund their endeavors, the standards for student admission become more selective. Community colleges, most of which have open-door policies, are depended upon to provide extended academic services to all students who wish to pursue postsecondary education.

The first step that a community college must take before considering the

development of a 4-year degree program is to conduct a needs assessment. Shkodriani (2004) reported the example of Great Basin College, in Elko, Nevada, to show how the need for the community college baccalaureate degree was evident because of the extreme isolation of the community college. The nearest 4-year institution of higher education to Great Basin College was in another state. This meant that after completing their 2-year degrees at Great Basin College, students who wanted to enroll in 4-year degree programs had to transfer to colleges out of state or travel over 100 miles each way to attend classes at the closest university in the state of Nevada.

The offering of 4-year degrees at community colleges may pose some leadership complexities and staffing problems. To acknowledge and confront the uncertainty that change usually evokes, the entire college community should be encouraged to “buy into” any new program efforts.

Although academic transfer, workforce development, and lifelong learning remain the primary goals of the community college, Floyd et al. (2004) pointed out the need for a more comprehensive mission for community colleges based upon the changing needs of the communities they serve. Interview respondents who supported the development of 4-year degree programs at community colleges cautioned that the types of 4-year degree programs that should be offered by community colleges will vary from college to college, depending on needs of the individual communities in which the colleges are located. The concept of developing 4-year degree programs within community colleges in the UCCSN is a highly political topic. The need for and the expected impact of such programs must be fully studied. Once the need for a specific program has been established by qualified experts and supported by adequate research, the entire college community, from

administration to support staff, must be consulted to ensure the success of the implementation process. Aspects of implementation models that are based upon precedence may be helpful to administrators at community colleges who seek to establish 4-year degree programs, but the development process must be tailored exclusively to address the needs of the individual college and the community it serves.

This endeavor takes a tremendous amount of time, and extra time must be allotted to allow for setbacks. The addition of a 4-year degree program is not something that a community college should attempt in order to attract or increase enrollment; such programs must be research based, soundly formulated, and sustainable for years to come. In the case of Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada, as described by Shkodriani (2004), preparation for presentation of the proposed program to the board of regents took at least 5 years. Ways must be found to improve all areas at the community college that will be affected by the start-up of 4-year degree programs so that when the initiative actually happens, the groundwork will have already been laid, the campus community will feel little impact, and all stakeholders will be aware of the goals of the effort.

When considering political, organizational, and fiscal barriers that could arise while attempting this endeavor, leaders within the community college must become agents of change. If the leaders approach this endeavor from an inclusive, logical, and rational perspective, the fear and apprehension associated with change, as painful as it is for many, will be reduced. Excellent documentation and thorough planning are essential. If things work out as planned, the college will produce a 4-year degree program that fills a need within the system, and may, as a result of the ever-changing academic environment, need to repeat the process with additional 4-year degree programs in other

academic areas.

The political implications of this mission expansion will surely “ruffle a few political feathers,” but that is something for the college president to handle with his or her cabinet and superiors. Forums should be set up with appropriate college administrators to address any concerns of the board of regents or the chancellor. Misunderstandings about the intentions of the endeavor could bring about the demise of a community college president and/or other personnel within the administration of the college. The researcher believes that pursuit of a 4-year degree program should not be about campus or individual power; it should be about what is best for the students and the community at large.

Organizational barriers, as noted by interview respondents, can include those from faculty, students, and staff. Faculty may have issues regarding pay scale, academic credentialing, and the teaching environment, which includes the virtual classroom. Students may have concerns about food services and campus housing, which are part of student life. Many community colleges do not address “student life” as such because students are commuters who do not live on the campus. A community college that offers 4-year degree programs must make provisions for student life, such as on-campus dormitories.

Staff at the community college may have concerns about issues such as (a) increased workload involved with the processing of applications for admissions and the need for additional financial aid resources, (b) increased facility usage, and (c) adequate financial services. As noted by the interview respondents, all of these things must be taken into consideration with equal weight when considering the possibility of offering 4-year degree programs at a community college. If student support services are weak,



then before pursuing 4-year degree programs, administrators at the community college must improve those resources. Once a community college begins offering 4-year degree programs, it becomes, in essence, a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution. Therefore, students will expect more from campus resources, such as the library, and the institutional overall.

Fiscal barriers to be expected may include funding structure issues. An inadequate funding structure may be a serious barrier and should be treated as such. If the institution is underfunded, the development of a 4-year degree program may be impaired. The researcher believes that an attempt to expand the mission of a community college when the core functions are underfunded is not a fiscally sound practice. The researcher also believes that mission expansion should not be initiated by a community college simply as an enrollment management tool because of the significant student and accreditation issues involved.

The interview respondents pointed out that faculty at the community college will be concerned if faculty-to-student ratios are not adjusted to accommodate the 4-year degree program model. Faculty members who teach upper division courses should not be expected to carry the same course load as those who teach only lower division courses. This is a controversial topic that faculty leaders and college administrators must address as part of the organizational leadership plan for this type of endeavor.

