

PERCEPTIONS OF LAWYERS ON CAREER TRANSITION, TRANSFERABLE
SKILLS, AND PREPARATION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

by

Thomas T. Nguyen

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of
The College of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

May 2014

Copyright by Thomas T. Nguyen 2014


PERCEPTIONS OF LAWYERS ON CAREER TRANSITION, TRANSFERABLE
SKILLS, AND PREPARATION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

by

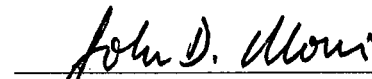
Thomas T. Nguyen

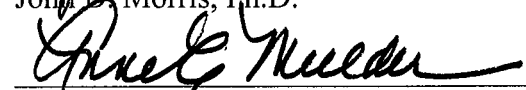
This dissertation was prepared under the direction of the candidate's dissertation advisor, Dr. Deborah L. Floyd, Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the College of Education and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

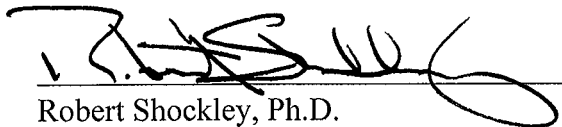
SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE:

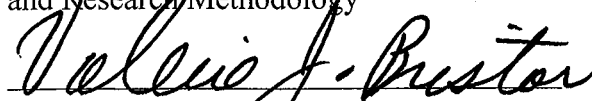

Deborah L. Floyd, Ed.D.
Dissertation Advisor



Patricia Maslin-Ostrowski, Ed.D.


John D. Morris, Ph.D.


Anne E. Mulder, Ph.D.


Robert Shockley, Ph.D.
Chair, Department of Educational Leadership
and Research Methodology


Valerie J. Bristol, Ph.D.
Dean, College of Education


Deborah L. Floyd, Ed.D.
Interim Dean, Graduate College

Date April 2, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express his sincere thanks and love to his wife Sarah, daughter Clare, son Luke and Casey the cat. The support and encouragement of family and friends throughout the writing of this manuscript was deeply appreciated. Of note, mother-in-law Patricia and friend Carmen provided much care to enable the author to complete this study. Father-in-law Jim offered therapeutic breaks to Miami Heat games. Siblings-in-law Christine and Mike have also been wonderful in their support. Much love and appreciation is also offered to my loving Nguyen family who has stressed the value of an excellent education. The author is grateful to the distinguished participants for volunteering their time to support this study. Lastly, the guidance, mentorship, and patience from Dr. Deborah L. Floyd, Dr. Pat Maslin-Ostrowski, Dr. John D. Morris, and Dr. Anne E. Mulder were wholeheartedly appreciated.

ABSTRACT

Author: Thomas T. Nguyen
Title: Perceptions of Lawyers on Career Transition, Transferable Skills, and Preparation for Community College Leadership
Institution: Florida Atlantic University
Dissertation Chair: Dr. Deborah L. Floyd
Degree: Doctor of Philosophy
Year: 2014

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to examine perspectives of attorneys who have transitioned into community college leadership. The study sought to answer questions concerning why attorneys decided to change careers, how they transition into new careers, and to what extent their legal backgrounds helped them in educational leadership. Interviews were conducted of 20 former attorneys across America on their perspectives about career transition and leadership competencies to determine whether they might serve as a viable source for leadership. Participant perceptions revealed a transition to make a difference, the transition process was smooth, and transition was made for a better work environment. Participants recommended for career changers coming from law to informally learn about community colleges, gain work experience therein, and to earn another degree. Participants reported high abilities in communications and professionalism, which are current AACCC leadership competencies. Some participants reported low collaboration competencies. Participants

also recommended positive reinforcement, teamwork, and problem-solving as additional AACC leadership competencies. Moreover, participants reported other transferable skills including legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills. Recommendations from this study include a policy and practice of considering lawyers for educational leadership provided they demonstrate work and commitment toward a transition into community college leadership.

PERCEPTIONS OF LAWYERS ON CAREER TRANSITION, TRANSFERABLE
SKILLS, AND PREPARATION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

CHAPTER

I: Introduction	1
Problem Statement	2
Conceptual Framework	3
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Questions	4
Significance of the Study	5
Definition of Terms	6
Limitations	8
Delimitations	8
Anticipated Outcomes	9
Chapter Summary	10
II: Literature Review	11
Impending Leadership Crisis	11
AACC Leadership Competencies	13
Career Transition	17
Transferable Skills	20
Preparation for Leadership	23

