2016

Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership at a Kentucky Community College

Andrea Rae Borregard

University of Kentucky, aborregard@roadrunner.com
Digital Object Identifier: http://dx.doi.org/10.13023/ETD.2016.095

Click here to let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
Borregard, Andrea Rae, "Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership at a Kentucky Community College" (2016). Theses and Dissertations--Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation. 38.
https://uknowledge.uky.edu/epe_etds/38

This Doctoral Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at UKnowledge. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations--Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation by an authorized administrator of UKnowledge. For more information, please contact UKnowledge@lsv.uky.edu.
STUDENT AGREEMENT:

I represent that my thesis or dissertation and abstract are my original work. Proper attribution has been given to all outside sources. I understand that I am solely responsible for obtaining any needed copyright permissions. I have obtained needed written permission statement(s) from the owner(s) of each third-party copyrighted matter to be included in my work, allowing electronic distribution (if such use is not permitted by the fair use doctrine) which will be submitted to UKnowledge as Additional File.

I hereby grant to The University of Kentucky and its agents the irrevocable, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license to archive and make accessible my work in whole or in part in all forms of media, now or hereafter known. I agree that the document mentioned above may be made available immediately for worldwide access unless an embargo applies.

I retain all other ownership rights to the copyright of my work. I also retain the right to use in future works (such as articles or books) all or part of my work. I understand that I am free to register the copyright to my work.

REVIEW, APPROVAL AND ACCEPTANCE

The document mentioned above has been reviewed and accepted by the student’s advisor, on behalf of the advisory committee, and by the Director of Graduate Studies (DGS), on behalf of the program; we verify that this is the final, approved version of the student’s thesis including all changes required by the advisory committee. The undersigned agree to abide by the statements above.

Andrea Rae Borregard, Student
Dr. Beth Goldstein, Major Professor
Dr. Kelly Bradley, Director of Graduate Studies
ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP AT A KENTUCKY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

A COMPANION DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

Andrea Rae Borregard

Lexington, Kentucky

Co-Directors: Dr. Beth Goldstein, Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation and Dr. Willis Jones, Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation

Lexington, Kentucky

Copyright © Andrea Rae Borregard 2016
ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP AT A KENTUCKY COMMUNITY AND TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Community colleges constitute a special type of higher education organization: their complex mission, dynamics, personnel structures, and values require a distinct set of understandings and skills to lead and manage them well. Most of the research on leadership in community colleges focuses on leaders in positions of power (presidents, provosts, etc.) and not on grassroots or bottom-up leadership. Bottom-up leaders are individuals who perpetuate change without having the backing of a formal position of authority to do so. Recent leadership research validates the importance of having change agents at all levels of an organization in order to further the mission of the institution.

This dissertation consists of three primary parts: (1) a technical report written by a three-person research team representing a synthesis of the collaborative research findings on the various leadership pathways that exist in the community college and the factors that influence individuals to engage in leadership efforts; (2) an individual research study on the perspectives of grassroots leaders who have engaged in informal change initiatives at a community college; and (3) an extension of the individual research study that discusses institutional attributes, properties, and/or conditions that foster and encourage grassroots organization.

Individual, in-depth interviews were conducted in order to identify strategies grassroots leaders used to influence top-down leadership and the major obstacles they faced. The conversational nature of these interviews allowed for two-way interactions that lent themselves to a greater understanding of the subjects’ experiences, thoughts, and motives. This study provides a greater focus on understanding the motivations, tactics, obstacles, and sources of resiliency that grassroots leaders use to affect change. The findings indicate that a variety of personal and professional influences affect a grassroots leader’s decision to engage in leadership efforts, that grassroots leaders tailor their tactics and strategies to fit the situation, and that resiliency is essential to the success of their engagement. Finally, this study makes several recommendations administrators can use to promote grassroots leadership on their campuses.
ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP
AT A KENTUCKY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By
Andrea Rae Borregard

Dr. Beth Goldstein
Co-Director of Dissertation

Dr. Willis Jones
Co-Director of Dissertation

Dr. Kelly Bradley
Director of Graduate Studies

04/19/2016
Date
To my parents, who taught me the importance and value of education and to always believe in myself.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Throughout this journey, I have been blessed to receive support and encouragement from many individuals. First, I would like to thank my dissertation co-chairs, Drs. Beth Goldstein and Willis Jones. I am grateful to Dr. Goldstein for her thorough feedback, endless edits, and guidance during this process. Since the first semester of this doctoral program, she has proven to be a constant source of strength and wisdom and has always made herself available to me. I wish to thank Dr. Jones for his ability to always “calm the storm” through rational conversation and his willingness to pitch in and help me work through my research hitches. His support, encouragement, and mentorship were invaluable to me. I thank Dr. David Hellmich for his willingness to give his time and attention to this dissertation. I was fortunate enough to benefit from his academic and professional experience throughout my doctoral studies. I am grateful to Dr. Wayne Lewis for his knowledge and insight into the critical elements of this study. I thank my external examiner, Dr. Tricia Browne-Ferrigno, for her support and encouragement throughout the defense process.

I also wish to thank SKYCTC administrators, specifically Dr. Phillip Neal, for their willingness to allow me to conduct my research at their institution and the research participants who so freely shared their experiences, perspectives, and insights. This study would not have been possible without their open and honest participation. I am also grateful to my OCTC colleagues who have supported and encouraged me along the way.

None of this would have been possible without the support of my dissertation partners, Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner. These two ladies have served as research
companions, sounding boards, and cheerleaders over the past four years. Words cannot express how much they both mean to me and I know that I have gained friends for life. I am grateful for the rest of my fellow UK cohort members, especially Brenda Knight. The countless hours in the car travelling back and forth to class and the conversations we shared about the craziness of our lives truly got me through some very stressful times. I am so grateful to have such a wonderful friend in her.

Finally, I wish to thank my family for their unwavering support throughout this endeavor. I have enjoyed a life full of love and support from my parents, Ray and Ruth Gillaspie, who have always taught me that I can achieve any goal through hard work and perseverance. I had to rely very heavily on both to get me through this program. I have no words to express my gratitude to my husband, Brooke, for allowing me the flexibility and freedom to pursue my dreams. I cannot count the times he’s filled in as chauffeur, cook, tutor, and team dad over the past few years. Finally, I am blessed beyond measure to have two wonderful children, Allie and Chase. I pray that one day they forget all of the activities and events I had to miss and instead recognize that it takes hard work and sacrifice to achieve your dreams.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................... iii

List of Tables .................................................................................................................. ix

List of Figures .................................................................................................................. x

Chapter 1: Introduction ................................................................................................. 1

   Conclusion .................................................................................................................... 5

Chapter 2: Looking to the Future: An In-Depth Study of Influences
   on Leadership Engagement in a Kentucky Community College ....................... 6

   Executive Summary ................................................................................................. 6

      Background ........................................................................................................... 6

      Research Approach .............................................................................................. 7

      Setting .................................................................................................................... 7

      Key Findings .......................................................................................................... 8

      Dominant Themes .................................................................................................. 8

      Recommendations ............................................................................................... 10

   Introduction .............................................................................................................. 11

   Project Focus ........................................................................................................... 11

   Setting ...................................................................................................................... 12

      Site Selection ......................................................................................................... 15

   Leadership Landscape ............................................................................................. 19

   Leadership Crisis in Community Colleges: Three Leadership Perspectives ....... 23

      Grassroots Leaders ............................................................................................... 23

      Faculty ................................................................................................................... 25

      Executive-Level Leaders ....................................................................................... 26

   Research Design ....................................................................................................... 27

      Quantitative Methods .......................................................................................... 27

      Qualitative Methods ............................................................................................ 29

      Ethical Issues ....................................................................................................... 33

   Results ...................................................................................................................... 34

      OCAI – Section 1 (Survey Responses) ................................................................. 34

      OCAI – Section 2 (Strengths/Areas of Improvement) ........................................... 39

      OCAI – Section 3 (Respondent Demography) .................................................... 41

   Findings .................................................................................................................... 41

      Personal Influences that Support Engagement and Administrative

         Aspirations ........................................................................................................... 41

            Affecting Change ........................................................................................... 42

            Commitment to Profession .......................................................................... 44

            Institutional Self-Interest .............................................................................. 46

      Personal Influences that Dissuade Engagement and Administrative

         Aspirations ........................................................................................................... 47

            Challenge of the Role ................................................................................... 47

   Challenge of the Role ............................................................................................... 47
Chapter 3: Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership at a Kentucky Community College

Significance..................................................................................77
Research Questions.........................................................................78
Grassroots Leadership in Higher Education..................................79
Tempered Radicals.........................................................................89
Methodology....................................................................................90
  Research Setting...........................................................................91
  Identification and Recruitment of Participants............................93
  Data Collection and Analysis.......................................................94
Professional Profile..........................................................................96
Findings...........................................................................................99
  Motivation: Individual Grassroots Phenomenon..........................99
    Passion.......................................................................................100
    Commitment to Profession.......................................................101
    Institutional Self-Interest........................................................102
  Tactics.........................................................................................103
    Buy-In.......................................................................................104
    Using Data.................................................................................105
    Professional Development/Raising Consciousness....................106
    Networking.................................................................................107
    Mentorship...............................................................................109
  Obstacles.......................................................................................110
    Divergent Visions/Lack of Solidarity.........................................111

Summary of Findings.......................................................................66
Common Themes and Corresponding Recommendations...............68
  The Desire to Affect Change.......................................................69
  The Importance of Peer/Mentor Influence..................................72
  The Goal of Maintaining a Work/Life Balance...............................74

Institutional Influences..................................................................53
  Culture.........................................................................................53
  Professional Development........................................................56
  Inclusion/Being Asked...................................................................59
  Peers and Mentors........................................................................62
  Promotion......................................................................................64
  Trust............................................................................................65

Motivation: Individual Grassroots Phenomenon..........................99
  Passion.......................................................................................100
  Commitment to Profession.......................................................101
  Institutional Self-Interest........................................................102

Tactics.........................................................................................103
  Buy-In.......................................................................................104
  Using Data.................................................................................105
  Professional Development/Raising Consciousness....................106
  Networking...............................................................................107
  Mentorship...............................................................................109

Obstacles.......................................................................................110
  Divergent Visions/Lack of Solidarity.........................................111
Appendices

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Reflection on Research ................................................................. 146
Reflection on Collaboration ............................................................. 149

Appendices ....................................................................................... 150
Appendix A: Email to Grassroots Interview Participants ......................... 150
Appendix B: Research Subject Informed Consent Form ......................... 151
Appendix C: Grassroots Interview Protocol ........................................ 153
Appendix D: Organizational Culture Assessment Survey – Cover Letter/Email
to Participants ................................................................................. 155
Appendix E: Organizational Culture Assessment Survey ......................... 157
Appendix F: Faculty Interview Protocol ............................................. 163
Appendix G: Executive-Level Leaders Interview Protocol ...................... 166
Appendix H: Research Subject Informed Consent Form ......................... 169
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1: Comparison of Factors on Influence.................................................................8
Table 2.2: Years of Service for KCTCS Presidents as of March 2016..............................14
Table 2.3: OCAI Response Rates by Participant Employment Status.............................35
Table 2.4: Mean Scores of Overall Organizational Culture – All Respondents..............37
Table 2.5: Mean Scores of OCAI of Executive-Level Leaders and Faculty....................39
Table 2.6: Comparison of Factors of Influence .................................................................69
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Overall Organization Culture Profile at SKYCTC – All Respondents ........36

Figure 2.2: Comparison of OCAI Perceptions and Preferences Profiles of Executive-Level Leaders and Faculty .................................................................38
Chapter 1
Introduction

This dissertation is part of a collaborative study that examines the various leadership pipelines that exist in a community college setting. The current emphasis in the community college leadership literature is on determining who will lead our colleges in the changing educational environment. Leadership responsibilities have become more complex in response to growing societal demands. This evolution requires a broad-based leadership structure that calls for leadership at many levels within the institution. The leadership situation in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) emulates the national trend.

This dissertation incorporates three manuscripts that were developed, in part, by a three-person research team. Team members participated in the EdD cohort program at the University of Kentucky (UK), a member at the time of the Carnegie Project on the Education Doctorate (CPED). CPED is a consortium of over 80 college and schools of education, which have committed resources to work together to improve the efficacy and reliability of the professional doctorate in education. The goal of CPED participation is to develop scholarly practitioners who blend practical wisdom with professional skills and knowledge in order to ensure equity and social justice. UK faculty members incorporated this pedagogy throughout the program of study. A unique feature of this EdD program is the option for cohort members to conduct companion dissertations with a common research agenda.

During the last year of coursework, program faculty and cohort members identified potential teams based on mutually accepted research interests and
complimentary skill sets. The research team represented in this dissertation was comprised of myself, Erin Tipton, and Reneau Waggoner. This team had a common interest in community college leadership - specifically in understanding how community college administrators will respond to the numerous leadership vacancies and individual motivation and preparation to assume these roles. The team wanted to explore this problem of practice by focusing on the various pipelines of leadership at one Kentucky community and technical college. As a result of the combination of professional experience, scholarly research, and lengthy discussion regarding site selection, the team committed to an in-depth, mixed-method study of leadership at a single institution. Each team member wanted to focus on a different “level” of leadership within the institution, so each person developed her own research questions with careful consideration of how individual results could be synthesized into a collaborative technical report.

The array of challenges facing community colleges today is unprecedented; leaders must contend with financial pressures, growth in technology, business and industry demands, changing demographics, competing values, and public scrutiny (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Community colleges of the 21st century are calling for leaders who can coordinate his or her activities with other leaders within the institution so that the quality of decisions and the ability of the institution to truly serve its community do not suffer. No single individual possesses all of the leadership skills required to meet the accumulated missions of these institutions. Collaborative structures typically found in community colleges require a diversity of thinking patterns, behavioral habits, and professional approach (Romero, 2004). The current educational environment calls for
leadership at all institutional levels; however, there is a marked decline of ready and willing individuals in the leadership pipeline.

This dissertation follows a journal article format. Following this first chapter introduction, Chapter 2, entitled Looking to the Future: An In-Depth Study of Influences on Leadership Engagement in a Kentucky Community College, is a co-authored technical report that synthesizes the findings from the three-part collaborative study. Having a three-person team allowed us to focus on different leadership pipelines: (a) leadership aspirations to seek the role of the community college presidency; (b) personal and institutional factors influencing faculty members to assume leadership roles; and (c) the role grassroots leaders play in the decision-making process. We used a mixed-methods approach to case study so that we could gather evidence, descriptive information, and examine relationships among variables (quantitative) before using qualitative processes to explain the how and why phenomena occur and the range of their effects. The goal of this synthesis is to provide KCTCS with a richer, more detailed lens through which to understand opportunities and challenges of leadership pathways within the system.

Chapter 3, Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership at a Kentucky Community College, provides a description and analysis of my individual research project on grassroots leaders who have engaged in informal change initiatives in the community college setting. Organizational change is typically studied and managed from a top-down, calculated perspective with an emphasis on how formal leaders and managers initiate change. Scholars assert that grassroots leadership in the community college setting can play a vital role in fulfilling its multiple missions (Amey, 2005; Eddy, 2010; Green, 2008; Kezar & Lester, 2011; Lester, 2008; Romero, 2004; Rosser, 2000;
Sethi, 2000). Although grassroots leadership is now seen as a valid form of decision-making across the institutional hierarchy, we know less about this form of leadership within the community college context (Birnbaum, 1992; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The goal of my individual research was to reveal the critical role that informal, grassroots change agents play in guiding organizational change. My study is a replication, in part, of several studies completed by Adriana Kezar and her various co-researchers. Dr. Kezar has pioneered the study of grassroots leadership in higher education, but her research in the community college setting is limited to a couple of cases. Kezar’s specific studies are mentioned throughout this dissertation.

I selected a qualitative approach to understand the essence, structure, and meaning of the lived experiences of the study participants. I used one-on-one, in-depth interviews and analyzed numerous institutional documents in order to identify experiences that motivates individuals to engage in grassroots leadership, strategies grassroots leaders use to affect change, major obstacles to implementing grassroots change, and sources of resiliency. The key inquiry was to understand how individuals organize around new ideas and begin working collectively or individually without direction or guidance from the top administrators.

The third manuscript in this dissertation explores the institutional attributes, properties, and/or conditions that foster grassroots organization. This manuscript builds on the findings in Chapter 3 by recognizing that certain institutional cultures make it easier for grassroots change initiatives to succeed. Certain policies, practices, and aspects of institutional culture help support bottom-up leadership. Support for grassroots efforts is not the result of a single policy, but a combination of practices and values that make a
difference (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Through in-depth interviews, grassroots leaders were given the opportunity to articulate which particular institutional attributes were vital to the success of their leadership activities. The analysis of these interviews can be found in Chapter 4, Organizing for Change: Institutional Support for Grassroots Leadership Initiatives.

Chapter 5 serves as a conclusion to this project. It discusses the study’s findings in light of existing research, as well as implications for current professional practice. I also provide a brief reflection of collaborative research and dissertation process, highlighting how experience gained from the program will be applied to professional practice. References and appendices are included at the end of each chapter where applicable.

**Conclusion**

Community colleges are facing a rapid decline of individuals in the leadership pipeline (Romero, 2004). With limited resources and available personnel to fill those leadership roles, it may be time for administrators to focus on new perspectives for change. A growing body of research is starting to examine ideas and build a case for emergent change as an alternative way of thinking about institutional change. My hope is that this study will give voice to grassroots leaders who often use unconventional strategies and tactics to affect change within their organizations. Administrators can use the findings in this study to recognize the value of grassroots leaders within their institutions and to foster a culture that supports grassroots organization.
Chapter 2:
Looking to the Future:
An In-Depth Study of Influences on Leadership Engagement in a
Kentucky Community College
Andrea Borregard, Erin Tipton, and Reneau Waggoner

Executive Summary

Background

Community colleges, with historically different organizational cultures and complex missions in comparison to other institutions of higher education, are stretched to find their next set of leaders who can respond to the diverse challenges of leading the institution. Many community colleges are underprepared to fill the future academic and administrative vacancies they will experience over the next five years. These positions have traditionally been filled through the faculty ranks, yet according to the 2013 estimates by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), nearly half of current full-time faculty members nationally will retire by 2015 (AACC Website, 2013). Successful colleges of the future will be the ones that today are identifying new generations of leaders at all administrative levels (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002), formal and informal.

The purpose of this three-part companion research study was to investigate the various leadership pathways within the community college and to identify influences that impact individual decisions to engage in leadership activities at community colleges. In their study on critical issues facing community colleges, Campbell, Basham, and Mendoza (2008) asserted that hiring, developing, and retaining leaders rank among the top administrative concerns. They argued that administrators need to be able to identify and encourage leaders at all institutional levels and understand the nuances of both formal and informal leadership in order to maintain organizational stability. Because the
leadership shortage is not limited to one particular position, the research team identified three areas for the study: grassroots leadership, faculty, and executive-level leaders.

**Research Approach**

Based on the broad scope of the study, a mixed-methodological case study was used for the research on grassroots leaders, faculty and executive-level leaders at one community college campus. In the study of grassroots leaders, the population for the study was faculty and staff members who have engaged in change initiatives using bottom-up leadership techniques. Eight faculty and staff members participated in one-on-one, semi-structured interviews. The research of faculty and executive-level leaders was a paired, parallel study. This began with a survey of faculty and administrators about their perceived and preferred cultures of the institution, using the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI). Baseline data from the survey informed the second and main phase of the study: semi-structured interviews of nine faculty and ten executive-level leaders.

**Setting**

The setting for this study was Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), one of the sixteen colleges that comprise KCTCS. SKYCTC is a mid-sized college within KCTCS. Its service area spans both urban and rural areas. SKYCTC has recently received national recognition for its faculty-driven Workplace Ethics Initiative. It has also been selected as a Best Place to Work in Kentucky for the past five years. The president at SKYCTC has made a marked commitment to leadership development within the college and welcomed a leadership study at his institution.
Key Findings

The common factors of influence among grassroots leaders, faculty and executive-level leaders are: affecting change, the “culture of caring”, and leadership/professional development.

Table 2.1 - Comparison of Factors of Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor of Influence</th>
<th>Grassroots Leaders</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Executive-Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a difference / influencing change</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Being asked”</td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to help</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture – “culture of caring”</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer and mentor influence</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/professional development</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge of the leadership role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to leave the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Dominant Themes

Six overarching themes emerged from the case study:

1. **The Desire to Affect Change** – At all levels, participants expressed their desire to engage in leadership efforts that have the potential to bring about marked change.
2. **The Impact of Institutional Culture** – Institutional culture plays a key role in an individual’s decision to engage in change efforts, the methods used to lead, and the expectations of success.

3. **The Availability of Leadership and Professional Development** – Availability of Leadership/Professional Development opportunities was a dominant factor of institutional influence on the desire to seek a leadership role. Some participants viewed professional development as in itself a vehicle for raising consciousness and creating change.

4. **The Importance of Peer/Mentor Influence** – Through mentorship and networking, leaders have the opportunity to create communities of support which can ease the transition into leadership roles at the institution. Mentoring can help foster the skills and experiences needed to be impactful leaders. Mentoring can also be a way of encouraging individuals to pursue leadership roles within institutions.

5. **The Importance of Being Asked** – Administrative encouragement to assume leadership roles influenced individuals’ decisions to engage in leadership efforts. According to the participants, one of the most influential ways that administrators showed support was to ask them to assume a leadership role.

6. **The Goal of Maintaining a Work/Life Balance.** In the higher education setting, leadership efforts take time. While many participants were committed to their cause and willing to do extra work, they expressed concern that they might be overburdened by their numerous responsibilities and struggle to maintain a healthy work/life balance.
Recommendations

The findings of the study resulted in several recommendations for administrators to positively influence an employee’s decision to engage in leadership activities:

- establish an open-door policy through which employees can address fears and concerns and establish trust,
- provide ample leadership opportunities,
- create a culture of caring,
- develop formal leadership development programs,
- provide employees with release time or support to pursue advanced degrees,
- establish a formal mentorship program,
- ask employees to assume leadership positions,
- promote the benefits of leadership, and
- establish clear and realistic short- and long-term goals for leadership activities.
Introduction

The future of community college leadership is at the forefront of concern at many institutions across the United States. Community colleges, with historically different organizational cultures and complex missions in comparison to other institutions of higher education, are stretched to find their next set of leaders who can respond to the diverse challenges of leading the institution. Many community colleges are underprepared to fill the future academic and administrative vacancies they will experience over the next five years. Administrative vacancies have traditionally been filled through the faculty ranks, yet according to the 2013 estimates by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), nearly half of current full-time faculty members nationally will retire by 2015 (AACC Website, 2013). Successful colleges of the future will be the ones that today are cultivating new generations of leaders at all administrative levels (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002) and in the full range of career positions including administrators, faculty, and staff.

Project Focus

The purpose of this three-part companion research study was to examine current leadership pipelines existing within the community college (grassroots leaders, faculty, and executive-level leaders) and identify the personal and institutional influencers that affect individuals’ decisions to assume leadership roles. In their study on critical issues facing community colleges, Campbell, Basham, and Mendoza (2008) asserted that hiring, developing, and retaining leaders ranks among the top administrative concerns. They argued that administrators need to be able to identify and encourage leaders at all institutional levels and understand the nuances of both formal and informal leadership in order to maintain organizational stability. Because the leadership shortage is not limited
to one particular position, the research team identified three areas for the study: grassroots leadership, faculty, and executive-level leaders (defined as those holding a formal, senior administration position in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System: Provost, Vice President, Dean, Campus Director, Director or Coordinator). Together, we wanted to identify the motivations and influences of individuals at all stages of the organization hierarchy to assume leadership roles. The team examined the role grassroots leaders play in affecting organizational change through their personal passion and commitment for initiatives. We conducted research among faculty to understand the manner in which institutional factors influence faculty decisions to assume the formal leadership positions. Finally, we investigated the factors that influence the leadership aspirations of executive-level administrators to seek the role of the community college president.

**Setting**

*For the first time in history, there is a growing national recognition of the vital role that community colleges play in America’s higher education system by preparing people for some of the most highly-skilled and high demand occupations in the 21st century. America aspires to once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world and community colleges are being challenged to produce an additional 5 million graduates by the year 2020. The role that Kentucky’s community and technical colleges will play in achieving this national goal is both exciting and challenging.*

- Dr. Michael B. McCall, Founding KCTCS President

In 1997, through the passage of the Kentucky Postsecondary Education Improvement Act, the Kentucky legislature created the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) from the Commonwealth’s 14 existing community colleges and 25 vocational/technical schools. KCTCS is a single system of community-
based two-year colleges designed to respond to the need for job creation, economic development, and global competitiveness in Kentucky (KCTCS, 2010). KCTCS is the largest institution of higher education in Kentucky, serving over 50 percent of Kentucky’s undergraduate students through more than 600 credential programs. The new reality of limited state resources and increased demands for educational opportunities for Kentuckians has caused KCTCS to be methodical about the way their institutions operate.

In 2010, Dr. McCall launched a yearlong Transformation Initiative designed to advance KCTCS’s mission of becoming the premier community and technical college system in the nation. A large part of this plan was aimed at harnessing the collective strengths, talents, and skills of KCTCS’s 10,000+ full- and part-time faculty and staff. In the 2010-2016 Business Plan, McCall recognized a need for transformation in the services to KCTCS students, the nature and purpose of employees’ daily tasks, and the overall tone of KCTCS workplace culture. Specifically, he addressed the importance of implementing a responsive leadership model designed to compensate for limited state resources and increased demands for postsecondary education and training in Kentucky (KCTCS, 2010).

An important element of Dr. McCall’s vision was the identification of individuals for key administrative and leadership positions, including the presidents of the individual colleges that comprise the system. Since assuming the role of KCTCS President in January 2015, Dr. Jay Box has completed three presidential searches for individual colleges in the system with two more active searches underway, and several others on the
horizon. Several of the KCTCS presidents have been in office since shortly after the consolidation process in 1998.

Table 2.2 - Years of Service for KCTCS Presidents as of March 2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of Service</th>
<th>No. of KCTCS Presidents</th>
<th>KCTCS Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interim</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Gateway, Hazard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Big Sandy, Owensboro, Jefferson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Ashland, Hopkinsville, Maysville, Southcentral Kentucky, Southeast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bluegrass, Henderson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Kentucky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16+</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Elizabethtown, Madisonville, Somerset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the presidential appointments made in the past five years, two out of eight of the presidents were promoted from within the institution and one president had prior experience as an academic vice president at a KCTCS institution. All others had no professional experience within the Kentucky system; however, three were presidents at community colleges outside of Kentucky and two held various vice president roles at non-Kentucky institutions. Five of the eight have faculty experience in a community college (one had faculty experience at a KCTCS institution).

Dr. Box has expressed interest in having individual KCTCS colleges develop their own local or regional leadership programs. He said these leadership initiatives would “provide the opportunity for selected faculty and staff to foster leadership skills and professional growth while considering the varied and complex strategic issues facing two-year colleges” (McNair, 2015). System-wide, KCTCS offers an annual leadership program designed to recognize and enhance the leadership skills of current and potential leaders within KCTCS. The President’s Leadership Seminar (PLS: now entitled the
McCall Leadership Academy) began in 2000 with the goal of providing faculty and staff with a unique professional development experience in an effort to advance the system’s 16 colleges as well as each participant’s personal and professional goals. Numerous vice presidents, deans, and directors, as well as two of the current KCTCS presidents, have completed PLS during their tenure.

