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THE REGIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS

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THE REGIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES: A
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A COMPANION DISSERTATION
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
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By
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Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

THE REGIONAL ACCREDITATION PROCESS AT COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
A CASE STUDY OF EFFECTIVENESS

This companion dissertation reports the findings of applied case study research on four community college organizational units that consistently meet or exceed standard performance measures. In addition, prior ample evidence confirms that performance extended significantly beyond what might be explained by available tangible resources alone. The case study contexts are common in higher education in general: a) an external partnership, (b) an ad hoc team, (c) a traditional, cross-divisional service unit, and (d) a grant-funded student service unit.

Emerging positive organizational theory and research shows promise for revealing performance-influencing phenomena and behaviors that are not adequately represented in standard measures. Therefore, this collaborative case study research was designed to explore positive influences on the success of the four community college units.

This companion dissertation consists of three manuscripts. Chapter 2, a technical report, contains the collaboratively-written synthesis of findings from the four individual case studies. Key findings across the units suggest the influence on performance of: (a) a people-first culture, (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership, and (c) resource richness beyond constrained tangible resources.

In Chapter 3, the researcher presents the key findings of the individual case study that looks at the success of an ad hoc committee formed to guide their institution through the accreditation process. The findings of this study emphasize the important role that leadership plays in the team's success.

In Chapter 4, the researcher shares lessons learned throughout the research process and by walking through her leadership journey from reluctant to authentic leader.

KEYWORDS: Accreditation, Community College, Teams, Leadership, Leadership Development

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the late Jimmie and Alice Torain who showed me such great love and support by sacrificing so much for me. I never would have made it without you!

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change. To everyone who willingly participated in the study, I owe you a great deal of gratitude. I have learned so much from you, and now, many others will too.

I am fortunate to be a part of a large family who supported me every step of the way. Thank you to my sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins who inquired about my progress and sent encouraging text messages and made encouraging phone calls. That really meant a great deal to me.

To my Hopkinsville Community College and All Nations House of Prayer family, many times you stopped me in the hallway to encourage me. Thank You!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation is a collaborative effort between four community college practitioners who partnered together to look at community college organizational functioning from a positive perspective. The four of us were participants in a pilot cohort EdD Program through the University of Kentucky developed as a part of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). This project is a national effort aimed at making the education doctorate, the EdD, a more relevant degree by preparing community college leaders to meet the challenges of educational leadership in the 21st century.

Chapter 2 is a technical report entitled The Dynamics of Abundance: Exceptional Performance in Four Community College Units and consists of the analysis from the four researchers who collaborated to study the same topic in varying successful community college units. By looking at how each unit performed, we hoped to add to research that begins with a grounded theory named the Community College Abundance Model which is influenced by positive psychology and suggests that we should look at strengths in conjunction with the problems or challenges we face.

My team members included Susan Berry, Lewis Burke, and Michael Stapleton. Each of us selected a unit that was familiar, successful, and that really served as a model for others. Our units varied like our interests vary, but the area of consistency was the quality of the units we chose to study. Susan Berry studied a grant-supported student service unit. Lewis Burke Jr. studied an external partnership unit and Michael Stapleton studied a college-wide service unit.

Chapter 3 is my own research entitled Delivering Reaffirmation: Positive Leadership, Resources, and Excellence in a Community College Accreditation Team. I studied a community college ad hoc committee that was established specifically for the purpose of guiding the institution through the accreditation process. This ad hoc committee was known as the Accreditation Preparation Team, and I was particularly interested in the factors that affected their success. While three themes emerged from the study, they all revolved around the necessity of effective leadership. Analysis of the data revealed that the leader's abilities and behaviors positively affected the team's performance.

Chapter 4 is a personal qualitative reflection of my leadership journey since my tenure with the community college system at which I have been employed for 21 years and where I have held several mid and upper level administrative positions. After attending a few leadership development programs, I felt knowledgeable about concepts and theories, but a piece of the puzzle was still missing until my introduction to strengths based leadership and leadership development. In this manuscript, I reveal how the positive approach to leadership, more specifically, authentic leadership changed the way I see myself as a community college practitioner and altered my leadership approach.

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Chapter 2

The Dynamics of Abundance: Exceptional Performance
in Four Community College Units

Susan T. Berry; Lewis Howard Burke, Jr.; R. Michael Stapleton; Alissa L. Young

Executive Summary

In this technical report, the authors synthesize findings from four case studies of factors that influence exceptional performance of community college organizational units. The authors show how the units achieved their successes despite resource constraints, external circumstances, and extreme internal pressures. These units demonstrate that constraints need not hinder achievement of excellence.

Community colleges are responsible to their stakeholders for multiple missions (Dougherty, 1994) as well as for meeting performance and accreditation targets. Economic pressures and significant shifts in students' expectations have created simultaneous conditions of constraint and opportunity. Traditional approaches to performance enhancement have become insufficient to meet current constraints and to adapt to shifts in stakeholder expectations. Thus, colleges must adopt new approaches and ways of thinking in order to develop the capacity to thrive in a shifting, uncertain environment (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, & Strickland, 2009).

The cases, selected from four community colleges, represent four types of functional organization: (a) a partnership with an external entity; (b) an ad hoc team; (c) a grant-funded student service unit; and (d) a traditional service unit that crosses divisional boundaries. Data was collected from all four cases using similar methods of collection and a common interview protocol. A constant comparison method of analysis

was used within and between the individual cases to identify common and contrasting findings across the four units.

Key Findings

Analysis of findings from the units revealed numerous positive organizational dynamics that influenced exceptional performance. We assigned these dynamics to three broad themes or categories: culture, leadership, and resources. The ability of each unit to perform well depended on: (a) a people-first culture, (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership, and (c) resource richness. Unit leaders and members fostered these positive dynamics by thinking differently about culture, leadership, and resources. As a unifying influence, unit members shared a compelling vision of the future from which they derived purpose, motivation, and meaning. Unit leaders and members translated these positive dynamics into actions and behaviors through informal mission statements embodied in audacious goals. We summarize these findings in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 2.1

Positive Organizational Dynamics That Influence Exceptional Unit-Level Performance

Theme	Organizational Dynamic
	Units are characterized by a culture that values people as people.
People-first culture	Unit directors and supervisors follow traditional methods of authority, but also introduce and foster a people-first mindset.
	Unit members described a sense of professional community and trust, extending in some cases to a personal, or "extended family" level.
	Leaders are found at all levels of the unit.
	Leaders articulate the formal mission in terms of audacious goals, and the resulting informal mission becomes a strong motivation among unit members.
Authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership	Unit members share a clear vision that transcends the formal mission.
	Unit members expressed a sense of higher purpose.
	The units' formal leaders and members seemed to understand these things implicitly through experience rather than deriving them from formal professional development.
	Units demonstrated a capacity to build synergistic relationships that allow them to amplify their efforts and make more resources available to the unit.
Rich resources	Unit members did not allow resource constraints to be the "ceiling" of ability to perform. Instead, they actively identified and developed their intangible resources.
	The capacity to develop all available resources served as a lever that amplified performance and attracted new resources and people.

Recommendations

We compared and contrasted these themes across the four cases to develop a

picture of organizational functioning that can be extended to other community college

units. We found unit excellence to depend on broad views of culture, leadership, and
resources that move beyond simple cause-and-effect calculations typically used in unit
evaluation and assessment. Our highly-contextual findings cannot be condensed into a
step-by-step manual for excellence. However, the following suggestions may help
community college practitioners learn to broaden views and build capacity in their own
contexts.

- Superior performance requires more than hard work—it also requires the ability to build capacity.

- Whether plentiful or not, tangible resources can charm attention away from capacity-building ways of thinking required to produce excellence.

- Intangible resources—culture, leadership, and ability to build capacity—are required to achieve aspirations of excellence.

- Patience is required because ways of thinking and perceiving can take time to change.

- People are much more than units of functional output. Valuing people as people creates supportive contexts for excellence.

Introduction

Higher education is in a people business. It is unique in that we develop longstanding relationships not only with the stakeholders who fund us, study us, or employ our students, but also with the students themselves. We spend vast resources trying to determine the best way to move students through the pipeline so they emerge educated and employable. Rarely do we study our own organizational dynamics (Bastedo, 2012). When we do, we often concentrate on our plans and deficits, and how we will find the money to meet our goals. As Caza and Caza (2008) assert, most research in organizational studies concentrates on solving problems. We report our performance to our stakeholders according to parameters they define. These measures do not effectively capture the range of organizational dynamics that affect performance (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003a).

In contrast, this research study was designed to understand the organizational dynamics of community college units that have performed with excellence that in some cases was unexpected, given the circumstances. The study offers an alternative to a prevalent view of resources that makes superior performance contingent on greater amounts of tangible resources. Consistent with emerging research into organizational and individual dynamics, this study shows that the most powerful drivers of performance are ways of thinking that build organizational capacity and allow for unexpectedly excellent performance despite constraints. To understand this, we analyzed the findings from four case studies on successful community college organizational units to learn how some of our most productive entities have achieved extraordinary levels of functioning and performance.

Our positive research perspective draws from positive psychology research (Peterson, 2006) and its extension to the workplace (Alfred et al., 2009; Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003b; Luthans, 2002a; Luthans & Avolio, 2009; Luthans & Youssef, 2007). These are discussed throughout this report. We engaged this positive perspective to understand the performance of four successful community college units. Our goal was to identify influences shown in the positive organizational literature to contribute to above-average performance. Each member of this research team chose a community college organizational unit (a) that has performed well (or above average) using standard measures of performance and (b) for which significant aspects of the unit's successful performance are not adequately represented by standard measures nor easily attributed solely to levels of tangible resources.

Analysis of these four cases reveals how tapping readily-available, but often-underutilized, resources can influence overall performance and even attract additional tangible resources to a unit. It shows how these units achieved their success through the ability to amplify existing resources beyond expectations. Examples of resources in these cases include recognizing the leadership capacity of all members of a unit; the importance of sustaining a simple, shared vision that transcends the formal mission of the unit; and maintaining a positive organizational environment in which people come first.

This research builds on a study by Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, and Strickland (2009) who interviewed community college presidents to better understand and account for college performance. They found the primary determinant of excellence to be the amplification of resources through *leveraging*. That is, high-performing community colleges have the ability to identify and optimally deploy all available resources. This

ability rests on a central commitment of formal leaders to "building the strategic capabilities in staff" (p. 252) that fosters a capacity to "work differently" (p. 252).

Alfred et al. (2009) conducted their research at the institutional level through the perspective of senior leadership. Their research yielded the Community College Abundance Model (CCAM) that ranks a college's capacity to achieve abundance, as defined above. They also observed that community college leaders might be easily tempted, when confronted with a barrage of constraints and accountability requirements, to focus on growth and efficiency to meet performance goals. However, they conclude, "Working harder and faster will not get your college to abundance, but investing in people and working differently will" (p. 252).

Existing research on positive organizational functioning in community colleges stops short of explaining exceptional outcomes at the unit level or describing the dynamics that influence excellence. However, the work of community colleges is performed in organizational units collaborating within the institution and with external partners. Thus, our research emerges from an interest in investigating how the CCAM findings apply at the level of the organizational unit—where the actual work of a college takes place.

Based on their findings, Alfred et al. (2009) hold that building the capacity to amplify resources and to work differently requires community colleges, leaders, and staff to "think differently" (p. 252) about four aspects of the organization: performance, resources, the organization itself, and leadership. Our study of each of the cases selected examined the intentional capacity-building achieved in the units in each of the four aspects.

Thinking differently about performance means more than working harder or more efficiently—although those things are essential. In what ways do these community college units enhance performance beyond efficient effort?

Thinking differently about resources means recognizing intangibles as the means by which efforts can be amplified as an organization moves toward purpose-defined outcomes that exceed expectations. Intangibles include valuable traits, knowledge, and behaviors that are not easily measured (e.g., resilience that enables a student to persist and graduate in the midst of a personal crisis). In what ways do these community college units value and build upon intangible resources?

Thinking differently about the organization means living out the belief that people come first. In what ways do these community college units develop relationships, rather than interchangeable parts, and recognize the efforts of many leaders who are empowered with autonomy and support?

Thinking differently about leadership means understanding that there are many leaders in a high-performing organization. Formal and informal leaders with positive characteristics need to be present and, if not, developed and enhanced in those with the decision-making responsibility. In what ways do these community college units control personal resources—ways of thinking and being—that can be changed and developed? These resources are attributes and traits that can contribute to unit-level excellence as easily as they hinder or are merely neutral.

In addition, emerging streams of positive organizational theory and research have shown promise for focusing on what is best about organizations and individuals. These include positive organizational scholarship, positive organizational behavior, and positive

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psychology. The positive research orientation presents opportunities to think differently

about organizational performance. It augments familiar approaches by expanding the

range of desirable outcomes and success indicators to include behaviors and

characteristics that foster individual and organizational flourishing (Cameron et al.,

2003a; Caza & Caza, 2008) as well as psychological capacities that influence individual

and organizational outcomes.

These emerging streams of theory and research reveal new ways of thinking about

individual and organizational performance. Scholars and researchers in these areas

deliberately adopt a positive framework for understanding success in organizations.

Through a focus on phenomena and behaviors that promote flourishing and vitality in the

workplace, researchers have begun to discover correspondence between positive

organizational scholarship (Cameron et al., 2003b), positive organizational behavior

(Luthans, 2002a, 2002b), positive psychology (Peterson, 2006; Seligman &

Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), and appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005;

Watkins & Mohr, 2001).

Thus, in exploring the exemplary performance of the units described here, we applied the
concepts of positive organizational theory to create a lens through which to investigate
successful organizational functioning. In this research report, we consider three areas of
focus in the positive literature: positive leadership, perspectives on resource development
that build organizational capacity through resource amplification, and the presence or
enhancement of psychological capital. Collectively, these are shown to promote
phenomena and conditions that (a) enable individuals to be at their best (Cameron et al.,
2003a; Peterson, 2006), (b) buffer the effects of trauma and uncertainty (Cameron &
Caza, 2004; Weick, 2003), and (c) create workplaces in which people are valued as
people and all available resources are maximized (Alfred et al., 2009).

Background of the Study

During our coursework and within our professional roles, our research team was

aware of one such positive framework for examining institutional performance—

appreciative inquiry (AI). During our doctoral coursework, as members of different research teams, we conducted pilot studies using protocols informed by AI. In addition, as employees of KCTCS, we knew that AI had been integrated to frame ongoing strategic planning cycle discussions in positive ways. AI was also being introduced throughout the colleges as a supportive framework for numerous, significant initiatives planned for the coming years. Thus, when as a team of doctoral candidates we began to design the four case studies that are the subjects of this multiple-case analysis, we decided that an appreciative approach would be a good fit for our own positive research orientation.

A second influence was our experience of the implementation of AI across our colleges and system-office. Four-day workshops, designed around an AI approach to organizational development (Watkins & Mohr, 2001), were held with the intent to produce two certified AI trainers from each college. These would return to their home colleges, train others, and apply appreciative practices college-wide. Appreciative inquiry was thus intended to become the foundation of an organizational culture that would sustain significant, coming organizational changes. Although the training raised awareness of positive approaches to change, cultural changes have not trickled down as hoped—or at least not as quickly as hoped. For the most part, colleges that did not already have an appreciative culture have not changed much. Instead, traditional, discrete accountability measures still seem to have the strongest influence on planning and processes.

