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Juston C. Pate

Maysville Community and Technical College, juston.pate@kctcs.edu

Lance R. Angell

Hopkinsville Community College, lance.angell@kctcs.edu

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Cover Page Footnote

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Juston C. Pate, Maysville Community and Technical College 1755 U.S. HWY 68, Maysville, KY 41056 E-mail: juston.pate@kctcs.edu

**Factors Community College Faculty
Consider Important to Academic Leadership**

Juston C. Pate[*]
Lance R. Angell[†]

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, many concerns have been raised over the number of pending vacancies in academic leadership positions throughout our nation's community colleges (Cooper & Pagotto, 2003; Haynes, 2009; Katsinas & Kempner, 2005; O'Banion, 2007; Shults, 2001). Wholesale retirements could leave a significant void in the leadership of our community college system if we are not taking measures to prepare the next generation of leaders (Campbell, 2006; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Shults, 2001). As bureaucratic organizations, higher educational structures require some measure of academic administration; therefore the positions being vacated will most certainly be filled. Given this reality, efforts should be directed toward finding qualified applicants for these important positions. To take a proactive approach to filling this growing void, leadership development programs dedicated to the community college academic leader would be of significance. The quality of those programs would depend on the efforts given to the identification and inclusion of the necessary leadership traits for the successful academic administrator.

Researchers and authors have written extensively on the nature, scope, and importance of leadership and its relationship with the team and organizational environment (e.g., Bass, 2008; Cohen, 2010; Maxwell, 2007; Smith, Bell, & Kilgo, 2004). Leaders play a large role in the organization's vision, direction, employee morale, integrity, level of communication, values, trust, respect, and overall effectiveness and success. This literature has been extended to the applications and responsibilities of leadership in higher education (e.g., Bowen & Shapiro, 1998; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Henkel, 2002; Johnston, 2003;

[*] Juston C. Pate is Chief Academic Officer at Maysville Community and Technical College. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Juston C. Pate, Maysville Community and Technical College 1755 U.S. HWY 68, Maysville, KY 41056 Email: juston.pate@kctcs.edu
[†] Lance R. Angell is Dean of Institutional Effectiveness at Hopkinsville Community College.

Rich, 2006; Saleh, 2001) and the community college (e.g., Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Haynes, 2009; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hrabak, 2011; McNair, 2010; Townsend & Bassoppo-Moyo, 1997; Vaughan, 1986). It is important to study the aspects of quality leadership, particularly quality academic leadership, if we are to understand the qualities we should seek in potential leaders to fill the growing administrative vacancies in our nation's community colleges.

DISCUSSION OF ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

The success of community colleges is closely aligned to the productivity of its leadership (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Rich, 2006). The leadership of an institution is responsible for making decisions that affect the lives and responsibilities of the faculty, staff, and students of the college. Academic leadership in higher education requires a unique approach of both business strategies and academic traditions (Hebert-Swartzer & McNair, 2010; Henkel, 2002; Johnston, 2003). The academic integrity of the institution must be upheld to ensure the mission of the college is accomplished and the standards of accreditation are met. However, given the fact that the college business model usually includes an independent finance structure, the institution must ensure proper fiscal management in order to continue its daily operations and support its academic programs.

The managerial responsibilities of academic administrators include managing conflict (Spiller, 2010); budgetary concerns (Spiller, 2010; Strathe & Wilson, 2006; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005); balancing internal and external demands (Mouewen, 2006); proper policy development, structure, and implementation (Tucker, 1984); and dealing with various political realities and legislative mandates (Henkel, 2002; Rich, 2006). The academic responsibilities of higher educational administrators include the implementation, guidance, and oversight of the promotion and tenure process (Tucker, 1984); faculty governance (Johnston, 2003); academic accountability (Henkel, 2002; Spiller, 2010; Strathe & Wilson, 2006); the development/support of curriculum and pedagogy (Gano-Phillips et al., 2011; Lucas & Associates, 2000; Saleh, 2001); and establishing, monitoring, and maintaining collegiality (Fullan & Scott, 2009; Gano-Phillips et al., 2011; Ramsden, 1998).