Other than this single system initiative, KCTCS offers very few formal opportunities to cultivate leaders from within. Our argument is not that all leaders should be homegrown; in fact, we would suggest that institutions can greatly benefit from a balance of leaders and administrators who come from within the system and those from external sources. Yet, because the mission of each community college is influenced by the culture and community surrounding the institution, promoting individuals who have excelled and have proven their commitment and dedication to the institution often ensures that the individual will have the knowledge, experience, expertise, and history to perpetuate the college’s mission (Reille & Kezar, 2010). Our three-dimensional case study aims to understand individuals’ leadership activities and aspirations from within the KCTCS system.

**Site Selection**

Purposive sampling allows a researcher to eliminate and/or narrow the pool of information sources by deciding who to, what to, and what not to consider in the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Purposive sampling will provide “information-rich” participants matching the overall purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009). When using purposive sampling, it is important to seek sites that will provide an understanding of the phenomenon. In our case, we wanted to study an institution that
exhibited a high level of commitment to developing leaders. Based on the knowledge of
the population and the purpose of the study, the researchers used purposive sampling to
select Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), one of 16
community colleges in Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) as
the site of our case study.

We selected SKYCTC as the site for several reasons. First, in 2015, SKYCTC
received a national award of excellence from the American Association of Community
Colleges for their Workplace Ethics Initiative. This initiative is the result of
collaboration between faculty members and local business partners to ensure that
behaviors in the classroom mirror those expected in the workplace. As a result of this
recognition, SKYCTC faculty members and administrators have presented the principles
of this initiative at several conferences in the country. The Workplace Ethics Initiative
has received several other national recognitions as well. The National Institute for Staff
and Organizational Development published a best practices article on Workplace Ethics
(May 2012), the League of Innovations recognized the initiative as an Innovation of the
Year (May 2013), and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement has
requested that SKYCTC publish Workplace Ethics as a national best practice.

Second, SKYCTC has been selected as a Best Place to Work in Kentucky every
year since 2012. Winners are selected through a two-part process designed to gather
detailed data about each participating company. Part one requires employers to complete
a benefits and policies questionnaire about company policies, practices, and
demographics. In part two, employees are asked to complete a survey that gauges
employee opinions on how the institution fares in eight core focus areas: Leadership and
Planning, Corporate Culture and Communications, Role Satisfaction, Work Environment, Relationship with Supervisor, Training, Development and Resources, Pay and Benefits, and Overall Engagement. For purposes of our study we were drawn to selecting a site where there seemed to be a high level of employee satisfaction in several of these areas. Appreciative Inquiry embraces the notion that focusing on the strengths of an organization can heighten positive potential and lead to further growth and development based on those strengths (Conklin & Hartman, 2014).

Third, we wanted to select a KCTCS college that was somewhat representative of the majority of colleges in the system in terms of size (enrollment) and locale (rural vs. urban). SKYCTC is a mid-sized college within KCTCS. In fall 2015, SKYCTC had a full-time equivalent enrollment of 2,351 students (FTE = total credit hours/15). The median KCTCS enrollment for Fall 2015 was 2,325. SKYCTC has six campuses located in a ten-county service area. The college also has a strong partnership with local business and industry. Through its Workforce Solutions department, SKYCTC serves over 6,000 individuals and 600 companies annually. One point of distinction is that SKYCTC is the only KCTCS college with no tenured or tenure-track faculty (KCTCS Factbook, 2015).

During the passage of the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act in 1997, which formed KCTCS, Bowling Green Technical College had no community college with which to merge; tenured faculty were never a significant part of the institution. In lieu of tenure, the former technical colleges in Kentucky had an employment designation of “continued employment status.” Continued status faculty are described under KCTCS policy as full or part-time faculty hired prior to July 1, 2004 who have satisfactorily completed the KCTCS Introductory Period. Per this policy, faculty with continued
employment status enjoy similar protections as tenured-classified faculty and should only be discharged from employment for just cause.  

A fourth reason SKYCTC was selected as the case study site was due to ease of access and administrative support for the study at the institution. In 2013, SKYCTC named Dr. Philip Neal as its President and CEO. Neal was promoted from within the college where he served as the Provost from 2008 to 2013. Neal’s leadership pathway includes serving as a faculty member at a community college outside of Kentucky and holding various administrative positions in Texas and Wyoming before becoming provost at SKYCTC. Neal has co-edited a textbook about leadership, *The Creative Community College: Leading Change through Innovation* (2008). He has pledged to the continual growth of his employees. He preserves professional development dollars in the midst of budget crises, provides faculty leadership opportunities in conjunction with reduced course load, and most recently, tasked college administrators with creating an internal leadership development program similar to KCTCS President’s Leadership Seminar (Borregard, Tipton and Waggoner, 2014). As a proponent of leadership development, Dr. Neal welcomed a leadership study at his institution going so far as to allow the researchers to speak at a campus-wide forum in order to promote the study and encourage participation.

Finally, we were intentional about selecting a college that was not the home college of any of the members of our research team. In discussing which KCTCS college would be the best fit for our study, we agreed that we wanted to avoid any potential

---

1 As noted in the KCTCS Administrative Policy 2.0.1.1.4 – Continued Employment Status.
influences and biases that may be associated with studying leadership at one of our own institutions. The three of us have no professional experience linked directly to SKYCTC. We hoped study participants would be more comfortable and forthcoming in their interview responses since we were not their SKYCTC colleagues. Since we would be unfamiliar with the experiences and events participants discussed, we also felt that we would be more likely to keep personal biases out of our interview interpretations and analysis.

**Leadership Landscape**

_We are at a critical juncture in our nation’s higher education development. While there is very strong work happening today in community college leadership development, we cannot leave it to chance that our nation’s community colleges are prepared to meet the coming demand. We have learned a lot about what makes an effective community college leader and it is time to not just name those qualities, but translate what we know into action._

-William Trueheart, President and Chief Executive Officer of Achieving the Dream

In September 2013, leaders of six organizations representing over 13 million community college student, trustees, and administrators nationally met to address the impending leadership exodus and the urgency this departure represents. Community colleges knew they would face a significant challenge in filling the vacancies of future community college leaders due to the pending mass exodus of senior level community college leadership and faculty (Shults, 2001; McNair, 2010; Whissemore, 2011). Without intervention, this turnover could threaten the stability of the community college sector and its ability to maintain open access while achieving stronger student outcomes. These leaders committed to use their organizations as outreach vehicles for promoting the
recruitment, selection, and preparation of leaders with the skills required to successfully perpetuate the community college mission (ACCT, 2013).

McNair, Duree, and Ebbers (2011) conducted a study that examined community college presidents. The research examined the presidents’ backgrounds and career paths; and participation in leadership programs and educational preparation outlined within the American Association of Community College (AACC) competencies. The report concluded that there was not one single path, but participation in a variety of professional experiences, professional development opportunities, doctoral studies and mentoring. Recommendations included job shadowing and internship experiences which would allow future leaders to work with current community college presidents, as well as succession planning.

The impending retirements among senior faculty who are often those moving into formal leadership positions, combined with the increase of adjuncts and the decrease in tenure-track positions, compounds the pressure of who will assume leadership roles of the future. Nationally, the pipeline of tenured and tenure-track faculty across higher education has dramatically changed over the last thirty years moving from 78.3 percent on the tenure track and 21.7 percent on a non-tenure track to current figures of only 33.5 percent of faculty having tenure or on the tenure track and 66.5 percent ineligible for tenure (Kezar & Gehrke, 2014). In the community college, the national data indicates that 68.7 percent of faculty are either part-time or non-tenure track, 13.8 percent are full-time and non-tenured and only 17.5 percent are either tenured or on the tenure track (Kezar & Maxey, 2013).
For KCTCS, the numbers mirror the national statistics as full-time faculty capacity has declined over the last several years. Since 2010, 300 fewer full-time faculty are employed across the system with a decrease from 1,933 to 1,617. The number of full-time, tenured faculty has decreased from 779 in 2010 to 708 in 2013. In addition, the number of faculty on the tenure track has dipped from 150 in 2010 to 134 in 2013 (KCTCS Factbook, 2013). The number of part-time faculty has increased across the System over the last several years. From 2009 to 2011, the number of part-time faculty across the System increased from 2,754 to 3,304. Much of the increase in hiring of adjuncts was due to the increase in student enrollment as KCTCS experienced a dramatic student enrollment surge from 89,942 students in 2008 to 108,302 students in 2011 (KCTCS Factbook, 2013). While the enrollment surge prompted the hiring of additional part-time faculty to meet student enrollments, the enrollment decline (down to 80,075 students in Fall 2015) has slowed the number of full-time faculty being hired, leaving vacancies unfilled. (KCTCS Factbook, 2013). It is clear the landscape of faculty tenure is dramatically changing in higher education, particularly at the community college and within KCTCS.

As the retirement outlook for community college faculty shows that half of the total number of full-time faculty across the nation are currently eligible to retire, it is critical to develop the next set of academic administrators. In Kentucky, the situation mirrors the worrisome national trend with over 50% of full-time KCTCS faculty eligible to retire in the next five years (KCTCS Human Resources, 2013). The pipeline for future faculty has decreased over time, compounded by a reluctance among faculty to assume these positions (Evelyn, 2001). Although many reasons may exist for faculty aversion to
advance through the academic leadership ranks, there is evidence that institutional and personal factors play a role in faculty decision making, behavior, and activities (Evelyn, 2001; Cooper & Pagatto 2003; Malik, 2010; Mahon, 2008).

Community colleges are particularly susceptible to external demands due to the nature of their mission. They are being asked to drive economic growth in their communities, serve more students, respond to industry demands, and provide more pathways to the baccalaureate while dealing with reduced funding. In her book on community college leadership, Eddy (2010) discussed the importance of implementing a multidimensional model of leadership suited to dealing with these challenges. She argued that leadership must occur at all levels of the institution and these leaders must possess a cultural competency that is fostered by experience, professional development, and lifelong learning.

Many higher education leadership researchers advocate for fostering leadership at all levels within the institution (Amey, 2005; Eddy, 2009; Green, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Lester, 2008; Romero, 2004; Rosser, 2000; Sethi, 2000). Lester (2008) researched the concept of “non-positional leadership.” She argued that this style of leadership empowers all employees to contribute, strengthens the organization, and provides future leaders an opportunity to hone leadership knowledge and skills. In his article about the impending leadership crisis in higher education, Appadurai (2009) argued that in order to sustain institutional engagement and to keep up with the constantly changing societal demands, community college administrators will have to place a consistent emphasis on leadership development and input from employees at all levels of the institutional hierarchy.
Leadership Crisis in Community Colleges: Three Leadership Perspectives

The retirement of current leaders is problematic. So, too is the complex scope of community college missions, a scope that far exceeds the traditional function of degree-granting programs. Community colleges are faced with the pressure of reconciling a variety of challenges from intertwined curricular functions, changing demographics, improved technology, demands for alternative delivery methods and contradictory missions (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Doughtery, 1994). There is growing concern over the ability of institutions to respond to these challenges, particularly as the number of change initiatives mounts (Birnbaum, 1992; Hines, 2011; Wallin, 2010). In order to address these challenges adequately, leadership must emerge from all institutional ranks – grassroots leaders, faculty, and executive-level leaders. This technical report examines current leadership pipelines existing within SKYCTC (grassroots leaders, faculty, and executive-level leaders) and the personal and institutional influencers that affect their decisions to assume leadership roles.

Grassroots Leaders

Most of the historical research on leadership in higher education has focused on individuals in positions of power (i.e. presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and deans) in hopes of pinpointing universal characteristics, behaviors and competencies that characterize “effective” leadership (Astin & Leland, 1991; Bartunek, 1984; Bernal, 1998; Kroeker, 1996). Recent research recognizes that these individuals are often not the only source of leadership within an institution. Educational scholars are now beginning to consider the often-untapped source of grassroots leadership across institutional hierarchy as a valid form of decision-making. Some scholars suggest that grassroots leadership
takes place every day in all institutional settings (Birnbaum, 1998; Kezar, 2012). Proponents of grassroots leadership cite the leader’s ability to affect change with his/her passion for a particular issue (Scully & Segal, 2002). They argue that faculty members, for example, are the stewards of campus leadership and decision-making because they work directly to advance the institutional mission of teaching and learning (Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). Staff members often have unique opportunities to influence change because of their proximity to so many of the leadership roles in the college (Birnbaum, 1996).

Top-down leadership models are not a strong fit for community colleges because of the loosely-coupled subsystems present throughout their organizational structures. Recent research contests the conventional notions of leadership and reframes it as a process of collective action by individuals throughout the organization who use unique strategies to facilitate change (Amey et al., 2008). This inclusive style makes it more likely that a greater number of approaches to a problem will be explored and the willingness of campus leaders to themselves be influenced in exchange for the opportunity to influence others leads to the development of compromise that most people of campus can support (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Under this model, individuals without formal positions of power can create significant change on college campuses and play important leadership roles. Acceptance of and encouragement for bottom-up leadership challenges employees to think differently, propose ideas, and promote a new direction for accomplishing tasks; however, these employees have to adopt effective tactics to create important changes and increase their capacity for leadership (Bettencourt, 1996; Scully & Segal, 2002). Experts agree that the key to making meaningful changes
on campus is to understand the complexities and varying outcomes of convergence between top-down and bottom-up leadership (Kezar, 2012; Amey, M.J., Jessup-Anger, E., & Jessup-Anger, J., 2008).

**Faculty**

In addition to concerns regarding the anticipated percentage of full-time faculty retirements, there is a reluctance of faculty to assume leadership roles (Evelyn, 2001). Coupled with expected retirements, the increased unwillingness of faculty to move into entry and mid-level academic administrative roles has reduced the pool of qualified leaders. In Kentucky, the faculty retirement situation mirrors that of national statistics. At just one rural and one urban community college within the KCTCS, it is estimated that 55% and 49% respectively of currently employed full-time faculty are eligible to retire by 2018 (KCTCS Human Resources, 2013). Faculty are challenged with supporting their academic disciplines. Academic administrative leadership requires a balance of understanding the structure and challenges facing the overall institution and of those of particular units or departments of the college. Faculty assuming leadership roles may struggle with the ability to step out of daily teaching responsibilities which they might enjoy and the balancing the culture of their own academic disciplines with the varying cultures across the institution.

Faculty reluctance to ascend to administrative positions may also be influenced by the culture of the organization. Higher education organizational culture research conducted to date offers insight into how dominant cultures and subcultures can influence overall organizational effectiveness and facilitation of change during times of crisis (Cameron & Quinn, 1999; Locke, 2006; Shein, 2006; Tierney 1988). Social Cognitive
Career Theory (SCCT) suggests that organizational culture can also influence individual career aspirations. An analysis of personal and institutional factors influencing faculty within the community college will lead to a greater understanding of faculty behaviors, decisions, and perspectives regarding moves into leadership assignments.

**Executive-Level Leaders**

Community colleges face a huge challenge in the preparation and training of future community college presidents due to the pending mass exodus of senior level community college leadership (Shults, 2001; McNair, 2010; Whissemore, 2011). The AACC (2013) conducted a similar study in 2012, which revealed that 75% will retire by 2022, 42 percent of which will occur by 2017. Even more alarming is that the administrators who report to the presidents – and who might be expected to replace them – are also approaching retirement (Boggs, 2003). The issue of keeping individuals in the presidential pipeline is of major concern to community colleges nationwide.

Based on the looming gap in community college leadership, the overarching question is who will lead the community college in the presidency? The extant literature has focused on leadership development programs for executive-level administrators interested in the presidency (Piland & Wolf, 2003; Reille & Kezar, 2010). It has also reviewed other forms of professional development: participation in professional associations and organizations; networking and job shadowing; and on-the-job responsibilities that contribute to leadership development (Laden, 1996). However, the research has not addressed the aspirations of executive–level leaders to seek the role of the community college presidency. An analysis of the positive and negative factors that
influence their desire to ascend to the presidency will assist with the looming gaps caused by the impending mass exodus.

**Research Design**

The researchers employed a mixed-methods case study approach in order to understand and explore individual motivations, aspirations, and influences to assume both formal and informal leadership roles. This approach emerged as a best means of studying and making sense of the proposed phenomenon to capture the complexities of intersection between campus climate and individual decisions from multiple perspectives. Qualitative methods included document analysis and interviews. The goal was to “allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies” (Thomas, 2003). Quantitative analysis of survey data was used to complement qualitative inquiry in an attempt to reach a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This convergence of methods strengthens study findings because the use of various strands of data promote a greater understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

**Quantitative Methods**

The population for this portion of the study was faculty and executive-level leaders. The purpose of this qualitative component was to investigate the current perceived and preferred organizational culture types within the community college. In March, 2015, all full-time faculty (N=78), all exempt-level administrative staff (N=37), and all executive-level leaders (N=25) at SKYCTC were invited to participate in the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI) survey (see Appendix E). Although the focus of this study was to investigate faculty and executive-level leaders,
exempt-level administrative staff were included in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions of organizational culture across the institution.

Our interest in organizational culture was motivated by the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). SCCT describes career development as a complex interaction between an individual, his/her behavior, and the environment. SCCT emphasizes cognitive-person variables that enable people to influence their own career development, as well as extra-person (e.g., contextual) variables that enhance or constrain personal agency (Lent, Brown and Hackett, 2000). One such contextual variable that has rarely been studied is organizational culture. Given the power of culture to shape the outcomes and goals of organizations, one might expect that culture may also shape the leadership aspirations of individuals within it. Our study looks to explore this possibility. Is institutional culture a contextual variable that influences the administrative aspirations of faculty and executive administrators?

The results of the survey were tallied using the software program offered through the electronic version of the OCAI to determine the mean scores for the overall current culture and preferred culture type. The mean scores for the overall current and preferred culture responses were then computed by adding all of the responses from the four culture types (Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy). The culture profile results from the OCAI administered to the faculty at SKYCTC were compared against the culture profile results of executive level leaders at SKYCTC to determine potential similarities and differences among perceptions and preferences of organizational culture types at the institution.
There was an open-response section to the end of the OCAI. These questions asked respondents to identify three areas of strengths and three areas for improvement at SKYCTC. The results from the areas of strengths and improvements were coded and examined for themes. The results from the open-ended responses provided a greater understanding of how the faculty and staff viewed the organization prior to conducting the interviews. The themes from the end of the survey supported the overall findings from the OCAI culture types and assisted in the development of the interview questions.

**Qualitative Methods**

The qualitative component of the study included three parts. Results from the survey were used to identify the faculty and executive-level respondents who were willing to participate in the semi-structured interviews. The goal was to achieve interview samples with diversity of experience, aspiration to leadership, gender and location. First, numerous institutional documents were analyzed to understand the context of leadership activities on SKYCTC’s campus. These documents included college demographic fact books, annual reports, budgets and financial planning documents, strategic plans, organizational charts, minutes from faculty and staff senate meetings, and progress reports.

The final questions on the OCAI requested additional information regarding previously held leadership positions, desire to assume formal leadership positions, and willingness to participate in an interview. Of the 70 faculty and executive level leaders who completed the survey, 26.7% of respondents indicated their interest by responding “yes” to the question about their willingness to serve and by adding their contact information. Nine (9) faculty and eight (8) executive-level leaders consented to an
interview. Two (2) additional executive-level leaders were asked, and consented to, an interview (n=10). The interviewees represented three (3) of the six (6) campuses of SKYCTC. Of the nine (9) faculty interviewed, four (4) were females and five (5) were males. Two (2) of the females indicated having aspirations to lead. Two (2) of the five (5) males indicated having aspirations to lead. Of the ten (10) executive-level leaders interviewed, seven (7) were male and three (3) were female. Among the executive-level leaders, two (2) indicated aspirations to become a community college president, four (4) were uncertain and four (4) indicated they did not aspire to become a community college president.

Faculty members and executive-level leaders were contacted to arrange interviews. All faculty interviews were conducted within a two week timeframe and took place at SKYCTC in an area most comfortable for the participant (the faculty member’s office). All executive-level interviews were conducted within a two-week timeframe with the exception of one (which was rescheduled due to unforeseen conflict) in an area most comfortable for the participant (i.e. participant’s office or conference room). Each interview was transcribed to ensure accuracy of data obtained during the interviews.

Finally, interviews were conducted with individuals identified as grassroots leaders within the college. As an initial means of identifying grassroots leaders, a well-networked campus administrator and a tenured faculty member at SKYCTC were contacted to ask for assistance in identifying faculty and staff members who actively engaged in grassroots (local, bottom-up) change efforts. The individuals identified as grassroots leaders were asked to participate in the study. After this initial round of participant recruitment, a snowball sampling technique was used to recruit additional
participants. Campus functions and presentations were also observed and institutional documents were examined to identify other individuals engaged in grassroots efforts. Additional participants were sought until the recommendations were exhausted and the sample was saturated for a total of eight subjects.

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews provided the primary data for identifying the strategies grassroots leaders use to influence top-down leadership and the major obstacles they face. In researching grassroots leadership in post-secondary institutions, an unstructured interview is a valid choice because it solicits detailed examples and rich narratives and it identifies possible variables to frame hypotheses. Yin (2011) discussed the importance of understanding the participant’s world. The conversational nature of semi-structured interviews allows for two-way interactions that lend themselves to a greater understanding of the subject’s experiences, thoughts, and motives.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) asserted that participants may be most willing to reveal information about them in their natural setting. These interviews (N=8) were conducted on-location to better understand the context and place in which the participants reside when making leadership decisions. Each interview lasted between one and one-half hours. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. The researcher’s role was best characterized as an investigator of these individuals’ lived experiences with grassroots leadership (Yin, 2011). This role was maintained by asking questions and gaining information for the study. The researcher built trust and established rapport with interviewees by obtaining consent, using open communication techniques and by conducting member checks to ensure accurate interpretations of participant experiences.
In order to maintain anonymity, each participant was assigned a pseudonym and identifiable information was removed from the interview transcripts.

Results from the semi-structured interviews with faculty and executive level participants were analyzed using inductive approach through the Rapid Assessment Process (Beebe, 2001). An inductive approach to qualitative data analysis did “aid in understanding the meaning in complex data through the development of themes or categories from the raw data” (Thomas, 2003, p. 3). The research team convened to review the aggregated data to identify patterns and themes. The data was examined repeatedly allowing major themes to emerge and be captured. Data from the interviews with faculty was coded based upon established themes agreed upon by the research team. The data was then grouped into tables (Beebe, 2001; Yin, 1994) and situated into “a framework to develop a model of the underlying structure of experiences captured in the study” (Thomas, 2003, p.2).

An inductive approach was also used in gathering and analyzing the data from interviews with grassroots participants. The content from all interviews was compared and data was categorized for emerging themes. Creswell’s (2009) open, axial, and selective coding methods were employed during the data analysis to determine the meaning of the data. First, an open coding method was used to organize the data into relevant categories. Next, the axial coding method was used to demonstrate the interrelationships and connectivity of the open coding categories to the central idea of the study. Finally the selective coding method was used to form the participants’ stories and to connect the stories to the study’s research questions (Creswell, 2009). The constant-comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) was employed throughout this study.
while formulating categories for coding the data provided through the interviews (Yin, 2011). Segments of meaning were categorized and sorted in an Excel database so that overarching themes can be identified, refined, and connected to theory. The result is a study with findings grounded in research, theory, and raw data (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011).

The data sets from all of the interviews with grassroots leaders (Borregard, 2015), faculty (Tipton, 2015), and executive level leaders (Waggoner, 2015) were then comparatively analyzed to determine themes and variations among the three groups. Examining commonalities across the participants’ perspectives provide the higher education literature base with a consistent picture of personal and institutional influences that affect individuals’ decisions to assume leadership roles. Adding an interpretive dimension to this research allows it to be used as the basis for practical theory (Lester, 1999).

**Ethical Issues**

Researchers are expected to design and perform research in a manner that ensures that the welfare, dignity, and privacy of subjects are protected and that information about the individual remains confidential (Yin, 2011). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and influences of subjects to assume leadership roles, researchers had to ask questions designed to draw out personal experiences and realities. Because the population for this study was relatively small, researchers took extra care to protect the identities of study subjects. Confidentiality issues were considered at every stage of the research process. Team members developed informed consent forms that clearly outlined
the study purpose and potential benefits and risks to each participant. Electronic versions of consent forms were sent to study participants prior to participation in an interview.

The day of the interview, researchers explained the informed consent process, obtained appropriate signatures, and assured participants that personal and identifiable information revealed during the interview would be confidential. Participants were told, up front, not to answer any questions with which they were uncomfortable answering. Transcribed interviews were sent to study participants for member checking in order to confirm that the accuracy of the information. Participants were assigned pseudonyms in order to protect their identity. In some instances, study data and findings were aggregated in order to preserve confidentiality.

**Results**

**OCAI – Section 1 (Survey Responses)**

The response rate goal for faculty and executive-level leaders to complete the OCAI was 70%. The average response rate for surveys in organizational settings among non-executive level employees 52.7% (32.5 % for executive-level employees (Anseel, F., Lievens, F., Schollaert, E., & Choragwicka, B., 2010; Baruch & Holton, 2008). A study of 1,607 research studies utilizing surveys investigated overall response rates between 2000 and 2005. Among those studies surveying organizations, the average survey response rate was 37.5% (Baruch & Holton, 2008). Because our survey (OCAI) was administered to an organizational group within KCTCS and the college president introduced the survey and offered his full support, we anticipated a higher than average response rate. The overall response rate of the OCAI across the institution was 54.5%.
Table 2.3 shows the response rate among faculty, executive-level leaders and other administrative staff at the institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>TOTAL/UNIT</th>
<th># COMPLETE</th>
<th>% COMPLETE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FACULTY</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>50.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEADER</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>76.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>45.45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>54.35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The term “Leader” denotes Executive-Level Leader as defined in this study. The term “Administrative Staff” refers to exempt-level administrative staff (non-faculty) that do not hold a formal leadership role as defined by this study.

---

2 The term “Leader” denotes Executive-Level Leader as defined in this study. The term “Administrative Staff” refers to exempt-level administrative staff (non-faculty) that do not hold a formal leadership role as defined by this study.
As Figure 2.1 shows, the results from the OCAI indicate the overall culture profile at SKYCTC. The perceived (now) and the preferred culture at SKYCTC is the Clan Culture. This indicates the culture is currently aligned with how employees are thinking in terms of the current environment and the culture preference at SKYCTC. The profile also indicates a slight shift in terms of culture preference to operate in a less hierarchical (control and structure) and more in an adhocracy (create, entrepreneurial) manner.

**Figure 2.1 – Overall Organizational Culture Profile at SKYCTC – All Respondents**
Table 2.4 provides the mean scores of the overall organization’s culture profile by the four culture quadrants of the OCAI. Questions on the OCAI are linked to the four culture types: Clan, Adhocracy, Market and Hierarchy. The mean scores provide a snapshot of the differences in the perceived (Now) and preferred culture types at SKYCTC.

Table 2.4 – Mean Scores of Overall Organizational Culture – All Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ORGANIZATION TYPE</th>
<th>NOW</th>
<th>PREFERRED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLAN OR COLLABORATE QUADRANT</td>
<td>38.81</td>
<td>42.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mean of Questions 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, 5A, 6A)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADHOCRACY OR CREATE QUADRANT</td>
<td>19.37</td>
<td>24.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mean of Questions 1B, 2B, 3B, 4B, 5B, 6B)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARKET OR COMPETE QUADRANT</td>
<td>17.17</td>
<td>14.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mean of Questions 1C, 2C, 3C, 4C, 5C, 6C)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIERARCHY OR CONTROL QUADRANT</td>
<td>24.65</td>
<td>18.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Mean of Questions 1D, 2D, 3D, 4D, 5D, 6D)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2.2 data is aggregated to show faculty and executive-level leader perceptions of the culture at SKYCTC.