All participants in the trainings received Watkins and Mohr's (2001) *Appreciative Inquiry: Change at the Speed of Imagination* as a suggested framework for developing

the Transformation Initiatives mentioned. The authors list six freedoms or essential

conditions of AI that echo the positive organizational literature:

1. Freedom to be known as a human being rather than merely for the role performed;

2. Freedom to be heard and not ignored—to voice information, ideas, and innovations;

3. Freedom to dream in community and at all levels in the organization, creating organizations as safe places where large, diverse groups can dream together;

4. Freedom to choose to contribute—an act that liberates power and leads to commitment and a hunger for learning;

5. Freedom to act with support in a climate of positive interdependence, thus feeling safe to experiment, innovate, and learn;

6. Freedom to be positive, to have fun, and to be happy—conditions that are not often the norm.

According to Watkins and Mohr (2001), when these six AI conditions are present, they create a self-perpetuating momentum for positive change. This individual and organizational momentum bears a resemblance to the positive, self-reinforcing *spirals of flourishing* that result from organizational virtuousness (Cameron, Bright, & Caza, 2004; Fredrickson & Losada, 2005; Froman, 2010).

Research Questions

Our interest in the positive, people-focused aims of AI provided an excellent

foundation for our curiosity about the positive research orientation. In addition, our

experience of the AI trainings within our own workplaces led us to wonder about

organizational units that were already performing at very high levels—before they

received the training. To inform the research described in this chapter, we settled on a

conceptual lens similar to AI, but more broad in scope. We draw from multiple related

positive organizational literatures, described earlier, that focus on positive phenomena,

behaviors, and traits in the workplace.

Accordingly, we were interested in how positive influences in the organizational units support extraordinary success. Our research team designed each of the studies to have a positive research orientation, similar research questions, and virtually-identical protocols. As a result, we asked questions of the case study findings from a shared positive research perspective. For example, what happens when an organizational unit leader prioritizes the development of unit members' psychological capital? How are bold, shared visions of desired unit outcomes related to performance? How do unit leaders influence unit culture? To what do members of successful units attribute their success? Do members of these units value people and intangible resources above tangible resources? If so, how are these values shaped, communicated, and perpetuated? What influences do positive organizational behaviors and psychological capital have on culture and performance in the unit? How do successful units acquire the capacity to perform exceptionally? Are successful units solely dependent on tangible resources, or are other influences at work? In successful units, how are positive behaviors and traits developed and nurtured? In what ways do these affect the performance?

To frame this multiple-case analysis and to connect it to emerging research on positive workplaces, we asked the following research questions:

- What positive organizational dynamics are found in the case studies chosen for this analysis?

- How do these dynamics influence unit performance?

- What outcomes, capabilities, and characteristics do unit members value that are not typically considered as performance measures?

- How is leadership perceived and practiced in the units?

- How are resources identified, prioritized, developed, and deployed? Which resources are valued the most?

- How do perspectives toward the recognition and use of intangible resources influence performance?

- How does psychological capital, or any of its four components, contribute to the successful functioning of these units?

Methods

During our team discussions about our research design, we decided to concentrate on functional or organizational units. Several reasons informed this choice. Small organizational entities seemed a narrow enough focus to be compatible with our research

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timeframe. More importantly, understanding team and group functioning is important because the everyday work of community colleges is performed in these contexts. However, we found that most positive-oriented research had been conducted at either the individual or the institutional level (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Few studies existed in the private sector, and the positive literature is virtually silent on higher education groups and teams.

In addition to timeframe and importance of group-level functioning, our decisions were influenced by contextual factors. Each member of our research team works in a community college, and personal and professional knowledge informed each member's ability to choose organizational units that have already been recognized as successful. To support the group research component of our study, we adopted a common research protocol the four individual case studies (Appendix A). Additional prompts were used to elicit information about interviewees' perceptions about positive dynamics such as vision, relationships, trust, leader expectations, and behaviors.

We chose units of different kinds, one for each researcher, judging that the differences could provide a broader data set out of which to synthesize findings across the four cases. The four units represent common organizational structures within community colleges and in higher education generally, potentially extending the applicability of our findings beyond the boundaries of the four individual case studies and the cross-case analysis reported here. We continued to discover the full value of choosing four separate cases at the unit level as this analysis progressed.

We chose case study method for the individual research studies because it is useful for answering questions of how and why when observing a "contemporary set of

events, over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). A unit of analysis, or case, can be an "individual, program, event, group, intervention, or community" (Merriam, 1998, p. 19). Case study theorists agree that *boundedness* is a distinguishing characteristic of a case (Merriam, 1998). Boundedness denotes a clear idea about what is included in the case and what is not. We defined the bounds of each case analyzed for this report by limiting the number of participants interviewed and by restricting the data collection period.

To increase the validity, quality, and trustworthiness of the analysis, we used accepted qualitative research methods. The data collected for the individual studies primarily included participant data supported by documents and on-site observations. In addition to multiple data sources, our team engaged multiple reviewers and member checking (Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2009). For example, as data was gathered from the individual cases, we continuously discussed the findings to discern themes, account for unexpected findings, and consider rival explanations. The discussions continued during the development of the individual case analyses and throughout the analysis of the four cases together.

The diversity of our research team strengthened the collaborative analysis. Our varied strengths, professional experiences, life stories, roles as community college employees, and interests in our cases assured varying perspectives. The balance and insights in the conclusions reflect our diversity. In addition, our diversity and familiarity with community college functioning informed our thinking as we operationalized our findings into realistic implications and recommendations.

Tour of the Individual Case Sites

The units contributing to the case studies described below belong to four different colleges in the same 16-college state community college system. While governed by the same state and system-wide regulations, each college maintains individual accreditation and status as an independent college. The investigative team chose these community college units based on two criteria: (a) the unit performs well or above average relative to standard measures of performance and (b) the unit appears to demonstrate additional performance criteria that include positive workplace dynamics and desirable organizational outcomes consistent with this study's positive conceptual framework.

External partnership unit. The first unit studied exists as the result of a partnership between a secondary public school system and a local community college. The secondary school system has a district wide enrollment of over 100,000 students. Its post-secondary partner, a two-year public college located in the same urban community, enrolls upwards of 15,000 students per semester. The purpose of the partnership is to promote the transition of adult education students into community college by improving mathematics, reading, and writing for students whose college placement scores fall below the minimum requirements.

This unit was chosen for study because of its national recognition as a model partnership. A national report funded by the US Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education highlighted the collaborative approach of this program as a national model of practices to help improve participation and persistence in adult education (Tolbert, 2005). The authors noted, "Partnerships and leveraged resources also have helped programs expand their services and address the needs of specific

populations" (Tolbert, 2005, p. 9). Alfred et al. (2009) identify external partnerships as capacity-building levers that amplify tangible resources and lead to improved performance.

Ad hoc committee. The second unit chosen for study was an accreditation preparation team located at a rural, public two-year degree granting institution that serves approximately 7,500 students. This ad hoc team, established for a specific amount of time, was tasked with preparing the institution to complete the accreditation process that includes conducting a self-study of the institution to ensure compliance with the accreditation organization's principles.

This unit was chosen because the evaluation of their accreditation report yielded zero recommendations for improving this institution. This was one of the first institutions within the state community college system to complete the reaffirmation process with no recommendations for improvement. Given the enormity and complexity of the reaffirmation process, having received no recommendations for improvement distinguishes this ad hoc team as a high-performing unit. Additional reasons for choosing this unit include the investigator's knowledge of and experience with the accreditation process having served on accreditation review teams and her acquaintance with members of the chosen unit.

College-wide service unit. The third unit chosen for study, a community college library, serves one of the larger community colleges in the state system. The service area includes six campuses and enrolls approximately 12,000 students each semester representing over 100 counties. The library chosen for study resides in the main academic building of the primary college campus. This location is in close proximity to

classrooms, administrative and student services offices, and student commons. As many as 1,800 students visit the library on peak days. As a result, many faculty and administrators describe it as the largest classroom on campus.

This library was chosen because it consistently accomplishes its mission and goals related to serving students, faculty, and staff as rated by its constituent groups in annual satisfaction surveys. Library surveys and college exit surveys indicate similar high levels of satisfaction with library services across a wide range of services (Stapleton, 2013). In addition, the professional role over several years has acquainted the researcher with the personnel and the environment, observing many of the phenomena, behaviors, and traits that are the subjects of research in the positive literature.

Grant-supported student service unit. The fourth unit chosen for study is funded by a federal Student Support Services (SSS) or "TRIO" grant. It serves a mid-sized community college with a large rural service area including a military installation. The unit assists low-income, first-generation college students and students with disabilities to progress through the academic pipeline during their undergraduate study. The unit provides a small number of qualifying students with services similar to those offered to the general student population, such as academic advising and tutoring. Unlike the campus-wide services, this unit provides its student population with a single physical environment for study, socializing, and academic assistance. This unit was selected because it has consistently ranked within the top 10% of similar programs nation-wide, enabling it to receive continuing grant funding for twelve years. Similar to national and longitudinal measures of persistence, retention, and graduation, the SSS participants in this unit are more likely to: (a) remain enrolled in higher education, (b) accrue more

college credits, and (c) earn higher grade point averages when compared to similarly qualified students who do not participate in the program (Chaney, Muraskin, Calahan, & Rak, 1997). The investigator chose this unit because it met the research design requirements and because the investigator, through familiarity with the unit, identified exceptional performance not revealed by performance evaluation. In addition, the investigator understands the purposes and functions of SSS and the demands of meeting grant performance standards for continued funding eligibility.

Exploration of Four Cases

The four members of the research team communicated with each other during the collection and analysis phase of their individual case studies. As preliminary data analysis proceeded, the team members used the findings derived from the individual case studies and through conversations, reviews of each other's writings, and brainstorming sessions proceeded to shape an overarching analysis. Approaches included comparing findings and developing themes, rearranging the themes in different configurations, and finding contrasts between the unit themes and characteristics. As the analysis deepened, members of the research team found connections that distinguish this study's findings from studies conducted on larger organizations such as entire community colleges.

We discovered that the unit level reaches into resources often invisible to or ignored by leaders at higher levels of functioning and thus can increase performance capacity in unexpected ways. The variety of units provided us some common ground across units and revealed that some practices often thought to influence success, had little bearing on our units' success and yet other practices and attitudes often identified as neutral or unimportant had a huge effect on successful performance. The diversity of

units who function in community colleges and higher education institutions in general are almost limitless so providing a small snapshot of that diversity proved valuable to this study and future research.

We proposed that discussion and review of each other's findings would reduce potential negative impacts of researcher bias or assumptions. In addition, collective analysis was broadened and deepened as we—who are community college employees ourselves—shared development of findings. In addition, we considered how our current roles and areas of responsibility as community college employees might influence the analysis of the findings. We each addressed this concern by using triangulation through interviews, observations, and documents.

Findings and Discussion

Review of the case findings shows three significant areas that influence the success of these units: (a) a culture showing commitment to a unified vision that enhances each member's sense of purpose and appreciates his or her contributions, (b) leadership traits and behaviors including trust-building that enhance and build upon a cohesive culture, and (c) leaders who value and enhance resources including intangible resources.

Although these are major themes from our units, they are not discrete categories. In our units that function successfully, they occur in intricate combinations. For example, culture influences personnel behaviors. Concurrently, leaders and unit members influence the culture through their actions, thereby effecting constant—although mostly minute—shifts in the culture. All unit members, regardless of formal or informal leadership role, learn, think, and grow continuously, thereby affecting how they influence

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everyone around them. In addition, as leaders receive feedback from the effects of how they use resources, they learn that some things work better than others do in the unit. This learning suggests new ways to leverage what they have.

People-First Culture

Bolman and Deal (2003) observe that "some people argue that organizations *have* cultures; others insist that organizations *are* cultures" (p. 243). Behaviors provide clues about the essential natures of cultures. The participants in the four units spoke at length about their behaviors and perceptions. These provided the researchers with clues about the reciprocal influences of behaviors and context. The participants' actions and characteristics formed the cultures of their units, and the unit cultures influenced the participants. The members themselves are not cultures but rather *have* cultures both as culture-builders and as recipients of unit-level culture. Thus, we argue that the essential question about our units' cultures is not what they *are* but what the members *do,* or "the way we do things around here" (1982, p. 4).

Central to our findings in all four units was leadership as a leadership disposition or "organizational state and a mind-set" (Shults, 2008, p. 148) that regards people as the units' most valuable resource. This disposition results in behaviors that treat people *as people* rather than as functional units for performing job descriptions. This disposition is an intangible resource that enables behaviors and capacities that in turn become levers for resource amplification and improved performance (Alfred et al., 2009). The members' behaviors also create a feedback loop that strengthens member commitment to the units' values and reinforces positive behaviors. In consequence, the units may be described as *enabling workplaces* (Peterson, 2006; Peterson & Park, 2006).

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In each unit, the members were committed to a unified vision and reported that this shared vision provided them with a sense of purpose. In addition to collective vision and individual purpose, participants described a sense of accountability. The influences of vision, purpose, and accountability interactively influenced participants' determination to achieve the vision and fulfill individual purpose.

Despite many similarities in their ability to achieve high performance, study participants in the four units described their cultures differently. This is not surprising, because a unit's culture is, among other things, an expression of its purpose and mission. Members of the adult education unit cited trust and collaboration as significant parts of their culture, whereas the accreditation team described a culture of excellence. Library personnel exhibited pride in their unit's service and professionalism, whereas student services personnel emphasized commitment to students first. In the adult education external partnership, the importance of sustaining a committed culture based on relationships and trust was particularly interesting. Working together to develop an entirely new model of adult and college developmental education, the leaders of each "side" of the partnership created an innovative design that transformed a culture of competition into a culture of collaboration. These leaders continued their commitment through purposeful engagement and kept their personal commitments for ten years, renewing that commitment annually.

In each unit, unit members who deal directly with students emphasized the importance of relationships within the unit including a culture of care and support. For example, relationships among library staff helped them deal with sudden death of staff family members, and the grant unit's welcoming atmosphere influenced student success

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and employee satisfaction. This welcoming atmosphere was the result of a legacy, honored and sustained during the transition from the first unit director and passed down to the next leader, finally evolving into a legacy that she expanded to include students. As with the centerpiece of trust and purposeful engagement found in the adult education culture, the focus of autonomy and support exists among all of our units, even if not described as such.

The accreditation team and the college it represents demonstrated two cultural distinctives: (a) a culture of excellence and (b) a culture of evidence. In other words, superior performance was expected, and decisions were informed with evidence. A team member reported that the "use of gathering and monitoring data is not episodic. It is part of the culture." Another team member said, "I don't know if it was said, but the expectation was always understood in my mind that we would get no recommendations [for change]." This was an essential goal of the team's charge because no recommendations implied no corrective action and thus represented the team's shared aims for excellence.

Like most organizational units, each unit in this study has a formal mission that is determined for them. Sometimes the mission reflects that of the college, as in the case of the reaccreditation committee and the library. The accreditation team reflects the college culture of nothing short of excellence and the library's reflects it longstanding director's influence. State statute defines the mission of the adult education unit, and federal guidelines define the grant unit's mission.