These roles are often contradictory to one another and provide a great deal of stress for those in academic leadership positions, leading many administrators to leave their positions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Gmelch, 2000; Sessa & Taylor,

2000; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005). Additionally, academic leaders at the community college level are facing difficult situations with declining or uncertain budgets (Basham & Raghu, 2010; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Johnstone, 1999) and increased accountability (Henkel, 2002; Maslin-Ostrowski, Floyd, & Hrabak, 2011; Rich, 2006; Strathe & Wilson, 2006), further serving to push community college leaders toward retirement or other career options. Given that there are insufficient leadership development programs in place to fill these voids (Gmelch, 2000; Sessa & Taylor, 2000; Wolverton, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005), attention should be given by individual institutions, state systems, and higher educational oversight agencies to develop programs to help support successful transition into academic leadership positions.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

The need to cultivate succession plans and leadership development programs is clear, but the structure of these programs should be carefully considered given the wide range of responsibilities assigned to our academic leaders. Although literature has pointed to the need for potential academic leaders to learn from current academic leaders (Campbell, 2006; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Shults, 2001), little attention has been paid to the need for potential academic leaders to learn from current members of the faculty. Lucas (1994) suggested that because of the dual nature of academic leadership, the preparation for academic leaders must be twofold: managerial and academic.

There is much to be gained in the preparation of our future academic leaders from the insights and perspectives of the leadership traits those in the faculty role consider important to academic administration. Understanding the needs of the faculty puts academic leaders in a better position to lead the academic units of the college (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006). It is important for faculty to feel engaged and aligned with the work of the institution and its leaders in order to increase job satisfaction and performance (Coates et. al., 2010). Allowing faculty to have a role, or at least a voice, in the preparation of our future academic leaders could provide valuable insight for an academic leader's efforts to align the work of the institution with the work of faculty.

There are many benefits of assessing and considering the views of the faculty when creating a leadership development program for academic administrators. Many in the field of leadership have long held that the views of

the led must be considered when making a determination of the potential effectiveness of the leader (Bass, 2008; Hollander, 1992; Stewart, 1982). When those in followership positions have the confidence that their leader is working to ensure the organization's values and principles are protected, they will be more likely to be engaged with that leader. Bass (2008) noted, "It seems obvious that if leaders and their subordinates, individually or in groups, share the same approaches, values, and attitudes, they will be more satisfied with their relationship and experience less conflict and more mutual support" (p. 433).

In an effort to discover what leadership traits faculty consider detrimental to positions within academic administration and the leadership traits considered beneficial to academic leadership, the researchers attempted to answer the following research questions: (a) What factors do community college faculty consider important to academic administration? (b) Do community college faculty perceive certain leadership attributes to be missing from community college leaders?

For the purposes of this study, academic leadership has been defined as any position with supervisory capacity over community college faculty. These positions include, but are not limited to, the division chair, department chair, associate dean, coordinator of academic programs, dean, chief academic officer, and president. The nature of the relationship between the faculty member and the academic leader were not considered. Rather, attention was given to the faculty member's perception of the leadership qualities academic administrators must possess.

METHOD

Participants

All full-time faculty members from six of the 16 Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) districts were e-mailed a link to participate in an Academic Leadership survey, of which 162 out of a possible 765 (21.2%) completed the questionnaire. The survey consisted of items relating to faculty perceptions of leadership skills and their relation to academic leadership effectiveness. The questionnaire used in this study was developed by the researchers based on an extensive review of leadership literature and validated by practicing community college administrators. The administrators who validated the instrument were six chief academic officers, three vice presidents, four

provosts, and two presidents. Twenty-eight percent of respondents were from the western third of the commonwealth, 36% were from the central third, and 28% were from the eastern third. Eight percent did not indicate their geographical location. The range of years of service in a postsecondary institution was 1 – 45, with a median of 12 years.

Participants were asked to provide basic demographic information along with an assessment of their duties, years of service, and general institutional descriptors. Institutional data included location, size, and propensity to hiring internal versus external academic leaders. Respondents were then asked to rate on a Likert-type scale their level of agreement with 16 items pertaining to the leadership effectiveness of academic leaders. Subsequently, they were asked to provide the five attributes they considered most important to quality academic leadership. Finally, respondents were asked to rate the magnitude of 20 items that can compromise a leader's effectiveness.