**Figure 2.2 – Comparison of OCAI Perceptions and Preferences Profiles of Executive-Level Leaders and Faculty**

Executive-level leaders and faculty at SKYCTC both perceive and prefer the Clan or Collaborate culture. The examination of each data set in Table 3 indicates that both executive-level leaders and faculty prefer a slightly higher level of the Clan (or Collaborate) culture, less Hierarchy (or Control) and less Market (or Compete), and more Adhocracy (or Create) than what they perceive is currently happening at SKYCTC.
The results from the executive-level leaders at SKYCTC were compared with those of the faculty to ascertain similarities and differences of these groups in their perceptions and preferences of the type of organizational culture type at the institution. At SKYCTC, executive-level leaders and faculty perceptions and preferences were congruent. These results provided a gauge of the temperature of the college and to measure the role of institutional factors in the decision to seek higher level positions with increased authority. Further, these results were used to inform the interview questions for the core qualitative phase of the study.

**OCAI – Section 2 (Strengths / Areas of Improvement (Opportunity) / Other Comments)**

In the second section of the OCAI survey, respondents were asked to identify three strengths of SKYCTC, three areas of improvement (opportunity), and to make other comments. These open-ended responses were coded and themed.

Respondents identified the top three strengths of SKYCTC as caring (that exists among faculty, staff and students) / “culture of caring,” collaboration, and leadership. Other
strengths were identified as, but are not limited to, trust, community-oriented, and friendly work environment.

Respondents identified the top three areas of improvement (opportunity) as communication, professional development, and processes (i.e. admissions, advising). Other areas of improvement were identified as, but are not limited to, having a more risk-taking and entrepreneurial mind set, increased student success and retention, food on campus, and increase in salary.

Respondents were given space to make additional comments (non-specified) and the responses ranged from feelings about the survey to feelings about SKYCTC. The dominant theme of the respondent’s comments was the positive work environment at SKYCTC. One of the respondents commented:

SKYCTC is truly one of the Best Places to Work. This is in large part due to the culture of caring which exist among the leadership, faculty and staff in the college. All levels at the college are truly concerned with student success and finding ways to help all students reach their goals and highest potential.

Another respondent shared:

There is a wonderful positive spirit here, where most everyone truly cares about their work and each other. I love working here and I love what I do, who I’m doing it for, and who I’m doing it with.

One of the other respondents stated:

SKYCTC is an excellent work environment, directed by people who both strive for excellence in the work place and are concerned with the people who work for them.

The results from sections 1 and 2 were utilized to develop four common interview questions that were asked of both faculty and executive-level leaders (see Appendices F and G).
**OCAI – Section 3 (Respondent Demography)**

Respondents were asked about their tenure at SKYCTC, their leadership experience, their desire to become a community college president, and their willingness to participate in an interview. The demographic information of the respondents (N=75) indicated that 84% of have tenure of 0-10 years at SKYCTC; 42.7% of respondents currently hold a formal leadership position at SKYCTC; 18.9% have held a formal leadership position at other higher education institutions; 69.3% desire a formal leadership position in the future; and 8% desire to become a community college president.

**Findings**

**Personal Influences that Support Engagement and Administrative Aspirations**

According to interview participants, motivation comes from “self-interest or passion” for a particular cause or from a “sense of commitment or responsibility” to the cause. Individuals are motivated because they believe that change is the right thing to and they have a deep understanding or belief in the cause (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Overall, the participants’ motivation centered on the desire to create positive change.

Grassroots participants used phrases such as “pride,” “vested interest,” “passion,” “proactive,” and “duty” to describe their reasoning to engage in grassroots change efforts. Faculty who indicated aspiration to a formal leadership role commented that their leadership desire was part of their personal career journey and ability to affect change. Executive-level leaders cited motivation to “make a difference,” “help others,” and influence change. Given the participants’ responses, three themes of positive influence clearly emerged.
Affecting Change

For grassroots participants, the desire to impact change stemmed from their passion for a particular initiative. Scully and Segal (2002) argued that employees have a great passion for their issues as a result of their daily, firsthand experiences in the workplace. Many participant responses substantiated this argument, particularly in terms of their passion for students and the institution. Misty’s passion for community service efforts and philanthropy came as a direct result of working with community college students. In her tenure at SKYCTC, she has represented the college on several community boards and began a Christmas program to ensure students could provide gifts to their children. When asked what motivated her to push for this program she responded:

We walk up and down these halls and we see these students day in and day out. We don’t really know what’s going on behind closed doors. We don’t really know what’s happening in their lives. They’re doing their best to change their circumstances. I know that. I lot of faculty and staff know that. That’s why we have to do whatever we can to try to help them and to make their lives better.

Allison assumed a leadership role on the New Student Orientation Committee in an attempt to completely overhaul SKYCTC’s orientation program, specifically orientation content, delivery method, and frequency of offerings, because she believes that student engagement and interaction is important step toward student retention. She stated:

I love interacting with students. My favorite part of being here at this campus is interacting with students. Attending orientation is often a student’s first opportunity to engage on campus. Employees get to greet them and interact. Then, maybe, I see a student that I met at orientation in the hallway and I’m a familiar face to them. Immediately, they have a sense of comfort at the college.

John exhibited this same passion for students through his leadership in the Student Success Center and his push for a cultural shift in the way faculty and staff members
think about responsibility for student success. He relayed this passion in the following statement:

I think the people here sincerely want to help students. I think the flame of helping students and nurturing their education really trumps anything else that takes place here. We know if we want to help, we have to change. I’ve told anyone who will listen that it’s all about making the student’s experience the best possible no matter what we have to do to make that happen. I think the whole general concern about helping students is the fact that drives everything we do here.

Others were prompted to engage because of their passion for the institution itself. When asked about her preparation and motivation to engage in grassroots activities, Emily spoke of her loyalty to SKYCTC:

I came from the school of hard knocks. I feel like this college raised me. I started here when I was 18. When I leave, it’s going to be like a death…or a divorce. I love it here. I was a student, then an intern, and then an employee. It’s part of me and I want to leave it better for the next person.

Faculty members who expressed aspiration for an administrative position spoke about the opportunity to use that position as a vehicle to affect change at the college. Ryan explained:

For me personally would be that I feel like I could serve students and the college in a leadership role. That’s one of the main things. I feel like I could help develop some of the new people coming in. I feel like I could help them develop if I were in a leadership role. That’s another thing, I feel like maybe it’s just a natural progression.

Lauren shared:

The ability to affect change that has a positive impact on more people at one time versus a classroom. How can I be involved to change a campus, or college, or a program so you reach people. I guess long term, be impactful on more people.

Regardless of their personal reasons, the findings indicate faculty who aspire to formal leadership positions view these roles as a mechanism to affect change at various levels at the college: impacting students, developing peers, improving programs or
Executive-level participants had similar responses. One of the motivations that influence many of the executive-level participants was the recognition of the power the position of president holds in influencing change. Peyton, who admittedly does not want to become a community college president, acknowledged that being able to make a difference could shift that aspiration from “no desire” to “desire”:

…yes, I could be convinced…if I saw this is an opportunity to make a change…not just to continue what's going on and not to make small, double changes and things like that.

Jordan, who also does not aspire to the presidency, agreed that the prospect of affecting change would be a motivating factor:

You can do some things grassroots…but to affect policy and to affect the way things move forward you really do have to be in an executive leadership position. It’s that that drives me to want to move into a position like that, is to have an influence over where we’re going.

Riley, who indicated a desire to become a community college president, emphasized the significance by acknowledging the ability, as president, to influence change a lot quicker than in other positions.

Commitment to Profession

Several grassroots participants focused more on their commitment to teaching or to their trade. Anne spent several years in the private sector as a corporate trainer. She used her experience there to push faculty members at SKYCTC to become better teachers in the online environment. She said:

I’ve always had a passion for enabling others to learn what they need to learn. It’s about facilitating the learning opportunity. I judge faculty, people who teach me. I am very critical about my education and our students are too because the world is open to them. We owe them to be the best we can be.
Melissa worked as a nurse in a clinical setting for years before taking a job as a professor in the Licensed Practical Nursing program at SKYCTC. She saw the growing need for registered nurses in the Bowling Green area, so she pushed to add program offerings. She stated:

I thought about the profession and knew what this college needed. It needed an RN program. Nursing is always a program that people gravitate toward. We were vested in that. We wanted it and we wanted to make sure it succeeded.

Shelley considered engagement in leadership activities to be part of her job. Considering her position at the college, she discussed the importance of being proactive. This proactive nature often pushes her to come up with new ideas and initiatives in order to avoid being stuck in a reactionary mode.

Executive-level leaders cited this same commitment in their aspirations to obtain administrative positions. As a tenured educator, Peyton talked about the life-changing potential education can have in individuals’ lives and the power of influence held in the presidency:

Do you want to be a president of a college that's going to take people…from where they are, poor and, you know, can't even make ends meet really from day to day, to a…that's well-respected that now they're able to provide for a child and they're so much happier?” yes, I can get on board.

Pat concurred:

For me, it's a desire to help others. That is the first and foremost. I don't think you get into education unless you really want to help others personally, or I hope you don't, and looking at how many others can I help. For me, the goal is to get to a point in which I can help the most people I can while still being connected to those people.

Riley’s commitment stemmed from the desire to use the profession to “pay it forward”:

I'm driven by my commitment to serving others, my desire to make sure that I'm doing my part to give back and invest in others, because others invested in me when I didn't know what the heck I was doing…the need to help others and just to
make sure that as I grow or for me to grow, I need to do my part to help others grow.

**Institutional Self-Interest**

Although it’s a much less prevalent theme overall, several grassroots participants linked their motivation with the desire to improve the reputation or standing of the institution itself. SKYCTC was approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on College in 2010 as a comprehensive community college, but it still operated under the name Bowling Green Technical College until 2013. Several of the participants talked about the difficulty in combating the community perception that SKYCTC is “just a tech school” or that they have very limited offerings. They spoke of the regional predisposition toward four year college as compared to other options for education and training. After completing extensive research on community and technical colleges, Dougherty (1994) summarized that laypeople often know very little about two-year colleges, believing they are only a peripheral part of the collegiate system or a landing spot for students who are unable to enter “regular” college. Even though Dougherty’s research is somewhat dated, many of the participants’ statements confirmed this perception. Shelley took over the strategic planning committee in an attempt to introduce ideas to improve public perception. She commented:

> It is clear that our community is still not aware of what we have to offer. I was like, you know that’s an opportunity for us right there to educate our community and make them aware of the programs we have to offer, make them aware of the opportunities as far as two plus two agreements that we have with WKU³. I want to make that happen.

---

³ The acronym WKU stands for Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Kentucky.
Misty agreed:

WKU is so known and respected in this community. There’s a lot of people, even to this day, that are not aware of the college and what we do. We’re a hidden gem and if we can do things to get people to recognize that, then we absolutely should.

The perception that attending SKYCTC as opposed to the local public university somehow equates to a lower self-worth was a motivator for several of the study participants. Their decision to engage in grassroots efforts was driven by institutional self-interest.

**Personal Influences that Dissuade Engagement and Administrative Aspirations**

**Challenge of the Role**

All five faculty who indicated a non-desire to assume a leadership role discussed the challenges of holding administrative positions. The challenges of the leadership role cited by faculty included: demands of the job; difficulty of holding a leadership role; responsibility for other people, employee conflict and the need to be a fundraiser with declining state support. Faculty indicated the challenge of leading influenced their non-desire to assume a leadership position. Below are explanations from the faculty that illustrate perceptions of the challenges of holding leadership roles. Sally explained the difficulties of leadership:

I think leadership roles are very, very difficult. For one thing, you can’t please everyone, and there’s always criticism. I don’t know, I just prefer not to have that at this stage in my life.

Scott specifically cited his reluctance to assume a fundraising role and his lack of desire to take on a position that supervises multiple faculty members:

Because of our funding, we used to get most of it from the state, now we don’t. You have to be a fundraiser anymore in a leadership role. That’s not for me. I think dealing with other faculty members in meetings and things like that, sometimes that’s harder than dealing with students.
Executive-level participants were also influenced by the political aspects of the role of the community college president. Taylor defined the political nature of the role as “politics inside an institution. Politics at the local level, magistrates, county judges, executive city commissioners. Politics at the state level…” and further stated that this would be a negative factor of influence. Jordan agreed:

Whereas once you get to the president, there’s a lot more … your level of political involvement has to go up a great deal, and I am not interested in the political side of things.

Pat, who wants to become a community college president, stated that politics was a concern in the larger context of state-supported funding.

State support is huge. Do they have local taxation? If not, is the state supporting it at a level at which you're comfortable with? Is it a state in which the politics are trending towards maybe, and this is where it gets ... Are they trending towards being a Tea Party type state, where they're going to cut back on all governmental funding including education? Or are they a state that is supportive of education and is willing to fund that?

The political aspect of the position of community college president was a negative factor of influence on the decision to pursue the role as well as not knowing or understanding the demands of the position of president. Morgan stated:

I think it’s just the unknown of what a position of higher authority entails and what the demands would be. The inability to really see the next level before considering the role…that unknown…it gives you hesitation.

Although a couple of the executive-level participants viewed the presidency as an exciting challenge, the majority discussed the difficulty in dealing with the constant changing nature of the community college and the ever-evolving role of the presidency. They also cited a lack of preparation to handle these demands. According to Romero (2004), the role of the community college president has become more complex. Given different backgrounds, experiences, and education, what happens developmentally to
influence an individual’s decision to pursue the presidency? Any formal or informal training of community college executive leaders must be conceptualized in the light of these changing demands.

**Work/Life Balance**

One major challenge that grassroots leaders face is trying to maintain the balance between work expectations and grassroots activism. True grassroots change takes time. Not only do grassroots leaders have to be patient in their efforts, but also they have to face constant battles from multiple sources. Grassroots leaders are committed to their cause and willingly agree to the extra advocacy work; yet the additional time makes them overburdened by various responsibilities (Kezar & Lester, 2011). After years of individually working to implement new ideas in to the student orientation program, Misty finally procured a leadership position on the committee where she could recruit and network with like-minded activists. The membership in this group continued to grow. At first, Misty thought this would be beneficial to her cause; however, these individuals had their own ideas about how the committee should focus their efforts. She said:

> Things were going well. People became interested in what I was trying to do. But one year, we were honestly overwhelmed. I didn’t even have 10 people on my committee and we had so much going. I didn’t want people to become burned out. I had to scale back. My plate was becoming too full… I couldn’t do that again.

Through this experience, Misty learned a valuable lesson about how quickly grassroots efforts can snowball out of control if there is not a consistent vision.

Similarly, Allison struggled with balancing her teaching responsibilities with her philanthropic involvement. For the first few years, Allison was a volunteer within the organization before becoming the first female site coordinator in Kentucky. While she
was honored to be asked to serve in this capacity, she knew it would not be easy to reconcile her roles as teacher, student, and leader:

I’m on a 10-month contract. I come back in August and things are very hectic. There are some weeks where I’m like, “Okay how can I get all of this done?” That’s probably my biggest obstacle. I teach all day, make phone calls and attend meetings for [organization] after work, and then go home and do homework. Oh, and somewhere in between all of that, I have to find the time to be “mom.” There’s no way that I could do it if I didn’t love it…all of it. Some days I do struggle with being able to put the time into it that I would like. There are other days when I feel like I’m not getting anything done.

Most grassroots leaders view their advocacy activities akin to responsibility, but the choice to engage is very demanding. Shelley suggested that this obstacle is exacerbated by the fact that funding is down, positions remain unfilled, and resources (i.e. time) are scarce. Shelley and her team spent years designing their ideal student success center, but decreased resource led to the pairing down of the original plans for the center. She said, “It became clear that it wasn’t going to work exactly as we wanted. It couldn’t be done. We were frustrated and felt like we were wasting time. We could’ve given up, but we didn’t. We just came up with a new plan.”

Executive-level participants were more vocal in discussing the personal factors that hinder their desire to pursue a president’s role. Three of the interviewees indicated that the balance of work and family was a key factor of personal influence that would discourage them from seeking the community college presidency. Some respondents fear that the presidency has become a 24/7/365 career and are not eager to forfeit personal freedom for professional advancement. Pat avowed:

I want to be a president. I get this red flag that pops up and says, if I do that, will I get to have a family? Will I get to see my family? That made me take a step back but then I get to a place like here and I see it being done right or it's possible to do it where you can still have a family. You can get home by 5 or 6 and make it to tee-ball games and things like that.
In terms of the college presidency, the topic of work-life balance has grown significantly (McNair, 2014). Often the multiple roles held by one individual can be in regular competition. Although no executive-level participant had experience as a college president, the majority of respondents readily recognized that consideration for the role was a professional choice full of implications on their personal lives.

**Reluctance to Leave the Classroom**

Faculty desire to stay in the classroom and in direct connection to students. Among the faculty who indicated a non-desire to assume a formal leadership role, all four revealed their reluctance to leave the classroom. Scott shared:

> I guess I kind of like being on the front lines with the students. I know you’ve heard this before, but when you make a connection and when you feel like you’ve helped somebody, there’s no better feeling.

Sandra discussed:

> You’re more removed and you don’t get to help and I like the little light bulb that pops on in the kid’s head and saying, I was never good at math. I was never good in school. It was very difficult for me. I don’t like that. And, you get to show them the reason for it, how to do it. I like doing the job. I like teaching.

All the faculty in this research study showed a high level of commitment to students. They initially became educators to work with students; leaving the classroom becomes a deterrent to assuming a formal leadership position.

**Age**

In addition to family, executive-level participants contemplated their age, particularly the notion of whether to pursue the position of community college president “at this age, at this stage” of the professional work cycle. This concern corresponds to survey findings from the Harvard Business Review and Bloomberg which indicated that
age is a factor of influence on seeking advancement opportunities. Both surveys found that “young workers were more likely than older workers to be aiming for promotion, which makes more sense given that they are early in their careers and see more opportunity for advancement” (Lebowitz, 2015).

Age was a factor of influence for three of the interviewees in this study, who indicated that the passing of time in their professional lives is a deterrent to their aspirations to seek the role of community college president. Morgan stated:

I haven't really given a lot of thought about being a college president. I'm not a young whippersnapper anymore. I'm doing okay, but I'm not ... I'm also in the stages of life where I've got a lot of life priorities, a lot of different personal life priorities now and things like that.

Likewise, Peyton concurred:

I'm old enough now that I'm set in my career. That may sound funny, but I don't have a strong desire to sit there and keep moving up and become the president… It's not there. I think that occurs with age. When you're really young, you just want to conquer the whole world and you want to get to this position and you're not going to be happy if you don't get there.

Justifiable or not, both of these statements clearly indicate that these participants correlate the energy required of a presidency with youth. Hayden shared:

Personal factors would be: do I want to do it at my age?...Would I want to do that after having worked already 30-some years and I've seen all of this stuff. Do I have the energy and the desire to fight through all of that? It's like starting over again. You get to a point where you feel well, I can go fishing now. I can enjoy. I can leave at a reasonable hour. Do you want to turn around and go back into that grind? Those are the kind of things I would have to think about. Yeah, the money might be good, but you know what you're giving up when you step into a situation like that. Those are the factors that I would have to consider.

This third respondent, Hayden, also associates the vibrancy of youth with being a president, and adds the element of concern about the shift of work-life balance as a priority (DeZure et.al, 2014; HBR, 2014). Having been seasoned in a career that spans
over 30 years, Hayden has gained wisdom and insight into the field of higher education and the changing role of the community college president. Hayden is focused more toward retirement and a changed lifestyle versus the energy and stamina required to become a community college president.

**Institutional Influences**

Participants noted that institutional factors also influenced their desire and decision to engage in leadership efforts. Of the institutional factors cited – its “size,” “the board,” “the faculty,” “the campus culture, “the climate,” “growth,” “community,” and “diversity” – the dominant factors of influence were the culture of the institution (“culture of caring”), professional development, and inclusion.

**Culture**

SKYCTC has a strong familial culture. As the results of the OCAI indicate, the dominant and preferred culture is the Clan Culture among faculty and staff across the institution. All nine faculty interviewed discussed the “Culture of Caring” embedded across the institution. The interview data corroborate this and explain how this culture fosters desire to assume leadership roles. One faculty member said: “I think it (Clan Culture) helps because it supports – we are looking for supportive leaders and feel we have supportive leaders and I think that does help (aspirations to leadership).” Another faculty member commented “They’re [the administration] wanting people to step up and take an active leadership role.”

Several of the grassroots participants mentioned key individuals who encouraged grassroots leadership efforts through both direct and indirect interactions. Both faculty and staff members discussed the importance of having a positive leader as a role model,
of sorts, and the impact of this individual on informal learning. Positive leaders not only remove barriers and obstacles to successful leadership efforts, they serve as mentors to individuals attempting to create change (Kezar & Lester, 2011). They often meet with faculty and staff members to offer support and brainstorm ideas, they change work conditions to allow leaders the freedom to engage in change efforts, and they may serve as allies in convergence.

Allison has held various faculty and staff positions within SKYCTC. Her professional teaching experience, combined with her graduate education in counseling and student affairs, affords her a unique perspective on student development and engagement. She saw a need for an overhaul in the student orientation program, but she doubted her ability to affect real change. The president’s support for leadership at all levels of the organization influenced her willingness to take over as chair of the new student orientation committee.

I think Dr. Neal is a very positive leader. He is very supportive and I think that trickles down to our deans and other people in leadership positions. But it’s not just them…everybody can have a seat at the table. He’s open to ideas and he encourages you to get involved if you see a need on campus. I’ve seen a lot of change go down over the years and he is the most supportive.

The former SKYCTC president was a strong advocate for involvement in community service projects and strengthening community partnerships. This passion for the underprivileged student spurred faculty and staff members to embrace their own desires to get involved with area community service organizations – specifically those offering services from which SKYCTC students could benefit.

He (Dr. Hodges) supported us. He supported community service. He supported our students. He’s the one that started the student emergency fund. He saw the
need of our students. He wrote a check, started a student emergency fund, and asked us if we wanted to contribute. He set that example for others to follow. When I took over as site coordinator for [national philanthropic organization], he even let me use the college as a home base for our operations.

Anne also talked about the importance of a “role model” quality in institution leaders. She commented that having that visible, positive leader encourages others to behave in more positive ways within the organization.

I am very excited that we have Dr. Neal leading us. We also have vice presidents who are amazing role models. One thing I admire most about them is that they lead by example. People appreciate that: they want to emulate that. That’s what going on around here right now. When I look back at leaders that inspired me, they are the ones that stand out. That “do as I say” mentality does not cut it with me. They don’t just provide you emotional support, but resources as well. Resources say that support is in word and deed.

Positive leaders help obtain resources, make essential connections and otherwise tear obstacles to initiating change. The presence of these leaders at SKYCTC both directly and indirectly encourages others to engage in grassroots leadership activism.

The results of the OCAI also indicate a desire across the college to shift towards operating in a more entrepreneurial spirit. Lauren, a faculty respondent, shared an example of how the entrepreneurial (Adhocracy) culture fosters her desire to want to assume an administrative position:

They (administration) understand that in order to be innovative, sometimes you have to take risks. They promote that. ‘Let’s try.’ What’s the worst that can happen? They’re very good in understanding that being innovative, being a leader and developing policy, technology or whatever is going to take some risk. With any risk, there’s always that risk of failure, but you learn from it and go on.

Among those interviewed, there was consensus that the culture at the college supports leadership development and aspiration, even among those faculty who indicated a non-desire for formal leadership role in the future.
Ninety percent of the executive-level leaders interviewed responded that the Clan (or Collaborate) culture also supports their desire to ascend to the community college presidency. One interviewee stated that if the culture of the institution was like that of SKYCTC, it is “much more likely” that the respondent would seek the position of the community college president. Yet another executive-level participant added the collaborative culture of SKYTC is “a good thing” in considering the role of president. Pat, who also aims to become a community college president, cited the “culture of caring” as an institutional factor of influence and expressed “that’s not something that you find everywhere.” The culture of the organization, specifically the “culture of caring” present at SKYCTC, was a positive factor of institutional influence on the decision to seek the role of the community college president.

**Professional Development**

Offering enhanced professional development opportunities allows community colleges to design and implement programs and curriculum that is customized to meet the needs of their particular institution. It is also an ideal way to identify future leaders within the organization. Promoting individuals who have excelled and have proven their commitment and dedication to an institution is often preferable to hiring externally (Middleton, 2009). Faculty grassroots participants noted the importance of professional development to establish their leadership and to network with other colleagues at their campus and within KCTCS. As a full-time faculty member, Melissa had held several informal leadership roles within her department, but it was the administration’s willingness to provide and allow for professional development opportunities that gave her
the motivation and confidence to pursue more formal positions as committee chair and faculty senate leader.

Our administration stands behind professional development. They send people to different trainings and conferences. They tend to rotate participants so that everyone who wants to has a chance to attend. They really encourage people to step up and take on a chair position or a leadership role. Dr. Neal is always coming up with new professional development ideas. He wants you to have the tools to succeed.

Institutions that make professional development opportunities available often foster greater leadership (May, 2013). Funding for professional development leads to a lower turnover rate because employees are pleased by the college’s investment in them and they have a clearer overall perspective of the college’s vision (Robinson, Sugar, & Williams, 2010). Shelley spoke about her experience:

Often times, our administration will encourage people to apply for leadership roles or the President’s Leadership Seminar through KCTCS. My direct supervisor sat me down and said, “Hey – you should think about this. As far as your professional goals go, this would look great on the resume.” They want you to proceed along in your professional aspirations as a whole. They always preserve the budget for professional development because they recognize how important it is. That support and opportunity for advancement is something that is encouraged here. It makes you consider leadership possibilities that you never did before.

Kezar and Lester (2011) asserted that conferences and workshops help grassroots leaders establish a network of like-minded professionals, learn leadership skills, formulate ideas, and garner insight into the ways they might approach change on their campus. The grassroots participants noted that the benefit from these professional development opportunities was two-fold: they were able to develop leadership skills they were lacking and they came away with “best practices” in terms of leadership tactics and strategies. Professional development opportunities that include membership to national and state professional associations allow employees to interact with other leaders, to
understand the national context for initiatives, and to gain new ideas. May (2013) argued that membership to faculty-specific associations gives faculty members credibility that is important when trying to gain support from other members of their profession.

Among the five faculty who indicated they did not desire an administrative position, all felt they would be supported by administration if they desired these opportunities. Two of the nine faculty interviewed, located at branch campuses of the main campus, shared the difficulty of accessing professional development due to geographic distance and professional development programming located on the main campus. Lauren, when speaking about barriers to leadership development shared, “Probably the only thing is being at an off-site location, not that it doesn’t promote it, but it just makes it a little bit more difficult.”

Another finding of this study is the need for a more structured leadership development program. Three of the nine faculty felt strongly that neither the college nor KCTCS provided significant training for aspiring leaders. When asked about how executive-level administration could support his leadership future, Daniel commented:

Develop a leadership development program. Create one, so that whether or not they want to stay here – that was a philosophy I learned a long time ago in industry. You’re only as successful as the people around you. The more people I had working with me that got promoted – that’s what you did. Your job was to develop so they could take over.

Executive level participants also indicated that the area of leadership development needs to be improved at the college. When asked about the aspects of SKYCTC’s culture that do not support leadership development, Jordan outlined:

Within faculty it’s a pretty well defined promotional chain. For staff, it’s not quite as clearly defined. I know that we are working on that, the college is working on that, but there’s not a clear-cut path or route. As far as I can see, it’s…For example, for me, there’s no clear-cut where would I go from here, what would be my next step if I wanted to move up. Right now, the way that works is I talk to my supervisor and say I’m
interested in more responsibility, but in terms of clear-cut progression for staff I don’t think it’s there.

Jordan asserted that the college can improve upon this lack of path progression by providing a defined pathways to advancement.