Yet each unit also developed an informal mission or set of internal guidelines that define the actual behaviors from day to day that have become an integral part of its

culture. Library staff members "serve students" and "take care of each other." The grant

unit personnel similarly take care of "students first and then each other" and exhort

students with this directive: "If you succeed, we succeed." The adult education

collaborators dedicated themselves to purposeful engagement taking an active part in

meetings that chronicled the progress of the collaboration. The accreditation team strove

for excellence through preparedness and developing the expertise of its members.

Each unit developed a set of internal guidelines that defined the actual behaviors

from day to day. For example, the informal mission of the library staff is, "We do

whatever it takes to get students what they need," even if the assistance is not specifically

library-related. They also function as an "extended family" that "takes care of each

other." Similarly, the grant unit staff's informal mission has become part of who they are

what they do in addition influence students to adopt their positive behaviors. The adult

education collaborators dedicated themselves to purposeful engagement. That is, they

actively participated in meetings that chronicled the progress of the collaboration, and

they worked to ensure that staff in each partner organization shared the leaders' common

vision. The accreditation team—guided by the college president's active mentoring,

example, and high expectations—strove for excellence through developing the expertise

of its members and by careful preparation.

Data across all four cases suggests the motivation for performing above minimum

expectations comes from focusing on a vision. For example, the grant unit envisions

every student who is willing to work as graduating. The adult education unit, as a

national model, sees itself influencing the success of adult students throughout the nation

through constant renewal and improvement of this model program. The accreditation

committee sees itself contributing to the prestige and effectiveness of a community college nationally recognized for its excellence. Library staff members shared that "knowing we make a difference in the success of our students" motivates them to serve at all costs. The formal mission is important to the formal unit leaders but for unit members facing crises every day, it is crucial to have a vision and purpose that conveys that they matter, not only to those they serve but also to those they follow.

Authentic, Trusting, Inclusive Leadership

The leaders in this investigation demonstrated similar positive characteristics as they facilitated the exceptional functioning of their units. The stories of our unit leaders demonstrated the attributes of realistic optimism, emotional intelligence, confidence to succeed, and hope (Luthans, Luthans, Hodgetts, & Luthans, 2001). They show that although it might be possible to identify specific actions that appear to stem from a specific trait or behavior, as with other human attributes, they do not occur in isolation. As with all human attributes, these are intangible resources, and research has found these attributes to be more effective when demonstrated in combination (Luthans, 2002b).

For example, in the case of the accreditation team, the college president used most or all of these traits as she prepared for the college reaccreditation process. She knew her goal and the path to follow when early in the process she chose college leaders who would comprise the accreditation team. Her plan included training for those team members to assure they would achieve the goal of no recommendations for improvement. The appointed team members were also given the responsibility of collecting information from personnel in most college departments so their leader provided her executive support if things did not progress as planned.

The formal leaders that facilitated the adult education collaboration between a large community college and a large public school district believed they could create a successful adult education preparation plan for the area they serve. They used collaboration between two large organizations and their leaders as the path to achieve that goal. The executive formal leaders however did not stop there: They pledged their own continued involvement in the project and have kept that promise for over ten years. The will to succeed accompanied the plan to develop trusting relationships and maintain purposeful engagement. Without that leadership attitude, the program may not have received national recognition. Leaders who developed organizational collaboration without the exchange of a single dollar were confident that the team they were building would succeed, just as the college president was confident that her reaccreditation team would receive no recommendations for correction.

Because the SSS unit and college library units work with students daily, their leaders assist and encourage students, which is important for bolstering student retention. Students feel as if they matter when supported by people at the college. Library staff members use the same emotional intelligence to support each other through grief and the loss of loved ones by showing empathy and support.

Analysis of the data revealed that all leaders were focused and engaged and that leadership attributes and behaviors operate in combination with other attributes helping to explain how units are able to perform above expectations. All leaders in the four case studies were selfless, focused on the mission and vision of their unit, and trusted by their unit members. Although unit members other than the formal leader rarely identified themselves as leaders, the definition used in our study includes them as such. In the grant

unit, having many leaders with the power to make decisions about resources created cohesiveness among the members.

Leaders within the four cases are authentic, feeling comfortable with who they are and what they believe and value. They act on their beliefs and values and act transparently with others (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). This authenticity also includes acting selflessly, although the leaders demonstrated this trait differently. For instance, accreditation team leaders recognize publicly any contributors to the excellent results of the reaccreditation. SSS unit leaders give their members some choice of location for their professional development, whereas accreditation team leaders recognize the talent and tacit knowledge of employees in personal ways. They also address the needs of all the team members by providing additional professional development and training so team members are prepared to make informed decisions.

Together, the leaders in this study demonstrate a consistent attitude of treating people as people rather than objects or abstract budgetary personnel account strings (Alfred et al., 2009; Shults, 2008). They empower, support, provide a purpose, and create opportunities to make a difference for those they lead. The director of the grant program displays all of these behaviors when she asks staff members to participate in the grant writing process. Each staff member represents her area of expertise as she works "off the clock" to prepare a new grant and willingly contributes to the new grant outcome through this process. Dividing the responsibility among all the unit members and sharing the consequences if the grant is not renewed is an example of shared accountability. In distributing accountability, the leader trusts the unit members to use their abilities and expertise to reach the unit goal. This trust, in turn, provides them with a sense of purpose

over and above their daily responsibilities. The work also empowers the staff through involvement in the outcomes that affect their future.

Several similarities and differences were present across the case studies. One similarity was the presence of a supportive, collegial climate among participants in spite of differences in organizational structure and decision-making process. The length of service each person has worked within the unit and organization contributed to unit members' subjective experiences of feeling supported. One library team member described this as the "ease of long-standing acquaintance" that facilitated the ability to know without speaking how to help other unit members. Across each of the four cases, no individual has worked fewer than five years in the unit, and leaders recognized through title or responsibility have served in that unit capacity from eight to 20 years.

A noticeable difference across units is the way formal and informal leaders carry out administrative and managerial tasks. Some units were more hierarchal with a team leader or unit director assigning tasks. Other units function with a more distributed leadership whereby both informal and formal leaders share in the input and output of administrative and managerial tasks. This variation did not appear to hinder the high performance of the units. Areas influenced most by formal leadership include leadership style, culture, mission and vision, reputation, and a system of reward and recognition. All of the leaders not only influence the culture of their units, they may have created it as in the case of the SSS unit and the adult education collaboration. In the case of the library, the formal leaders are the driving force behind the existing culture. The SACS unit identified themselves as having a culture of excellence, the library a traditional hierarchy with a service orientation, the SSS unit prides itself on its leadership legacy of

autonomy and support, and the culture that developed through the leaders of the adult

education collaboration is defined a culture of trust.

Positive leaders trust in the capabilities and possibilities of their members to

achieve unit goals, which paves the way for commitment to a shared vision and purpose

that enhances a sense of shared accountability for outcomes. Adding to this positive

environment are leadership actions that provide autonomy and support for all unit

members. Autonomy and trust work together developing an environment where

creativity and new ideas can flourish. Personnel trust that if an idea is not successful or if

they make a mistake, they have access to whatever support they need to proceed toward

the development of something new or to recover from a mistake. Of equal importance

are leaders who appreciate team members as individual people not just positions. These

three in combination contributed to the success of all four units. While this is also an

example of leveraging that evolves from the actions of the leaders, this leveraging may

well occur by accident but with similar results as if they were intentional. However, if

leaders understood and intentionally leveraged resources, the result might be even

greater.

Resource Richness

Resource richness is our adaptation of the CCAM term *abundance*, a term that

may be easily misunderstood to mean ample tangible resources (Alfred et al., 2009). We

use resource richness to denote the condition that results when all available resources,

both tangible and intangible, are optimally engaged. The four units achieved resource

richness by looking beyond tangible resources. Their leaders and members did not view

tangible resources as the primary constraining factors on their ability to achieve their high

goals. Instead, by valuing their intangible resources, they were able to avoid being charmed by ample (or lacking) tangible resources. Adding these considerable intangible resources to available budgets, positions, equipment, and physical spaces created resource richness. From this position, unit leaders and members could create leverage and thereby enhance the effects of their tangible resources.

Tangible resources. All four units function under some sort of structured plan, a funding source, and a budget that describes relatively fixed amounts they have to work with. The importance of these tangible resources cannot be overemphasized. When leaders discussed resources and organizational functioning, they identified tangible resources, especially money as extremely important. However, they also discussed quantifiable resources such as staff positions. Authority over the amount and disbursement of tangible resources varied from unit to unit. The leader of the adult education collaboration, however, indicated with pride that no money changed hands when the two leaders joined their organizations to deliver adult education and community college preparation to a large population of students. Each unit continues to function independently within its own strategic plan and funding source as it meets any legislative mandate that supports its operation. The SACS accreditation team, however, had access to whatever tangible resources they requested. Completing the assignment of sustaining accreditation remains such a high priority that no request was denied.

In all units, their tangible resources can ebb and flow, but in the case of the grant program, their funding can fluctuate annually and more often than not diminish year by year. To manage these changes and maintain their high performance, the team members

stay focused on the things they can control and leverage other types of resources to accommodate for any lost funding.

All the units are fiscally responsible and adapt to shrinking tangible resources when needed. In some cases, as in the adult education unit and grant program, asking for community support can result in monetary donations from community organizations or businesses. Yet these are not the only sources available to meet unit needs. Utilizing intangible resources can expand possibilities to achieve unexpected results.

In addition to careful stewardship of tangible resources, the units in our study leveraged tangible resources with careful preparation for the future, including identifying leveraging opportunities, focusing on resources that are within the unit's control, being prepared, and providing professional development. Each unit derives benefits from preparation. For example, the accreditation team leaders prioritized up-to-date data collection and credential verification. This advance preparation supported their ability to shepherd the reaccreditation process and complete it successfully with no recommendations for improvement. The administrative assistant for the SSS project developed a notebook containing all up-to-date documentation a site visit team from the department of education would require. The site visit team was so impressed with the notebook that they asked for a copy to use as a model for other sites. Library professionals make certain their committee responsibilities and reports are up to date, and adult education personnel prepare to meet the stringent reporting requirements. We found the more a unit makes a concerted effort to recognize and innovate with the resources, the greater its ability to perform with excellence.

Intangible resources. With such a fluctuation in tangible resources, the four units used a variety of resources, not easily quantified, to assist them in reaching their goals. This type of resource amplification is rarely a straight line, cause-and-effect event. Two areas in particular, psychological capital and positive leadership were clearly capitalized in these high-performing units.

Members of the SSS unit, displaying the characteristics of psychological capital, helped to develop and enhance those characteristics in students by modeling and encouraging desired behaviors, thus influencing the success of the unit purely through positive role modeling. Hope develops when a staff member assures a student he can succeed and helps devise a success plan. Accreditation members demonstrate self-efficacy through displays of confidence prior to an accreditation visit because they have prepared well. Library staff and professionals demonstrate resilience when they work together to manually manage a library printing queue in order to help students. Psychological capital, as an intangible resource, thus becomes a lever that amplifies the capacity of unit members to meet their formal goals, serve their constituents, and respond to external pressures.

Important intangible resources prime for leveraging are the behaviors and traits of all unit members, formal leaders, informal leaders, and students who receive services. Whereas the core constructs of positive attributes of leadership (PAL) include confidence for the group to succeed, psychological capital emphasizes self-efficacy, the ability of an individual to perform a specific task with excellence. The resilience component of psychological capital is the ability of an individual or group to bounce back from adversity (Avey, Luthans, Smith, & Palmer, 2010; Froman, 2010; Luthans et al., 2001),

and the emotional intelligence component of positive approaches to leadership is a relationship-focused attribute (Luthans et al., 2001).

Positive leadership can be found at all levels of the units examined because of the inclusive, people-first leadership structure. Behaviors prevalent in our investigation include treating people as people, building relationships, and collaborating with other entities. All the unit leaders value their personnel as individuals and professionals. The library director continued the care he traditionally shows to his staff during the holidays even through the pain of losing his daughter. The SSS unit director and her staff continued to serve students who needed their help, even when they could not count them as members of their program. Library personnel continued to take care of the students and faculty even when their staffing was short.

The library staff and professionals determined that they had not only reached but also surpassed the mark of excellence in student service. Their capacity to serve could have easily been diminished by a series of extremely difficult circumstances. However, their dedication, preparedness, and resilience buoyed their capacity to serve in the midst of pressing—even traumatic--difficulty. For example, their resilience was most evident as they continued delivering excellent service while at the same time supporting the needs of the library director who suffered the loss of two family members. Not only do unit members demonstrate these traits, they model the benefit of these attributes to the students they serve.

This expanded approach to organizational functioning insists that including intangible resources is paramount in the leveraging process in order to attain the best possible outcomes. Failure to develop and deploy intangibles creates *slack*, the unused

set of resources that represent the leeway between what an organization could accomplish and what it does accomplish.

The units place a high value on people, the things that people can do, and the things that people need. The people in the units build relationships, collaborate, influence others, model behavior, learn, teach, grow, improve, nurture, and show concern. They benefit from autonomy and a sense of purpose. They feel valued, respected, and trusted. They have opportunities to learn and improve, make connections, and appreciate being unique. Things within their control include people, relationships with other organizations both inside and outside the college, and the talents of their own students. The previous examples provide evidence of how intangible resources can act as levers that amplify available tangible resources to increase the capacity for excellent performance. Finally, the influence of positive leadership itself is an intangible resource in the development of others. For example, a supervisor may encourage development in unexpected areas. A participant explains, "I was a teaching faculty, and I wanted to do more. My president and academic dean saw something in me that maybe I never saw in myself, and I was given the opportunity to do things."

Regardless of the different organizational structures, all of our unit leaders kept their followers focused on the unit's mission from reaccreditation to organizational collaboration, to direct student service. Providing focus and direction produces stretch, the vision of results that seem out of reach based on current resources. This unit-level research confirms Hamel and Prahalad's (1994) assertion that stretch serves as a powerful motivation for learning to identify, develop, and deploy slack resources to produce resource amplification through leverage. Our research also supports the institution-level

findings of Alfred et al. (2009) of the role of leadership and intangible resources in influencing exceptional performance. Finally, it supports individual- and group-level research studies that describe positive organizational outcomes enabled by positive dynamics in a group.

Conclusions

This multiple-case analysis of four community college units reveals the effects of positive organizational dynamics on unit success. We grouped our findings into three areas: (a) people-first culture; (b) authentic, trusting, inclusive leadership; and (c) resource richness. Within these areas, we noted how leaders and members attributed unit performance to positive characteristics and behaviors that were intentionally developed and nurtured. We described the importance of positive behaviors and traits in formal and informal leaders and how these contributed to unit performance. We also discussed the power of shared vision and informal mission for cohesion, motivation, and purpose in the units.

Leaders influence unit cultures in which (a) people are valued holistically and above other resources; (b) authentic leaders provide autonomy and support while organizing the units' work around strengths, and (c) unit leaders and members maximize all available resources. Formal leaders influence the culture of their unit, develop, and depend on shared leadership to focus on the overall mission, and facilitate leveraging all available resources.