RESULTS

Validity

The effective leadership characteristics in the first scale should factor unidimensionally due to the general nature of the items, and an orthogonal principal components analysis supported this structure. All but one item on the first scale, *(Is Willing to Delegate)*, loaded strongly on one component (termed Leadership Competence). Cronbach's alpha was 0.97. This component explained 13% of the variance.

The Leadership Error scale should be unidimensional as well, and that was the case. Alpha was 0.96, and this component explained 12% of variance. Seven of 20 items (*Says Nothing at All; Being too Ambitious; Conducting Ineffective Meetings; Being Arrogant; Being "Buddies" with Other Employees; Focusing on Policy, not People; and Being Unwilling to Delegate*) had no bearing on the factor. See Table 1 for the factor loadings of these first two components.

Factors Considered Important to Academic Leadership

A review of the descriptive and frequency statistics provided useful data in making a determination of what leadership attributes community college faculty in the state of Kentucky considered to be important to academic administration.

Respondents were asked to provide the five attributes they considered most important to successful academic leadership. Of the 148 respondents who completed this list, communication, honesty, integrity, listening, and fair/ethical behavior were the top five attributes identified by the faculty. Table 2 indicates the 20 most important leadership attributes suggested by the faculty along with the frequency of each response.

TABLE 1

FACTOR LOADINGS

Factor 1	Loading	Factor 2	Loading
Is a strong communicator	0.88	Communicating inaccurately	0.70
Recognizes my achievements	0.87	Blaming others for failure	0.85
Accepts responsibility for	0.86	Taking credit for others' ideas	0.85
failure	0.86	Having a poor work ethic	0.86
Upholds academic integrity	0.78	Being dishonest with the team	0.86
Focuses on people, not policy	0.80	Lacking follow-through	0.81
Is honest	0.85	Not setting clear goals	0.82
Follows through on objectives	0.88	Having low expectations	0.79
Supports my development	0.82	Not knowing their workers' jobs	0.78
Sets high expectations	0.84	Resisting change	0.82
Knows something about me	0.86	Breeching ethics	0.82
Knows something about my job	0.85	Lacking self-confidence	0.76
Conducts effective meetings	0.88	Having poor people skills	0.78
Embraces change	0.90		
Inspires me to embrace change	0.83		
Understands academia			

Respondents were also asked to rate the magnitude of several mistakes academic leaders could make. Table 3 indicates the top ten mistakes as identified by the 159 respondents who completely addressed the item as *moderately high magnitude* or *high magnitude*. These items received 70% or higher respondent ratings of moderate or high magnitude. Other items included (in decending order of importance): No Communication, Resisting Change, Having Low Expectations, Not Knowing what their Faculty Do, Lacking Self-Confidence, Focusing on Policies instead of People, Conducting Ineffective Meetings, Being Buddies with Their Faculty, Arrogance, and Being Too Ambitious.

TABLE 2

LEADERSHIP ATTRIBUTES CONSIDERED

IMPORTANT BY COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY

Leadership Attribute	Frequency	Leadership Attribute	Frequency
Communication	120	Trustworthiness	19
Honesty	54	Organization	18
Integrity	42	Encouraging/Motivating	17
Listens/Collects Feedback	30	Recognize Others	16
Fair/Ethical	28	Teamwork/Collaboration	15
Knowledge of Academics	27	Intelligence	14
Vision/Goal Setting	25	Adaptability/Flexibility	13
Follows Through	25	Respect	12
Supports Development	21	Leading by Example	12
Delegation	19	Caring/Compassionate	12

TABLE 3

MAGNITUDE OF LEADERSHIP MISTAKES MADE BY ACADEMIC LEADERS

Mistake	Percentage Ranked Moderately High or High Magnitude	Percentage Ranked High Magnitude Only
Blaming Others for Failure	93.1	75.5
Being Dishonest	93.0	83.5
Taking Credit for Others' Ideas	92.8	73.2
Unethical Behavior	90.5	81.0
Poor Work Ethic	90.5	70.9
Exhibiting Poor People Skills	85.5	58.9
Not Following Through on Objectives	84.8	48.7
Having Unclear Goals	82.3	38.0
Inaccurate Communication	75.8	45.5
Unwilling to Delegate	70.4	33.2