Even though participants discussed a lack of formal leadership development opportunities, SKYCTC does offer one professional development opportunity specifically designed with the intention of cultivating future leaders. The newly created “Assistant to the Dean” position was a frequent topic among the faculty interviewed. This new position, created by the executive-level leadership at SKYCTC, was established to cultivate future leadership at the institution, particularly within the academic units of the college. The Assistant to the Dean position is a rotating, 2-year leadership term and faculty are selected within their academic division. This “Dean in training” shadows the division dean and is responsible for reviewing syllabi of adjuncts, scheduling classes for the department, handling student complaints, and facilitating and scheduling professional development trainings. The faculty see this position as a way to develop the next set of formal academic leaders and as an avenue to explore or “try out” a formal academic administrative role.

**Inclusion/Being Asked**

Community colleges often have a unique set of challenges. Many community colleges have multiple branch campuses or satellite locations with which they must contend. The relationships between the branch locations and the parent institution are complex, dynamic, and labor intensive. These campuses often have their own individual cultures and norms. Administrators often have to work diligently to blend the mission of scholarship, teaching, and community engagement between the branch and main
campuses (Dengerink, 2001). Deliberate efforts to include more people in campus activities, leadership development, and the decision-making process helps increase support for initiatives and motivation for involvement (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005). SKYCTC operates at six different locations. The furthest branch from the main campus is approximately 40 miles away. Melissa, an employee on one of SKYCTC’s branch campuses noted:

It helps when our president is very visible. In fact, he has a new employee luncheon or seminar and he rotates that among the campuses. I think they do it every other month. It’s nice because new employees get to see the branch campuses, but we also like seeing the president on our turf as well. That’s something we asked for, and he made that happen. We also rotate faculty senate meetings among the campuses. I think that’s also helped a lot. Everyone feels included and they have a voice.

This concept of inclusion is not unique to the decision-making process. Many participants discussed the importance of having administrators show interest in their job. For example, Emily, a faculty member also located one of SKYCTC’s branch campuses, stated:

One of our administrators comes to my class. He’s the only one who’s guest-lectured for me. The students connect with him instantly. He gives them his contact information so they know if they ever need anything, they can contact him. He just makes that connection with them. Students love that… I love that. He shows interest in my program and he goes out of his way to do so. That makes me want to return that favor or pay it forward. I want to get involved and do things to help out.

Inclusion is often the first step to relationship building among administrators, faculty, and staff members (Wallin, 2008). Inclusion also means asking employees to assume leadership roles or take on additional responsibilities. Faculty may not seek out formal leadership positions or feel they have the requisite abilities to move in to administrative roles. Five of the nine faculty who participated in the study who indicated a lack of desire
to aspire to an administrative position explained that while they do not plan to apply for these roles, if they were approached by administration they would consider assuming a leadership role. The following statements from two faculty illustrate this point. Rachel shared:

If push came to shove and they really wanted me to do it, I would do it. If I’m choosing on my own, I prefer not to. If administration felt that positive about my work and my contribution, then I would take it on – only because they asked me to, not because I volunteered to.

Ryan explained:

Maybe ask me for some opportunities, ask me to do certain things…we have a need. He would be a good fit. Can you give him some time to do it?

The findings from the interviews indicate that although faculty may not aspire to formal leadership positions, administration influences how faculty think about taking on administrative roles at the college. The influence of “being asked to lead” by administration impacts faculty decisions to consider leadership roles. Additionally, executive-level participants cited the importance of inclusion on their decision to pursue the presidency. Of those who indicated a lack of desire to assume the presidency, one of the factors that would cause reconsideration is the notion of “being asked” and being needed. Casey indicated:

If there was a need for it and I was asked to pursue to a higher level of authoritarian position, then I would definitely do that if it would help the school in general. If there was a definite need for it and I was asked to do it, it would be like what I’m doing now. I would do the best possible job that I could in that position.

This informal process of identifying future leaders has been referred to as “tapping” (McNair, 2014). For participants in this study, the “tap” on the shoulder becomes a strong catalyst for serious consideration of a presidential position. The theme of being asked was also present in half of the executive-level participants’ responses to
the question of the advanced leadership opportunities they had led. Several participants had all been asked to step into various formal and informal leadership roles, including spearheading projects and leading groups; assuming interim leadership appointments and other advanced leadership roles; leading professional development, and accepting special assignments.

**Peers and Mentors**

Mentorship emerged as an institutional influence on grassroots activism. Through the mentoring process, grassroots leaders have the opportunity to create a strong group of individuals with a commitment or passion for the issues on which grassroots leaders hope to make change (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Many of the participants spoke about the necessity for making personal connections and creating networks of like-minded individuals on campus. John commented on the importance of using this tactic:

> You need to put the right people on the ship. Managing your talent is a big piece of this whole puzzle. And if you’re going to get the right people on the bus, you’ve got to be very cautious in how you go about doing that. We often put so much effort on the student that we forget about the people who are supporting the student and getting them through.

Emily recognized mentorship opportunities with new hires:

> I think we can do a lot when new employees are hired. I try to get them involved in my initiative right away. If I were a new employee at SKY and I knew this was going on and I knew my coworkers were involved, I would just immediately jump in too. I make them think that’s just the way we work. Then I’ll get emails from them that say, “I’m new here. I’ve never done this before. Tell me how I can help.”

Once they’ve opened the door, Emily uses the opportunity to share her passion about the program, to talk about the benefits to both the community and the college, and to expose them to the campus culture.
Among the faculty participants, a strong presence of peer and mentor influence emerged, influencing faculty decisions to aspire to leadership. All nine faculty noted that the level of peer influence affects how faculty make decisions about assuming leadership positions. Of the faculty interviewed who indicated a desire to assume a formal leadership position, several noted the role peers play in their aspirations to leadership. One faculty member discussed her decision to run for a faculty leadership position: her peers told her to “try it and see; go ahead and run”. Ryan shared his experience with a peer mentor in his academic division:

My mentor’s always looking for something to shovel me into a position. He’s always looking for ways to get people involved in local leadership opportunities. Like the SOAR committee, he recommended that to me. He recommended to the Dean that I become the scholarship committee head. He’s even talked to me about being a program coordinator of a program.

The results among the five faculty who do not desire a formal leadership position also support the power of peer influence. Sally encouraged her peer to apply for an Academic Dean position:

I was just very blunt and said, “I hope you’re going to apply for that position.” Since I’m not interested myself, it does give me a little extra…I don’t know if clout is the right word, but I can see who would make a good leader, having been a leader before, and this person’s already taken on a lot of informal leadership, so I can see myself being supervised by the person.

Formal and information mentors often help individuals see areas where they are well prepared for leadership. For all the faculty interviewed, a clear connection exists with peer encouragement among faculty as they think about entering formal leadership roles.
Promotion

SKYCTC possesses many of the same characteristics as other colleges within KCTCS such as institutional structure, faculty rank and governance. SKYCTC is unique in that it is the only KCTCS institution with no tenured or tenure-track faculty. Instead, some faculty at SKYCTC have “continuing status” much like the tenure and tenure-track system and can enter and move through the promotion cycle. The absence of faculty tenure at SKYCTC is a result of the college’s history operating primarily as a technical college (Bowling Green Technical College) up until 1997. During the passage of the Postsecondary Education Improvement Act in 1997, Bowling Green Technical College had no community college to merge with; thus, tenured faculty were never a significant part of the institution as is the situation at other colleges within KCTCS.

Nonetheless, KCTCS does have a formal faculty promotion process developed solely for the purpose of improving the programs by continually upgrading the quality and performance of faculty member. SKYCTC faculty members are eligible and encouraged by college administrators to participate in this promotion process. Many faculty accept formal and informal leadership positions to advance their movement through the promotion cycle from Instructor to Assistant Professor to Associate Professor to Professor. Of the five faculty who indicated a desire to assume a leadership role, none mentioned promotion as part of the reasoning for desire to assume a formal leadership role in the future. Two of the four faculty who indicated a non-desire to assume a formal leadership position discussed the role of promotion. Rachel commented:

There have been a lot of leadership activities. Basically, as you go through the promotion process, you have the opportunity to take on leadership roles in committees, activities and things like that.
Sandra shared:

This is what you should be looking for or with your first promotion, you don’t need any leadership at all. You just need to be on a committee but the next one you do need to lead that committee. Then looking for a leadership role for the last one, you need to have one. They let you know what your goals are for your promotion and how to do everything.

The statements could imply a separation among faculty who view the promotion cycle as an avenue to do just that: advance through the promotion cycle because it is what is required by their performance evaluation and not out of desire to build leadership capacity and experience to be prepared to assume a formal leadership role.

**Trust**

Trust plays a vital role in a developmental culture. In their study of leadership development in community colleges, Robinson et al. (2010) found that trust played a key role in an employee’s decision to assume a leadership role within the institution. The authors were not talking about one-way trust; they discussed the importance of employees being able to trust their supervisors and administrators and having their trust in return. They argued that leads to increased perceptions of openness and transparency in college leadership. Although it was not as prominent of a theme, several participants talked about the importance of trust. David, a full-time professor in a technical program at SKYCTC, works closely with the administration to ensure their programs stay responsive to industry needs. This collaboration often requires both parties to face hard truths and to change policies and procedures with which everyone is comfortable. David embraces this role because of the trust he has for his administration. He said:

I have a really good relationship with administrators here. I trust them. They have always treated me well. I feel like can go in and speak to them about anything and they’ll listen. They know that when I come in to ask for something, or I have an idea to pitch, I’m doing it because it’s the right thing to do for our
students or community partners. I’ve cultivated that relationship with them and I feel like I’ve earned their trust in return.

Shelley also spoke about the importance of trust in an employer-employee relationship. She said that knowing that her administration supports her allows her to pursue leadership roles. She commented:

I think professionally what I look for in an employer is trust…someone who has faith in me. I just want someone to feel like they made a good hire. I don’t want them to sit back and say, “I don’t really know if she can handle that.” I honestly feel like the administration is supportive and that they believe in the faculty and staff here. They support your initiatives and they encourage your leadership opportunities. This makes it easier to step out on the ledge and go for it.

In a presentation on SKYCTC’s workplace ethics initiative at the KCTCS New Horizons Conference, a SKYCTC administrator shared a segment entitled “Leadership Lessons Learned.” He said that one of the most important lessons they learned was the importance of trusting and empowering employees. He stated, “You have to believe in your people and trust them to do a good job. If you empower them, they will work hard to succeed and they’ll do this because they want to.” David concurred that trust from the administration allowed faculty leaders to break through the fear and anxiousness of developing a program that would ultimately change the way faculty members controlled their classrooms. The support and trust ultimately led to the implementation of a nationally recognized initiative (2015 Faculty Innovation Award of Excellence from the American Association of Community Colleges).

Summary of Findings

The findings from this study clearly indicate that the participants are motivated and influenced by both personal and institutional factors when they consider assuming leadership responsibilities. Participants cited the desire to affect change, commitment to
their profession, and institutional self-interest as personal influences that support engagement in leadership efforts. Personal experience and years of employment in the higher education system have led to a cognizance of what study participants believe to be critical issues facing today’s students. For these participants, this awareness has led to a passion that has fueled their interest in advocating for the cause. This passion spills over into their commitment to their profession; as a professional in higher education, their sense of obligation to rectify any perceived injustices influences engagement.

Participants were also more likely to want to engage in formal and informal leadership roles if the focus is on actions that are advantageous to the organization or themselves. Many viewed this self-interest necessary for the growth of the institution.

Interviewees also discussed personal influences that discourage their decision to engage in leadership activities. Having to deal with the constantly evolving position of the presidency and the challenge of administrative roles, balancing career with personal life, and being reluctant to leave the classroom were all cited as negatively influencing a participant’s decision to seek leadership roles. Participants felt that one thing administrators can do to encourage individuals to step into leadership roles was to clarify the responsibilities of available positions. Likewise, participants cited institutional influences that affected leadership involvement. In all three areas of this study, participants talked about the role institutional culture plays on leadership aspirations and efforts. SKYCTC’s culture positively influenced grassroots leaders to engage in change efforts, faculty member to consider assuming administrative roles at the college, and executive-level leaders to aspire for the presidency at institutions with similar cultures. Although the emphasis relied heavily on having a positive leader who encouraged
involvement and inclusion, one of the more dominant themes from this study was the impact of available professional development opportunities. Many participants cited a desire to affect change, but felt they lacked the necessary skill to influence others. Professional development opportunities served as vehicles for leadership training and building confidence. For the participants in this study, being encouraged to participate in professional development opportunities also served as proof of the administration’s trust in their leadership potential and enhanced their feelings of inclusion.

**Common Themes and Corresponding Recommendations**

*Higher education is constantly evolving. New initiatives or advances in technology require faculty and staff to conduct business differently. I am an advocate for targeted professional development. As KCTCS president, I want to continue to invest in employee professional development including providing regional specialized workshops for all employees, allowing faculty and staff participation in state and national conferences, and arranging short-term appointments within business and industry for our technical faculty. I also want to continue the highly successful KCTCS President’s Leadership Seminar that has gained national recognition for its efforts in preparing future leaders within our system.*

- Dr. Jay Box, KCTCS President

The purpose of this study was to identify the motivations and influences of individuals to assume leadership roles. The data from grassroots leaders, faculty and executive-level leaders at SKYCTC were compared using meta-analyses to determine themes and/or variations among the three groups. The common factors of influence among grassroots leaders, faculty and executive-level leaders outlined in Table 2.6 are affecting change, the culture (“culture of caring”), and leadership/professional development.
Table 2.6 – Comparison of Factors of Influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor of Influence</th>
<th>Grassroots Leaders</th>
<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Executive-Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a difference / influencing change</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Being asked”</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to help</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture – “culture of caring”</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State of the institution</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer and mentor influence</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership/professional development</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promotion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge of the leadership role</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reluctance to leave the classroom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Based on the dominant themes that emerged in this project, we make several recommendations to increase the aspirations for leadership on community college campuses. The goal of these recommendations is to identify influences that impact an individual’s decision to engage in leadership activities and factors that affect these leadership efforts. Our hope is that our research provides a snapshot of the various leadership influences that exist on community college campuses and that administrators can use these recommendations to foster leadership aspirations within the institution.

1. **The Desire to Affect Change** – At all levels, participants discussed the desire to engage in leadership efforts that have the potential to bring about marked change.
a. **Alleviate the Fears.** Interview responses indicated that participants are very passionate about the desire to create change; however, they fear that these efforts may be futile. No rational employee expects every leadership effort to produce its desired goals, but administrators can assuage faculty and staff concerns by ensuring they know that activism is accepted and valued at the institution. Establishing an open-door policy can provide an avenue through which employees can address these fears with their administrators.

b. **Allow for Leadership Experiences.** Learning leadership skills out of a textbook or in the classroom will not prepare experienced leaders. As with any personal or professional undertaking, practice is necessary. Providing ample opportunities to lead groups or chair committees will allow the individual to connect theory with practice.

2. **The Impact of Institutional Culture** – Institutional culture plays a significant role in an individual’s decision to engage in change efforts, the methods used to lead, and their expectations of success.

   a. **Understand the Culture across the Institution and the Differences that Exist.** Gaining an understanding of the dominant and preferred cultures at the organization allows executive-level leadership the ability to diagnose how employees are feeling about institution. If employees understand the differences in the current culture of the institution, it can help them decide how to tailor potential leadership efforts. Recognizing the preferred
culture and taking deliberate steps to move the organization toward this culture can encourage employees to engage in activism.

b. **Create a Culture of Caring.** An overwhelming majority of survey respondents and interview participants indicated the desire to lead and operate in a Clan culture. The perception is that this culture is more supportive of leadership efforts that lead to caring, energy, and innovation. In order to create this culture, Willoughby (2014) cited strong leadership that focuses on the people so they feel they matter, are heard, are appreciated and empowered. Adopting an open-door policy, encouraging employee engagement, fostering relationships based on empathy and trust, and cultivating a service-oriented focus are all ways that administrators can promote a culture of caring.

3. **The Availability of Leadership and Professional Development** – Formal and informal opportunities for leadership and professional development support motivation to become senior leaders. The availability of these opportunities emerged as a dominant influence on whether or not participants engaged in leadership efforts.

   a. **Establish a Formal Leadership Development Program.** Community colleges would benefit by developing formal leadership development programs for their employees. The creation of such programs would define the pathways to promotion and provide opportunities for advancement needed for promotion. As part of this leadership development program, a position similar to the “Assistant to the Dean”
that is currently in place at SKYCTC could be developed – an “Assistant to the President” as training ground for those who have aspirations to ascend to the community college presidency. This position would allow individuals a firsthand glimpse into the presidency, thus removing the barrier of not knowing what the presidency entails.

b. **Set the Bar High.** Executive leadership positions often require doctorates, yet few faculty and staff members mentioned receiving strong encouragement to pursue this terminal degree. Having employees with this credential increases the number of in-house qualified candidates for upcoming vacancies. Providing employees with release time or support to complete a doctoral degree would be justified in addressing the crisis in the leadership pipeline.

c. **Allow for Bottom-Up Professional Development.** Not all professional development opportunities need to be presented by administrators. Research indicates that faculty and staff members often embrace the legitimacy of bottom-up professional development opportunities because they felt that it was an opportunity to discuss and explore ideas without feeling pressured to participate. Encouraging faculty and staff members to create and promote professional development opportunities can give a voice to employees at all levels of the organizational hierarchy.

4. **The Importance of Peer/Mentor Influence** – Through mentorship and networking, leaders have the opportunity to create a strong group of individuals with a passion for their common interests and the support leaders need to succeed.
a. **Enhance Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Opportunities.** Peer influence is significant among individuals across the institution, particularly among faculty as they aspire to leadership. As part of a new employee orientation programs, administrators should assign peer mentors (experienced employees) with similar positions to new hires.

b. **Be a Mentor.** Administrators should embrace the opportunity to share their leadership journey with others and to help others who desire administrative positions to develop an appropriate career path. An intentional connection with faculty and staff members early in their tenure may encourage them to plan a career trajectory instead of letting circumstances determine their career paths. Sharing knowledge and experiences is good communication practice and provides context for aspiring leaders.

5. **The Importance of Being Asked** – Administrative support matters to individuals’ decisions to engage in leadership. One of the most influential ways that administrators showed support was to ask people personally to assume a leadership role.

   a. **Ask People to Lead.** Many individuals indicated that while they are not interested in a formal leadership position, they would step up and assume a position if asked by administration. Asking employees to take on additional responsibility may influence their desire to take on leadership roles in the future.
b. **Ask Executive-Level Administrators to Assume Advanced Leadership Opportunities.** According to the participants in this study, many leaders will respond to advanced leadership opportunities simply by being asked to do so. Research findings indicated that even among those who lacked the desire to assume the community college presidency, they would accept the position if asked. Administrators at the system-level or the local college president can provide opportunities for executive-level leaders to take on special projects to hone their skills and to prepare them for advanced leadership opportunities in the future.

6. **The Goal of Maintaining a Work/Life Balance.** In the higher education setting, leadership efforts take time. While many participants were committed to their cause and willing to do extra work, they expressed concern that they may be overburdened by their numerous responsibilities.

   a. **Reap What You Sow.** Leadership is worth it. Too much emphasis is placed on the negative side of leadership and its all-consuming tendencies. Administrators need to actively promote the benefits of leadership (both personal and professional) and share these viewpoints on campus so that employees can recognize the positive aspects of engagement in leadership efforts.

   b. **Establish Realistic Work Goals.** Several participants discussed the importance of keeping a realistic perspective when engaging in leadership efforts. Employees are less likely to become overburdened if they
establish clear and realistic short- and long-term goals. Establishing these objectives can also help employees strategize to realize these goals.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this technical report was to examine current leadership pipelines existing within the community college (grassroots leaders, faculty, and executive-level leaders) and identify the personal and institutional influencers that affect individuals’ decisions to engage in leadership efforts. The results of this case study show that individuals are influenced by many factors as they consider both formal and informal leadership roles within the community college. The findings clearly reaffirm our assumption that institutional culture plays a significant role in leadership aspirations and decisions to engage. The manner in which the current institutional culture fosters aspirations to leadership, both formally and informally, came up in interviews with all three participant groups. Participants shared throughout the study the current institutional culture is one that promotes career mobility and professional development. Another key finding among the executive-level leaders and faculty was the importance of “being asked” by administration to take on formal leadership positions. Among both those with aspirations to assume formal leadership and those without, most indicated they would take on necessary leadership roles of the future if the college administration needed them and said so. Although many grassroots participants mentioned the importance of having a “supportive” administration, they did not base their decision to engage in leadership activities on whether or not they were asked by their administration to do so.

The study found that the major reason participants consider a formal or informal leadership role was to improve the college or make a difference. This desire did not reflect
a distrust of the current administration to improve the system. Instead, participants adopted an “all hands on deck” attitude in terms of dealing with the multiple missions of the college. In most instances they recognized that their placement within the organization afforded them the opportunity to affect change. The majority of the participants in this study felt that SKYCTC administrators were actively encouraging employees to participate in both formal and informal leadership roles on campus as well as taking the steps to prepare for career advancement options outside the college. Administrators encouraged participation in doctoral programs, offered professional development activities within the college, and personally reached out to individuals to encourage pursuit of leadership positions.

This intentional research provides leaders across community colleges and within KCTCS a greater understanding of behaviors, decisions, and perspectives regarding moves into formal and informal leadership assignments. Gaining a deeper understanding of motivators that contribute to the decision to engage in leadership efforts provides a framework for leadership development planning and programming.
Chapter 3
Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership
at a Kentucky Community College

The purpose of this study was to provide new insight into the perspective of grassroots leaders who have engaged in informal change initiatives in higher education. For purposes of this study, I defined grassroots leaders as individuals who do not have formal positions of authority, are operating from the bottom-up, and are interested in affecting organizational change. They have a personal commitment and passion to help create a change that is often not part of their normal activities, and, in the rare situation where activity was part of their duties, they fulfilled it in a way that exceeds a normal person’s sense of obligation or duty (Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). I contended that grassroots leaders are different from those in positions of authority who tend to have a structure in place through which they can enact leadership. Grassroots leaders typically have to create their own structure, network, and support system. To assist in the possible success of future bottom-up initiatives in higher education, I have tried to provide much needed insight into the experiences and perceptions of grassroots leaders in a community college setting.

Significance

Organizational change is typically studied and managed from a top-down, calculated perspective with an emphasis on how formal leaders and managers initiate change. In the social movement literature, there are numerous studies on how grassroots leaders contribute to important societal changes (Bernal, 1998; Bettencourt, 1996; Kroeker, 1996). Educational scholars are now beginning to consider the often-untapped source of grassroots leadership across institutional hierarchy as a valid form of decision-
making; however, we know less about this form of leadership within the context of postsecondary education (Birnbaum, 1992; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). In her study on the convergence of efforts between grassroots leaders and those in positions of authority within higher education, Kezar (2012) examined how grassroots leaders (defined as individuals without institutional, formal positions of authority) make change without having formal power. She found that while several challenges emerge, grassroots leaders are able to influence change by carefully adopting specific strategies in order to converge their efforts with top-down leaders.

Studies of grassroots leaders in higher education identify the contribution these leaders make in improving the institution through meaningful changes. Recent leadership research demonstrates the importance of leadership throughout all levels of the organizations for furthering goals, meeting the mission, and institutionalizing change (Hart, 2005; Kezar, 2012; Pearce & Conger, 2003). The goal of this shift is to tap into the wealth of expertise throughout the organization, increase commitment, and address organizational fit problems. One of the strengths of non-hierarchical leadership is that different personality types, beliefs, and behaviors can be more effectively brought together in order to make better decisions and strengthen the organization (Kezar, 2001).

**Research Questions**

The focus of this work was on the experiences of community college professionals who have instigated bottom-up leadership initiatives. The purpose of this study was to better understand the strategies used in implementing change through grassroots leadership. Four research questions guided this study.

1. What kinds of experiences motivate an individual to be an initiator of change?
2. What strategies do grassroots leaders use to affect change in college policy and practice?

3. What are the major obstacles to implementing grassroots change?

4. In what ways do grassroots leaders find support, inspiration, and balance to overcome challenges and obstacles and remain resilient?

**Grassroots Leadership in Higher Education**

Some community college and university cultures are particularly conducive to the success of grassroots leaders for several reasons. In his book about the four distinct styles of how colleges operate, Birnbaum (1988) recognized the unique characteristics of each style and offered important recommendations in order to ensure their effectiveness. Birnbaum distinguished between leadership and authority in an organization. He defined authority as a kind of legitimate power that people follow because their positions demand it. He argued that although leaders may have formal authority, they mostly rely on the informal authority they exercise on people to influence them. He reasoned that leaders emerge because of their ability to make things happen: they are trusted for their judgment and respected for characteristics such as expertise and integrity and not because they hold a certain position.

Two of Birnbaum’s (1988) organization models, the collegial and the political, clearly carve out a niche for grassroots leaders. Under the collegial model, faculty and administrators interact as equals. There is an emphasis on shared power and consensus among employees. Grassroots leaders often have a direct-line to people in a position of authority. In what Birnbaum defines as the political institution, leaders emerge from various groups and positions within the organization and compete to influence their
administration. Under this model, grassroots leaders can build relationships and connections with many different people within the organization so that they gain the backing of informal power.

Factions of grassroots leadership can and do exist in the other two organizational models Birnbaum describes - bureaucratic and anarchical; however, these factions are less likely because of the presence of dual control systems, conflicts between professional and administrative authority, and unclear goals (Birnbaum, 1988). In anarchical institutions, there is wide disagreement about institutional goals; the ambiguity leads to a lack of collaborative leadership. Birnbaum (1988) argued that anarchical institutions tend to have a culture that is driven by national meritocratic standards and these features constrain the behavior and inclusion of both internal and external shareholders.

Particularly in traditional bureaucratic models, grassroots leaders can be problematic for administrators and leaders who tend to make unilateral decisions in an attempt to “defend the sanctity of their office” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Additionally, there is an emphasis on written job descriptions and rules and regulations that guide behavior and lines of communication that can impede grassroots efforts (Birnbaum, 1988). Organizational models are not the only consideration for the effectiveness of grassroots leaders, but they do foster or hinder the likelihood of their success.

While community colleges have historically been characterized as bureaucratically governed organizations, scholars now agree that this approach to governing is changing (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). Amey, Jessup-Anger, and Jessup-Anger (2008) explored how external and internal factors affect community college governance and the roles leaders at all
organizational levels play in this governance. The authors found that because the organizational context for community colleges is growing more complex, traditional bureaucratic models of governance are no longer effective. Community college administrators must meet the challenge of sustaining a comprehensive mission while dealing with the compounding internal and external influences that demand increasing amounts of their attention. In order to reconcile these challenges, more and more community college administrators are adopting collegial systems of governance (Amey et al., 2008). As governance models continue to shift, further investigation is needed to examine what the convergence of top-down and bottom-up leadership looks like on community college campuses. What are the implications of grassroots activism?

In her article outlining the effect of the community college workforce development mission on governance, Janice Friedel (2008) found that the creation of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS) in 1998 led to a unified, unduplicative system of governance that combined the training and retraining of the workforce board with the collegiate transfer function of the community colleges. While this unified structure satisfied Kentucky’s major political constituents, individual community college boards and administrators became responsible for fulfilling the multiple missions of the college within their district. Through his tenure as KCTCS founding president, Dr. Michael McCall’s annual initiatives have a history of encouraging collaborative partnership and the implementation of team-oriented management (Lane, 2008). This push for collaboration translates to a network of teams establishing two-way lines of communication throughout the system. Individual KCTCS colleges have numerous committees and joint councils that allow faculty and staff
members to interact with administrators and contribute to the decision-making process of the college. This participative style allows leaders to manage multiple demands on resources while remaining responsive to the needs various constituent groups. While it is my opinion that KCTCS would be classified as a either the collegial or political organizational model (or a combination of the two) and KCTCS’s structure is certainly conducive to the success of grassroots leadership, research is required to examine how successful grassroots change efforts occur within the institution.