The conclusions drawn from this four-case analysis are consistent with results of capacity-building, a component of the CCAM construct of abundance. In each unit, we found leaders skilled at identifying and developing their available tangible and intangible

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resources. The resulting leverage amplified the units' performance. At the unit level, there is great opportunity to facilitate leveraging. Unit members are the closest to where resources are actually used, and they are best positioned to identify slack resources— especially the intangible ones. Each person has control over resources—especially those that are unique to themselves. Examples include personal strengths, multiple relationships, interdepartmental collaborations, and the ability to pursue personal and professional development. Leaders beyond immediate supervisors may be too far removed to see opportunities to develop intangible resources at the individual level. Thus, when unit members are given the autonomy and support to develop and deploy those resources as they see fit, they have the potential to influence unit performance exponentially.

Recommendations

The following recommendations focus on innovating toward capacity building, leaders appreciating people as people, and leveraging all resources in the direction of abundance. Leveraging can move an organization toward abundance; but an organization cannot maintain that state without continually using the tools that helped them get there. Resources available to leverage include positive authentic leaders and their attributes, accomplished employees who are encouraged to use all of their strengths including psychological capital, and a culture designed to utilize capacity building. Collectively, this combination of resources can achieve results greater than expected, based on current levels of tangible resources.

Becoming open and knowledgeable takes time, and it can seem risky. Thus, if someone is not ready to understand that process, it could take a long time to learn to think

differently about leadership, resources, organizational culture, and performance. The

following recommendations reflect the experience of our team members as we moved

from acquaintance to understanding, to application, to assimilation of the principles of

positive perspectives of unit performance, authentic leadership, and the leveraging of

resources. Other teams and units can also experience a similar process:

- Become acquainted with capacity-building and leveraging intangible resources. The literature referenced in this report, the experiences of the units under investigation, and the brief appraisal of unit functioning included in this report can help interested parties become familiar with the positive terminology and processes.

- Understand the concepts through a learning experience facilitated by educators acquainted with the process of unraveling abstract concepts with examples, role-playing, observation, and conversation.

- Assimilate the concepts by looking at and identifying your own examples. Looking at your own daily practice through the new lens constantly reminds you that leveraging is all around us.

- Apply the concepts by choosing an example of a unit that could be improved, preferably your own, and detail a specific plan of action for that unit to learn and apply leveraging for capacity building.

Further recommendations rest on our finding that individuals at all levels of the

organizational chart control considerable resources of their own. For example, we have

described the importance to team success of formal knowledge, such as one might

acquire through training or education. We have also described ways of viewing culture,

leadership, and resources that are at the same time familiar, yet difficult to translate into

organizational vitality. These different perspectives are forms of tacit knowledge—

intangible resources essential for building the capacity to amplify resources. Learning to

operate these levers makes it possible to perform with excellence in an environment

where resource levels and needs constantly change.

Further Study

This exploration of positive influences on unit-level performance leaves many questions unanswered and suggests avenues for further inquiry. For example, can the positive dynamics in successful individual units in higher education influence the performance of an entire college or university? If so, how and to what degree? Shifting the focus from units and institutions to individuals, can individual study of positive psychology and organizational dynamics influence team or organizational functioning? How and to what extent?

Leaders often mistake growth or plentiful tangible resources for high performance (Alfred et al., 2009). In doing so, they may assume that high performance comes from unique circumstances of growth or plentiful tangible resources. Attention is thus diverted from the possibilities for developing intangible resources that are essential for amplifying outputs regardless of available tangible resources. By contrast, the research reported here shows that when unit leaders add to their metrics of success the ability to identify and deploy intangible resources, they develop the capacity to produce results thought to be impossible. It is tempting to ignore intangible resources, especially when tangible resources are plentiful (as in the case of the reaccreditation team) and even when scarce (as in the case of the library). Yet, consistent with the CCAM and positive literature, this study suggests that the key to outstanding unit performance is full utilization of all available resources achieved through special emphasis on intangible resources and desirable—and new—organizational outcomes. In order to produce a culture that supports this expansive view of organizational performance, we must first recognize that such units already exist and identify what exceptional performance looks like. This

multi-case analysis has shown how positive organizational behaviors including attention

to intangible resources can influence the ability to perform well in various contexts.

Appendix

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

1. What are your position responsibilities in this program unit?

2. What is the relationship between your work and this program's overall performance?

3. In your program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?

4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective? What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

6. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

7. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?

8. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?

9. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

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Chapter 3

Delivering Reaffirmation: Positive Leadership, Resources, and Excellence in a Community College Accreditation Team

Work Teams are widely used to serve specific purposes in community college administration (Basham & Mathur, 2010; Yukl, 2002). One of the job responsibilities for community college leaders is serving on a variety of administrative teams. As organizations shift work and workflows from an individual emphasis to a team emphasis, the effectiveness of team performance is critical in achieving overall organizational effectiveness. While researchers vary on what is required for team effectiveness, they agree that the performance of teams within organizations is an important variable in the performance of the organization as a whole (Chermack, Bodwell & Glick, 2010; Senior, 1997).

The purpose of this case study is to look at what works in a successful community college work team, in this case an accreditation preparation team in its efforts to help guide an institution through the reaccreditation process. Rather than using a deficit approach that concentrates on what is not working well, this study explores organizational functioning through a positive lens in an effort to gather a more complete understanding of how specific factors, such as leadership and perspectives on resources, can contribute to organizational success.

This study contributes to relatively recent streams of literature, which are referred to in this study as positive scholarship, by extending it into a community college work group team. The team's role in reaccreditation (i.e., the reaffirmation process) represents an important component of institutional viability. A successful reaffirmation process is reflective of exceptional team effectiveness. This case study offers insight into how one

reaccreditation team operated as a successful, high-performing unit, potentially providing additional insight into the kinds of factors contributing to organizational success in higher education settings more broadly.

Background for the Study

Community colleges, like other institutions of higher learning, point to accreditation as a key mechanism to address questions and concerns about quality (Wergin, 2005). Accredited status is a signal to students and the public that an institution or program meets at least threshold standards in areas such as faculty credentials, curriculum, student services, and libraries (Eaton, 2009). The public identifies accrediting associations primarily with quality assurance, and they view accreditation as evidence that an institution meets qualitative criteria (Troutt, 1979). Accreditation is the primary means of ensuring that quality higher education is available to many constituencies (Alstete, 2004). Accreditation is a benchmark for quality assurance and quality improvement and is earned through the successful external review of institutions and programs (Eaton, 2009).

In order for a college's accreditation preparation team has to prepare a compliance certification report that addresses accreditation principles. The responses to the principles must be written in such a way that an outside reviewer can gain an understanding of the daily operations of the institution and can be assured that the institution is adhering to the principles and standards set forth by the accrediting agency (SACS, 2010b).

In order for a college's preparation team to perform well, decisions must be made regarding the makeup of the team and in regards to a plan of action, including developing

a plan and timeline. Team members must be knowledgeable about their institution to effectively address the accreditation standards. Team members must have a good understanding of the accreditation standards and the ability to clarify their meaning to others on campus. All institutional departments must understand that being in compliance is significant enough to warrant operational changes if necessary.

Success in the accreditation process depends on the level of performance of the individuals appointed to serve on the reaffirmation team. If the compliance certification report, which reflects the organizational functioning of the institution, is not presented in an effective manner, the school could lose accreditation, which would affect every employee of the institution. This study examines the functioning of a successful community college accreditation team. The exploration identifies how this ad hoc team helped their institution sustain accreditation with no recommendations for improvement.

Accreditation Background

Accreditation, an American innovation, dates back more than a century. It began in the late 19th century as a voluntary system of self-improvement (Basken, 2008) that differentiates colleges from high schools (Neal, 2008) and establishes minimum standards for curriculum, faculty qualification, student services, and institution resources (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). With the passage of the GI Bill in 1944, Congress linked the accreditation process with the distribution of federal funds (Neal, 2008). Federal and state governments deem accreditation to be a reliable authority on academic quality. Governments rely on accreditation to assure the quality of institutions and programs for which they provide funds, both to the institution and their students. States also require that individuals who wish to obtain state licensure in various professions must graduate

from accredited institutions and programs (Eaton, 2009). Accreditation agencies have taken on the *de facto* role of gatekeeper for federal dollars making it now virtually mandatory for institutions to receive accreditation for financial reasons (Neal, 2008). In sum, accreditation represents a critical area of concern for colleges and universities, one closely linked with students' educational professional opportunities and institutional financial viability.

Prior to the formation of regional and national accrediting agencies, junior colleges were accredited by nearby universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Because constitutional limitations prevent the formation of a centralized, federal system of education that exercises control over all postsecondary educational institutions in the United Stated, the states provide much of the oversight. To ensure a level of quality from one state to another, non-governmental regional accrediting bodies provide peer-to-peer evaluations of institutional quality (Jackson & Jackson, 2010).

The Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) and the U.S. Department of Education (USDE) recognize four types of accrediting organizations: (a) national faith-related, (b) national career-related, (b) programmatic, and (d) regional. The remainder of this review concentrates on regional accreditation. Regional accreditation focuses on public and private, non-profit, degree-granting, and two- and four-year institutions (Eaton, 2009) and is an on-going process that requires periodic reviews with 10-year cycles. Regional accrediting organizations operate in six different areas of the United States and generally review entire institutions, both at the associate and baccalaureate levels, which are largely degree-granting and non-profit (Eaton, 2009).

Regional Accreditation

The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), founded in 1895, is the regional accreditation agency responsible for Kentucky, and one of the six regional accreditation agencies in the country. While not the first in existence, SACS has emerged as a leader among the regional accrediting agencies by being one of the first agencies to adopt accreditation standards that would apply across the colleges in their area of oversight. It is also to incorporate an institutional effectiveness standard that requires every institution to provide evidence of student learning (Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

The college arm of SACS, the Commission on Colleges (COC), was founded in 1912 to develop standards and a process for accrediting colleges and universities in the South. The mission of the COC is the enhancement of educational quality throughout the region, and it strives to improve the effectiveness of institutions by ensuring that institutions meet standards established by the higher education community that address the needs of society and students. It serves as the common denominator of shared values and practices among the diverse institutions in the southern region (SACS, 2010a).

Conceptual Framework

The approach to this inquiry is influenced by research examining successful organizational performance and representing an alternative to the traditional, problem-solving deficit approach often found in organizational studies (Caza & Caza, 2008). Specifically, the framework is heavily influenced by components associated with exceptional organizational and individual functioning described and examined in the Community College Abundance Model (CCAM): (a) leadership, (b) tangible resources, and (c) intangible resources (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette & Strickland, 2009).

The study is influenced by CCAM and other scholarship such as positive psychology, positive organizational scholarship and positive organizational behavior. Positive psychology is the scientific study of human strengths, and it looks to find what works, what is right, and what is improving (Alfred et al., 2009 & Shults, 2008). Positive organizational scholarship focuses on dynamic leading to exceptional individual and organizational performance. Positive organizational behavior states that human capital is the most valuable asset held by organizations and that effectively utilizing and developing this resource can lead to enhanced performance. Positive organizational behavior has four constructs called *psychological capital,* which look at the possible influence of hope, optimism, resilience, and self-efficacy on the exceptional functioning of an organizational unit (Alfred et al., 2009 & Shults, 2008). Each of these areas of study contend that when organizations recognize the importance of human capital (i.e. people) and prioritize the development of it by building on strategic strengths at the individual and unit levels, the organization can achieve extraordinary success. In order to become high performing and achieve extraordinary success, the capacity to perform in ways that exceed expectations must exist or be developed in an organization (Alfred et al., 2009; Hamel & Prahalad, 2005). According to CCAM, building capacity is accomplished through leveraging or amplifying the three organizational components of leadership, tangible resources, and intangible resources, which collectively determine how well an organization or unit performs. Tangible and intangible resources are the raw material of performance, and leadership is the guidance system through which material is leveraged to produce a result (Alfred et. al, 2009).

Tangible resources are easily identified because they are the material assets a college deploys to achieve goals (e.g., money, staff lines, equipment, technology). Intangible resources are not easily quantifiable because they are an organization's informal, subjective, emotive, and process-oriented elements. Examples include (a) peoples' strengths, tacit knowledge, experience, diversity, and satisfaction; (b) culture, or shared values and beliefs; (c) organizational structures for authority, decision implementation, and communication; (d) systems, policies, and processes that support the achievement of goals; (e) time, especially as a resource for big-picture reflection; and (f) the organization's reputation (Alfred et al., 2009).

The leadership aspect of the conceptual lens applied in this study incorporates multiple expressions of positive leadership. When leaders identify, develop, and deploy tangible and intangible resources, amplification of the benefit or usefulness of those resources occurs (Alfred et al., 2009). This amplification occurs because resources and performance are posited to form a feedback loop in which resources are a precursor of performance, which in turn influences the availability of resources to leaders (Caza & Caza, 2008). Successful leveraging indicates that leaders place special emphasis and priority on the development and utilization of the non-material, intangible resources in their units.

In today's information technology-driven environment, teams as opposed to individuals are often the primary work unit (Yost & Tucker, 2000). The performance of teams within organizations is therefore, an important variable in the performance of the organization as a whole (Senior, 1997). A team or group is defined as (a) two or more individuals, (b) who work together or interact, (c) have one or more goals in common, (d)

perform tasks on behalf of an organization, and (e) have interdependencies and are held accountable (Chermack, Bodwell & Glick, 2010).

High-performing teams in various contexts have consistently been distinguished by such features as their collaborative climate, goal clarity, cohesiveness, composition, and standards of excellence. Many variables that have been associated with high performing teams in industry and other environments are associated with the success of teams in an educational setting (Robbins & Fredendall, 2001). Crucial to the performance of teams are the abilities and behaviors of their members. The roles that team members play are also important for success (Senior, 1997).

As the abilities, behaviors, and roles of individuals are vital to a team's success, it makes sense to study teams that have met and even exceeded expectations. Accordingly, this study, informed by scholarship that focuses on learning from organizational success, as opposed to failure, undertakes an examination of a successful SACS Preparation Team.

Research Methodology

This case study was conducted to discover what positive traits and behaviors contributed to the success of a SACS Preparation Team. Multiple methodological considerations justified the appropriateness of case study method for this inquiry. Case studies are appropriate for (a) investigating questions of *how* and *why* (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004; Yin, 2009), (b) observing a "contemporary set of events" (Yin, 2009, p. 13), and (c) understanding situations "over which the investigator has little or no control" (Yin, 2009, p. 13). This study meets each of these criteria.

Description of Selected Case

The institution in this study was one of the first of the 16 community and technical colleges in its state system to achieve a reaffirmation visit without any recommendations for improvement. Only three schools in this system had achieved this accomplishment at the time this study was conducted. When an institution receives no recommendations for improvement, the visiting team has determined that the school meets or exceeds requirements in every area of accountability. Such an outcome means that sufficient evidence was presented by the institution demonstrating that it is providing not only quality services in the academic arena, but also in every other unit that provides service to students. The work of the SACS Preparation Team played a significant role in helping the school to achieve reaffirmation with no recommendations for improvement by presenting the work members of the institution perform daily in an effective manner to the visiting team.