Chapter Summary	30
III: Methodology.....	32
Research Design.....	32
Sampling Plan	34
Site	34
Participant Selection	34
Participant Demographic	36
Data Collection	36
Interviews	37
Document Analysis.....	37
Data Analysis	38
Role of the Researcher	39
Chapter Summary	40
IV: Findings on Career Transition and Recommendations for Aspiring Leaders	42
Career Transition Into Community Colleges	44
Transition to Make a Difference.....	45
Transition Process Smooth	51
Transition to a Better Work Environment	56
Recommendations for Aspiring Community College Leaders.....	59
Learn About Community Colleges	59
Gain Work Experience at Community Colleges	62
Earn Another Degree	65

Chapter Summary	67
V: Findings on AACCC Leadership Competencies and Other Transferable Skills.....	68
AACCC Leadership Competencies	68
High Communications Competency.....	68
High Professionalism Competency.....	74
Lower Collaboration Competency.....	77
Positive Reinforcement Recommended.....	80
Teamwork Recommended.....	83
Problem-Solving Recommended.....	85
Other Transferable Leadership Skills	87
Legal Expertise	87
Business Sense.....	91
Analytical Skills.....	95
Chapter Summary	98
VI: Implications of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion.....	100
Discussion of Findings.....	102
Career Transition Into Community Colleges.....	102
Transition to make a difference	104
Transition process smooth	104
Transition to a better work environment.....	105
Recommendations for Aspiring Community College Leaders.....	105
Learn about community colleges	107

Gain work experience at community colleges	107
Earn another degree	108
AACC Leadership Competencies	108
High communications competency	108
High professionalism competency	109
Lower collaboration competency	109
Positive reinforcement recommended	110
Teamwork recommended	111
Problem-solving recommended	111
Other Transferable Leadership Skills	112
Legal expertise	112
Business sense	113
Analytical skills	113
Implications for Theory, Policy and Practice	114
Summary of Research Questions	115
Recommendations for Future Research	116
Conclusions	118
Chapter Summary	120
Appendix A. Adult Consent Form	121
Appendix B. Interview Protocol	124
Appendix C. Document Review Template	127
Appendix D. Table D1: Participant Demographics	129

Appendix E. Table E1: Major Themes and Findings	135
References	137

Chapter 1: Introduction

Shakespeare once wrote, “The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers,” from *Henry VI* (Shakespeare, trans. 2005, 4.2.71-78). The context of this statement was to install a character as autocrat by eliminating lawyers who uphold laws and rights of the people. Since there are some 1,268,011 lawyers in the United States as of 2012, one for every 300 Americans, perhaps we should not kill all the lawyers just yet (American Bar Association, 2013). Lawyers, sometimes viewed as combative or opportunistic, have their place in society. Lawyers have had a proud history of championing people’s rights and liberties. In modern times, lawyers have also been active in leadership in all types of organizations, at every level, all over the world. Lawyers are leaders in business, in not-for-profits, and in government. The majority of American Presidents, from John Adams to Barack Obama, have come from the ranks of lawyers.

Similar to leadership in government, leadership in higher education, another area of public service, is just another arena in which attorneys may thrive as leaders. America also has an abundance of attorneys who do not practice law. Many of these law school graduates find success and fulfillment in other fields. In particular, there are a select group of lawyers who choose to make a difference as higher education administrators. Of the million plus lawyers in America, 1,244 of them have successfully transitioned over as administrators in education (American Bar Association, 2013).

As recent as 2009, *Time Magazine* honored lawyer turned higher education leader Gordon Gee of Ohio State University as the best college president in America (*Time Magazine*, 2009). Although not as famous, there are many other well-respected attorneys turned administrators who chose to make a difference in higher education leadership. To learn more about this untapped talent source, therefore, this research was conducted to examine how attorneys might contribute and what motivates their career transition into higher education leadership.

Problem Statement

Community colleges are undergoing a challenging period in which many senior-level administrators are entering retirement raising the need for a new pipeline of talent to fill the vacuum of qualified leaders from mid-management to the executive ranks (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). At the same time, more and more attorneys prefer to work in positive environments that allow them to employ different skill sets in service to others. At the same time, many lawyers who originally entered law in order to lead and perform public service find themselves dissatisfied and burned-out in the practice of law. Upon completion of the study, the perspectives of lawyers turned administrators provided rich data and stories toward understanding a different source for leadership. There is insufficient qualitative literature on career transition, transferable skills, and preparation for community college leadership, especially from the ranks of those with legal backgrounds. Moreover, there is sparse literature on perspectives of lawyers on core competencies for effective community college leadership. Therefore, this study

contributes to that body of literature to help meet the community college leadership gap heading into the near future.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study utilized the lens of community college leadership competencies from the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2013). A conceptual framework contributes to research by informing and guiding the analysis and research questions (Merriam, 2009). In many cases, the conceptual framework is the lens for looking at the information and data gathered and is different from the theoretical lens, which is a review of other scholars' ideas (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). The conceptual lens is also the articulation of the application of theory to help find the answer to the issue or research questions. The conceptual framework truly guides and informs the methodology as the data is gathered, including the interviews with attorney-leaders.