Research on grassroots leadership is housed within the scholarship of social movement theory and focuses on non-hierarchical and collective processes (Bettencourt, 1996). The literature emphasizes the actions and abilities of individuals who wish to challenge the status quo, but are not in positions that have the power to easily and directly create change. Grassroots leadership literature also identifies a variety of tactics that are noted in top-down leadership research, but they are used differently among grassroots leaders on college campuses. In their study on the effect of institutional culture on change strategies in higher education, Kezar and Eckel (2002) identified the following five considerations in determining effective tactics for instigating change: level of senior administrative support, presidential leadership style, institutional culture, institutional structure, and visible actions (activities that can be visible and promotable for building momentum). One key assumption has been made regarding the characteristics of grassroots leaders: they adopt novel strategies and tactics (often collective) to navigate institutional power structures. Grassroots leaders usually develop a vision collectively with others and use consciousness-raising techniques to get individuals to cultivate a connection to the vision (Kezar et al., 2011). Top-down leaders may choose only a select
few with whom to collaborate. They also have access to different budgets, resources, and methods of communication than grassroots leaders who often have to rely on more informal means and processes of collaboration (Kezar, 2012). The differences may be blatant or they may be subtle; however, the importance lies in the overall impact of working with people (relationally versus hierarchically). Building upon this literature, this study will advance our understanding of grassroots leadership as a vehicle for social movement within an organization. Grassroots leaders in an organization also tend to create changes for those who traditionally have had less power and have been marginalized (Meyerson, 2003). These leaders can increase capacity for change and create changes for certain groups and interests that are often overlooked in society and within organizations.

Corporate and nonprofit literature shifted emphasis quite dramatically years ago, but the higher education literature has been slow to change to non-hierarchical and non-authority based models of leadership. Corporate executives wonder why colleges and universities cannot be run more like businesses – with the speed, efficiency, and unity they think typify their corporate world (Bolman & Gallos, 2011). The need for an overhaul in traditional higher education leadership has become more urgent now that the days of consistent state funding have been replaced by the growing state demands for accountability and assessment as well as the rise of globalization and competition (Kezar et al., 2006). Budget constraints have led to a greater decentralization of authority and the conventional belief in sweeping presidential authority is quite different from the reality (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005). Gone is the image of the traditional college having leaders at the top who direct and control the institution. In its place is the image
of the institution as a living, dynamic system of interconnected relationships and networks of influence (Pearce & Conger, 2003). Framing higher education leadership through a top-down or formalized structure negates the organizational literature that documents and highlights the dual nature of governance in academia (Birnbaum, 2000). For example, Eckel, Hill, Green, and Mallon (1999) posited that faculty and staff members with no official power may be more important to change than top administrators because colleges are more like networks that hierarchies.

Even though the corporate literature fails to address the traditional “public good” question of higher education, administrators may be able to draw new understandings about leadership by examining findings from this field of research. In an introduction to a collection of essays addressing the notion of colleges needing to act like businesses, Knapp and Siegel (2009) noted that the state of the current environment serves as a constant reminder that colleges can benefit from adopting practices that are readily found in the private sector. Institutions of higher education, particularly community colleges, have to be responsive to multiple constituencies who increasingly demand excellence and accountability in fiscal management, marketing, changing industry standards, and customer service. Knapp and Siegel (2009) argued that CEOs and administrators are not always in a position to be responsive because they are too-far removed from the day-to-day dealings with external partners. Corporations often have employees within their organizational structure who are strategically positioned to stay abreast of external demands. This enhances the corporation’s ability to stay responsive. The authors suggested that higher education institutions could benefit from adopting a similar structure or utilizing employees at a grassroots level to fulfill these roles.
New models of leadership recognize that the effectiveness of leadership does not depend solely on individual, heroic leaders, but rather on a leadership system at all levels of an organization. Grassroots leaders play an integral role in this paradigm shift. Some scholars suggest that grassroots leadership takes place every day in institutional settings (Kezar et al., 2011; Romero, 2004). Birnbaum (1992) and Kezar and Lester (2011) argued the importance of not only understanding what makes grassroots leaders successful, but also the campus contexts that contribute to or detract from their ability to lead. It requires a combination of departmental and campus-wide practices, policies, and values to create an institutional culture that promotes grassroots change.

Institutional culture is a primary factor in the success of change initiatives. In his qualitative case study of a southeastern community college, Locke (2006) found that community college cultures are multi-dimensional, and they contain subcultural groups that have the ability to influence change. It is assumed that these subcultures have developed their own guiding assumptions and beliefs based on what they have learned through past experiences. Grassroots leaders can integrate themselves into these subcultures because they recognize their potential to facilitate change by injecting diverse perspectives and innovative ideas into the organization (Locke, 2006). Alternatively, grassroots leaders can rise up out of these subcultures as a result of the desire to change and/or improve the subculture’s shared assumptions, understandings, and implicit rules that govern day to day behavior in the workplace (Deal & Kennedy, 1983). Leaders can make strategic use of cultural information and their position within these subcultures to build coalitions and garner support for change initiatives. This type of collaborative leadership is necessary because leadership from the top alone is rarely sufficient to
implement change (Kezar & Eckel, 2002). Convergence from the bottom-up is important because studies of grassroots leadership substantiate that the success of change initiatives can be extremely fragile if institutionalization does not occur (Bettencourt, 1996).

Community colleges constitute a special type of organization: their complex mission, dynamics, personnel structures, and values require a distinct set of understandings and skills to lead and manage them well (Bolman & Deal, 2011). Critics argue that many faculty and staff members lack the training (both formal and informal) and expertise to influence top-down leaders. Other external factors also affect their ability to assume leadership roles. For example, critics suggest that the propensity for faculty leadership to occur is hindered by the rise in part-time and non-tenure-track appointments and the demand for academic capitalism; staff members are only as empowered as their immediate supervisors allow them to be (Kezar, 2010). The role of bottom-up leaders in top-down efforts is important to understand; however, institutional members without formal authority also create change day-to-day. These change efforts often run counter to the interests of positional leaders.

Top-down leadership models are not a strong fit for community colleges because of the loosely-coupled subsystems present throughout their organizational structures. From a faculty perspective, autonomy and academic freedom lead to loose coupling within the administrative systems because administrators giving directives challenge the assumption of equality (Birnbaum, 1988). Recent research contests the conventional notions of leadership and reframes it as a process of collective action by individuals throughout the organization who use unique strategies to facilitate change (Amey et al., 2008). This inclusive style makes it more likely that a greater number of approaches to a
problem will be explored and the willingness of campus leaders to themselves be influenced in exchange for the opportunity to influence others leads to the development of compromise that most people of campus can support (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Under this model, individuals without formal positions of power can create significant change on college campuses and play important leadership roles.

Through interviews with 18 founders of grassroots, nonprofit community organizations in Southern California, Brant (1995) found that personal values of these founders played an important role in motivating them toward grassroots activism. The results of this study contribute to current research on identifying motivating factors that instigate a behavior change in ordinary people to assume a leadership role. The decision to participate in grassroots organizing involves cognitive and affective psychological elements. Individuals’ feelings of group consciousness and self-efficacy or empowerment, as well as their understanding of what is fair, may affect their willingness to become involved in grassroots activism (Wittig, 1996). The emerging values-based leadership paradigm provides a theoretical framework for examining whether an individual’s personal values proved the essential motivation factor (Takahashi, 2005).

Other scholars suggest that grassroots leadership occurs as the result of the leader’s ability to affect change with his or her passion for a particular issue (Scully & Segal, 2002). When looking at grassroots activism through the social context in organizational change, it is important to note that most often, this passion leads to small-scale changes over an extended period of time. Regardless, success fuels involvement and involvement fuels more action. Action leads to efficacy, which leads to bolder actions that bring other people into the fold (Sparks, 2005).
The trend towards grassroots leadership may require that individuals have different skills and campus stakeholders to be reeducated. For example, understanding how to read and shape the organizational culture is one of the key aspects of successful grassroots leadership (Kezar et al., 2011). College administrators can advocate for grassroots leadership on their campuses. In his dissertation on grassroots leadership and social activism, Brant (1995) found that administrations can do the following things to foster grassroots leaders within their organizations: include these individuals in strategic planning sessions, plan workshops that are either experimental or interactive, create programs that include broad-based team programs and projects, and partner them with mentors. He argued that using organized initiatives to encourage activism can create a ripple effect throughout the institution.

Through interviews with nine college presidents, Eddy (2005) found that presidents recognized the vital role campus members played in constructing the leadership of the institution. She noted that presidents who recognize the importance of these grassroots leaders to their institutions are more likely to be reflective about the choices they make in professional development and mentoring opportunities. As people get involved in the organizing process, they gain a heightened awareness of their own worth. Research outside of higher education mirrors Eddy’s findings. Keddy (2001) examined 15 years’ worth of the organizing activities of the Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO). PICO’s model of organizing places an emphasis on helping regular people become powerful actors in their own locales and on building the human infrastructure of a community long-term. Keddy found that interplay between human dignity and the leadership development process is what enables grassroots
organizing to have long-lasting impact because it is ultimately about more than politics or current issues. The growing sense of dignity increases the likelihood that individuals will challenge the status quo and confront conditions they deem unacceptable.

**Tempered Radicals**

Many recent studies on grassroots leadership are framed by the scholarship of tempered radicals, activists who essentially “work within the system” to achieve change, as compared to those who use more aggressive strategies and tactics (Kezar et al., 2011; Sparks, 2005). The tempered radical framework examines the work of bottom-up leaders without formal authority within organizational settings. This framework is helpful for understanding how grassroots leaders influence and create change. Tempered radicals identify with and are committed to their organizations, and are also committed to a cause or ideology that is fundamentally different from and possibly at odds with the dominant culture of the organization (Kezar et al., 2011). Meyerson and Scully (1995) described these individuals as “quiet catalysts” who push back against prevailing norms, create learning, and lay the groundwork for slow but ongoing organizational and social change. Grassroots leaders are often tempered radicals because they work to create change, operate from the bottom-up, lack formal authority, and create changes often outside the status quo (Kezar & Lester, 2011). They engage in simple acts that change the workplace over time.

A macro theory of change says that organizations are basically static and only change when something major happens to disrupt the routine. Grassroots leaders view organizations as organic and evolutionary: little nudges in the system actually matter and can provoke change from many places within the organization (Sparks, 2005). Kezar,
Gallant, and Lester (2011) found that faculty and staff are much more likely to take a
tempered approach to stimulate change in their institution than grassroots leaders in non-
education sectors. The culture and character of the institution distinctly shapes these
approaches. For example, the authors found that grassroots leaders at research
universities had more opportunities to raise consciousness through intellectual
opportunities whereas, leaders at liberal arts colleges were able to raise consciousness
through mentorship and network-building activities. Regardless of the tactic, when these
actions produce concrete results, they increase a leader’s sense of efficacy, which in turn
fuels new efforts and a new perspective on what constitutes an opportunity for making
change.

**Methodology**

This study explores the experiences of grassroots leaders in higher education. I
chose to use qualitative research methodology, in particular a phenomenological
approach, to illuminate the specific experiences of grassroots leaders and to gain insight
into their motivations and actions. A phenomenological perspective seeks to understand
what is the essence, structure, and meaning of the lived experience of a person or a group
of people (Patton, 2002). Given the research questions for the current study, a qualitative
approach emerged as the best means of studying and making sense of the proposed
phenomenon. A phenomenological perspective was utilized as the theoretical
underpinning that led to the research questions which ultimately lead to the research
design. Data are used to generate theory through a thematic analysis. To gather such data,
I undertook in-depth interviews with people who have directly experienced the
phenomenon of interest; that is, they have “lived experience” with grassroots leadership.
The assumption is that there are essences of shared experience among grassroots leaders: these essences are the core meanings mutually understood through the phenomenon commonly experienced. I bracket, analyze, and compare the experiences of my subjects in an attempt to identify the essences of grassroots leadership.

A majority of the literature on grassroots leadership has been based on qualitative research designs. Phenomenological research overlaps with other qualitative approaches, but phenomenological methods are particularly effective at bringing to the fore the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, and therefore challenging structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). A phenomenological approach can be applied to deliberately selected samples at a single site. Grassroots leadership is a process, and case study is ideal for studying processes (Bettencourt, 1996; Kezar, 2010).

Research Setting

Marshall and Rossman (2006) proposed that realistic and feasible sites for sampling and conducting qualitative research are ones in which: 1) entry is possible; 2) there is a high probability that a rich mix of the processes, people, programs, interactions, and structures of interest are present; 3) the researcher is likely to build trusting relationships with the participants in the study; 4) the study can be conducted and reported ethically; and 5) data quality and credibility of the study are reasonably assured.

I chose Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), one of 16 community college in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), as the site for this study. SKYCTC exhibits several characteristics recognized in grassroots leadership literature as being conducive to grassroots change efforts. First,
SKYCTC has a reputation of being supportive of bottom-up leadership initiatives. In 2015, SKYCTC received a national award of excellence from the American Association of Community Colleges for their Workplace Ethics Initiative. This grassroots-driven initiative is the result of collaboration between faculty members and local business partners to ensure that behaviors in the classroom mirror those expected in the workplace. As a result of this recognition, SKYCTC faculty members and administrators have presented the principles of this initiative at several conferences in the country.

Second, I wanted to select a college that is somewhat representative of the other colleges in KCTCS in terms of size and community demographics. SKYCTC is a mid-sized college within KCTCS. In fall 2015, SKYCTC had a full-time equivalent enrollment of 2,351 students (FTE = total credit hours/15). The median KCTCS enrollment for Fall 2015 was 2,325. SKYCTC has six campuses located in a ten-county service area. The college also has a strong partnership with local business and industry. Through its Workforce Solutions department, SKYCTC serves over 6,000 individuals and 600 companies annually. One point of distinction is that SKYCTC is the only KCTCS college with no tenured or tenure-track faculty (KCTCS Factbook, 2015).

Third, I chose SKYCTC due to ease of access and administrative support. In 2013, SKYCTC named Dr. Philip Neal as their President and CEO. Dr. Neal was promoted from within the college where he served as the Provost from 2008 to 2013. Dr. Neal came up through the faculty ranks to his present position as college president. Dr. Neal has co-authored/edited a textbook about leadership, *The Creative Community College: Leading Change through Innovation* (2008). Dr. Neal has made a marked pledge to the continual growth of his employees. He preserves professional development
dollars in the midst of budget crises, provides faculty leadership opportunities in conjunction with a reduced course load, and most recently, he tasked college administrators with creating an internal leadership development program similar to the KCTCS President’s Leadership Seminar.

Finally, considering my focus on grassroots leadership motivations, obstacles, and tactics, I wanted participants to be comfortable and forthcoming as possible in their interviews. I thought it was important to conduct this research away from my home college. Since I have no professional experience with SKYCTC, I hoped using SKYCTC as the site for my study would allow me to avoid any potential influences and biases that could be associated with knowing the participants and the administrators for which they work.

**Identification and Recruitment of Participants**

The population for this study was faculty and staff members at SKYCTC who have engaged in change initiatives using bottom-up leadership techniques. Purposive sampling allows a researcher to eliminate and/or narrow the pool of information sources by deciding who to, what to, and what not to consider in the study (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper & Allen, 1993). Purposive sampling will provide “information-rich” participants matching the overall purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009).

As an initial means of identifying grassroots leaders, I contacted a well-networked campus administrator and a tenured faculty member to ask for assistance in identifying faculty and staff members who actively engaged in grassroots (local, bottom-up) change initiative. For purposes of this study, I used a broad definition of change initiative as a series of actions taken to implement a transformation in the institution. I then contacted
individuals they identified as grassroots leaders to invite them to participate in the study. After this initial round of participant recruitment, I used a snowball sampling technique to recruit additional participants. I also observed campus functions and presentations and examined institutional documents to identify other individuals engaged in grassroots efforts. I continued to seek additional participants until I exhausted the recommendations and saturated the sample.

The findings presented in this manuscript draw upon interviews conducted with four faculty and four staff members engaged in grassroots change efforts. The faculty participants represented non-tenure-track faculty at all ranks. Staff participants ranged from entry- to mid-level staff in academic and student affairs and the president’s office. There were more women and people of color in the sample than their proportional numbers to the population of the institution.

Data Collection and Analysis

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews provided the primary data for identifying the strategies grassroots leaders use to influence top-down leadership and the major obstacles they face. In researching grassroots leadership in post-secondary institutions, an unstructured interview is a valid choice because it solicits detailed examples and rich narratives and it identifies possible variables to frame hypotheses. Yin (2011) discussed the importance of understanding the participant’s world. The conversational nature of semi-structured interviews allows for two-way interactions that lend themselves to a greater understanding of the subject’s experiences, thoughts, and motives.

Schatzman and Strauss (1973) asserted that participants may be most willing to reveal information about them in their natural setting. I conducted these interviews on-
location to allow me to understand the context and place in which my participants reside when making leadership decisions. Each interview lasted between one and one-half hours. The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. My role was best characterized as an investigator of these individuals’ lived experiences with grassroots leadership (Yin, 2011). I maintained this role by asking questions and gaining information for the study. I built trust and established rapport with interviewees by obtaining consent, using open communication techniques and by conducting member checks to ensure accurate interpretations of participant experiences. In order to maintain anonymity, I assigned each participant a unique number and removed any identifiable information from the interview transcripts.

Prior to conducting these interviews, I analyzed numerous institutional documents to understand the context of grassroots leadership activities on SKYCTC’s campus. These documents included college demographic fact books, annual reports, budgets and financial planning documents, strategic plans, organizational charts, minutes from faculty and staff senate meetings, and progress reports. During several campus visits, I observed several formal and informal activities (committee meetings, presentations, kickoffs, etc.) and took field notes which were also analyzed.

I took an inductive approach to gathering and analyzing the data and adapted this approach as relevant categories emerged. I compared the content from all interviews and categorized data for emerging themes. Creswell’s (2009) open, axial, and selective coding methods were employed during the data analysis to determine the meaning of the data. First, I used the open coding method to organize the data into relevant categories. Next, I used the axial coding method to demonstrate the interrelationships and
connectivity of the open coding categories to the central idea of the study. Finally, I used the selective coding method to form the participants’ stories and to connect the stories to the study’s framework (Creswell, 2009). I employed the constant-comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) throughout this study while formulating categories for coding the data provided through the interviews (Yin, 2011). Segments of meaning were categorized and sorted in an Excel database so that overarching themes can be identified, refined, and connected to theory. The result is a study with findings grounded in research, theory, and raw data (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). Examining commonalities across the participants’ perspectives will provide the higher education literature base with a consistent picture of what motivations and challenges grassroots leaders face in affecting change. Adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research allows it to be used as the basis for practical theory (Lester, 1999).

**Professional Profile**

This professional profile provides a snapshot of each leader interviewed for this study. The purpose of this snapshot is to build an understanding of the participants’ professional and educational background and to identify their involvement in grassroots change efforts.

*Melissa.* Melissa is an assistant professor in a selective admission program at SKYCTC. She worked in a clinical setting before she began working at the college in 2003. She holds a bachelor’s degree in nursing, a master’s degree in nursing, and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in educational leadership. Melissa was instrumental in growing the selective admission program at SKYCTC from offering one degree option
to two and bringing general education courses to the branch campus so that students can complete their degree in a single location.

David. David is a professor in one of the technical disciplines at SKYCTC. He has served in this capacity for 19 years. He holds an associate’s degree in vocational education and a bachelor’s degree in applied technology. He is also a nationally certified to teach in his discipline. After spending years in the manufacturing sector, David wanted to expand his skills by teaching others his trade. David’s experience in the manufacturing industry gave him first-hand knowledge of the kind of soft skills employers look for in potential employees. He used this perspective to help lead the implementation of the workplace ethics agreement at SKYCTC.

Anne. Anne is a staff member in the Outreach and Community Development department at SKYCTC. She has been in her position for a year and a half. She has experience at other higher education institutions in both faculty and staff roles and in the private sector as an electrical engineer and a corporate trainer. She holds both bachelors and master’s degrees. Anne is currently pushing for a cultural shift in the way faculty members engage students in online learning.

Shelley. Shelley is a staff member in the Student and Organizational Success department. She changed employment from a public four-year institution to SKYCTC in 2008. She holds a bachelor’s degree in Spanish and communication and an MBA. Her background in higher education is in academic advising and student success. Shelley was integral in the push for the development of a student success center on SKYCTC’s campus.
Allison. Allison is an assistant professor in the business division at SKYCTC. She has worked at the college for 13 years and worked as a trainer in the private sector before she entered into higher education. She has a bachelor’s degree in business education and a master’s degree in education. Allison has worked tirelessly in revamping the orientation program at SKYCTC.

John. John is a staff member in the Student and Organizational Success department. He holds a bachelor’s degree in history and a master’s degree in human resource development. Before beginning his employment at SKYCTC in 2013, he served in the armed services for eight years, worked in the manufacturing industry as a manager, and moved to the health care organization as a consultant. He transitioned into higher education by working as a career coach at a private four-year college in Kentucky. John has a strong foundation in human development and is very passionate about student success. He is currently working to grow this mentality across SKYCTC’s campus.

Emily. Emily is a professor in the business division at SKYCTC and is the longest tenured participant in the study. She has worked at SKYCTC for 26 years – 13 years as an administrative assistant and 13 years as an instructor. She has a secretarial diploma, a bachelor’s degree, and is currently completing a master’s degree. Emily has pushed SKYCTC to become more involved in community service through her association with a national philanthropic program.

Misty. Misty serves as a project coordinator in the president’s office at SKYCTC. She began working as an administrative assistant for one of the branch campuses in 2007 before moving to the main campus to work for the provost in 2008. She transitioned to the president’s office when Dr. Neal became president in 2013. She has completed
several business certificates and holds an associate of arts degree, a bachelor’s degree in business administration, and is currently pursuing a master’s degree in higher education. Misty is also responsible for engaging the college in several community service projects. She is a “go-to” person on campus for various leadership initiatives.

Findings

Every grassroots leader has a story. As the interview transcripts were coded, a series of themes emerged as a result of the collective responses of the participants. These themes are grounded in the data and the lived experiences of the participants.

Motivation: Individual Grassroots Phenomenon

The interviews started with subjects providing educational and professional background information. The first research question focused on the participant’s motivation to be an initiator of change by asking about their involvement in grassroots change efforts, interest in a particular initiative, and the chronology of events surrounding grassroots organization. Ultimately, the intention was to discover what kind of experiences motivated leaders to engage in grassroots activism. Motivation comes from “self-interest or passion” for a particular cause or from a “sense of commitment or responsibility” to the cause. Individuals are motivated because they believe that change is the right thing to and they have a deep understanding or belief in the cause (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Overall, the participants’ motivation centered on the desire to create positive change. Some participants used phrases such as “pride,” “vested interest,” “passion,” “proactive,” and “duty” to describe their reasoning to engage in grassroots change efforts. Given the participants’ responses, three themes clearly emerged.
Passion

Scully and Segal (2002) argued that employees have a great passion for their issues as a result of their daily, firsthand experiences in the workplace. Many participant responses substantiated this argument, particularly in terms of their passion for students and the institution. Misty’s passion for community service efforts and philanthropy came as a direct result of working with community college students. In her tenure at SKYCTC, she has represented the college on several community boards and began a Christmas program to ensure students could provide gifts to their children. When asked what motivated her to push for this program she responded:

We walk up and down these halls and we see these students day in and day out. We don’t really know what’s going on behind closed doors. We don’t really know what’s happening in their lives. They’re doing their best to change their circumstances. I know that. A lot of faculty and staff know that. That’s why we have to do whatever we can to try to help them and to make their lives better.

Allison assumed a leadership role on the New Student Orientation Committee in an attempt to completely overhaul SKYCTC’s orientation program, specifically orientation content, delivery method, and frequency of offerings, because she believes that student engagement and interaction is important step toward student retention. She stated:

I love interacting with students. My favorite part of being here at this campus is interacting with students. Attending orientation is often a student’s first opportunity to engage on campus. Employees get to greet them and interact. Then, maybe, I see a student that I met at orientation in the hallway and I’m a familiar face to them. Immediately, they have a sense of comfort at the college.

John exhibited this same passion for students through his leadership in the Student Success Center and his push for a cultural shift in the way faculty and staff members
think about responsibility for student success. He relayed this passion in the following statement:

I think the people here sincerely want to help students. I think the flame of helping students and nurturing their education really trumps anything else that takes place here. We know if we want to help, we have to change. I’ve told anyone who will listen that it’s all about making the student’s experience the best possible no matter what we have to do to make that happen. I think the whole general concern about helping students is the fact that drives everything we do here.

Others were prompted to engage because of their passion for the institution itself. When asked about her preparation and motivation to engage in grassroots activities, Emily spoke of her loyalty to SKYCTC:

I came from the school of hard knocks. I feel like this college raised me. I started here when I was 18. When I leave, it’s going to be like a death…or a divorce. I love it here. I was a student, then an intern, and then an employee. It’s part of me and I want to leave it better for the next person.

Allison had a similar response:

I’ve gone through several different college presidents, deans, and leadership. Thankfully the culture of caring here just seems to keep going. This is such a wonderful place to work and everyone is very supportive and open to new ideas. If I can think of ways to make things better, then why not try?

**Commitment to Profession**

Other participants focused more on their commitment to teaching or to their trade.

Anne spent several years in the private sector as a corporate trainer. She used her experience there to push faculty members at SKYCTC to become better teachers in the online environment. She said:

I’ve always had a passion for enabling others to learn what they need to learn. It’s about facilitating the learning opportunity. I judge faculty, people who teach me. I am very critical about my education and our students are too because the world is open to them. We owe them to be the best we can be.
Melissa worked as a nurse in a clinical setting for years before taking a job as a professor in the Licensed Practical Nursing program at SKYCTC. She saw the growing need for registered nurses in the Bowling Green area, so she pushed to add program offerings.

She stated:

I thought about the profession and knew what this college needed. It needed an RN program. Nursing is always a program that people gravitate toward. We were vested in that. We wanted it and we wanted to make sure it succeeded.

Shelley considered engagement in leadership activities to be part of her job. Considering her position at the college, she discussed the importance of being proactive. This proactive nature often pushes her to come up with new ideas and initiatives in order to avoid being stuck in a reactionary mode.

**Institutional Self-Interest**

Although it’s a much less prevalent theme overall, several participants linked their motivation with the desire to improve the reputation or standing of the institution itself. SKYCTC was approved by the Southern Association of Colleges and School Commission on College in 2010 as a comprehensive community college, but it still operated under the name Bowling Green Technical College until 2013. Several of the participants talked about the difficulty in combating the community perception that SKYCTC is “just a tech school” or that they have very limited offerings. They spoke of the regional predisposition toward four year college as compared to other options for education and training. After completing extensive research on community and technical colleges, Dougherty (1994) summarized that laypeople often know very little about two-year colleges, believing they are only a peripheral part of the collegiate system or a landing spot for students who are unable to enter “regular” college. Even though
Dougherty’s research is somewhat dated, many of the participants’ statements confirmed this perception. Shelley took over the strategic planning committee in an attempt to introduce ideas to improve public perception. She commented:

It is clear that our community is still not aware of what we have to offer. I was like, you know that’s an opportunity for us right there to educate our community and make them aware of the programs we have to offer, make them aware of the opportunities as far as two plus two agreements that we have with WKU. I want to make that happen.

Misty agreed:

WKU is so known and respected in this community. There’s a lot of people, even to this day, that are not aware of the college and what we do. We’re a hidden gem and if we can do things to get people to recognize that, then we absolutely should.