Because of the effectiveness of this SACS Preparation Team and because of the outcome of their SACS reaffirmation visit, various members of the selected SACS Preparation Team have conducted workshops on effectively preparing for the SACS reaffirmation process for institutions, both within and outside of the state system. Because of their expertise and experience, members of the SACS Preparation Team selected for this study have served as consultants for other schools of higher education. Some team members have given presentations on their institution's process at conferences both within and outside of the commonwealth of Kentucky. In an effort to share lessons learned and an effective way to be reaffirmed, members of the selected team have also written journal articles about accreditation, which have been published in

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scholarly journals of higher education. Members of the team are directly involved with the SACS organization and have recently served on SACS-COC Standing Committees. The Chair of the SACS Preparation Team, who is also known as the Reaffirmation Director, recently chaired an off-site review team. This individual was one of two chairpersons to serve in this capacity at the time that is not a college president.

Multiple factors help to demonstrate that the SACS Preparation Team selected for this study is successful. As such, the team provides a fitting organizational unit to further explore issues raised in the positive organizational scholarship and articulated in the CCAM framework.

Data Sources

The use of multiple data sources increased validity in this qualitative study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The primary sources of data were questionnaires, interviews, observation sessions, and documents related to the case. SACS Preparation Team members at the selected institution were asked to complete a questionnaire dealing with positive attributes of leadership and perceptions of tangible and intangible resources. In addition, SACS Preparation Team members and the institution's Leadership Team members were interviewed in order to gain insight into the team selection and the preparation process.

Data Collection

Data generated from this study was drawn from multiple data sources, including (a) the administration of an online questionnaire, (b) recorded in-person interviews, and (c) notes from direct observation of team interactions. In an effort to obtain the most relevant data regarding the SACS process at the selected institution, both current and

former members of the SACS Preparation Team were asked to participate in the study. The team members who agreed to participate signed an informed consent document (Appendix A). The consent document discussed all necessary information for the participants and shared what would be asked of them as well as, the amount of time required for participation. A statement that assured the participant of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time was included in the consent document; the researcher's contact information was included. Those participating included the institution's president and the person serving as the provost during the planning stage. The two of them were responsible for compiling the team of staff to complete the assigned task. The chair of the institution's SACS Preparation Team who drafted the plan to complete the process was interviewed as well as the team members who executed the plan and completed the work. Interview participants were selected based upon responses they provided from an initial questionnaire that focused on characteristics identified in positive literature.

Members of the SACS Preparation Team were contacted and asked to consider participating in the study. Five responses to the email were received, and the online questionnaire (Appendix B) was forwarded for completion. The questions on the questionnaire required narrative responses and centered on the attributes of leadership such as *What qualities of the leaders of the team made them effective?* and *How did leadership help you get through a challenging situation during the process?* Questions also focused on perception of resources. For example, *How did the team utilize both tangible and intangible resources to their best advantage?* and *What did you bring to the team that contributed to its success?* Responses from this essay type questionnaire

helped to guide the in-person interviews. The researcher used an interview protocol (Appendix C) that assisted in beginning a conversation with the participants. Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed, and special attention was given to themes surrounding perceptions of phenomena, traits, and behaviors informed by the three facets of the study's conceptual lens.

Participants were provided copies of interview transcripts in order to make any adjustments or corrections to the transcripts (Stake, 1995). Information was categorized in the coding process using the research questions as a guiding frame. Data analysis and data collection occurred simultaneously which allowed for the opportunity for adjustments.

In addition to conducting interviews, the researcher spent time with members of the SACS Preparation Team in their work environment observing daily functioning. These observations took place in the locations where members of the team operate. Team members were also observed interacting with each other in a team meeting setting. The researcher took notes while conducting the observations identifying the concepts that are the focus of this research.

The observation session focused on the individual team members' daily activity and interactions with staff members of the institution. Observations occurred in the team's meeting room and in member's office's.

Accreditation Process

The basic procedure in a typical accreditation system requires meeting standards by the agency, in this case the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. This includes a self-study by the institution, an off-site review,

an on-site evaluation, publication of the decision, and monitoring by the agency (Alstete, 2004). An institution seeking accreditation with SACS-COC must complete a series of steps much like those of any similar accrediting institution, including compliance with the standards contained in the *Principles of Accreditation: Foundations for Quality Enhancement* and with the policies and procedures of the COC (SACS, 2010c).

The COC requires that institutions establish a leadership team, also known as the SACS preparation team, to manage and validate the internal institutional assessment of compliance. The institution's SACS Preparation Team should include individuals who have the skills, knowledge, and authority to lead in this total institutional effort. Membership typically includes the chief executive officer, the chief academic officer, the accreditation liaison, and a representative faculty member (SACS, 2010b). The responsibilities of the SACS Preparation Team include, but are not limited to: (a) coordinating and managing the internal review process; (b) coordinating the completion of a Compliance Certification Report; (c) ensuring that the institutional community is engaged in the review process; (d) developing a Focused Report, if the institution so chooses; (e) overseeing the development and implementation of a Quality Enhancement Plan; (f) overseeing arrangements for the on-site visit; and (g) ensuring that appropriate follow-up activities are in place to address compliance issues. The SACS Preparation Team in this study carried out those same responsibilities.

The goal of any institution completing the SACS process is to be granted initial accreditation or to receive reaffirmation of accreditation. The institution can experience various scenarios related to reaffirmation. The most desired outcome is reaffirmation with zero recommendations for improvement. Any other scenario requires the

institution's preparation team to rewrite their response to the accreditation principles and to provide additional documentation, both of which require the commitment of a great deal of additional resources.

SACS provides guidelines that must be followed during the reaffirmation process. In fulfillment of the SACS guidelines, the institution in this study completed the reaffirmation process as a team; thus, the unit of analysis in this study is at the team level. This study examined the SACS Accreditation Preparation Team by asking the question, How did the team achieve superior organizational functioning? In exploring this inquiry, particular attention was given to the way in which performance was influenced by positive phenomena, behaviors, and traits, which are identified as effective in the positive organizational literature as effective: (a) positive approaches to leadership, (b) successful leveraging of available tangible resources, and (c) successful leveraging of intangible resources.

Researcher's Role

As the researcher, I also have first-hand knowledge and experience with accreditation and with members of the selected SACS Preparation Team. I currently serve as my institution's SACS liaison and was named as one of the chairpersons for my college's SACS Preparation Team. Serving as one of the chairpersons caused me to realize just what is involved to work through the process and caused me to be acquainted with the skills and abilities needed to successfully complete the accreditation process. Not only have I served on my institution's SACS Preparation Team, but I have served as an off-site team reviewer and an on-site team reviewer on more than one occasion. The task of writing the report alone is challenging, but if the various institutional departments

are not operating in compliance, the task can be even more challenging because that

department must be brought in to compliance with SACS Principles.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The use of multiple data sources increases validity; thus, this study relied on

different types of data (McMillan, 2008; Yin, 2009). This is consistent with qualitative

research standards and allowed for opportunities to test emerging concepts and themes.

In addition to distributing an online questionnaire and conducting interviews, the

researcher collected documentation and artifacts that pertained to accreditation and

contributed to the focus of the study.

The researcher analyzed the collected data, and identified key concepts and words

that focus on the traits and behaviors identified in the positive literature (Alfred et al.,

2009). Repetitive phrases that emerged were assigned a label or code to illustrate the

relationships between the interview, observation data, and questionnaire data. Yin (2009)

holds that these techniques support the creation and maintenance of a chain of evidence

from question to conclusion. The quality of this study was augmented through various

well-accepted methods including member checking and multiple reviews during the

collection process (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). The researcher did contact member of

the SACS Preparation Team to gain clarity and increase understanding of statements

made during the interviews and observations.

Limitations

Given the fact that the researcher has knowledge of and experience with the

SACS process, an understanding of the skills and abilities required to perform effectively,

and given the fact that the researcher has knowledge of and relationship with many of the

SACS Preparation Team members, the researcher worked to reduce personal bias when collecting and analyzing data by guarding against rushing to conclusions about the success of the team. Transcript review by interviewees, code checking by colleagues, and manuscript review by fellow researchers were implemented to prevent the introduction of such bias.

Discussion of Findings

This study examines the organizational functioning of a successful accreditation team at a community college and asks how this team executes the necessary tasks to ensure the team's success. The influence of leadership was pervasive throughout the process. I organized the findings into three themes -- attributes and actions exhibited by leadership, organizational culture promoted by leadership and effective utilization of resources by leadership. The findings align with Alfred et al.'s (2009) framework for building organizational capacity where leadership has both a direct and indirect influence on performance based on their ability to make decisions and their ability to leverage resources.

Attributes and Actions Exhibited by Leadership

When asked about reasons for the SACS Preparation Team's success, each team member stressed the importance of effective leadership to the accreditation process; in fact, they stated that leadership was a key factor of their success in the SACS reaffirmation process. Members acknowledged specific leadership positions and their attributes and actions as the main reasons for the high level of team functioning that occurred during the reaffirmation process. Barnett and McCormick (2012) posit that team leaders and team leadership are critical in effective team performance. Findings in

this study support this claim. The SACS Preparation Team members talked about the

importance of the person placed in the position of team leader and how her leadership

made all the difference. Members stated that the team leader was the "right person" for

the position and credit her leadership for their success. While team members participated

in the process and contributed to the report, they lauded the team leader's leadership and

affirmed that she guided them through the process effectively.

The former provost who was involved in the leadership selection process shared

why the team leader was chosen: "She thinks analytically and presents things in writing

very well. She is very organized and very intelligent. I knew she had the skill set to do

it." Team members specifically articulated appreciation for the team leader's abilities.

For example, one team member described her this way:

> She is just an exceptional person. She's just brilliant. You can give her all this
> information and she can just put it together in a format that's easily
> understandable and got the data to back it up.

The college president agreed with team member's assessment of the team leader and

added this insight by providing this comment.

> She can see things from a totally different perspective, and she has ideas that
> aren't typical academic kinds of answers to problems. We were very fortunate in
> that we have her. She is a detail person who likes dealing with data and has that
> type of organization . . . it takes someone interested and that has a passion and
> that wants to do that kind of work.

When asked about why she was chosen to lead the team, the team leader's reply

corresponded with team members: "I believe I was chosen because of my organizational

ability, my attention to detail, and my knowledge of the institution and SACS

requirements."

The team leader is a planner. She used her organizational and planning skills to

develop a strategy that guided the team from start to finish. This is significant because

(Meta, Field & Armenakis, 2009) tells us that team planning is related to group

performance. Key elements for successful group performance include the leader's ability

to plan, organize, and control the activities of the group (Denmark, 1993).

While team members pointed toward the team leader as a reason for their success,

they also credited their college president who had the foresight to see the ability in the

team leader and the willingness to provide her with the opportunity to lead. The team

leader also cited the college president as the major factor for the team's success:

> Our college president set the tone. She let college leadership know that she
> expected the college to be in compliance, and that they were to work with me to
> ensure compliance. The president also supported me in public by letting the
> college know that we take accreditation seriously, and that we would be in
> compliance. She allowed me to use a title that isn't an official KCTCS title,
> Reaffirmation Director. I had a name tag and even business cards with that title.

Appreciation for the support of the president resonated throughout the team. The
president shared her rationale for her role in the process: "I do believe that unless you
have the person at the top sort of launching it, cheerleading it, the troops really aren't too
interested in rallying behind a cause just because. That's just the way it is."

Team members knew they had the support of the president, but they also felt

empowered to perform the task for which they were charged. McArthur (2002) shares

that empowerment gives an employee a sense of ownership of their ideas and provides a

greater incentive to find solutions. An empowered employee is much more willing to

work in support of a departmental or institutional vision. One team member stated:

> I had total support of the president throughout the process. I was empowered to
> express my evaluation of standard compliance in what I wrote, and those I
> reviewed. I felt no pressure from administration to indicate in the self-study that
> we were in compliance with a principle if we were not.

In addition to having the freedom to be honest about where their units stood regarding

compliance, team members stated that they felt supported in other ways. For example,

"She [the president] provided encouragement and acknowledgment for the work that had

been done and recognized how important the work was for the college." While the president had final decision-making authority, she shared how she chose a collaborative approach regarding the accreditation process.

> We have a team approach to most everything we do here. I listened to their opinion when they talked about SACS. I met with the SACS teams. I knew what was going on, but I left the vast amount of decision making up to the team leader and team members because they were so knowledgeable about it . . . I have a team of people who are willing to work really hard to get something done. I think it's a people who have vision to identify what needs to be done. I think some are visionary, hardworking, and committed . . .They bring to the table some key pieces. They are problem solvers, and they have the needed skill sets.

Although team members did not acknowledge their own leadership skills or abilities as a factor for success, their leadership skills certainly contributed to the team's success. Senior (1997) states that, the abilities and behaviors of team members are crucial to team performance. In addition to serving on the SACS Preparation Team, each team member served as a chairperson of a team that collected information and drafted responses to SACS Principles that pertained to their specific unit. One member explained, "Anyone on the committee had a set, defined responsibility for certain standards. So there was no ambiguity as to exactly what you were responsible for." Ulloa and Adams (2004) assert that once team members have role clarity (i.e., they understand what is expected of each team member), and they respect the authority of each team member regarding their assigned task, team members identify how to complement the skills and efforts of each other to make the team effective.

Members of the SACS Preparation Team affirmed that their team's performance was influenced by decisions made by leadership-leadership at multiple levels. The president appointed a team leader with the necessary skills to organize and accomplish the task. In doing so, the president capitalized on the human resource strengths available

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to her. The team leader leveraged her skills and abilities to rally the team and lead the

reaffirmation effort, and finally leadership from team members who worked with other

members of the institution to accomplish their assigned tasks

Leadership from various levels was evident, and the skills of the different leaders

contributed to the team's success. Leaders effectively utilized available resources of

skills and strengths toward the goal of reaffirmation, which increased the team's capacity

to perform and yielded in the best possible result for the team and the institution. Not

only was leadership demonstrated at various levels of the team involved in this process,

but also various leadership approaches worked together to accomplish the task even in

this hierarchal structure. The president used her authority when needed, such as when

she shared her expectations of reaffirmation with not only the leadership team but also

the campus at large. However, the president exercised a collaborative leadership

approach regarding the planning and completion of the process, and she trusted the skills

and abilities of the person she chose to lead the team. The team leader operated within

her strengths to move the team forward, and team members served in a dual capacity

received assignments from the team leader while they lead a team to complete them.

Organizational Culture Promoted by Leadership

A standard of excellence is one characteristic that defines a high-performing team

(Robbins & Fredendall, 2001). Analysis of the data shows that the SACS Preparation

Team had a high standard of excellence. In their words, they have a "culture of

excellence." Culture is important in an organization because it shapes the attitudes that

staff bring to work, how they interact with one another, and how they act with students.

Culture is defined as values and beliefs that are shared by most people in an organization

(Alfred et al., 2009; Lawson & Ventriss, 1992). According to team members, everyone, not just team members, knows how jobs are to be performed and how tasks are to be accomplished. The culture of excellence was easily evident in conversation with the team members. The following commentary by a team member best evidences the team's assessment of organizational culture.