Costs associated with offering 4-year degree programs include augmentation of services in every aspect of the college. Respondents were very clear about the areas that institutional leaders must focus on while assessing the community college's ability to offer 4-year degree programs. Considerations include different or more comprehensive

financial aid and the need to hire additional faculty with doctoral degrees and a dean or lead faculty member to oversee the program. Respondents indicated that improved library acquisitions will require a minimum of \$100,000 for program start-up.

Facility availability and operations and maintenance factors must be considered with regards to staffing and space. When students are on campus for a longer period of time, using the resources that 4-year students normally use, more work is created for the staff, and more wear and tear is placed on the institution's physical resources. Unless the majority of courses for the program will be offered online, serious consideration must be given to classroom space and availability. Additional recruitment efforts must be made to maintain student enrollment in the program. Decisions to offer high-quality baccalaureate program within a community college should be shared with outside entities, and students should be actively recruited to enroll in such programs because they are, indeed, more cost-effective and accessible for the average student.

Currently, 4-year degree programs are offered at a limited number of community colleges, but as unmet academic needs continue to grow in higher education, the need for such programs will increase. The American educational system is set up to reward research universities; therefore, universities are trying to improve their research status. Such is the case within the UCCSN. The focus on the baccalaureate degree is not in the forefront of the university's mission as it was in previous years, but baccalaureate degree holders are essential to many fields of employment; therefore, the demand continues to grow.

As with any institutional endeavor, needs assessments must be done to validate relevancy, and each institution must determine the success of its programs. Assessment

can be done by looking at job attainment of program graduates through academic affairs records, community input, or institutional research. Needs assessment is also part of the accreditation process. Colleges and universities are required to self-evaluate and recommend or propose change within the institution as part of the program review process.

Respondents in this study expressed that the best evaluation tools are interviews and surveys that are administered to students before the students begin a program and upon completion. Contact with employers is important to assure that their needs are being met with the education that graduates have obtained. This is imperative to assure long-term relevancy. This evaluation cycle should be included in the overall proposal for offering 4-year degrees within a community college. Because this type of endeavor can be highly political and is considered a mission change, significant research should be done on the success of similar programs that have been offered in other settings.

Respondents posed the additional concerns:

1. Distance education. Should the baccalaureate degree program be offered online only, be site based only, or be offered in both formats?
2. Location. For multicampus institutions, will the program be offered at all sites or just one site?
3. Establishing and maintaining high standards. Are mechanisms in place as part of the plan to do this?
4. Changes in mission and focus. Community college personnel who become involved with 4-year degree programs may possibly lose sight of the community college's original focus on student success as they shift their emphasis to academic

standards. How can this problem be identified and rectified?

Other factors that need to be considered are the availability of resources from both the public sector and private sector. Just as universities place emphasis on foundations, donors, and gift giving, so should community colleges that offer 4-year degree programs.

### *Conclusions*

The researcher met with the summative committee on two occasions. At the first meeting, the researcher presented and reviewed related literature. Some of the committee members added to the body of literature with articles and publications on the subject of 4-year degree programs at community colleges. The summative committee members concluded that the review of literature provided possible readers with the background necessary to understand the nature of the study.

At the second meeting, members of the summative committee who had firsthand experience with 4-year degrees at community colleges expressed that this study would add to the ever-increasing body of information available on the subject. The committee confirmed that the blueprint (see Appendix B) would indeed be useful for community colleges within UCCSN. It was noted, however, that it is important for institutions to make sure that information submitted to the board of regents be very well documented because board members are elected by the people of Nevada and are not necessarily academicians. Members of the committee noted that if the information submitted to the board includes much of the information suggested for use by this study, it would be hard to deny the need for such programs, without a compelling rationale. The feedback from the committee was informative, and members of the committee who are experts on the subject recommended to the researcher that she should share the results of this study with

the Community College Baccalaureate Degree Association and submit an article for publication in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

### *Implications*

If the blueprint that resulted from this study is implemented, it could save a community college significant time and money by providing all aspects to consider for this type of endeavor. Both the formative and summative committees agreed that 4-year degree programs at community colleges are needed as long as the institution can document a need for such programs. The committees also agreed that this type of endeavor could cause community college leaders to “spin their wheels” or hire very expensive consultants if a plan is not provided for what must be done to assure that the institution needs and is ready for 4-year degree programs.

A potential effect of this study was education of the campus community; the blueprint is a “thinking piece” that will make the various college constituencies aware of the endeavor. The committees strongly agreed that the institution must make sure that all stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input and data on the feasibility and cost of offering 4-year degree programs. Members of both committees believed the college community lacked information about this issue. Another recommendation made was that the system should address the issue of evaluation tools uniformly to assure continued relevancy and continuous evaluation of the community college’s ability to offer 4-year degree programs. Currently, no system-wide evaluation has been conducted on the impact of the community college baccalaureate within the UCCSN. The committee proposed a future study to capture and evaluate data from the community and from students, both of whom are the direct beneficiaries of programs offered by the

institutions.