The perception that attending SKYCTC as opposed to the local public university somehow equates to a lower self-worth was a motivator for several of the study participants. Their decision to engage in grassroots efforts was driven by institutional self-interest.

Tactics

The second research question asked what kind of tactics grassroots leaders used to affect change in college policy and practice. The motivation to engage in grassroots activities can be rendered useless unless it is complemented by the appropriate tactics to create change from the bottom up. The participants in this study used several tactics that are discussed in traditional grassroots literature. Ultimately, these tactics centered around one school of thought. Leaders wanted to develop a need for change by creating awareness of the need to change behaviors and processes. In a larger study on the concept of a change agent, Rogers (1995) described the importance of understanding the roles key players and strategies used to influence the change process. He noted that
change agents must first diagnose and analyze the issue or problem, motivate interest in the innovation, and translate this interest into action. Due to the uniqueness of the educational environment, the leaders used tactics that were educational in nature (professional development, using data to tell a story, mentorship).

The leaders were purposeful in their use of a particular tactic depending on the opportunity to raise consciousness or influence others; however, the preferred style was a more tempered approach. In line with Meyerson’s work on tempered radicals, the participants softened their strategies because they are employees, not outsiders, who wish to create change in their organization (Meyerson, 2003). By choosing a tactic that is intentional in its scope and impact, tempered radicals are able to construct a change framework that fits their unique identities and goals (Kezar & Lester, 2011). I identified five tactics that were most prevalent among the faculty and staff leaders.

**Buy-In**

Although the eventual goal of most of the tactics included in this section is buy-in, many of the participants discussed buy-in as an intentional strategy. Emily got involved with a national philanthropic organization because she had strong familial ties to the mission of the program. She knew that the majority of her co-workers would not have this same motivation, so she used specific components of the program to appeal to their sense of philanthropy:

I’ll do whatever I have to to get their support. It’s something I just can’t do on my own because if the college doesn’t back me, it’ll never work. I have to have their support. It pulls people in from all areas of the college. People are shopping for toys, answering phones, sorting and distributing gifts…it’s amazing.
For Anne, getting buy-in equated to permanence for her initiative. She argued that grassroots change efforts are more resilient than administration-driven initiatives due to peer buy-in.

Now, a lot of grassroots changes will start, but they never go anywhere. It’s important to get campus buy-in. That’s the only way grassroots works. When your peers are telling you something works, it’s much more believable. Also, I tend to see changes those changes lasting because they are embraced by others.

She argued that grassroots change is such a time-consuming process that failing to get buy-in just negates the effort. John expressed similar sentiments:

You gotta get buy-in. I think many people have great ideas about things they want to change. I think it starts with massaging the people and letting them know how this change is going to benefit them. You have to start by understanding the system, tapping into the people to get the buy-in, and finding a way to connect.

Using Data

As a member of the chair of the strategic planning committee, Shelley pointed out the importance of collecting and using data to tell the story of the initiative. This tactic is often successful for grassroots leaders in higher education institutions because it aligns well with academic culture since it tends to be evidence and research based (Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). Pushing for the formation of a student success center on campus, Shelley spent approximately four years researching various advising models, visiting existing advising centers within KCTCS, and touring student success centers in Seattle and Orlando. As a result of this research, her team created a report of best practices to present to the leadership. She said she wouldn’t have “gotten through the door” without supporting data.
Similarly, as part of the push to revamp orientation, Allison began surveying students attended orientation to gauge their opinion about the program. She used their responses and feedback in her redesign proposal:

We try our hardest, I think, to get support or data that supports our beliefs or whatever it is that we’re trying to push forward. That way, when we do go meet with leadership, we have evidence there and it’s not just some “idea.” The leadership responds well to that.

Allison also talked about the importance of “testing” some of the components of the proposal in her classroom before presenting ideas to the leadership. This added another layer of validity to her process.

Another faculty participant used his classroom as a forum to gather data to support his initiative. David began implementing components of the Culture of Caring initiative prior to its formal implementation. He knew that selling the initiative to his faculty peers would be no easy feat. When asked about his reasoning for doing so, he responded:

Great ideas are pitched all the time, but if they don’t have the proper support, they they’re just going to be that…great ideas. They just fail. It’s not because their ideas weren’t great, it’s because you didn’t have any backing to support it.

**Professional Development/Raising Consciousness**

One tactic that is touted as being highly successful by the participants is the use of professional development opportunities to create change. Kezar and Lester (2011) theorized that the success of this tactic stems from the fact that professional development is already an accepted part of institutional operations. In her study on engagement among female academics, Hart (2005) dubbed this tactic “professionalized activism.” She found that using professional development as a vehicle for raising consciousness seemed to be a
key strategy for fostering change. Anne elaborated on how important this tactic has been to her initiative:

A lot of times, as faculty, we are not prepared to develop materials and things that are designed to really help our students learn to learn, which is critical. That’s sort of what I try to do. I’m trying to lead them into understanding. My goal is to help them understand how their students learn and how they can get their students interested in learning. I’m trying to do that through professional development opportunities that imitate what I hope they can do in a class.

Shelley used professional development opportunities in conjunction with her strategic planning committee to target raising awareness for student success in the STEM disciplines:

Our enrollment and retention was declining in STEM. We had scholarship money and we had seats to fill, but nobody knew how to recruit and retain. We had a training camp that was designed to help faculty members learn how to get students interested in STEM areas and be successful. They didn’t know about the opportunities to get students involved. Once we started pulling all of the information together…let’s just say it was very eye opening for some of them.

Kezar (2013) noted that faculty and staff perceived bottom-up professional development (as opposed those opportunities presented by administrators) as legitimate. David speculated that professional development opportunities worked so well for the Culture of Caring initiative because faculty members felt that it was an opportunity to discuss and explore without the assumption that they would be forced into the idea. It took the pressure off of their participation and created more of a forum.

**Networking**

Networking within the campus community and partnering with external partners proved to be a valuable tactic for six of the leaders. Several of the participants discussed the importance of getting involved with a specific committee or campus group to raise
awareness of their initiatives. Allison used the committee selection process to gain a position of influence in regards to the orientation program:

   We get an email from HR and we basically get to rank our preferences for committee assignments. There is usually a spot where you can designate whether or not you’d like to have a leadership position on the committee. That’s what I did. I had a great committee. Once I got everyone on the same page, we were ready to implement some changes.

   Emily used committee assignments in a different way. When she became a county coordinator for a national philanthropic organization, she knew that she would need to establish an extensive volunteer network in order to fulfill her obligations. She worked with her administration to get them to allow her volunteer coordinators to count their hours of service as “leadership” to fulfill promotion requirements. After SKYCTC administration blessed this idea, she offered key volunteer positions to individuals she knew were going up for promotion. It was a win-win situation for all parties. Emily filled her volunteer coordinator positions, faculty members earned hours toward leadership, and SKYCTC grew their community network because their employees were actively engaging in external service.

   By nature of their existence, community colleges have extensive network of external partners. Melissa used existing professional networks to influence administration to expand nursing programming and to seek state approval:

   We did a needs assessment to test the viability of the RN program. We talked to clinical site to make sure they could still handle us coming to their facility because of the growth of the program. They were instrumental in helping us do that, helping us get approval both locally and with the state nursing board.

   David also played on these partnerships to help push the workplace ethics initiative. From the onset of planning for the initiative, David held extensive conversations with community members and employers to identify common issues they were having with
their employees and to establish a slate of workplace expectations. He then used this information to influence faculty support for workplace ethics. He said, “We value our relationships with our external partners and we want to live up to their expectations of that partnership. This is what they expected.” David felt that, as a community college, it was only natural to work with the community to create change.

*Mentorship*

Mentorship emerged as the final, albeit less prominent, theme regarding tactics grassroots leaders use to affect change. Through the mentoring process, grassroots leaders have the opportunity to create a strong group of individuals with a commitment or passion for the issues on which grassroots leaders hope to make change (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Many of the participants spoke about the necessity for making personal connections and creating networks of like-minded individuals on campus. John commented on the importance of using this tactic:

> You need to put the right people on the ship. Managing your talent is a big piece of this whole puzzle. And if you’re going to get the right people on the bus, you’ve got to be very cautious in how you go about doing that. We often put so much effort on the student that we forget about the people who are supporting the student and getting them through.

Emily recognized mentorship opportunities with new hires:

> I think we can do a lot when new employees are hired. I try to get them involved in my initiative right away. If I were a new employee at SKY and I knew this was going on and I knew my coworkers were involved, I would just immediately jump in too. I make them think that’s just the way we work. Then I’ll get emails from them that say, “I’m new here. I’ve never done this before. Tell me how I can help.”

Once they’ve opened the door, Emily uses the opportunity to share her passion about the program, to talk about the benefits to both the community and the college, and to expose them to the campus culture.
Grassroots leaders tend to use very specific, well thought-out strategies in order to push their bottom-up agenda. Tactics used by participants in this study mirrored those found in grassroots literature. In many instances, buy-in, networking, mentorship, and raising consciousness all involved using campus-provided arenas where grassroots leaders came together with their peers in order to educate and persuade others to support their cause. Leaders in the study did not just assume that peers and administrators knew what resources and support were needed to move their initiative forward. Instead, they looked for and created opportunities to recruit advocates among campus. Study participants found using data to be a highly effective tactic as well. It is widely known and accepted that college administrators often rely heavily on the use of data to guide their decision-making process (Birnbaum, 1992). Leaders in this study were able to mimic this tactic to gain buy-in and support for their initiative. Using data also provided a platform of legitimacy to appeal to college administrators.

**Obstacles**

The history of higher education institutions has produced a culture that naturally resists change and adheres to the comfort of the status quo (Craig, 2004). First, change often jeopardizes the balance of a group and its shared beliefs. Second, it is human nature to resist the will of others especially if it opposes the longstanding traditions of an institution (Keup, Walker, Austin, & Lindholm, 2001). The participants’ responses support this research. They anticipated and prepared for resistance to their transformation efforts. Resistance is not necessarily negative and can often be perceived as the success of the initiative in filtering through the organizational levels.
**Divergent Visions/Lack of Solidarity**

The most often cited obstacle for the leaders was divergent visions and/or the lack of solidarity. After speaking with numerous SKYCTC employees, it became apparent that the overall vision for the college was widely accepted and adhered to; however, opinions about how the college should achieve this vision varied greatly. Location contributed to some of this divergence. SKYCTC has six campuses with which leaders must consider in their efforts making solidarity difficult. When rolling out a new orientation program, Allison wanted to include sessions on several of SKYCTC’s campuses as opposed to holding all of the sessions on the main campus. Doing so meant involving more volunteers to organize these sessions:

> As far as faculty and staff go, overall it’s been okay, but we have had some negative feedback. Whereas in the past we had really large sessions that held maybe 60 to 90 students, now we have smaller sessions on several campuses. Some of the faculty on those campuses said, “Is it really worth our time to have all of these small sessions?” They didn’t see the importance to the overall picture.

Committee membership at SKYCTC rotates every two years, so Shelley also has to work to keep solidarity intact when new members rotate onto the committee. She does this in part by making sure faculty and staff members from the branch campuses are included on the committee. She acknowledges that each branch campus has its own culture and their inclusion in the group can go a long way to ensuring unity.

One way leaders dealt with this divergence was to build trust. Like Shelley, other participants talked about the importance of including others in any dialogue about their plans for change. Keeping this dialogue within the confines of the formal committee structure is detrimental to the momentum of the leader’s initiative because committees disband after a short period of time. This problem is compounded by the fact that most
faculty members operate on a 10-month contract. John refers to these issues as “institutional barriers” to solidarity:

When leaders talk about change, they have to think about more than just people. You have to have the right things in place to accommodate change. You have to acknowledge the institutional barriers to change taking place… the different status between faculty and staff, 10-month contracts, locations of colleagues, the course schedule… all of these things can cause problems for leaders trying to affect change.

Regardless of circumstance, the participants recognized that divergent visions can and will almost always exist, but working towards cohesion could facilitate the implementation of change initiatives. The goal for successful grassroots advocacy is not always solidarity, but the acceptance of alternative ideas.

Overcoming the Status Quo

Several of the leaders mentioned the difficulty in trying to deal with the existence of deep-rooted practices and beliefs. In trying to get faculty members to embrace and incorporate new technology into their pedagogy, Anne has fought tirelessly to combat the institutional culture of the status quo. Several of the faculty members have a long professional tenure at the institution and are resistant to this change. She said:

This is definitely an obstacle. They say things like, “I’ve been doing it this way for a long time. I’m not going to change just because students have” or “It’s worked for me so far. I’m going to leave it as is.” Some of them are just blunt enough to tell you that. My response is that our students can take classes anywhere they want. They’re no longer required to take the closest class to home. The thing is, “rate my professors” is out there. They are taking about you whether you want them to or not. Word spreads quickly. You get enough students saying, “don’t take this guy,” or “this course is better at another university” and pretty soon your class doesn’t make and you’re not going to be teaching.

When Melissa first began teaching at SKYCTC, the only nursing offering was the Licensed Practical Nursing degree. Not only did they want to establish a Registered Nursing pathway, but they wanted it to be an academic career mobility program, meaning
there are different entry and exit points depending on the student’s academic and professional intentions. At the time of their exploration, only one other college in Kentucky offered that type of program. Due to their lack of success with the program, it eventually closed. The LPN program was successful and it was profitable for the college. Because there was not a “success story” or model for the academic career mobility program, administrators were more resistant to change.

Based on participant responses, the conservative culture can be found at all levels of the institution. Often new faculty and staff brought in new passion for a program or initiative, but as John pointed out, “The biggest obstacle grassroots leaders have to overcome is the people at the institution. People are very comfortable with the status quo and they don’t want to invest the time and energy into change.”

*Feeling Overburdened*

One major challenge that grassroots leaders face is trying to maintain the balance between work expectations and grassroots activism. True grassroots change takes time. Not only do grassroots leaders have to be patient in their efforts, but also they have to face constant battles from multiple sources. Grassroots leaders are committed to their cause and willingly agree to the extra advocacy work; yet the additional time makes them overburdened by various responsibilities (Kezar & Lester, 2011). After years of individually working to implement new ideas into the student orientation program, Misty finally procured a leadership position on the committee where she could recruit and network with like-minded activists. The membership in this group continued to grow. At first, Misty thought this would be beneficial to her cause; however, these individuals had their own ideas about how the committee should focus their efforts. She said:
Things were going well. People became interested in what I was trying to do. But one year, we were honestly overwhelmed. I didn’t even have 10 people on my committee and we had so much going. I didn’t want people to become burned out. I had to scale back. My plate was becoming too full… I couldn’t do that again.

Through this experience, Misty learned a valuable lesson about how quickly grassroots efforts can snowball out of control if there is not a consistent vision.

Similarly, Allison struggled with balancing her teaching responsibilities with her philanthropic involvement. For the first few years, Allison was a volunteer within the organization before becoming the first female site coordinator in Kentucky. While she was honored to be asked to serve in this capacity, she knew it would not be easy to reconcile her roles as teacher, student, and leader:

I’m on a 10-month contract. I come back in August and things are very hectic. There are some weeks where I’m like, “Okay how can I get all of this done?” That’s probably my biggest obstacle. I teach all day, make phone calls and attend meetings for [organization] after work, and then go home and do homework. Oh, and somewhere in between all of that, I have to find the time to be “mom.” There’s no way that I could do it if I didn’t love it…all of it. Some days I do struggle with being able to put the time into it that I would like. There are other days when I feel like I’m not getting anything done.

Most grassroots leaders view their advocacy activities akin to responsibility, but the choice to engage is very demanding. Shelley suggested that this obstacle is exacerbated by the fact that funding is down, positions remain unfilled, and resources (i.e. time) are scarce. Shelley and her team spent years designing their ideal student success center, but these factors led to the pairing down of the original plans for the student success center. She said, “It became clear that it wasn’t going to work exactly as we wanted. It couldn’t be done. We were frustrated and felt like we were wasting time. We could’ve given up, but we didn’t. We just came up with a new plan.”
Unsupportive Administrators

Although only two of the participants mentioned unsupportive administrators as an obstacle, it is important to acknowledge this barrier due to the impact of top-down opposition. As part of her curriculum, Emily included several career preparation activities for her students. These exercises opened her eyes to the reality that many of her students lacked the resources and preparation to “put their best foot forward” when interviewing for positions. Emily felt passionately that her department could assist several of these students. She spent several months formulating a plan for a career preparation center (completely manned and stocked through volunteers) that would cover all facets of the job search. The department was excited about the potential impact on their students, but the initiative never came to fruition. According to Emily, this was a direct result of an unsupportive administrator:

She wouldn’t even consider my request. She wouldn’t consider anything I asked for. I think it was personal. I was the faculty senate chair under her for two years and she titled me the “troublemaker.” We had a lot of conflict, but I couldn’t do anything about it. She was the “hatchet person.” She got rid of a lot of good people and a lot of good programs. She was a threat to a lot of people. They just didn’t feel comfortable communicating with her.

When asked how she dealt with the opposition in trying to push her initiative forward, Emily responded:

I didn’t. It wasn’t worth it. I couldn’t risk being on her “list” any more than I already was. We just had to wait her out. We knew that she didn’t have much longer to work here. The day she retired people were dancing in the halls…literally…dancing.

In a less blatant example, Melissa mentioned the difficulty of dealing with an unsupportive administrator when trying to develop the academic career mobility program. When discussions of this development began, one particular administrator
wanted to close the LPN program altogether and only offer the academic career mobility program only because he did not see the demand for both. Melissa stated:

They pushed for that, but we fought back. We weren’t just instructors. We were practitioners as well. We knew what our partners needed and what our students were capable of doing. Basically we were taking our traditional LPN program that’s three semesters and doing it in two. It was going to move quickly. We had to explain to the administration that not everyone could do that. Some students need a traditional three-semester LPN program.

In the end, it worked out for Melissa and her peers. The administration was willing to listen to their rationale and the input of area partners. Melissa conceded that the issue with the administrator was two-fold: a lack of understanding about the nursing profession and the need for increased personnel.

Each faculty and staff member encountered obstacles on the path to creating change, yet this story is not complete without the acknowledgement that most of these leaders found ways to overcome these obstacles and barriers.

**Resilience**

Beyond having to deal with an unsupportive administrator, the lack of resources, and the psychological toll of the ambivalence of others, the road to change can be riddled with setback and frustration. This is partly because of the slow, incremental changes grassroots leaders are able to make. But these leaders persist despite receiving little recognition for their efforts and having no guarantee that their efforts will result in their desired outcomes (Meyerson, 2001). Perry (2014) characterized this resiliency as having the ability to bounce back from difficult circumstances, which comes from both intrinsic and extrinsic sources. Though these individuals stay true to their core beliefs and commitments, they must remain flexible about how and when to fulfill them. The
following findings cover ways that grassroots leaders find support, inspiration, and balance to remain resilient.

**Administrative Support**

Every one of the eight participants credited some of their resiliency to having a supportive administrator. Support came from various sources: placement on a key committee, pledge of resources, approval for participation in professional development activities, and a listening ear. According to the participants, the most impactful way that administrators showed support was to engage in the initiative itself. Emily recalled the support she received from a newly hired senior administrator:

> She constantly says, “You know, you’re doing a great job” and “tell me how things are going.” She wanted to come out and see our operation. We were sorting things and I looked up and she was standing there. She said, “Put me to work!” She’s the only administrator to volunteer. She was totally into it. That meant a lot to me.

Although Anne’s grassroots advocacy deals primarily with faculty members, as a staff member, she attributes her success at gaining faculty buy-in, in part, to the encouragement she receives from her supervisors and academic leaders:

> If I had dreamt of the way I wanted this to play out, I wouldn’t have expected this. I thought that it was just a dream…just a pipe dream. Well, it’s grown into my pipe dream. It’s better than that, and that completely comes from my leadership. They’ve openly supported where I’ve gone with this and faculty members see that.

That support is reflected in the 105 faculty members who attended her professional development sessions over a two-month period.

As part of the orientation redesign, Allison wanted to offer sessions on some of the branch campuses. Coordinating these sessions did not require administrative approval, but Allison recognized that having it would increase the likelihood of campus
buy-in. Throughout this process she worked with several different administrators, but she said that all of them were open to dialogue and new ideas. Even though the answer was not always “yes,” she never considered any of the administrators to be unsupportive. She explained, “Their job is to tell me ‘no’ when they need or want to, but I appreciate the fact that they aren’t saying, ‘I don’t have time for you.’ The door is always open.”

Making a Difference

One substantial source of resiliency for the grassroots leaders was seeing progress and leveraging small wins. Both provided evidence that they were making progress. Meyerson (2001) defined a small win as a limited doable project that results in something concrete and visible. Even though the participants knew they wanted to achieve something large-scale, they started where they could, with initiatives that were doable. Starting small allowed the leaders to make immediate, tangible progress that over time created a cascading effect to more meaningful change. Melissa’s resiliency was drawn from the success rates of her students. David maintained resiliency by gaining faculty support for workplace ethics initiative. Allison found a source of resiliency in increasing orientation sessions to double-digits. None of these successes were the ultimate goal, but all of them were part of a conscious strategy to put the leaders’ agendas in motion.

John summarized the importance of seeing change to his resiliency:

I think it’s very important because that’s evidence that things you are doing are working for you. If you’re dealing with other people, they need to see this too. They need to see that there’s a light at the end of the tunnel…that there is a win in the end.

He provided this example of a small win in using software to foster student success and retention:
Last week we had our in-service day. We are at the stage where we could say, “Okay. Starfish is going to be a key piece in our whole retention and student success efforts here. How many people are currently using Starfish?” Most people raised their hand. Then a faculty member, who is a catalyst for change, who uses Starfish for everything, speaks up to her colleagues about it. That’s major. She’s one of them. That never would have happened if we didn’t get these little victories that they got to see. That’s where change starts.

Anne’s resiliency was drawn from faculty attendance at her professional development sessions. She said:

I’m blown away…absolutely blown away and thrilled by what it means for our students. I think that’s why SKY is such an awesome place. I have faculty that are willing to bend over backwards for students. They will do whatever it takes. When I calculated the numbers in December to share with the deans, I rechecked myself several times because I thought, “There’s no way this can be right. I know I’m doing something wrong.” I went back, I looked at the certificates I sent out, and thought maybe I wrote numbers down wrong, but…

Making a difference was one of the most important sources of resiliency for these grassroots leaders. Seeing the potential for impact on SKYCTC students fueled their passion and their initiatives gained momentum.

**Being Realistic**

Shelley knew that SKYCTC would have to strengthen and change their support services in order to complement the transformation to a comprehensive community and technical college. Original plans for the Student Success Center included a “one-stop” advising shop for students. Once they received some feedback from faculty members and administrators, they began to rethink the center:

We had to. Yes, yes, we had to. I think at one point it was everyone’s dream that the advising center would be the hub for advising for all majors. Everybody was like, “That would be fabulous.” To be able to have a student walk in, not necessarily know what they want to go into and someone who can advise them no matter what they choose… That sounds good, but you’ve also got to have your very skilled advisors that can interpret each of those programs and be knowledgeable about them. That was going to take some time to build. If we’re not able to hire 20 people to staff this, then we knew we had to scale it back a
little bit and see what things we can perfect from the beginning and then add different pieces along the way.

Shelley’s statement is a definite example of the importance of keeping a realistic perspective. Her choices were either to change or fail. She was passionate enough about strengthening supports services to take the incremental change and remain optimistic about future possibilities.

Anne likes to dream big. Her time in the public sector opened her eyes to possible transformation among employees. Working in higher education was an adjustment for her because she was not used to the slower pace. She’s also had to adjust to the tempered approach that tends to be more successful and valuable in higher education. She commented:

Now, I will go to [supervisor] for sanity checks because I’m very apolitical. I’ll say, “Look. I have this idea, is it something that would fly? Is this kosher?” I know I need a political sanity check. I do. I’m very blunt. I’m very straightforward. I put my head on the chopping block without ever realizing it. I know I need to change that. I need that dialogue to keep me grounded.

Anne knew her efforts were gaining momentum with the faculty and she did not want to jeopardize that traction by pushing too hard, too fast. Maintaining a realistic understanding about the nature of change in higher education is paramount to grassroots success.

**Personal Values**

Grassroots leaders talked about the importance of tapping into their personal value system to remain resilient in their change efforts. Doing so allows them to have an understanding of the purpose of the initiative, its connection to individual values, and its impact on the mission of the institution. Grassroots leaders must engage in constant
reflection to retain the consciousness and adherence to personal values throughout the process (Bettencourt, Dillman, & Wollman, 1996). Misty expanded on this process:

At first I really wanted to connect the college to community service initiatives because I think it’s our duty to give back. But even that wasn’t enough. I wanted to do something internally. We started a Christmas angel program. In November we take applications to find out students that are in need that have children that probably won’t receive gifts for Christmas. We get those applications and do our best to verify that they are true. We select students that we feel have the most need. Then, before they leave in December, we hand out gifts. Each year, I want to do more…build on it some way. But then I have to stop and remember what it’s supposed to be about. It’s about helping our students. It’s a very emotional experience. To me, that’s a very exciting and overwhelming time when the college does that each year. I’m proud of what we’re doing.

Emily’s engagement in grassroots advocacy is deeply rooted in personal values and familial ties. Her initial connection to the national philanthropic organization came through an uncle and cousin. She was drawn to the organization because the benefit was two-fold: she was able to support her family and her community, both points of passion for her. Her personal values bled into her leadership style within the organization:

I send out an email and tell them it’s [name of philanthropic program] time. I give them a list of opportunities. They can answer the phone. They can shop because I have a credit card and they can do the shopping. They can come and sort things. They can come and actually distribute. I just give them some opportunities, and it’s amazing how they come on board. I want this to be a family affair. They bring their kids. They bring their parents. They bring the Boy Scout troop. They bring their church group. It’s amazing.

Personal values are a foundation for many grassroots activities. Allison worked hard to complete her education in spite of having to fill multiple roles and responsibilities at the same time. She attributes her persistence and completion to the connection she felt to her institution. This affinity contributed heavily to her decision to tackle orientation as she views it as a “first impression” for students. In addition to business degrees, Allison has taken several courses in counseling and student affairs. She said, “I value my
education. I want our students to feel the same way. This is why I chose to study what I did.” Grassroots leaders find a formidable source of resiliency by connecting to an initiative that reflects their personal values.

**Discussion and Future Research**

This study identified some common patterns of grassroots leadership themes and concepts. At the beginning of the data collection phase, it became apparent that individuals identified as grassroots leaders were a strong guiding force for transitioning emergent ideas into successful change efforts. Although very little research on grassroots leadership in a community college setting exists, the findings in this study were consistent with those found in the existing literature. I found, similar to the literature that change initiatives frequently emerged at the grassroots level as individuals interacted with each other through the course of the day. I posit that the majority of the tactics and strategies the leaders used fell in line with Meyerson’s Tempered Radicals Framework. These leaders are committed to their institution and they desire to continue their employment at SKYCTC; therefore, they had to approach leadership activism in a manner that created small, positive changes without feeling like they were jeopardizing their standing at the institution. The leaders’ life experiences and involvement in leadership shaped their motivation to engage in leadership activities and their view of successful tactics to try. Raising consciousness through professional development and networking were two of the most widely-used tactics to garner buy-in from peers and administrators.

This was an exploratory study to understand how and why grassroots leaders engaged in bottom-up activism. In most instances, grassroots leaders were engaging in
change efforts that were supported by the SKYCTC administration. I recognize that the findings of this study may have been different if these grassroots efforts opposed the administrative agenda. The small sample size of 8 participants prevents making generalized statements on possible theories of leadership; however, it does provide a platform for identifying and expanding this topic to other areas for further research. I did not focus on gender or race in this study and there is a marked void of such considerations in the existing literature on grassroots leadership. Perhaps a study that considered how these factors impact motivations, tactics, and sources of resilience of grassroots leaders could help fill this void. Several of the participants discussed administrative support as a key source of resilience. This support is not always prevalent in higher education. A future study may uncover very different findings if the administrative support was absent. This may be a compelling path for research and practice.