> I just think that, beginning at the top down, you embrace excellence, and that permeates whatever you're doing. If it is a program development, then it should be an excellent, world-class program. And that's from a facilities standpoint. That's from equipment standpoint and structure standpoint. And it's also from an M&O standpoint of industry standard and cleanliness. We do a great job here on the physical plant. It is something that we stay on top of continually. If you want to be good, you need to look good, and it's not just a façade. It's an embedded culture of excellence, so it permeates everything we do. If it's a SACS visit, then we want to excel. If it's a new program, we want to excel. If it's presentations at a national or state conference, we want to excel. And so it's not arrogance, it's just being as good as you can be, and I think you do everything from a leadership standpoint you can to convey that from the top all throughout the organization.

The SACS Preparation Team members actually reflect the culture of the college, and this culture and mindset is so pervasive that a visiting reviewer from a national awarding foundation made the following statement: "It appears to me that you all do things on this campus not because you're going to receive some sort of financial reward from the state," because that does not exist, "but because that's who you are. You want to be the best at whatever it is you are doing"

Leadership's influence on the team is evident in this area as well. Team members pointed to the president regarding the source of this culture. Schein (1992) asserts that leadership is the creation and management of culture and that cultures begin with leaders who impose their own values and assumptions on a group. Team members share the influence the president has had through communicating her vision for their

institution and her expectations of those who will help her achieve it. One member

explained how the vision extends outside of the college

> She has a commitment to economic development. She has the big picture. It's
> not just the college we have to educate. For our region to succeed, for it to be a
> place where people want to live and have opportunities to work, we're going to be
> that engine for them.

Another team member explained it this way. "I think in everything you do, it's got to be
seen as fulfilling a mission and being a part of something greater than yourself." The
president acknowledges that she is driven, and she shares a little about what drives her:

> I'm passionate about what we do; I think most people working in the community
> college are, so I don't think I'm unique in that way at all. I'm passionate about
> education and about this college and the community colleges as a whole. I expect
> the people that I work with to be driven and passionate and do a good job.

> Alfred et al. (2009) posits that leaders are closely watched and that their behavior

and actions reinforce or introduce shifts in culture. Team members shared how they saw

excellence modeled for them on a daily basis, and they followed her example. A team

member explained,

> She never asks us to do more than she's willing to do. She's goes 24/7. I don't
> know how she does it. How can you say no to her? How can you say, "I don't
> have time to do that?" It's not in my vocabulary and I don't think it is, most of
> us, because we have really good leadership… I think it stems from a love for this
> college.

The former provost put it this way:

> She does things first class herself, and I always wanted her to be proud of what
> we had done, and the way we made the institution look because it helped her to be
> proud of the way she viewed our work. We always wanted to please her, in part
> because she had such a high expectation.

> Once the president has clearly communicated her expectation, she does not mind

holding people accountable. The former provost explained,

> She gets frustrated when people don't do things at that level but most of the time
> they do because she expects it, and she's not afraid to move people around if they
> don't.

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The president described the challenges of leadership and accountability

> If you are not doing something, if you are not carrying your weight in one of these areas, someone will go over and talk to you. I don't want to sound like the Nazi, and I don't think that it's a fear environment. I don't think when you come here you feel that way, but honest communication occurs. You need to step up to the plate we've got to get this finished. Now, I don't usually go in. I hope that the people on this leadership team know that when they ask somebody to do something that people have the respect for them and they will do it.

> Another factor contributes to this culture of excellence according to the team

members. A part of being their best is the ability to make informed decisions in order to

maximize their efforts. This requires analyzing information that can guide them in the

direction they needed to take in preparation for the external review of their institution by

a SACS team. Team members were also proud of the fact that they have a culture of

evidence at their institution. They relied heavily on data and strove to make decisions

based on what the revealed. One of the team members stated, "You want to excel; you

have a data-driven, decision-making process in place, which is what SACS and others are

looking for you to do." Another team member attributes much of their success with the

SACS process on the attention they give to data:

> That is probably 75 percent of why we were successful with that, is because our use of gathering/monitoring data is not episodic. It is part of the culture. We track a lot of different data about the college as well as our region so that we understand the service area.

One of the leaders describes it this way:

> We were constantly pulling numbers. If I've got a question, I want to be able to say, pull this data and let me look at this. Why is this? Why did this happen? What did we do to make this happen? Can we use that somewhere else? Why did this go backwards? What did we not do this time that we did last time or what can we do to turn this trend the next time? You know you ask people are we good, 'Oh yeah we're good.' Are we great, 'Oh yeah we are great.' Are we as good as we can be and it is because we are operating off of my perceptions of where we are? As I heard it said In God we trust, all others bring data. You like us and think we are good. I want you to prove it to me.

The president understands what she wants not only for her institution, but also for

her region, and she has effectively shared that vision with leaders within her organization

and has challenged them to contribute to the achievement of the goals within the vision

(McArthur, 2002). The culture of this SACS Preparation Team reflects the culture of the

organization, and that culture is defined in such a way that it propels the team member to

high performance. Receiving no recommendations was not a complete surprise to this

group because they conducted the reaffirmation process as they always do-operate in

excellence. The culture of the community college contributed to the success of this unit.

Effective Use of Resources by Leadership

Leaders deploy resources to generate a product that meets, exceeds, or falls short

of stakeholder needs and expectations (Alfred et al., 2009). Tangible and intangible

resources are required for organizational functioning. Tangible resources were

strategically used to outsource tasks that did not have to be performed by team members.

This action allowed team members the opportunity to remain focused on their areas of

expertise and operate in their strengths to produce an outstanding result.

Tangible Resources

Money, staff, and technology are a few examples of what Alfred et al. (2009)

labels as tangible resources. Each of these tangible resources was mentioned by members

of the SACS Preparation Team as necessary components that aided their performance and

accomplishment. Members of the team viewed the available resources as another form of

support from the president to assist them in accomplishing the assigned task of

reaffirmation. For example, according to one team member,

> We had the full support of the college. We developed a budget and identified
> what was needed to complete the self-study. We included reassigned time,

additional clerical and technical support was provided, upgraded computers were purchased for editors, dedicated meeting space was provided as well as professional development opportunities. Any materials we requested were provided. We were provided whatever resources we needed.

Members shared that the self-study took priority over any other commitment and that there was never any question about having access to needed tangible resources to complete the reaffirmation process. Members confirmed that the president was willing to do whatever was necessary to ensure that they would have the best opportunity to be reaffirmed. The team leader stated,

> The president budgeted sufficient resources to allow for sufficient personnel and equipment letting the college know that we take accreditation seriously. We also had a ton of professional development during this process, primarily because of changes to part of the SACS Principles.

The president had this to say about the role of tangible resources in the process.

> You have to be first and foremost accredited, that gives you that stamp of approval. When it comes to SACS you have to make it a priority in terms of allocating dollars for it. That's just a part of the way it works. You have to allocate the money for the needs to get this completed. You know the visit is coming. You know there are going to be certain expectations.

Tangible resources drive much of what is possible in organizations and is a needed component in building institutional capacity (Alfred et al., 2009; Shults, 2008). Clerical and technical support was secured to release team members to complete tasks that only they could complete. Leadership used tangible resources strategically to expand the team's potential for success by amplifying the team member's ability to perform using their strengths and skill sets in the most effective way possible (Alfred et al., 2009; Hamel & Prahalad, 1989).

Intangible Resources

Intangible resources are the nonmaterial assets that help or hinder a college's ability to achieve goals. Intangible resources include people, culture, time, policies, and

processes (Alfred et al., 2009). According to the SACS Preparation Team members, several intangible resources played a role in the successful reaffirmation visit. These resources included having the right people on the team, valuing the knowledge of team members, and providing members with professional development as a tool for effectively completing their assigned task.

The Right People

The role of human resources is invaluable to an organization (Alfred et al., 2009; Froman, 2009; Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Analysis of the data for this study confirmed that assertion and revealed the importance of including the right people in the right positions. The college president is particularly proud of the team assembled for SACS reaffirmation. She stated, "We put the right people in the right places and gave them all the tools that they needed to be successful." An important component of leadership is to identify talent and ability in others. High performance is not possible without top administrators acquiring, developing, and retaining the best talent (Alfred et al., 2009; Bandow, 2001).

When it comes to acquiring talent, it is important to hire for fit according to the institution mission and culture. The people hired influence and refine the culture of the institution (Alfred et al., 2009; Bandow, 2001; Schein, 1992; Shults, 2008). The college president takes every hire seriously and becomes involved in the hiring process personally if an individual will engage in the broader community while representing the institution. She wants to ensure that a professional image is portrayed and that the college is well represented. "I don't interview every position on campus but if you're

going to go out and be recruiting for the college, I want to know what you look like and I want to know what you sound like."

Developing talent is something the president takes seriously as well. She asserted that this team's performance was no accident; rather, it was in part because of years of hard work preparing people in her organization for leadership positions. She explained,

> It didn't happen overnight that we had people like the team leader and the team members in those positions. It was years back of grooming people to take lead in those positions.

The president took the time to groom and mentor members of the team. This provided her the opportunity to pass down her professional values and insight to those who had the desire to use their skills and abilities to contribute more to the organization (Lipscomb, Martin, & Peay, 2009). One of the president's protégés shared her perspective

> I think it's important that we mentor and tap individuals like our team leader. I was kind of tapped as a person back in the '90s because I wanted to do more. I was a teaching faculty, but I wanted to do more, so the president who was academic dean at the time saw some things in me that maybe I never saw in myself. So, I was given the opportunity to do things. I think it's important.

While the mentor relationship was reported by team members as a reason for the team's success, more than one team member talked about the fact that they were involved in a mentoring relationship with one of the team members or the president and shared about how the mentor relationship affected them. Mentoring relationships serve as an essential function in helping those being mentored to develop leadership skills and advance within the organization (Dunbar & Kinnersley, 2011). The mentoring relationships in this study opened up leadership opportunities and helped to shape who team members were as leaders, which had an impact on the team's performance. The team leader's talents and abilities were discovered during the last SACS reaffirmation visit. She worked closely with the former team leader and was groomed to assume

leadership during the next accreditation review. She shared her insight about the

mentoring she received.

> I wasn't just dropped into this cold turkey. I served on the previous steering
> committee for SACS reaccreditation and during that process it became apparent
> that I had a knack for doing assessment and writing these reports. I had someone
> take me under her wing and groom me for the next reaffirmation. She served as
> chair of the college's last reaffirmation. I had a lot of guidance from my mentor.
> She is my mentor, my supervisor, and my strongest supporter. She also was very
> good about getting me on a SACS committee. As soon as we realized that I was
> going to be the person responsible for the next reaffirmation, we contacted the
> commission.

Mentoring is certainly an intangible resource that was used to help team members

to stretch and grow professionally. Mentoring is not a part of the CCAM framework

(Alfred et al., 2009), nor is it specifically mentioned in the other positive literature that

influences the CCAM. Mentoring relationships nonetheless played a role in leadership

development of the team leader and team members, and mentoring clearly made a

difference. Alfred et al. (2009) state that effective leaders must possess the ability to

identify and multiply talent. Leaders must search for quality staff, both inside and

outside of the organization and then work to develop that talent because it has the ability

to elevate performance and transform organizational culture. The college president has

worked hard over the years to ensure that she has people on her team who she identifies

as "high performers."

> I expect the people that I work with to be driven and passionate and do a good
> job. I like working with high performers. I think when you are at this level you
> need to be a high performer.

Institutional Knowledge

The people factor has become the dominant driver for organizational success.

This is especially true in a knowledge-driven economy where the most valuable asset of

the company is the knowledge and skills of the staff (Andreou, Green & Stankosky,

2007; Shults, 2008).

Given the nature of the task, the right person to include on the team is a

knowledgeable person. The team members in this study have longevity with the

institution and are extremely knowledgeable about the college's policies, procedures, and

practices. This proved to be helpful in responding to the accreditation principles. The

team leader shares that she believes that knowledge is a reason why she was chosen to

participate. "I believe I was chosen because of my . . . knowledge of the institution and

SACS requirements." A team member shared why she believes she was chosen.

> Longevity with the college, past experience as chair of the college SACS steering
> committees, served as a member of both onsite and off-site accreditation
> committees experience in strategic planning and institutional effectiveness,
> excellent organization and communication skills, and excellent working
> relationships with all areas of the college.

The team leader and her mentor shared an incident where having knowledge made a

difference in how the response was written:

> The most challenging situation I experienced was discovering that two of the
> individuals were assigned responsibility for completing specific sections of the
> compliance report were not able to complete their assignments. In both instances,
> the individuals simply did not know how to write the responses because they
> didn't have the knowledge. It's hard to take back responsibility after it's been
> assigned without causing embarrassment or hurting someone's feelings. My
> mentor offered suggestions for approaching the individuals. In both instances, the
> individuals told me that the finished product was much better than anything they
> could have written.

In addition to knowledge of the daily practices of the institution, several of the

team members had actually served as members of both a SACS on-site and off-site

committee for other institutions outside of the state. The team found this experience

beneficial as well because they understood what SACS would expect in the compliance

and focused reports. One of the team members summed it all up with this questionnaire

response: "We assured we had a competent team, plenty of financial and human resources to get the job done in plenty of time. In addition, we had knowledgeable individuals leading the process."

Professional Development

In addition to putting the right people in place, the president stated that team members were provided with necessary tools in order to be successful." Professional development was one of the biggest tools provided to the team members. The team leader and some members were sent to conferences sponsored by SACS designed to increase understanding about the SACS principles. Books were purchased for faculty leaders to read and review to expand their understanding of institutional effectiveness and the learning outcomes process. The author of one purchased book was brought to campus to share a perspective on the topic of institutional effectiveness. Providing professional development opportunities for people communicates that they are valuable and that leadership is willing to invest in them, and it puts people at the center of unit and organization (Alfred et al., 2009). The team leader provided this response to study prompt about professional development.

> We had a ton of professional development during the reaffirmation process, primarily because of changes to parts of the SACS Principles. We offered professional development on accreditation practices, on the assessment of learning outcomes. We purchased a book on learning outcomes for Program Coordinators to gain a better understanding, and we brought the author in to present a professional development session.

Professional development did not always come from outside sources because members shared how internal professional development provided opportunities for people to learn and grow. One of the team members stated, "Interviews were conducted with people and departments in which they do not normally have contact with gave them

an opportunity to meet and get to know more about other individual." Another team

member shared that "people gained a better understanding of all areas of the college,

getting to know other people and learn about their contributions to the college." Another

team member talked about how the reaffirmation process became a team building process

stating.

> As we went through the different stages, individuals began to respect other areas
> of the college, and in areas where we had challenges, individuals worked to be in
> compliance as they wanted the college to have a positive self-study experience.

In order to complete the process of responding to accreditation standards

effectively, the right people had to be involved. Those people had to have knowledge of

the policies, procedures, and practices of the institution, and they had to have an

opportunity to gain necessary information about the accreditation process that came

through professional development

Conclusions

This study sought to identify reasons for the high performance of a community

college accreditation preparation team. Accreditation is vital to institutions of higher

education by saying that the institution meets the standards set forth by the accrediting

body and offers a quality educational experience. Work teams are also vital to the

institution because much of the work completed in organizations is at the team level

(Yost &Tucker, 2000). It is therefore important to look at what contributes to the success

of the team because team performance and effectiveness affects organizational

performance (Senior, 1997).