DISCUSSION

Faculty valued very highly many of the attributes we would expect to find in quality leaders. Significant demographic differences existed among the respondents pertaining to certain aspects of leadership and the level to which they scrutinized internal versus external hires. This is not surprising due to the comprehensive nature of many community colleges. Differing backgrounds are often prevalent among the faculty. These differences would likely lead individual faculty members to vary in their expectations for the individual leadership attributes and the relative importance of hiring internal versus external candidates. Also, it could be assumed that having a longtime relationship with many internal candidates could serve to positively skew an individual's assessment of the leader.

In a review of the leadership traits most valued by community college faculty members, communication was clearly the most important characteristic. Nearly three quarters of the faculty surveyed identified communication as one of the top five traits associated with strong academic leadership. Attributes of high moral character (honesty, integrity, fair/ethical treatment, trustworthiness); sound decision-making (vision, listening/collecting feedback, intelligence, knowledge of academic practices, organization); teamwork (delegation, teamwork/collaboration, adaptability/flexibility); work ethic (follow-through, leading by example); and the development of strong relationships (recognition of achievement, encouragement/motivation, support for faculty development, respect, caring) were also identified as being important to faculty.

These findings align with the results obtained from a 2010 survey conducted by Cipriano and Riccardi (2012) to ascertain the most important skills required of academic department chairs across the nation. The top five skills identified as essential to academic leadership were (a) ability to communicate effectively, (b) character/integrity, (c) leadership skills, (d) interpersonal skills, and (e) decision-making ability.

When asked to identify the magnitude of leadership mistakes made by academic leaders, similar themes emerged. The faculty rated most highly the mistakes related to the leader's willingness to accept responsibility for failure (Blaming Others for Failure, Taking Credit for Others' Ideas); character (Being Dishonest, Unethical Behavior); work ethic (Poor Work Ethic, Not Following Through on Objectives); personal relationships (Exhibiting Poor People Skills,

Communicating an Inaccurate Message, Being Unwilling to Delegate); and vision (Having Unclear Goals).

While many institutions take great care to hire quality individuals when filling vacant positions, success in a previous job does not necessarily translate to success in a leadership role (Bass, 2008). This reality has led to the creation of many post baccalaureate, independent, and internal leadership development programs. When developing these training programs for future academic leaders, strong consideration should be given to the improvement of communication skills so future academic administrators will understand the importance of personal interactions and the fostering of understanding amongst faculty and academic divisions. Consideration should also be given to the development of the specific skills relating to the moral responsibilities of leadership, character development, decision-making, teamwork, accountability, and work ethic.

Likewise, when looking to hire academic leaders, institutions should seek individuals who demonstrate strong communication skills, ethical behavior, knowledge of academic procedures and traditions, and the ability to maintain a strong vision necessary to meet the demands/expectations of the faculty. It is a common practice for search committees to have a requisite list of desired characteristics by which candidates will be measured. Having knowledge of the leadership attributes found to be of importance to the faculty will help ensure that the characteristics identified as requisites of those leaders will better align with the expectations of those they will lead.

Of course, there are aspects of academic leadership and administration that cannot be ignored that did not surface in this survey such as budgeting, interacting with external constituencies, policy development/implementation, and personnel review procedures. This research was not intended to provide an exhaustive list of the necessary leadership attributes for successful academic administration. Rather, it was meant to provide insight into the attributes community college faculty members consider important to those in leadership positions. The findings in this article should help to provide a more well-rounded view of the expectations placed on community college leaders from the perspective of the faculty. These findings are applicable to future efforts in the training and hiring of community college academic leaders.

Limitations

The current study has limitations that should be addressed in future studies of a similar nature. This study was limited to two-year, public institutions in Kentucky. Also, the nature of the interpersonal relationships between the faculty and their academic administrator(s) and the varying background of the individual faculty members were not considered. Only the factors perceived to be important were discussed. Future studies should consider faculty from other states and other areas of higher education, the backgrounds of the individual faculty members, and the nature of the relationship between the faculty member and the academic leader.

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