Implications for Practice

The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of grassroots leaders who have engage in bottom-up change efforts on a community college campus. The goal of this research was to recognize the legitimate role grassroots leaders play in affecting change and achieving positive organizational outcomes. In terms of practical advice for grassroots leaders and administrators, I offer the following implications to provide some insights for practitioners on a different way of looking at organizational change:

1. Demonstrates the influence of power within institutions on the way participants define leadership – In the community college setting, “leadership” can no longer be singularly defined. Effective grassroots leaders tap into their own source of
power to affect change based on the motivation behind their decision to engage and their preparation to assume a leadership role. The findings in this study point to the fact that grassroots leaders often rely on their passion for an issue and commitment to their profession to guide their decision to engage. This leadership role may be transient and only tied to one particular issue, but faculty and staff members are recognizing a sense of obligation to lead.

2. Helps identify the need to acknowledge multiple forms of leadership – Community college leadership is becoming less hierarchical and more non-positional. Administrators can work with and use leaders at all levels of the institution to affect change. This convergence does not in any way diminish administrative influence; on the contrary, participants in this study applauded the administration’s willingness to accept grassroots leadership as a valid form of decision-making. For the most part, this cooperation only served to strengthen allegiance to the administration and their agenda.

3. Illustrates the importance of more reflection on organizational contexts and history and what influences leadership belief systems – Leaders cannot take a “one size fits all” approach when determining which leadership strategies to employ in a given situation. Participants discussed several tactics to affecting change including getting buy-in, using data to tell a story, offering professional development sessions, and networking. Grassroots leaders must be able to evaluate the situation and the organizational context in order to be able to determine an effective course of action.
4. Identifies pluralistic leadership to encompass diverse perspectives – From an administrative perspective, grassroots leaders are often the first individuals aware of an issue or condition on campus. Their proximity to the situation and to other employees on campus often makes them more readily positioned to affect change. Grassroots leaders also are more likely to have their finger on the pulse of the campus community. They can act as the moral compass for the organization in charge of assuring the inclusion of diverse perspectives and addressing social injustices on campus.

**Conclusion**

The study adds to the growing body of research on informal leadership in higher education. As the mission of our country’s community colleges continues to diversify, it is becoming more and more imperative that leaders identify new ways to stay responsive. While much literature exists on grassroots leadership, there is little research that adequately addresses the convergence of bottom-up and top-down leadership in higher educational settings. The findings from this study will provide KCTCS with an understanding of how grassroots leaders might successfully work with top-down leaders to garner support for their initiatives and ultimately affect institutional change. The findings will also identify strategies grassroots leaders can use to influence change and to avoid challenges to convergence. Although it is not the primary focus of this study, future research is needed to examine strategies for managing the internal dynamics and relationships of grassroots leaders. If community college administrators truly want to encourage this leadership style, they must have buy-in from other layers of the organizational hierarchy as well.
Chapter 4
Organizing for Change: Institutional Support for Grassroots Leadership Initiatives

Higher education in the United States is built on a long history of traditions and norms that have, for the most part, been impervious to societal pressures and influence (Craig, 2004). Historically, institutions have been able to function with a great deal of autonomy, but that autonomy is now being challenged by the numerous internal and external forces that drive change in institutions and require them to be responsive. Community colleges are particularly susceptible to external demands due to the nature of their mission. They are being asked to drive economic growth in their communities, serve more students, respond to industry demands, and provide more pathways to the baccalaureate while dealing with reduced funding. In her book on community college leadership, Eddy (2010) discussed the importance of implementing a multidimensional model of leadership suited to dealing with these challenges. She argued that leadership must occur at all levels of the institution and these leaders must possess a cultural competency that is fostered by experience, professional development, and lifelong learning.

Many higher education leadership researchers advocate for fostering leadership at all levels within the institution (Amey, 2005; Eddy, 2009; Green, 2008; Kouzes & Posner, 2007; Lester, 2008; Romero, 2004; Rosser, 2000; Sethi, 2000). Lester (2008) researched the concept of “non-positional leadership.” She argued that this style of leadership empowers all employees to contribute, strengthens the organization, and provides future leaders an opportunity to hone leadership knowledge and skills. In his article about the impending leadership crisis in higher education, Appadurai (2009) argued that in order to sustain institutional engagement and to keep up with the constantly
changing societal demands, community college administrators will have to place a consistent emphasis on leadership development and input from employees at all levels of the institutional hierarchy. He said administrators in this environment need to expect faculty and staff members to be risk-takers, self-starters, and able to set a clear vision.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to identify institutional attributes, properties, and/or conditions that foster and encourage grassroots organization. Not all institutional cultures support this type of leadership, but scholars assert that grassroots leadership in the community college setting can play a vital role in fulfilling its multiple missions (Amey, 2005; Eddy, 2009; Green, 2008; Kezar & Lester, 2011; Lester, 2008; Romero, 2004; Rosser, 2000; Sethi, 2000). To assist in the possible success of future bottom-up initiatives in higher education, this study provides insight into the experiences of grassroots leaders in a community college setting and their perceptions of institutional attributes that promote grassroots change. For purposes of this study, I am defining grassroots leaders as individuals who do not have formal positions of authority, are operating from the bottom-up, and are interested in affecting organizational change. They have a personal commitment and passion to help create a change that is often not part of their normal activities, and, in the rare situation where activity was part of their duties, they fulfilled it in a way that exceeds a normal person’s sense of obligation or duty (Kezar, Gallant, & Lester, 2011). I contend that grassroots leaders are different from those in positions of authority who tend to have a structure in place through which they can enact leadership. Grassroots leaders typically have to create their own structure,
network, and support system. This article derives from a larger study on the perspectives and experiences of grassroots leaders in a community college setting.

**Institutional Culture and Grassroots Change**

Certain policies, practices, and aspects of institutional culture help support bottom-up leadership. Support for grassroots efforts is not the result of a single policy, but a combination of practices and values that made a difference (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Some researchers have argued that higher education institutions’ balance between openness to change with resistance to change stems for the prevalent “loose-coupling” within the organization (Hearn, 1996; Weick, 1982; Clark, 1983; Birnbaum, 2000). Specifically, community colleges, or departments within the college, tend to be uncontrolled by bureaucratic pressures for uniformity or change. This “loose-coupling” perspective helps unravel the paradox of higher-education change; how a social institution that is often rigid in its structure can be so overwhelmingly successful in adaptation and survival (Hearn, 1996). Several authors have offered a less hierarchical view of leadership (Cohen & March, 1974; Bensimon, & Neumann, 1993; Birnbaum, 1992; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). These studies contextualized leadership within higher education literature on organizational theory and explored the effectiveness of top-down leadership. These research studies began to change views of leadership and make way for the consideration of grassroots change efforts.

Leaders constantly have to face new challenges and enhance their skills. Certainly, leading can be defined as learning since leaders must be professional learners and be able to lead their organization through change (Amey, 2005; Kezar, Carducci, & Contreras-McGavin, 2006). The current community college environment calls for a
transformation of leadership from the traditional top-down, power-driven model to a more facilitative and inclusive style of leadership (Evans, 2001). In order to make this transformation possible, administrators can work to create an institutional culture or aspects of an institutional culture that support bottom-up leadership. Change efforts started at the grassroots level often require top-down support in order to be institutionalized. In his research on leadership and change, Hearn (2006) captured the dilemma of converging top-down and bottom-up leadership. He found that one of the major challenges for institutional leaders was the reconciliation of the expectation of executive style leadership with the cultural context of shared governance and distributed leadership.

Change processes and strategies are largely shaped by institutional culture (May, Susskind, & Shapiro, 2013). In examining 26 community colleges and universities that were involved in various change initiatives, Kezar and Eckel (2002) found that leaders are more successful when they choose strategies that are relevant and fit with the culture. Different cultures shape various institutional functions including leadership (Birnbaum, 1988). This study is based on a combination of the two links between culture and change that exist in higher education literature. The first link suggests that institutions “need” to have a culture that encourages change (Curry, 1992). The second set of ideas intimates that culture or key elements of institutional culture (i.e. mission or vision) are modified as a result of the change process (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988).

According to Berquist (1992), four different, yet interrelated cultures exist in higher education. He argued that two of these cultures, collegial and managerial, have a long history in institutions of higher education. The collegial culture values scholarly
engagement, shared governance and decision-making, and rationality. The managerial culture places importance on the organization, implementation, and evaluation of work that is directed toward specific objectives and purposes. Bernquist (1992) contended that the other two cultures, developmental and negotiating, emerged more recently in response to the changing demands on educational institutions. The developmental culture finds value primarily in the creation of programs and activities that further the growth and development of the members of its collegiate community. In contrast, the negotiating culture, which grew out of faculty opposition to the managerial culture, ensures that all resources and benefits of the institution are distributed equitably. As a result, this culture values confrontation, bargaining, and the dissemination of undesirable attitudes and structures of the institution (Bernquist, 1992). Although most colleges tend to exemplify one dominant culture, the other three cultures interact with it and each other.

Grassroots leadership tends to be a prominent and accepted form of leadership within developmental cultures (Tierney, 2008). Developmental culture values personal openness and service to others. It believes that teaching and learning are at the heart of the academy and it shares with the collegial culture a democratic spirit of open communication and deliberation. Participation is a central value that embraces students, staff, and administration. This idea of organization-wide participation is central to the developmental culture (Bernquist, 1992). This culture is also best characterized as informal and trusting. The leadership processes on campuses that exemplify a developmental culture tend to be facilitative and strongly collaborative (Tierney, 2008). Kezar and Eckel (2002) defined collaborative leadership as a process where the positional
and non-positional individuals throughout the campus are involved in change initiatives from conception to implementation.

**Research Question**

In a study of change frameworks in higher education, Lindquist (1978), suggested that leadership at the top alone is insufficient and that change requires collaborative leadership at all levels of the organizational hierarchy. Collaborative leadership is a natural element of the developmental culture where administrators seek to develop individual’s leadership capacities and tap into their creativity when implementing change. This study contributes to this body of knowledge by examining a developmental organizational culture that supports grassroots activism as a successful form of leadership. Specifically, the following research question guided this study:

What institutional attributes, properties, or conditions enable grassroots organization?

**Methodology**

Robert Yin (2011) defines case study research method as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case study research excels at bringing forth an understanding of a complex issue or object and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. Grassroots leadership is a process and case study is appropriate for studying processes (Kezar, 2012). A limited amount of research on grassroots leadership in a higher
education setting exists and the focus of this research is rarely on institutional culture and factors that contribute to the success of bottom-up leadership efforts.

**Research Setting**

Site selection is one of the most important criteria for ensuring the trustworthiness of a study (Yin, 2011). I used purposive sampling to guide the site selection for this study. Every organization has something that works right and contributes to its success. Purposive sampling allows researchers look for what works in an organization instead of trying to diagnose problems and find solutions (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), one of 16 community college in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System (KCTCS), has a reputation of positive change efforts. In the past decade, numerous grassroots efforts have been successful at the institution. SKYCTC is a mid-sized college within KCTCS. In fall 2014, SKYCTC had a full-time equivalent enrollment of 2432 students (FTE = total credit hours/15). SKYCTC has been named one of the winners of the Best Places to Work in Kentucky from the past four years (2011-2015) (Kentucky Chamber, 2015).

In 2013, SKYCTC named Dr. Philip Neal as their President and CEO. Dr. Neal was promoted from within the college where he served as the Provost from 2008 to 2013. Dr. Neal came up through the faculty ranks to his present position as college president. Dr. Neal has co-authored/edited a textbook about leadership, *The Creative Community College: Leading Change through Innovation* (2008). Dr. Neal has made a marked pledge to the continual growth of his employees. He preserves professional development dollars in the midst of budget crises, provides faculty leadership opportunities in
conjunction with a reduced course load, and most recently, he tasked college
administrators with creating an internal leadership development program similar to the
KCTCS President’s Leadership Seminar. Dr. Neal’s commitment to leadership
development and collaborative leadership made SKYCTC a creditable choice for a
leadership study.

Identification and Recruitment of Participants

The population for this study was faculty and staff members at SKYCTC who
have engaged in change initiatives using bottom-up leadership techniques. Purposive
sampling allows a researcher to eliminate and/or narrow the pool of information sources
by deciding who to, what to, and what not to consider in the study (Erlandson, Harris,
Skipper & Allen, 1993). Purposive sampling will provide “information-rich” participants
matching the overall purpose of the study (Creswell, 2009).

As an initial means of identifying grassroots leaders, I contacted a well-networked
campus administrator and a tenured faculty member to ask for assistance in identifying
faculty and staff members who actively engaged in grassroots (local, bottom-up) change
efforts. I then contacted individuals they identified as grassroots leaders to invite them to
participate in the study. After this initial round of participant recruitment, I used a
snowball sampling technique to recruit additional participants. I also observed campus
functions and presentations and examined institutional documents to identify other
individuals engaged in grassroots efforts. I continued to seek additional participants until
I exhausted the recommendations and saturated the sample.

The findings presented in this manuscript draw upon interviews conducted with
four faculty and four staff members engaged in grassroots change efforts. The faculty
participants represented non-tenure-track faculty at all ranks. Staff participants ranged from entry- to mid-level staff in academic and student affairs and the president’s office. There were more women and people of color in the sample than their proportional numbers to the population of the institution.

Data Collection and Analysis

I conducted one-on-one, in-depth interviews with each leader over a two-month period. Interview questions were semi-structured, allowing for open-ended probes, but they also encouraged participants to use their own terminology and to steer the interview toward issues and concepts that best represented their own experiences. The protocol included: (a) an introductory question about the professional and educational background of the participant; (b) experiences that motivated the participant to engage in change; (c) obstacles to implementing grassroots change; (d) strategies participants use to maintain resiliency; and (e) institutional attributes that foster or hinder grassroots change efforts. Although I followed the structure of the interview protocol, at times it was necessary to further explore the grassroots process; therefore, the research allowed for follow-up questions for deeper descriptions of experiences and events.

I used methods of analysis that were informed by grounded theory with the goal of elaborating on the existing conceptual vocabulary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The first step was open coding of the interview transcripts. I used line-by-line coding of the transcripts to break the interviews up into small units. I categorized these concepts into higher-level categories of meaning based on interest, plausibility, and category saturation (Weick, 1989). In analyzing the interviews, I worked toward moving back and forth between data and abstract concepts. My objective was to expand the
abstract concepts with concrete examples. The result is a study with findings grounded in research, theory, and raw data (Creswell, 2009; Yin, 2011). Examining commonalities across the participants’ perspectives will provide the higher education literature base with a consistent picture of institutional attributes that foster or hinder grassroots change efforts.

**Findings**

Grassroots leaders described the importance of certain policies, actions, and values to create an environment that would acknowledge and foster their work. The findings presented here represent the different forms of support that played a part in furthering grassroots leadership. Some practices were more formal and institutionally-sanctioned (professional development activities) and others were more informal practices (the influence of a positive leader and trust). While most of the factors I discuss support both faculty and staff leaders, faculty members noted a preference for the sponsorship of professional development opportunities and staff members emphasized trust from their supervisor as a strong motivator to engage in bottom-up change efforts.

**Positive Leaders**

Several of the participants mentioned key individuals who encouraged grassroots leadership efforts through both direct and indirect interactions. Both faculty and staff members discussed the importance of having a positive leader as a role model, of sorts, and the impact of this individual on informal learning. Positive leaders not only remove barriers and obstacles to successful leadership efforts, they serve as mentors to individuals attempting to create change (Kezar & Lester, 2011). They often meet with faculty and staff members to offer support and brainstorm ideas, they change work
conditions to allow leaders the freedom to engage in change efforts, and they may serve as allies in convergence.

Allison has held various faculty and staff positions within SKYCTC. Her professional teaching experience, combined with her graduate education in counseling and student affairs, affords her a unique perspective on student development and engagement. She saw a need for an overhaul in the student orientation program, but she doubted her ability to affect real change. The president’s support for leadership at all levels of the organization influenced her willingness to take over as chair of the new student orientation committee.

I think Dr. Neal is a very positive leader. He is very supportive and I think that trickles down to our deans and other people in leadership positions. But it’s not just them…everybody can have a seat at the table. He’s open to ideas and he encourages you to get involved if you see a need on campus. I’ve seen a lot of change go down over the years and he is the most supportive.

The former SKYCTC president was a strong advocate for involvement in community service projects and strengthening community partnerships. This passion for the underprivileged student spurned faculty and staff members to embrace their own desires to get involved with area community service organizations – specifically those offering services from which SKYCTC students could benefit.

He (Dr. Hodges) supported us. He supported community service. He supported our students. He’s the one that started the student emergency fund. He saw the need of our students. He wrote a check, started a student emergency fund, and asked us if we wanted to contribute. He set that example for others to follow. When I got took over as site coordinator for [national philanthropic organization], he even let me use the college as a home base for our operations.
Anne also talked about the importance of a “role model” quality in institution leaders. She commented that having that visible, positive leader encourages others to behave in more positive ways within the organization.

I am very excited that we have Dr. Neal leading us. We also have vice presidents who are amazing role models. One thing I admire most about them is that they lead by example. People appreciate that: they want to emulate that. That’s what going on around here right now. When I look back at leaders that inspired me, they are the ones that stand out. That “do as I say” mentality does not cut it with me. They don’t just provide you emotional support, but resources as well. Resources say that support is in word and deed.

Positive leaders help obtain resources, make essential connections and otherwise tear obstacles to initiating change. The presence of these leaders at SKYCTC both directly and indirectly encourages others to engage in grassroots leadership activism.

**Professional Development**

Offering enhanced professional development opportunities allows community colleges to design and implement programs and curriculum that is customized to meet the needs of their particular institution. It is also an ideal way to identify future leaders within the organization. Promoting individuals who have excelled and have proven their commitment and dedication to an institution is often preferable to hiring externally (Middleton, 2009). Faculty members noted the importance of professional development to establish their leadership and to network with other colleagues at their campus and within KCTCS. As a full-time faculty member, Melissa had held several informal leadership roles within her department, but it was the administration’s willingness to provide and allow for professional development that gave her the motivation and confidence to pursue more formal positions as committee chair and faculty senate leader.
Our administration stands behind professional development. They send people to different trainings and conferences. They tend to rotate participants so that everyone who wants to has a chance to attend. They really encourage people to step up and take on a chair position or a leadership role. Dr. Neal is always coming up with new professional development ideas. He wants you to have the tools to succeed.

Institutions that make professional development opportunities available often foster greater leadership (May, 2013). Funding for professional development leads to a lower turnover rate because employees are pleased by the college’s investment in them and they have a clearer overall perspective of the college’s vision (Robinson, Sugar, & Williams, 2010). Shelley spoke about her experience:

Often times, our administration will encourage people to apply for leadership roles or the President’s Leadership Seminar through KCTCS. My direct supervisor sat me down and said, “Hey – you should think about this. As far as your professional goals go, this would look great on the resume.” They want you to proceed along in your professional aspirations as a whole. They always preserve the budget for professional development because they recognize how important it is. That support and opportunity for advancement is something that is encouraged here. It makes you consider leadership possibilities that you never did before.

Kezar and Lester (2011) asserted that conferences and workshops help grassroots leaders establish a network of like-minded professionals, learn leadership skills, formulate ideas, and garner insight into the ways they might approach change on their campus. The participants noted that the benefit from these professional development opportunities was two-fold: they were able to develop leadership skills they were lacking and they came away with “best practices” in terms of leadership tactics and strategies. Professional development opportunities that include membership to national and state professional associations allow employees to interact with other leaders, to understand the national context for initiatives, and to gain new ideas. May (2013) argued that
membership to faculty-specific associations gives faculty members credibility that is important when trying to gain support from other members of their profession.

**Inclusion**

Community colleges often have a unique set of challenges. Many community colleges have multiple branch campuses or satellite locations with which they must contend. The relationships between the branch locations and the parent institution are complex, dynamic, and labor intensive. These campuses often have their own individual cultures and norms. Administrators often have to work diligently to blend the mission of scholarship, teaching, and community engagement between the branch and main campuses (Dengerink, 2001). Deliberate efforts to include more people in campus activities, leadership development, and the decision-making process helps increase support for initiatives and motivation for involvement (Fulton-Calkins & Milling, 2005).

SKYCTC operates at six different locations. The furthest branch from the main campus is approximately 40 miles away. Melissa, an employee on one of SKYCTC’s branch campuses noted:

> It helps when our president is very visible. In fact, he has a new employee luncheon or seminar and he rotates that among the campuses. I think they do it every other month. It’s nice because new employees get to see the branch campuses, but we also like seeing the president on our turf as well. That’s something we asked for, and he made that happen. We also rotate faculty senate meetings among the campuses. I think that’s also helped a lot. Everyone feels included and they have a voice.

This concept of inclusion is not unique to the decision-making process. Many participants discussed the importance of having administrators show interest in their job. For example, Emily, a faculty member also located one of SKYCTC’s branch campuses, stated:
One of our administrators comes to my class. He’s the only one who’s guest-lectured for me. The students connect with him instantly. He gives them his contact information so they know if they ever need anything, they can contact him. He just makes that connection with them. Students love that…I love that. He shows interest in my program and he goes out of his way to do so. That makes me want to return that favor or pay it forward. I want to get involved and do things to help out.

Inclusion is often the first step to relationship building among administrators, faculty, and staff members (Wallin, 2008). Subsequently, the leaders noted the importance of communication to the feeling of inclusion. John, a staff member in the Student and Organizational Success department, has a strong professional background in human development. He recognized the administration’s effort at inclusion as being impactful on employees’ decisions to participate in change efforts. He observed:

The culture here is one of… it's like a family. The administration communicates and makes people feel included. It's very connected and what it does, I think… it sets the stage and I could agree it does foster grassroots type. It sets the stage for this type of change to take place. I think it is one of…many people within our particular culture here desire it and they really... People listen here. They listen to those particular folks who are actually at those particular grassroots levels trying to make change and going forward. I can agree with that. It does foster the grassroots level of type of change and it take place.

Misty agreed. When asked to identify things in SKYCTC’s culture that foster grassroots leadership, she responded:

We have the right people in place. I’ve worked at places in the past…there’s one I can think of, in particular, that the owner was…if you caught her on a bad day…let’s just say, you hated your job. I think we’re lucky because we work for people that care so much. They care about everyone here…not just the students, but the workers, too. Nobody is excluded. Somebody is always fighting for someone or fighting for the division they’re in or whatever…I’m so impressed with that. That’s the kind of atmosphere we have here.

Almost all of the participants spoke of inclusion in conjunction with a “culture of caring.” Emily compared this culture to that of her classroom. She said, “It’s like I’ve always said, students don’t care what you now until they know that you care. I think our
administration has the same motto.” According to the participants, this concept of “caring” and “inclusion” motivates employees to engage and bolsters confidence that efforts will not be in vain.

**Trust**

Trust plays a vital role in a developmental culture. In their study of leadership development in community colleges, Robinson et al. (2010) found that trust played a key role in an employee’s decision to assume a leadership role within the institution. The authors were not talking about one-way trust; they discussed the importance of employees being able to trust their supervisors and administrators and having their trust in return. They argued that leads to increased perceptions of openness and transparency in college leadership. Although it was not as prominent of a theme, several participants talked about the importance of trust. David, a full-time professor in a technical program at SKYCTC, works closely with the administration to ensure their programs stay responsive to industry needs. This collaboration often requires both parties to face hard truths and to change policies and procedures with which everyone is comfortable. David embraces this role because of the trust he has for his administration. He said:

> I have a really good relationship with administrators here. I trust them. They have always treated me well. I feel like can go in and speak to them about anything and they’ll listen. They know that when I come in to ask for something, or I have an idea to pitch, I’m doing it because it’s the right thing to do for our students or community partners. I’ve cultivated that relationship with them and I feel like I’ve earned their trust in return.

Shelley also spoke about the importance of trust in an employer-employee relationship. She said that knowing that her administration supports her allows her to pursue leadership roles. She commented:
I think professionally what I look for in an employer is trust...someone who has faith in me. I just want someone to feel like they made a good hire. I don’t want them to sit back and say, “I don’t really know if she can handle that.” I honestly feel like the administration is supportive and that they believe in the faculty and staff here. They support your initiatives and they encourage your leadership opportunities. This makes it easier to step out on the ledge and go for it.

In a presentation on SKYCTC’s workplace ethics initiative at the KCTCS New Horizons Conference, a SKYCTC administrator shared a segment entitled “Leadership Lessons Learned.” He said that one of the most important lessons they learned was the importance of trusting and empowering employees. He stated, “You have to believe in your people and trust them to do a good job. If you empower them, they will work hard to succeed and they’ll do this because they want to.” David concurred that trust from the administration allowed faculty leaders to break through the fear and anxiousness of developing a program that would ultimately change the way faculty members controlled their classrooms. The support and trust ultimately led to the implementation of a nationally recognized initiative (2015 Faculty Innovation Award of Excellence from the American Association of Community Colleges).

**Implications for Practice**

While grassroots leaders tend to emerge organically, there has now been more of an emphasis on the need to foster this type of leadership, particularly for community college development (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Research on grassroots leadership development suggests that these individuals have very different needs from traditional leadership models and those in positions of authority (Gray, Wolfer, & Mass, 2005). Administrators wanting to adopt a culture that promotes grassroots leadership can use the insight gained from this study to remove obstacles, particularly the organizational-level
ones, which hinder grassroots organization. It is important to note, especially in a community college setting, that grassroots leaders often make changes that respond to important public concern and policy makers’ directives, and they work at the level most likely to achieve institutionalization of these changes (Kezar & Lester, 2011). Grassroots leadership enhances the campus capacity for leadership and builds a more effective higher-quality campus.

**Discussion and Future Research**

Members of a higher education institution often take its culture for granted and do not truly assess its impact on decisions, behaviors, and leadership activities. The fit between existing culture and the proposed change will determine whether the culture promotes or impedes institutional change (Craig, 2004). The results of this study illuminate several new insights into higher education organizational change processes. In addressing the research question, whether there appears to be a relationship between institutional culture and an individual’s ability to affect grassroots change, the results suggest that grassroots leaders are influenced both by campus culture and the degree of administrative support or involvement. While administrators may not have necessarily encouraged grassroots activities, in many instances, administrators gave motivated faculty and staff members a platform for change activities by approving their request to be placed on a certain committee, allowing them to participate in professional development activities, including them in a particular group or conversation, and fostering a relationship built on trust.

The findings from this study point to several opportunities for future research. This study focused on institutional attributes which supported grassroots leadership
efforts from a bottom-up perspective. Identifying and studying administrators or mid-level management professionals who support and enable grassroots leadership to occur could help provide a more holistic view of grassroots change. The site for this study, SKYCTC, can be characterized as having a development culture. Since this culture is conducive to the success of grassroots leadership efforts, the use of this site warrants cautious use of the study’s findings; however, having multiple perspectives from various sectors of the institutional community helps assess the success of bottom-up leadership activities within the culture. A future study may utilize a site that is more consistent with one of the other cultures Bernquist (1992) discussed.