The team studied was created by the president for a specific purpose and for a

specific amount of time. While tangible resources were necessary and certainly

contributed to the success of the team, it was leadership's leveraging of the intangible

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resources that contributed significantly to the team's performance. It was the knowledge and skills possessed not only by the team leader but also the team members and most certainly the president that collectively produced great team performance which yielded such great results.

Research findings indicate that the reason for the success of this team can be directly linked to members' ability to leverage the intangible resources the greatest of which is people-their tacit knowledge, their skill sets, and their proper placement or role assignment. Adequate tangible resources were budgeted and made available to the committee. These resources provided the team with opportunities to secure additional clerical assistance which released them to accomplish other important steps of the process. Another notable intangible resource leveraged for the group's success was their culture: The culture of this team drove them to high performance. From their perspective, they have a culture of evidence that requires them to make data-informed decisions, and they have a culture of excellence where in their words "nothing is left to chance," but every aspect is planned and rehearsed. The SACS Preparation Team exhibited the culture of the institution. Everyone understood that her or his best was required, and team members strived to be the best at their given responsibility. These findings can certainly be considered when developing an ad hoc committee or work team to accomplish a major task in any organization.

High-performing teams in various contexts have consistently been distinguished by such features as their collaborative climate, goal clarity, cohesiveness, composition, and standards of excellence. Many variables that have been associated with high performing teams in industry and other environments are associated with the success of teams in an

educational setting (Robbins & Fredendall, 2001). Crucial to the performance of teams are the abilities and behaviors of their members. The roles that team members play are also important for success (Senior, 1997). As the abilities, behaviors, and roles of individuals are vital to a team's success, it makes sense to study teams that have met and even exceeded expectations. Accordingly, this study, informed by scholarship that focuses on learning from organizational success, as opposed to failure, undertakes an examination of a successful SACS Preparation Team.

Recommendations

The findings of this study emphasize the important role that teams play in organizational success and the role that leadership plays in the team level success. When appointing an ad hoc committee to complete a specific project within a specific time frame, it is important to understand that teams must be comprised of the right people who have the right skills and abilities to complete the assigned project. Team members should be assigned to tasks that align with their strengths. The team leader must be trusted and respected by both team members and organizational leadership and will be most effective if supported and empowered by the organizational leader. Team members and organizational members must be made aware of the team leader's autonomy to make decisions and requests. Finally, it is important that leaders within the organization continue to seek out those among them with potential to lead then groom and mentor them for future positions. The training these future leaders receive combined with their knowledge of the organization and proven initiative will be invaluable to the success of the organization.

Appendices

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Looking at Accreditation through the Lens of Positive Organizational Functioning

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the positive organizational functioning of an Accreditation Preparation Team because you played a role in your institution's reaffirmation process. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be one of 30 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Alissa Young, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky Department of Education Policy Studies and Evaluation, is the person in charge of this study. She is guided in this research by Neal Hutchens and Tricia Brown-Ferrigno. Other research team members who may assist with this study are Susan Berry, Lewis Burke Jr., and Michael Stapleton. They are all members of the same doctoral program.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study will explore reasons for exceptional performance of some community college organizational units. We hope to learn about how exceptional functioning of this accreditation preparation team is influenced by positive characteristics of the team's staff and their functioning as a unit.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You may decline participation without harm.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place at West Kentucky Community and Technical College. Participants will assemble in the small conference room in Carson Hall on the agreed to date for an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. These interviews will take place during the month of May or June 2011. Volunteers will also be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire with open ended questions which will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Participants will also be asked to complete a paper questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The total amount of time a participant will be asked to volunteer is 1 hour and 45 minutes in the month of May or June 2011.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

Participants will be asked to respond to questions and share thoughts about leadership, the use of resources and the performance of the accreditation preparation team both individually and collectively. Participants will be interviewed. The questions will ask the participants to reflect on perceptions of leadership, resources and team functioning. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be asked to review the transcripts from the interview to confirm responses. The researchers will discuss and compile the major themes that emerge.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no risks or discomforts.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not get any personal benefit from the study.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Participation is this study is not mandatory. Participants will take part in the study simply because they choose to.   No loss of benefits or rights will occur if someone chooses not to participate.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES
There are no other choices if an individual chooses not to participate in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

No one will receive any rewards or payment for participating in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

Every effort will be made to keep private all research records that identify participants to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All data will remain in the possession of the researchers or be kept in a locked cabinet or password protected system at the researchers' office.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

Participants can choose to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Alissa Young at alissa.young@kctcs.edu or 270-707-3717. If you have any questions

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent   Date

Instruments

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

Looking at Accreditation through the Lens of Positive Organizational Functioning

This study is focusing on the things that help make organizations successful and why they work. This questionnaire is interested in your views and opinions about what works and why concerning the functioning of your SACS Preparation Team.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Please respond to the questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible.
This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1. Why do you believe you were chosen to participate on the accreditation preparation team?

2. What were your position responsibilities as a member of the team?

3. In what ways were you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

4. What did you bring to this team that contributed to its success?

5. What opportunities did team members have to learn and grow during this process?

6. What qualities of the leaders of the team made them effective?

7. What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

8. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

9. How did leadership help you get through a challenging situation during the process?

10. How did the team utilize their limited time to their best advantage?

Individual Interview Guide

Looking at an Accreditation Preparation Team through a Positive Lens

This interview will take about 45 minutes of your time. We will use the following questions as a starting point for discussions about the high functioning of this unit. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Some questions are related to the perceptions and use of resources. For this study, resources are divided into two categories, tangible and intangible. Tangible resources include: positions, finances, facilities, equipment and technology. Intangible resources include: culture, climate, processes, systems, staff capabilities, and tacit knowledge.

Interview questions and sample probes:

- Tell me about how the goals for this team were communicated.

- Talk about cohesiveness and trust of the team during the preparation process.

- How do leaders embrace and reward, risk, and change?

- How were you able to get the results at the completion of the reaffirmation process?

- What is your understanding of leveraging intangible resources?

- Discuss the team's priorities of focusing on tangible or intangible resources.

- In general, how well did team members embrace change?

- In what areas are members of your unit willing to try new ways of doing things?

- Please provide examples of how the team performed beyond expectations?

- Share with me a time when the team had to overcome a roadblock.

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Chapter 4

A Positive Approach to Leadership Development: A Practitioner's Story

Effective community college leadership is critical to meeting the societal needs of the 21st century (Boggs, 2003). Leading community colleges is more complex and demands a greater range of skills as our society uses knowledge in a more specialized way (Romero, 2004; Boggs, 2003). New leaders for community colleges must be grounded in knowledge and research about leadership development to truly prepare themselves for the environment in which they will operate (Alfred, Shults, Jaquette, & Strickland, 2009; Romero, 2004; Shults, 2008). An upswing in highly publicized corporate scandals, management malfeasance, and broader societal challenges has contributed to the recent attention placed on authenticity and authentic leadership. The convergence of these challenges has elicited appeals for more positive forms of leadership in institutions and organizations to restore confidence in all levels (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The unique stressors facing organizations today demand a leadership approach that can deal with current challenges but more importantly restore basic confidence in moral and ethical conduct.

Leadership development programs must set out new role models for emerging leaders to emulate. These programs must address the policy dynamics, research and practice skills along with values and behaviors that support and affirm the various climates in which community college leaders work (Romero, 2004). Leadership is a crucial component to organizational effectiveness, and even leaders who have natural abilities must practice and train in order to strengthen existing abilities. Leaders must also be trained and educated in new skills and abilities. Leaders must acquire the

knowledge and behaviors needed in order to be effective in creating resilient

organizations staffed with resilient employees who are ready to take on the challenges of

the current academic environments (Abdullah, 2009).

Leadership Perspectives

Leadership holds different meanings for different people (Eddy, 2010), and there

are more than a hundred definitions of leadership in the literature (Hernon & Rossiter,

2006). Kezar & Lester (2011) describe leadership as an effort by groups or individuals to

create change. Similarly, Kotter (1996) describes leadership as a set of processes that

creates organizations and then adapts them to significantly changing circumstances.

Leading organizational change is the essence of leadership and is the process of

influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be

done effectively (Malam, 2008). However, leadership theories are becoming more

complex in response to changing structures and changing demographics (Eddy, 2010).

One emerging concept of leadership offers a strengths-based approach that

promotes positive outcomes for individuals and organizations (Abdullah, 2009). This

type of leadership improves performance, productivity, and overall employee satisfaction

and requires such relationship skills as problem solving, conflict management,

motivation, communication, and listening (Abdullah, 2009: Walvoord, Redden, Elliott, &

Coovert, 2008).

Positive leadership theories include transformational, charismatic, and servant

leadership that are relationship-oriented leadership styles. However, Avolio and Gardner

(2005) propose the need to "concentrate on the root construct underlying all positive

forms of leadership and its development, which is authentic leadership" (p. 316).

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Authentic leaders strive to achieve authenticity. Authenticity is described as owning one's personal experience, thoughts, and emotions while expressing what is genuinely thought or believed. Authenticity occurs through self-awareness, self-acceptance, and authentic actions and relationships. Authentic leadership also extends beyond the authenticity of the leaders as people to encompass authentic relations with followers (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans & May, 2004; Sparrowe, 2005).

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership can restore confidence by coming from individuals who are true to themselves and whose transparency positively develops associates into leaders as well (Sparrowe, 2005). Authentic leaders act in accordance with deep personal values and convictions to build credibility. They win the respect and trust of followers by encouraging diverse viewpoints while building networks of collaborative relationships with followers. Thus authentic leaders lead in a manner that followers recognize as authentic (Avolio et al., 2004). Authentic leaders know who they are and what they think. They are leaders who are aware of the context in which they operate along with their own and others' moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011). Avolio and Gardner (2005) state that becoming an authentic leader is a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities such as confidence, optimism, hope, and resiliency along with a highly developed organizational context. The positive psychological capacities are considered a personal resource of the authentic leader, and when combined with challenges and other stressors, they can heighten the self-awareness and self-regulatory behaviors of the leader and enhance the

process of positive self-development. These are the basic processes needed to develop leadership that promotes veritable, sustainable performance.

Leader self-awareness occurs when people are cognizant of their own existence. It is a process where a person continually comes to understand his or her unique talents, strengths, sense of purpose, core values, beliefs, desires, knowledge, experiences, and capabilities. Self-regulation is the process through which authentic leaders align their values with their intentions and actions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Avolio and Gardner (2005) contend that authenticity is achieved through internally driven regulatory processes, as opposed to external standards or consequences, but Sparrowe (2005) postulates that introspection does not provide a complete picture of the true self. The true self needs on-going clarification that comes from others because one's true self is discovered in relation to others. Sparrowe (2005) promotes a narrative approach to authentic leadership in which others play an essential role in forming the self, whereas, Shamir and Eilam (2005) posit that authentic leadership is based on the leader's self-concept and how the self-concept is expressed in the leader's behavior. The narrative approach (i.e., life stories) provides leaders with an opportunity to express their self-concept through their leadership role. Personal narratives are individuals' identities because their life stories represent an internal model of *who I was, who I am, and who I might become*. Individuals know or discover themselves, and reveal themselves to others by the stories they tell about themselves (Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

My Leadership Story

Eddy (2010) states that individuals generally lead based on how they have learned to lead, mainly through experience and trial and error. Individuals learn from their own

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mistakes and those they have observed in others. This is certainly the case for me. I experienced a great number of trials and errors in my development as a leader. Armed only with the leadership skills modeled before me by the previous administrator, I felt ill-prepared to address many of the challenges I faced, especially regarding personnel. March and Weiner (2003) affirm that administrators of community colleges are commonly neither prepared nor trained to face a tougher and perhaps meaner job than in earlier years thus, those who would lead should understand and be prepared. Leading is extremely important, and it is hard work. Leaders do not just happen. Excellent leadership results from the combination of motivated talent, the right leadership opportunity, and appropriate preparation (Piland & Wolff, 2003).

I feel uniquely qualified to speak to the need for leadership development from a different approach. When I accepted the position of associate dean and moved fully into administration, I inquired about participating in some type of leadership development program. My president approved my attendance at a week-long leadership seminar. I would later go on to participate in another program run by my college system.

At the time of this writing, I was the dean of Academic Affairs at my institution, and I have served in this capacity for four years. Because this was not a position I purposefully selected, I consider myself an accidental leader. The work by Kezar and Lester (2011) suggests that I am not alone. Actually, many mid-level leaders come to their positions accidentally and without intentional career plans. I arrived at this position through what I perceive is a traditional route: I began as teaching faculty and then became the chairperson of my division, but only because it was my turn to serve in that capacity. I then moved to the associate dean position and a couple of years later was

asked to serve as acting academic officer until a search could be conducted and a permanent replacement could be found. While excited for the opportunity, I must admit I felt ill equipped to do the job. I did not have any formal leadership training, and in my mind, I did not possess the characteristics of a good leader. I continually questioned why I was asked to serve in a leadership capacity because I ascribed to the trait theory of leadership. I perceived that true leaders possessed and exhibited specific traits that I did not have, at least not to the degree that I felt I needed them. I thought leaders were smart, confident, bold, decisive, energetic, and charming. I found myself in a leadership position, and I could not figure out why. I served at this institution for several years at this point and worked with three other individuals who held the position before me. I was concerned because I was nothing like my predecessors, but they were the examples that I had.

While I was enlightened by my experiences, it was not until I completed my leadership classes as a part of my doctoral studies that I really began to understand about many of the facets of leadership. One exercise in particular opened my eyes to my own leadership traits, tendencies, and style.

Such "Wimpy" Strengths

During one of the leadership classes, we were given an assignment to complete an assessment revealing our strengths (Rath, 2007). I was disappointed with my results because I thought my strengths were weak and unassertive, and thus, I considered them ineffective. My perception of leadership was based on certain characteristics that I thought leaders possessed, and unfortunately, I did not have them (Abdullah, 2009). Therefore, I struggled with my role as leader. I believed that all leaders were assertive,

charismatic, and extremely intelligent and have all the right answers. My strengths were much softer than those (i.e., empathetic, adaptable, consistent, restorative). "What kind of leader is that?" I asked my professor. "Those are wimpy strengths." Trying to work through my disappointment, I read the descriptions of what the strengths mean, and I became more receptive to them. It would be wonderful to have a leader who truly listens to me, tries to understand what concerns me professionally, and then works to match my passion with an appropriate position at the organization. This combination could yield greater results for me as a professional and the organization for which I work (Alfred et al., 2009). The assessment is telling me I am more than capable of demonstrating that behavior.

The Price of Inauthenticity

The concept of authenticity has its roots in the Greek philosophy: *To thine own self be true.* Authenticity emanates from people who are in tune with themselves, able to clearly and accurately see themselves and their lives (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). This did not describe me at the time. I was not happy about my strengths and thought I needed to be like others to be effective. As a result, I worked at becoming something I was not. As the acting chief academic officer at my institution, I worked hard to be the type of leader I thought my president expected and needed me to be. I understood my role to be a faculty advocate, to ensure that their voices were heard and opinions considered in the decision making process. I was told that I was not assertive enough when working with faculty. I was told that I was too soft. It was a painful experience at times because I felt like I needed to act in a way that was contrary to what my skills, talents, and strengths are. I was being asked to act contrary to who I am as an individual and a leader. I lead in

such a way that was not authentic or real to me. Instead of searching for common ground and finding ways to work with faculty regarding requests and ideas, I found myself often rejecting their requests. I was told that I needed to be tougher, more assertive, and that is what I was striving to become. Rath (2007) asserts that individuals devote more time to their shortcomings than to their strengths and often work to conquer major challenges that in many cases push individuals down a path of most resistance. Each person has greater potential for success in specific areas, and the key to human development is building on one's personal strengths and abilities.