The development of a blueprint for community colleges within the UCCSN to use as a guide for assessment and preparation of a plan to offer 4-year degrees is something both committees agreed would be an asset to the process currently used by community colleges in the system. However there was conversation between committee members at the system level about whether or not some of the colleges within the system would look at this blueprint as another political barrier being created to thwart efforts to initiate community college baccalaureate degrees. The eventual conclusion to the discussion was that with proper presentation, the institutions would see that the blueprint would save them time and money. Former presidents on the committee commended the researcher for implementing what could have been considered a political study in a way that did not alienate anyone who did not agree with the concept. One of the committee members, who had been the first community college president to address this matter within the UCCSN, stated that he wished such a tool had been available some 20 years ago when he started talking about this to the board.

### *Recommendations*

The results of this study can benefit the UCCSN community colleges by giving the leadership a blueprint to assist in the development of proposals for 4-year degree programs for submission to the board of regents. It can also be made available for community colleges outside the state of Nevada that are considering taking on 4-year degree programs. This blueprint can give institutional leaders a comprehensive checklist of the elements that need to be addressed while assessing the need for such programs and whether or not the institution can afford to pursue this type of endeavor.

The next step should include a trial run of the blueprint document at a community college, such as Great Basin College in Elko, Nevada, that has successfully implemented 4-year degree programs. What Great Basin College spent 20 years and a large amount of money documenting, submitting, and resubmitting to the board could now be shared in a more palatable format (i.e., a blueprint that could be used by other community college administrators for the development of 4-year degree programs). As recommended by members of the summative and formative committees, this blueprint could also be shared with members of the Community College Baccalaureate Degree Association to solicit their comments and feedback. The committees also recommended that the researcher publish the results of this study in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

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Appendix A  
Interview Questions

Please answer the following questions with UCCSN in mind. Feel free to reference outside examples as well.

1. How many years have you been employed in (or associated with) higher education?

In what capacity (check all that apply) and for how long?

- Vice president or above \_\_\_\_\_
- Faculty \_\_\_\_\_
- Administrative faculty \_\_\_\_\_
- Staff \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. How much of your higher education experience is with a community college?
3. Have you been employed in any other sectors of higher education (4 year, etc.)
4. If you have never worked in a higher education setting, how long have you been associated with higher education and in what capacity?
5. As a president (or regent), what do you see as the mission of community colleges as it relates to baccalaureate degree programs?

Dr. Kerry Romesburg, former president of Utah Valley State College, questioned whether it was “brilliance or mission blur.” What do you think?

6. What should be the driving factors for consideration of baccalaureate degrees at community colleges?
7. What formal mechanisms should be used to determine what types of 4-year degree programs should be offered?
8. What political barriers should a president (or regent) expect? How do you overcome those barriers?
9. What organizational barriers should a president expect? How do you overcome those barriers?
10. What fiscal barriers are to be expected? (finance question)
11. What costs are associated with offering 4-year degrees at community colleges within UCCSN?

12. What academic affairs considerations must be made when considering 4-year degree programs for community colleges?
13. What student affairs considerations must be made when considering 4-year degree programs for community colleges?
14. How does an institution determine the relevancy of the baccalaureate degree programs, and how do you measure success?
15. What evaluation tools are necessary parts of the process?
16. What other factors should be taken into account when considering 4-year degree programs for a community college?

Appendix B

Outline of the Blueprint for Development of 4-Year Degree Programs

### *Introduction*

This presentation provides an institutional checklist for community colleges within the UCCSN that wish to develop 4-year degree programs.

### *Topics of Discussion*

Considerations for the various constituencies within the college will be outlined so as to assure a complete understand of the scope of this endeavor.

### *Needs Assessment*

The leadership within the community college must first meet with college constituencies to address the issue of need for baccalaureate degree:

- Senior administration
- Faculty
- Academic affairs
- Student affairs
- Finance
- Administration
- Community members to be affected by proposed programs
- Students

### *Research*

Research must be done and experts must be consulted on the actual community need and/or demand for the proposed endeavor.

- Have experts provide written results.
- Take those results back to college constituencies.
- Reevaluate the need for the program(s) to determine if the perceived need/demand indeed exists.
- Bring entities within the college at all levels together to discuss implications of having a 4-year degree program. Management is not always aware of every operational aspect of the college.

### *Institutional Issues*

Once need and demand has been established, the institution must evaluate its ability to carry such programs by

- Evaluating the availability of qualified faculty
- Fiscal ability to afford/manage the program (e.g., increased workload of faculty)

Availability of facilities and equipment (maintenance, etc.)  
Student affairs issues such as admission process, student life, living facilities (if location bound), financial aid resources, counseling resources, etc.  
Required library acquisitions  
More defined recruitment efforts  
Education within the organization of the accreditation requirements for substantive change  
Establish timeline that is feasible and politically correct  
All of the above should occur before submission of a proposal to the board of regents.

*Questions/Comments*