**Conclusion**

One of the primary issues identified in the research on grassroots leadership is the presence of departmental and institutional barriers that make grassroots leadership difficult on today’s campus (Kezar & Lester, 2011). As a result, this research sought ways that such leadership can be fostered and encouraged. The grassroots leaders in this study described the importance of certain institutional attributes, properties, and conditions to create an environment that would acknowledge and facilitate their grassroots efforts. Many participants mentioned key individuals and administrators who helped them overcome challenges and motivate them to engage in grassroots activism. Others talked about the systematic barriers that are typically present in higher education institutions and the ways in which SKYCTC administrators have strategically reduced their existence. Regardless of the specific reason, participants recognized that their administration has taken deliberate steps to create an environment in which non-positional leadership can thrive. Administrators are seen as visible, positive leaders that
work to establish relationships that are inclusive and built on trust. Even in the midst of budget cuts and financial uncertainty, the president has pledged to preserve the professional development budget and his commitment to leadership development. These conditions ensured that participants felt encouraged to initiate and engage in grassroots leadership activities that led to the betterment of the institution, the benefit of its students, or the advancement of the community it serves.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

Grassroots leadership is quickly becoming a valid and accepted form of leadership in institutions of higher education. This dissertation brought the focus on grassroots leadership in the community college setting. Leaders and administrators alike can use the information and findings in this dissertation to recognize the obstacles and challenges grassroots leaders face and to promote or create a culture in which these leaders can thrive. Ultimately, the collaboration of leadership efforts leads to a stronger, unified campus. This brief chapter includes my reflection on implications of this research on my professional future and the Kentucky Community and Technical College System as a whole.

Reflection on Research

Even before beginning this doctoral program, I knew that my dissertation topic would most likely be about educational leadership. I spent a lot of time studying the various aspects of leadership while pursuing my master’s degree: transformational vs. transactional leadership, authenticity, emotional intelligence, referent power, expert power, self-awareness, relational transparency, etc. Like many others, I viewed educational leadership as a traditional, top-down model; however, my professional experience in the community college indicated a much different reality. I have been fortunate to work for several strong administrators who valued and demanded collaborative leadership. My original interest in the concept of grassroots leadership arose during a qualitative research course in the third semester of coursework in the EdD program. I read an article by Adrianna Kezar on top-down/bottom-up leadership convergence that really served as a roadmap for my future doctoral studies. For the first
time, I felt like my personal experiences aligned with scholarly trend, but outside of Kezar’s works, not a lot of research on grassroots organization in higher education exists. This gap in research only served to further my interest in the subject.

When I began researching the topic, I was initially surprised at the amount of literature dedicated to discussing opposition to grassroots leadership and navigation of institutional power structures. In delving further, I began to question why my experiences with grassroots leadership seemed to contradict the research. I quickly realized that my naiveté rested in my failure to consider institutional context when thinking about grassroots change. Outside of a few case studies in the community college environment, most of the research centered around four-year institutions. The community college mission is vastly different than our four-year partners; the diversified mission of the community college, and its loosely-coupled systems, tends to lend itself to collaborative and non-positional leadership.

KCTCS is the largest provider of post-secondary education and workforce training in the state of Kentucky. It serves almost 90,000 students through 16 colleges and 70 campuses across the Commonwealth. While emphasizing its historical mission to provide general education, the system is expanding its focus on occupational/technical education and it works closely with its industry partners to ensure that we stay responsive to the challenges of today’s technologically driven, knowledge-based economy. In order to meet these numerous demands successfully, KCTCS needs leaders – a lot of leaders. In my opinion, these leaders need to come from all areas of the college, and not just the top. The system could serve itself best by pushing for collaboration, not only within each college, but across institutions as well. My research substantiates scholarly claims that
grassroots leaders are well positioned to make meaningful change. While grassroots leaders often emerge organically, administrators could benefit from fostering these leaders in an attempt to introduce systematic change.

Higher education has the reputation of moving at a snail’s pace when it comes to change; however, grassroots leadership research suggests that each individual has the power to become a change agent within an institution. KCTCS can use these leaders to create important and needed change that is unlikely to happen from the top-down because of constraints on administrators, to advance issues that are favorable to students and learning, to improve the relationships within the community, and to create a greater dexterity for leadership on campus. I hope that my research encourages administrators to see grassroots leaders as partners with a common interest in moving the campus forward, rather than opponents to administrative efforts. There is power in collaboration.

Reflection on Collaboration

This power extends well beyond the workplace. My entire journey through the Ed.D. program at UK has been a lesson in collaboration. From the first class of the program to completion of my dissertation, I have collaborated on projects, presentations, peer reviews, interviews, focus groups, writing teams and research. In many instances, this collaboration required a great deal of effort and coordination. The thought of completing a companion dissertation was somewhat daunting because I am very particular about communication, personal deadlines, writing style, and persistence. I was afraid that collaborating with others would hinder my progress toward degree completion. My concerns couldn’t have been further from the reality. I was fortunate to find two individuals with similar interests in education leadership and the dedication and drive to
complete a companion project. Collaborating with teammates afforded me perspective that I would have otherwise missed. I believe that our divergent foci were all strong enough to stand alone, but combined, we were able to create a more powerful work that encompasses all levels of institutional leadership. Given the nature of my team’s employment in a community college system and our desire to one day serve in administrative leadership roles, it is important to understand and appreciate the various forms of leadership that exist. We were granted this exposure through our research.

This program has afforded me an opportunity to experience collaboration that is reflective of the nature of professional practice in higher education. Collaboration inspires team building, innovation, and offers numerous intrinsic rewards such as enjoyment for work, a sense of value, and a shared sense of purpose. I truly believe that collaboration will be key to competing in the future of the higher education. The lessons I learned through the Ed.D. program have helped prepare me to be competitive: to apply appropriate and specific practices, generate new ideas, and advance the stewardship of the profession.
Appendices

Appendix A

Email to Grassroots Interview Participants

Dear (Subject):

I am Andrea Borregard, a doctoral student in Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation at the University of Kentucky.

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of grassroots leaders (individuals without formal positions of power) in higher education and to gain insight into their motivations and actions. You have been identified as one of these leaders and as a result, I am inviting you to participate in this research project.

As part of the study, I will conduct interviews with you and observe various committee meetings and/or other activities pertinent to the topic. I anticipate that the preliminary interview will only take an hour at most and I would like to include a follow-up interview in the weeks following. Your voluntary response to this request constitutes your informed consent to your participation in this activity. You are not required to participate. If you decide not to participate, your decision will not affect your current or future relations with Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College.

This project has been approved by the University of Kentucky’s and Kentucky Community and Technical College’s Institutional Review Boards. If you are willing to participate, please respond with an available time to complete the interview (preferably between January 7- February 25). The interview can be conducted in your office or another agreed upon location.

Please feel free to contact me at andrea.borregard@kctcs.edu or by phone at 270-302-7780 if you have any questions. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Andrea Borregard
Appendix B

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title:</th>
<th>Sponsors:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organizing for Change: A Case Study of Grassroots Leadership at a Kentucky Community college</td>
<td>Dr. Beth Goldstein &amp; Dr. Willis Jones Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation University of Kentucky</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principal Investigators:</th>
<th>Organization:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andrea Borregard</td>
<td>University of Kentucky College of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erin Tipton</td>
<td>Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reneau Waggoner</td>
<td>Lexington, KY 40506</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location:</th>
<th>Phone:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexington, KY</td>
<td>859-257-3178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY**
   You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to look at the experiences of grassroots leaders in higher education. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about five people to do so. Andrea Borregard, Erin Tipton, and Reneau Waggoner will be the Principal Investigators (PI) for this study. She is being guided in this research by Dr. Beth Goldstein and Dr. Willis Jones of the University of Kentucky, Department of Educational Policy. By doing this study, we hope to gain insight into the motivations and actions of grassroots leaders to initiate change.

2. **PROCEDURES**
   The research procedures will be conducted at Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC). The PI will contact you via email and telephone to arrange an interview time. You will be asked to answer questions regarding your grassroots change efforts.

3. **POSSIBLE RISKS**
   Risks to participating in this research study are unknown. To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life. However, any new information developed during the study that may affect your willingness to continue participation will be communicated to you.

4. **POSSIBLE BENEFITS**
   There are no known benefits from taking part in this study. Your participation will allow for a greater understanding of the motivations and actions of grassroots leaders in a higher education setting.
5. **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**
   There are no costs associated with taking part in the study. There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research.

6. **CONFIDENTIALITY**
   Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. 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. Your information will be combined with other people taking part in the study. The results of the study may be published to share with other researchers, but we will not give your name or include any identifiable references to you.

7. **TERMINATION OR RESEARCH STUDY**
   You may voluntarily choose not to participate in this study or withdraw at any time. You will not be treated any differently for deciding not to participate or for deciding to withdraw.

8. **AVAILABLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION**
   Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please do not hesitate to contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity at the University of Kentucky at 859-257-9428 or toll-free at 1-866-400-9428.

9. **AUTHORIZATION**
   *I have read and understand this consent form and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws.*

Participant Name: _________________________________

Participant Signature: _____________________________       Date: _______________
Appendix C

Grassroots Interview Protocol

**Research Questions:**

1. What kinds of experiences motivate an individual to be an initiator of change?
2. What strategies do grassroots leaders use to affect change in college policy and practice?
3. What are the major obstacles to implementing grassroots change?
4. In what ways do grassroots leaders find support, inspiration, and balance to overcome challenges and obstacles and remain resilient?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of experiences motivate an individual to be an initiator of change?</td>
<td>Tell me about your professional background and experience with SKYCTC.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you define institutional change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How would you compare grassroots initiated change from other types of institutional change? What about specific examples from SKYCTC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you share with me a time when you proposed a change/initiative at SKYCTC or another educational institution?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Please describe the chronology of events that took place leading up to your decision to engage in grassroots organizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why was this particular initiative important to you? What motivated you to pursue this change initiative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What specific experiences can you identify that helped you prepare for this role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What strategies do grassroots leaders use to affect change in college policy and practice?</td>
<td>Describe a particular change initiative with which you were involved. (How did it begin, what it addressed, process, outcomes, people involved, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How much time did you invest?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What resources did you have?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did you work with existing structures and policies? With the administration? What about people outside the institution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think was crucial to maintaining momentum for this initiative?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What institutional attributes, properties, or conditions enable grassroots organization?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How would you describe the institutional culture at SKYCTC?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What qualities or conditions do you think need to be present to foster or promote grassroots leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there anything unique to SKYCTC that supported or hindered your ability to bring about institutional change?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does this compare to other experiences you’ve had with institutional change?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the major obstacles to implementing grassroots change?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What have been some of the frustration and/or obstacles in bringing about change? How have you adjusted as a result of these?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were there any key points when you felt the momentum for change was waning or gone? If so, what did you do to revive that momentum?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did your overall vision for your initiative change from the beginning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you had to start all over with this initiative, what would you do differently?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closing Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is there any information about grassroots organization that you think would be helpful for this study?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your plans for future involvement in leadership initiatives?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D
Organizational Culture Assessment Survey - Cover Letter/Email to Participants

Thank you in advance for your willingness to participate in this survey to assess your thoughts, values and beliefs regarding the organizational culture(s) at your institution. As an identified leader at your institution, your feedback and participation is invaluable.

Below are the instructions for completing the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI):

1. The purpose of the OCAI is to assess six key dimensions of organizational culture. In completing the instrument, you will be providing a picture of how SKYCTC operates and the values that characterize it.

2. Every organization will most likely produce a different set of responses, so there are no right or wrong answers. Therefore, be as accurate to your own opinion in responding to the questions so that your resulting cultural diagnosis will be as precise as possible.

3. The OCAI consists of six questions. Each question has four alternatives. Divide 100 points among these four alternatives depending on the extent to which each alternative is similar to your own organization. Give a higher number of points to the alternative that is most similar to your organization. For example, in question one, if you think alternative A is very similar to your organization, alternative B and C are somewhat similar, and alternative D is hardly similar at all, you might give 55 points to A, 20 points to B and C, and five points to D. Just be sure your total equals 100 points for each question. You will do the same for the “Preferred” organizational culture section as well. Place a higher number by the alternative which best represents the culture you would prefer in your current organization.

4. All responses will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated in your responses. Please note, that the first pass through the six questions is labeled “Now”. This refers to the culture, as it exists today. After you complete the “Now”, you will find the questions repeated under a heading of “Preferred”. Your answers to these questions should be based on how you would like the organization to look five years from now. Please answer the “Now” questions first and then come back to the “Preferred” questions.

5. Lastly, at the end of the OCAI is a “Strengths and Areas for Improvement” section where you will have an opportunity to share open ended responses you believe will be helpful in better understanding the culture at SKYCTC.
Completing this section of the survey is encouraged but optional in your participation.

Lastly, please do not hesitate to contact us directly at erin.tipton@kctcs.edu or reneau.waggoner@kctcs.edu or by telephone at (859) 246-6862 or (502) 213-2620 should you have specific questions on the directions for the survey.

Thank you once again for your participation in this survey!

Sincerely,

Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner
Doctoral Students at the University of Kentucky
College of Education
Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
Appendix E
Organizational Culture Assessment Survey

Note: Please answer “Now” Questions first, then come back to the “Preferred” Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Dominant Characteristics</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A The organization is a very personal place. It is like an extended family. People seem to share a lot of themselves.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The organization is a very dynamic entrepreneurial place. People are willing to stick their necks out and take risks.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C The organization is very results oriented. A major concern is with getting the job done. People are very competitive and achievement oriented.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D The organization is a very controlled and structured place. Formal procedures generally govern what people do.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Organizational Leadership</th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify mentoring, facilitating, or nurturing.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify entrepreneurship, innovating, or risk taking.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify a no-nonsense, aggressive, results-oriented focus.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D The leadership in the organization is generally considered to exemplify coordinating, organizing, or smooth-running efficiency.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 3. Management of Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The management style in the organization is characterized by teamwork, consensus, and participation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The management style in the organization is characterized by individual risk-taking, innovation, freedom, and uniqueness.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The management style in the organization is characterized by hard-driving competitiveness, high demands, and achievement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The management style in the organization is characterized by security of employment, conformity, predictability, and stability in relationships.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 4. Organizational Glue

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The glue that holds the organization together is loyalty and mutual trust. Commitment to this organization runs high.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The glue that holds the organization together is commitment to innovation and development. There is an emphasis on being on the cutting edge.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The glue that holds the organization together is the emphasis on achievement and goal accomplishment. Aggressiveness and winning are common themes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The glue that holds the organization together is formal rules and policies. Maintaining a smooth-running organization is important.

5. Strategic Emphases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The organization emphasizes human development. High trust, openness, and participation persist.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The organization emphasizes acquiring new resources and creating new challenges. Trying new things and prospecting for opportunities are valued.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The organization emphasizes competitive actions and achievement. Hitting stretch targets and winning in the marketplace are dominant.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The organization emphasizes permanence and stability. Efficiency, control and smooth operations are important.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total

6. Criteria of Success

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Now</th>
<th>Preferred</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>The organization defines success on the basis of the development of human resources, teamwork, employee commitment, and concern for people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>The organization defines success on the basis of having the most unique or newest products. It is a product leader and innovator.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>The organization defines success on the basis of winning in the marketplace and outpacing the competition. Competitive market leadership is key.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The organization defines success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low-cost production are critical.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The organization defines success on the basis of efficiency. Dependable delivery, smooth scheduling and low-cost production are critical.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2015 Southcentral Community and Technical College Culture Assessment
Written Observations

Strengths
We encourage you to add comments to clarify your views regarding the strengths of your
department or administrative area in which you work. The next section will allow you to list the
areas in need of improvement or any suggestions you have for change that would lead to
improvement.

Identify three of your department's or administrative area's greatest strengths:

Strength 1:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Strength 2:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Strength 3:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Areas in Need of Improvement
We encourage you to add comments to clarify your views regarding areas requiring improvement
and to add your suggestions for improvements.

Identify three things in your department or administrative area in need of greatest improvement:
Area for Improvement 1:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Area for Improvement 2:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________

Area for Improvement 3:
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________
Please provide the following items for demographic information:

1. Please provide select the faculty title that best describes your current position (title) with SKYCTC.
   ___________ Professor
   ___________ Associate Professor
   ___________ Assistant Professor
   ___________ Instructor

1. Please provide your length of employment with SKYCTC (please only include your employment at the college and not with other community colleges or KCTCS institutions):
   _______ 0-5 years
   _______ 5-10 years
   _______ 10-15 years
   _______ 15 or more years

2. Do you currently hold a formal leadership position at SKYCTC?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

3. Have you previously held a formal leadership position at SKYCTC?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

4. Do you desire a formal leadership position in the future?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

5. Would you be interested in participating in an interview as a follow up to this survey?
   _______ Yes
   _______ No

If yes, please provide your full name and telephone number:

Name________________________________________
Telephone ____________________________________
Appendix F

Faculty Interview Protocol

Each of the nine semi-structured interviews conducted with faculty who participated in the OCAI, expressed either a desire or non-desire to assume a leadership role in the future and agreed to follow up participant interviews will be held in the participant’s office at SKYCTC to help the participants feel as comfortable as possible. The interviews were audio recorded to ensure accuracy in reporting the results of each interview. The primary researcher (Erin Tipton) was present during the interviews and took notes.

Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews immediately following, and coded for themes in the data collected. The data was coded into themes and organized into charts. The following outlines the interview protocol utilized:

Introductions and Background for Interviews:

- Explained the purpose of the interview and how the data gathered will be utilized.
- Explained confidentiality, review consent form and ask for Consent signature.
- Explained participants’ right to opt out of the interview at any time.

Introduction Questions:

1. What is your current position at SKYCTC?
2. How long have you been employed at the college? What have been your various responsibilities while employed at SKYCTC?
3. What formal or informal leadership positions have you held at the college? Please describe those positions and your experiences with them.
4. What types of leadership development activities have you participated in?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Supporting Interview Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What personal factors contribute to faculty motivation to formal leadership roles in the community college?</td>
<td>5. You have indicated a desire/non-desire (this is based upon your response to the question at the end of the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument Survey you participated in April) to move in to a leadership role in the future at SKY. As a faculty member, what are your greatest reasons for wanting/not wanting to assume a formal leadership role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6. In what manner do the differences in job responsibilities of an administrator in comparison to your current role as a faculty member contribute to your aspirations/non aspirations to move into a formal leadership role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7. How do your peers contribute to your aspirations/non aspirations to assume a formal leadership role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8. What personal factors influence or deter your desire to assume a formal leadership role?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9. Suppose you want to convince one of your faculty colleagues to assume a leadership position. How would you go about convincing this person?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10. What characteristics are necessary for a person to succeed as a leader in your department? At this college?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What institutional factors contribute to faculty aspirations to formal leadership roles in the community college?</td>
<td>11. The results of the OCAI indicate the Clan or “collaborative” culture is the overall <strong>perceived</strong> and <strong>preferred</strong> culture at the college (and among faculty). This (Clan) culture is described as being very collaborative, team-oriented with a focus on trust and human capital development. Based upon the definition of this culture, please describe how you see how this culture contributes to or deters your aspirations to a formal leadership position.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. The results of the OCAI also indicate a preference among faculty to operate in a more externally focused, entrepreneurial manner (Adhocracy Culture) than what is currently happening at the college. Can you describe how this culture preference contributes to or deters your aspirations to a formal leadership position?

13. The results of the OCAI among faculty indicate a slight change, a reduction in operating in a more competitive or “Market” culture which tends to be described as a production and results oriented culture. Based upon the results, can you describe how this culture preference contributes to or deters your aspirations to a formal leadership position?

14. What specific aspects of your department’s culture support your leadership development? What aspects do not support your leadership development?

15. How does the organizational structure (how the college is arranged) at SKY contribute to your aspirations to a formal leadership role? The structure (arrangement) of KCTCS?

16. How can executive level leadership at SKY support your leadership future?

17. Is there anything else that you can share that can help me better understand faculty aspirations or lack of aspirations to leadership at SKY?
**Appendix G**

**Executive-Level Leaders Interview Protocol**

**Research Question(s):**

*What are the personal and institutional factors that influence (both positively and negatively) the leadership aspirations of executive-level community college leaders to ascend to the presidency?*

**Interview Questions:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Icebreaker and Background</strong></th>
<th>Describe your leadership journey (progression to current leadership role).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Icebreaker</strong></td>
<td>What advanced leadership opportunities have you organized? Participated in?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Personal/Psychological Factors</strong></th>
<th>What personal/psychological factors contributed to your desire to become an executive-level leader?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What characteristics are necessary for a person to succeed as a leader in your area? At the college?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The overall results of the OCAI survey indicate common themes in the strengths of SKYCTC as being the caring atmosphere for students, faculty and staff; trust; community-oriented; strong leadership; professional development; and friendly work environment. How do these characteristics align with your professional values, level of motivation, and leadership aspirations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Institutional Factors</strong></th>
<th><em>(Share/show chart)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The results of the OCAI survey indicate that the Clan or Collaborative culture is the perceived and preferred culture at the college (and among executive-level leaders). This (Clan) culture is described as being very collaborative, team-oriented with a focus on trust and human capital development. Based upon the definition of this culture, please describe how you see how this Clan or Collaborative culture supports/does not support your desire to assume the position of president.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results of the OCAI survey indicate a preference among executive-level leaders to operate in a slightly more externally focused, entrepreneurial manner (Adhocracy Culture) than what is currently happening at the college. Can you describe what factors (internal and external) contribute to this preference?

The results of the OCAI survey among executive-level leaders indicate a preference among executive-level leaders to operate in a less Hierarchical or Controlled culture. Much of the context of the Controlled culture surrounds rules, policies, procedures and overall efficiencies with decision-making and authority tends to be top-down. Based upon the results, can you describe how this culture preference contributes to or deters your aspirations to become a community college president?

What types of professional development and/or advancement opportunities exist at SKYCTC for individuals who aspire for executive-level leadership? Presidency?

What aspects of your college’s culture support your leadership development? What aspects do not support your leadership development?

**Follow-up: How can the president support your growth as a leader?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspirations to Ascendency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe your level of desire to become a community college president.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-up: What factors contribute to this decision?</strong> What would cause you to reconsider?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What about the culture of the SKYCTC influenced your decision?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-up: What about the culture of previous institutions influenced your decision?</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Conclusion** | If you were to pursue the position of community college president, what factors (positive and negative) would influence your decision? Personal? Psychological? Institutional?

What potential factors gave you pause in considering moving to a position of higher authority?

What advice would you give to an aspiring leader? |
Appendix H

RESEARCH SUBJECT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Project Information

**Project Title:** Pipelines of Leadership: Aspirations of Faculty and Executive Level Leaders at Southcentral Community and Technical College (SKYCTC)

**Sponsors:**
Drs. Beth Goldstein and Willis Jones
Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
University of Kentucky College of Education

**Principal Investigators:**
Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner

**Organization:**
University of Kentucky College of Education
Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
Lexington, KY
Phone: 859-246-6862

**PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY**
You are being invited to take part in a research study designed to investigate aspirations of faculty and executive level leaders to formal leadership. A study of institutional and personal factors influencing faculty and executive level leaders’ desire to assume leadership roles at SKYCTC will be conducted. If you volunteer to take part in this study, you will be one of about sixteen to eighteen people to do so. Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner are the Principal Investigators (PI) for this study. They are being guided in this research by Drs. Beth Goldstein and Willis Jones, of the University of Kentucky, College of Education. By conducting this study, we hope to gain insight into leadership at your college. This research will evaluate the institutional and personal factors among faculty and executive level leaders as it relates to aspirations to leadership.

**PROCEDURES**
The research procedures will be conducted at SKYCTC. The PI will contact you via email and telephone to arrange an interview time. You will be asked to answer questions regarding leadership and organizational culture from your perspective. You may opt out of this study at any time.

**POSSIBLE RISKS**
There are no known risks as a result of your participation in this study.
POSSIBLE BENEFITS
Your participation will allow for a greater understanding of institutional and personal factors and their influence on leadership aspirations at Southcentral Community and Technical College and KCTCS.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS
None

CONFIDENTIALITY
Your identity in this study will be treated as confidential. 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.

AVAILABLE SOURCE OF INFORMATION
Before you decide to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that come to mind now. Later, if you have questions, suggestions, concerns, or complaints about the study, you can contact the investigator, Erin Tipton via e-mail (erin.tipton@kctcs.edu) or phone (859-324-0041) or Reneau Waggoner (reneau.waggoner@kctcs.edu) or phone (502-298-1720). If you have questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact the staff in the Office of Research Integrity and the University of Kentucky between the business hours of 8am and 5pm EST, Monday-Friday, at 859-257-9428 or toll free at 1-866-400-9428. We will give you a signed copy of the consent form to take with you.

AUTHORIZATION
I have read and understand this consent form and I volunteer to participate in this research study. I understand that I will receive a copy of this form. I voluntarily choose to participate, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws.

__________________________________________
Signature of Person Agreeing to Participate in the Study

__________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Agreeing to Participate in the Study

__________________________________________
Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent

__________________________________________
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Informed Consent
Appendix I
Confidentiality Agreement for Semi-structured Interviews

Consent Form for Semi-structured Interviews

Organizational Culture: Influence on Faculty in the Community College

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Andrea Borregard, Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner, employees of the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and doctoral candidates of the College of Education at the University of Kentucky. You are being invited to participate because you are a faculty member at Southcentral Community and Technical College (SKYCTC). We are asking you to take part in this study because we are trying to learn more about organizational culture and its influence on faculty decisions to enter leadership roles in the community college setting.

Having previously responded to the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (OCAI), you expressed interest in participating in a follow up interview. If you agree to participate in the next part of the study, this form serves as your consent to participate in the interviews.

The information you provide during the interviews, along with the results of the OCAI survey will be kept confidential. At any point during the study you may opt out as a participant.

____________________  __________________
Signature of Person Agreeing to Participate in the Study               Date Signed

____________________  __________________
Signature of Person Obtaining Informed Consent                      Date Signed
Appendix J

Permission to Utilize the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument

(Tipton and Waggoner)
Appendix K

Presidential Support Letter for Site Selection

Dr. Phillip W. Neal  
President/CEO  
1845 Loop Drive  
Bowling Green, KY 42101  
Telephone: (270) 901-1111

September 16, 2014

Office of Research Integrity  
315 Kinkead Hall  
University of Kentucky  
Lexington, KY 40506-0057

Dear Members of the IRB Committee:

On behalf of the Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College (SKYCTC), I am writing to formally indicate our awareness of the research proposed by Andrea Borregard, Erin Tipton and Reneau Waggoner, students at the University of Kentucky. I am aware that these students intend to conduct their research at our institution by administering a written survey to our employees and conducting one-on-one interviews.

As President of SKYCTC, I am responsible for employee relations. I grant these students permission to recruit SKYCTC employees for the purpose of their research.

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact my office at (270) 901-1114.

Sincerely,

Dr. Phillip W. Neal
References


Borregard, A., Tipton, E. and Waggoner, R. (2014). Notes taken during initial meeting with Dr. Phillip W. Neal, President and CEO, to discuss SKYCTC as potential research site. Bowling Green, KY: Borregard, Tipton and Waggoner.


KCTCS Factbook, 2015

KCTCS Factbook, 2011

KCTCS Factbook, 2010

KCTCS Factbook, 2009


Kezar, A. (2010). Faculty and staff grassroots leaders' beliefs about power: Do their beliefs affect their strategies and effectiveness? *International Journal of Leadership Studies, 6*(1), 84-112.


Vita
Andrea Borregard

Place of Birth: Owensboro, Kentucky

Educational Institutions Attended and Degrees Awarded

University of Louisville
Master of Arts, Higher Education Administration
May 2011

University of Kentucky
Bachelor of Arts, Political Science
December 2001

Professional Positions

November 2007 – Present
Assistant Director of Financial Aid
Owensboro Community and Technical College

August 2004 – November 2007
Store Manager
Barnes & Noble College Booksellers

June 2003 – August 2004
Community Development Planner
Green River Area Development District

January 2001 – June 2003
Government Relations Assistant
Brunenkant & Haskell, LLP

Scholastic and Professional Honors

• Graduate, Leadership Owensboro, Class of 2011