Trying to adjust my way of leading to conform to expectations only made matters worse. I became frustrated, confused, and sometimes angry. In my attempt to be all things to all people, I became ineffective. Avolio and Gardner (2005) state that inauthenticity is when a person is overly compliant with stereotypes and demands related to the leader role. In my effort to assume a leadership position and carry out the responsibilities in the way that I thought was expected of me, I acted outside of my authentic self and thus, paid a heavy price.

Relationships matter in leadership (Eddy, 2010) and are built on trust. Having served in various capacities at my institution for more than 20 years, I knew most of the people who served with me. Faculty knew me as a colleague, and I believe respected me as such. When I moved into administration, I was told by a faculty member that at least there was now an individual in leadership that faculty could trust. I believe I had a great deal of social capital (Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2004), but that self-perception did not last long. Unfortunately, trust can be broken and relationships severed. After serving as the acting chief academic officer for a year, and making many decisions and many

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mistakes, I exhausted all of the capital I had developed over 20 years. Some of my colleagues were not accustomed to my making a decision that they believe adversely affected them. Some faculty no longer felt that I was an advocate and relationships began to suffer. During one of the last exchanges I had with a faculty member prior to moving out of that position, he said, "I just don't feel supported by administration." I remember the hurt and disappointment on his face.

I share this story because I know that I am not the only person that has ever faced these struggles. Perhaps my story can increase awareness for another leader who is wrestling with leadership. Leadership preparation and training are needed and are vital to the success of leaders and the organizations they serve.

Leadership Development

Leadership and leadership development are increasingly seen as a key to developing the effectiveness of educational organizations (Eddy, 2010). The approach taken in the leadership development process is an important component of that effectiveness. Leadership development is one of the most critical responsibilities of presidents and chancellors (Boggs, 2003) and should be ongoing and intentional (Sirkis, 2011). An important component of leadership is to identify talent and ability in others as mentioned in the example. High performance is not possible without top administrators acquiring, developing, and retaining the best talent. It is important to hire the right people, train them to lead, and then provide them with opportunities to lead (Alfred et al., 2009). The best way to affect leadership development may be to encourage individual community colleges to offer leadership development programs for their own faculty and staff (Boggs, 2003).

Historically, community college leadership development includes a mix of on-the-job training, graduate education, and short-term, unconnected leadership training opportunities. Catalfamo (2010) would label them the formal, informal, and non-formal categories of leadership development. Formal leadership development would be considered the pursuit and completion of a degree. An example of informal leadership development consists of mentoring relationships, and non-formal development consists of short-term learning opportunities such as attendance at a workshop or conference. Traditional strategies for preparing community college leaders are disjointed and in many cases ill-suited to meet the challenges leaders will face through the beginning decades of the twenty-first century. Community colleges must take a proactive role in the development of their future leaders and do a better job of preparing them to them to meet the challenges of leadership (Boggs, 2003; Catalfamo, 2010; Piland & Wolf, 2003).

Authentic Leadership Development

Most leadership development programs focus on learning concepts, skills, and behaviors that can be learned in a session or two, but authentic leadership development takes time and cannot be learned in one or two professional development sessions. Authenticity means being true to self. The ability to do this comes through self-awareness and self-regulation occurring through the narrative, reflective process. Shamir and Eilam, (2005) says that self-awareness and self-regulation are achieved through the construction of life-stories. The authors also posit that authentic leadership rests heavily on the self-relevant means the leader attaches to her or his life experience, which is captured in the individual's life-story.

Leadership preparation must include learning concepts, understanding theories, and developing skills. Those components were a major part of my leadership development experiences. Training that I attended provided the knowledge of leadership theories, budgetary matters, conflict management, and communication styles. But it is also important to add a strengths-based positive component to leadership development because it provides balance to the overall picture. It adds a dimension to what is known. If I know what my strengths are, and if I am true to who I am, then I can operate within those strengths authentically and help my unit and my organization function successfully.

Sparrowe (2005) and Shamir and Eilam (2005) espouse a narrative, life-story approach to authentic leadership development. I believe that authentic leadership development must include opportunities to draft a narrative and write life-stories in an effort to discover the self, accept yourself and go on to serve as examples for other developing leaders. Sparrow (2005) lays out a three-step plan that could be followed in authentic leadership development sessions. He suggests using the narrative self by writing life-stores. He says that we can learn from other authentic leaders and should identify them and read about their life-stories. Finally, he recommends asking friends and family to share their perspective of our strengths by relaying them through telling stories about when they saw us at our best.

Being authentic means I have to be true to myself. I have to know who I am and accept myself. The literature tells me that I can do this through narrative life-stories, writing, sharing, and expressing my life story. I now realize that I have been doing this for years. I can now label some of the experiences and emotions that I have had and assign meaning to those experiences. Having meaning makes all the difference in the

world. It is a sense of awareness, a sense of enlightenment- aha moments if you will over the last year or so. This has come through reading the literature and engaging in discussion about my experiences. I did not realize that telling my story, whether writing it or telling it, provides a therapeutic means to release my thoughts and get them outside in order to assign meaning. Authenticity of the self is more than just an introspective exercise (Sparrowe, 2005). It is more than looking within; it is looking without as well. It was not until I shared my life-story reflecting on my thoughts or sharing my thoughts and reflections that I was actually able to see some truths about me and really grow to accept them.

Authentic leadership is not easily or quickly developed. It takes time. Having worked in higher education for more than 20 years, I have built up numerous experiences and learned from those experiences and thus am able to move toward authenticity. I feel that I am not only a leader but also an effective leader. My skill set coupled with the skill set of others in my unit, make it effective. I contribute to the success of my academic affairs unit.

I began to engage in conversation with myself by asking where I fit in all of this. What type of leader am I? Perhaps more importantly, what type of leader did I want to be? Finally, I engaged in conversation with colleagues who shared their perceptions and reminded me that it is okay to be me and that I really am a leader. This proactive initiative on my part developed the awareness or perhaps provided a reminder of who I am discovered through literature, introspection, and conversations with colleagues, family, and friends. I believe this process would be beneficial to others.

Writing one's life-story is therapeutic and enlightening, and it is a free intangible resource. It provides the opportunity to get at what's inside of you, clarifying it, and making sense of it. I have been reminded during this two-year dissertation process that I am a leader, and I have what it takes to perform the tasks for which I have been assigned. My strengths and skill set are needed by my institution. Armed with this new found confidence, I can hardly wait to tell the rest of the story.

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Chapter 5

Conclusion

In August 2007, a group of students gathered to begin their doctoral studies through a new cohort program offered by the University of Kentucky coursework with the plan to earn a doctorate in education in Educational Policy and Evaluation. It was both an exciting and frightening time. I often questioned whether or not I could complete this process. The coursework was exciting and had an impact on my professional practice.

In August 2010, four members of that same cohort decided to become a team to complete a collaborative dissertation. We were a diverse group in every way, and it took us some time to determine where we wanted to go with this wonderful opportunity of writing a collaborative dissertation. One group member stumbled upon a book that introduced us to a new leadership model based on a study on leadership at the community college level. This model was influenced by positive psychology which looks at what is right, rather than what is wrong. We wanted to know if behaviors and traits of unit members and leaders positively influenced performance. We embarked on a journey that has changed each of us professionally and personally. As a community college administrator, I deal with challenges on a daily basis. While looking at data and reading research articles and newspapers, I am reminded of what is wrong with the community college. It felt good to look at what many units in our colleges are doing right. Abundant units exist at our institutions and throughout our system. It behooves us to study them and glean all we can.

I ended up with perfect team members and the perfect topic. I have lived this study. I have learned so much about myself professionally and personally. I am forever changed! At the time of this writing, my boss is considering changes my position responsibilities. She says based on my strengths, I would be suited to oversee faculty and staff development. Leaders are change agents. Armed with my new found knowledge about strengths-based positions and my passion to assist others in understanding the need for positive leadership development, I can change an institution one person at a time.

I was amazed at what I saw transpire in our team. We each had strengths and interests that actually complimented each other, and once we learned this and decided to do what our research told us, we became like a well-oiled machine. It was actually beautiful to see it unfold. This study has actually helped to remind me of who I am personally and professionally. I have been shaped and molded by what I have studied and learned, and I am forever grateful to my three team mates who patiently taught me it's ok to be me because actually, I am pretty good at it!

Appendices

Appendix A

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

1. What are your position responsibilities in this program unit?

2. What is the relationship between your work and this program's overall performance?

3. In your program unit, what opportunities do staff members have to learn and grow?

4. In what ways are you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

5. What qualities of the formal leaders of your unit make them effective? What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

6. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

7. Give an example of how unit members build upon strengths?

8. Give an example of how unit members value personal assets?

9. How does your unit deliver exceptional value to students?

Appendix B

Consent to Participate in a Research Study

Looking at Accreditation through the Lens of Positive Organizational Functioning

WHY ARE YOU BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH?

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the positive organizational functioning of an Accreditation Preparation Team because you played a role in your institution's reaffirmation process. If you choose to participate in this study, you will be one of 30 people to do so.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY?

Alissa Young, a doctoral student at the University of Kentucky Department of Education Policy Studies and Evaluation, is the person in charge of this study. She is guided in this research by Neal Hutchens and Tricia Brown-Ferrigno. Other research team members who may assist with this study are Susan Berry, Lewis Burke Jr., and Michael Stapleton. They are all members of the same doctoral program.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

This study will explore reasons for exceptional performance of some community college organizational units. We hope to learn about how exceptional functioning of this accreditation preparation team is influenced by positive characteristics of the team's staff and their functioning as a unit.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY?

You may decline participation without harm.

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST?

The study will take place at West Kentucky Community and Technical College. Participants will assemble in the small conference room in Carson Hall on the agreed to date for an interview that will last approximately 45 minutes. These interviews will take place during the month of May or June 2011. Volunteers will also be asked to complete an electronic questionnaire with open ended questions which will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. Participants will also be asked to complete a paper questionnaire which will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The total amount of time a participant will be asked to volunteer is 1 hour and 45 minutes in the month of May or June 2011.

WHAT WILL YOU BE ASKED TO DO?

Participants will be asked to respond to questions and share thoughts about leadership, the use of resources and the performance of the accreditation preparation team both individually and collectively. Participants will be interviewed. The questions will ask the participants to reflect on perceptions of leadership, resources and team functioning. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Participants will be asked to review the transcripts from the interview to confirm responses. The researchers will discuss and compile the major themes that emerge.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS?

There are no risks or discomforts.

WILL YOU BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

Participants will not get any personal benefit from the study.

DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY?

Participation is this study is not mandatory. Participants will take part in the study simply because they choose to.   No loss of benefits or rights will occur if someone chooses not to participate.

IF YOU DON'T WANT TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY, ARE THERE OTHER CHOICES
There are no other choices if an individual chooses not to participate in the study.

WHAT WILL IT COST YOU TO PARTICIPATE?

There are no costs associated with taking part in the study.

WILL YOU RECEIVE ANY REWARDS FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY?

No one will receive any rewards or payment for participating in the study.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT YOU GIVE?

Every effort will be made to keep private all research records that identify participants to the extent allowed by law. Your information will be combined with information from other people taking part in the study. When we write about the study to share it with other researchers, we will write about the combined information we have gathered. You will not be personally identified in these written materials. We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.

We will make every effort to prevent anyone who is not on the research team from knowing that you gave us information, or what that information is. All data will remain in the possession of the researchers or be kept in a locked cabinet or password protected system at the researchers' office.

We will keep private all research records that identify you to the extent allowed by law. However, there are some circumstances in which we may have to show your information to other people. We may be required to show information which identifies you to people who need to be sure we have done the research correctly; these would be people from such organizations as the University of Kentucky.

CAN YOUR TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY?

Participants can choose to discontinue participation in the study at any time.

WHAT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS, CONCERNS, OR COMPLAINTS?
Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Alissa Young at alissa.young@kctcs.edu or 270-707-3717. If you have any questions

_____   _____
Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study   Date

_____
Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

_____   _____
Name of [authorized] person obtaining informed consent   Date

Appendix C

Questionnaire for Leadership and Resources Perceptions

Looking at Accreditation through the Lens of Positive Organizational Functioning

> This study is focusing on the things that help make organizations successful and why they work. This questionnaire is interested in your views and opinions about what works and why concerning the functioning of your SACS Preparation Team.
>
> Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.
>
> Please respond to the questions as honestly and in as much detail as possible.
> This survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete.

1. Why do you believe you were chosen to participate on the accreditation preparation team?

2. What were your position responsibilities as a member of the team?

3. In what ways were you empowered to carry out your position responsibilities?

4. What did you bring to this team that contributed to its success?

5. What opportunities did team members have to learn and grow during this process?

6. What qualities of the leaders of the team made them effective?

7. What qualities of the informal leaders of your unit make them effective?

8. Describe techniques used by leadership to make everyone feel like an integral part of the unit?

9. How did leadership help you get through a challenging situation during the process?

10. How did the team utilize their limited time to their best advantage?

Individual Interview Guide

Looking at an Accreditation Preparation Team through a Positive Lens

This interview will take about 45 minutes of your time. We will use the following questions as a starting point for discussions about the high functioning of this unit. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw your participation at any time without consequence.

Some questions are related to the perceptions and use of resources. For this study, resources are divided into two categories, tangible and intangible. Tangible resources include: positions, finances, facilities, equipment and technology. Intangible resources include: culture, climate, processes, systems, staff capabilities, and tacit knowledge.

Interview questions and sample probes:

1. Tell me about how the goals for this team were communicated.

2. Talk about cohesiveness and trust of the team during the preparation process.

3. How do leaders embrace and reward, risk, and change?

4. How were you able to get the results at the completion of the reaffirmation process?

5. What is your understanding of leveraging intangible resources?

6. Discuss the team's priorities of focusing on tangible or intangible resources.

7. In general, how well did team members embrace change?

8. In what areas are members of your unit willing to try new ways of doing things?

9. Please provide examples of how the team performed beyond expectations?

10. Share with me a time when the team had to overcome a roadblock.

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Educational Institutions Attended and Degrees Awarded

Murray State University   Master's Degree, Organizational Communications

Murray State University   Bachelor's Degree, News Editorial Broadcasting

Professional Positions

Hopkinsville Community College

January 2012 – Present	Dean of Academic Affairs
January 2011 – December 2011	Acting Chief Academic Affairs Officer
July 2007 – December 2010	Dean of Academic Affairs
November 2005 – June 2007	Acting Chief Academic Affairs Officer
August 2003 – October 2005	Associate Dean for Academic Extensions
July 1998 – July 2003	Chairperson for the Fine Arts and Humanities Division
August 1991 – July 2003	Faculty

Honors and Awards

- Leadership Fort Campbell Graduate, 2004

- National Institute for Leadership Development Graduate, 2003

- KCTCS President's Leadership Seminar Graduate, 2001