The areas of focus of the conceptual lens for this study included analytical skills, written and verbal communication skills, and professional responsibility, including knowledge of legal ethics. In this instance, the conceptual framework for this study is the lens that helps analyze the data gathered from attorney-administrators to help answer questions from this study (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). As an investment in community college leadership, the AACC in 2004 commissioned a report resulting in *A Competency Framework for Community College Leaders* (AACC, 2013). From 125 surveys, there was a 76% return rate with 95 surveys returned. The process for collecting data and developing these competencies included but was not limited to surveys. The major

competencies that emerged for community college leaders were: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. These community college leadership competences are elaborated in greater detail within the next chapter's literature review.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe perspectives and experiences of certain lawyers working as community college leaders to provide insight into how they might contribute as a unique source of leadership. The intent of this research was also to explore what motivations trigger the career transition of lawyers who wished to work in community college leadership. By examining results from the data, including from interviews with attorney-administrators, and review of curriculum vitae, the researcher attempted to understand these individuals and their perceptions of how lawyers contribute as educational leaders and what drives their career choices.

Research Questions

The research questions for this qualitative case study were:

1. What are the career transition experiences of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?
2. What are the transferable skills of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?

Sub-Question: How do these transferable skills measure up to the AACC's Community College Leadership Competencies?

3. How does a legal background prepare an individual for community college leadership?

Significance of the Study

This study was an important and relevant addition to the study of higher education leadership because much can be learned and applied from lawyers as college administrators. Their best practices, traits, skills, and experiences may be utilized in service of students, faculty, and colleges alike. These legally-trained leaders may be effective and different than other traditional administrators in a number of ways. Colleges may find it worthwhile to tap into a reliable source for management and leadership excellence, much like the impact of certain MBAs to the success of corporations, government, and learning institutions. Some may argue that lawyers have had an even greater impact on leadership throughout world history. Lawyers are leaders in local, state, and national government. An overwhelming majority of U.S. Presidents have come from the ranks of lawyers. Similarly, leadership in higher education or community colleges, another area of public service, is just another arena in which attorneys may be able to thrive as leaders.

Furthermore, many lawyers bring a wealth of directly transferable legal experience which can be applied to help solve higher education problems which all have aspects based in law, including: assuring rights and enforcing obligations of employees and students, educational affiliations and contracts, and real estate zoning and construction law (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). Additionally, attorney-administrators are adept at facing other commercial based challenges involving intellectual property law, contracts

and business transactions, purchasing, international programs, labor and employment law. Moreover, attorneys are prepared to resolve potential issues in student affairs, data handling practices and privacy, equal opportunity and nondiscrimination, researching regulations, health law, and campus safety and security (Kaplin & Lee, 2007). Lawyers are also trained to be familiar with arbitrations, internal grievance and disciplinary hearings, faculty discipline, immigration law, conflict resolution, admissions policies and practices, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and student privacy, students with disabilities, and probate law as they pertain to development and fundraising operations. In summary, higher education leaders coming from law could make formidable administrators because their legal backgrounds help them to be aggressive in the face of opportunities and also in risk-avoidance measures.

Definition of Terms

The term *motivation* refers to the psychological feature that triggers a person to action toward a desired goal, the purpose for the action, or that which gives purpose and direction to behavior (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). *Motivation* is the set of forces that cause people to behave in certain ways. The performance of an individual depends on his or her ability backed by *motivation* (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). For this study, the research will explore what motivates or influences attorneys to transition from law into community college leadership.

The word *transition* is the act of passing from one state or place to the next, leading to an event that results in a transformation. *Transition* is the passage from one place or state to another, for example, the transition of the weather from wet to dry

(Webster's Dictionary, 2011). In this instance, the transition from legal work to educational leadership was explored as a research question.

The term *preparation* refers to the activity setting in advance of some act or purpose, for example, preparations for graduation had already commenced (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). Put another way, *preparation* could mean the act of preparing beforehand for a particular purpose, activity, or condition. It also means a previous arrangement or a making ready, for example, the preparation of crops for harvest or the preparations of a professor for a classroom visit (Webster's Dictionary, 2011).

Community college refers to nearly 1,200 colleges who are institutional members of the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC, 2013). These institutions vary considerably in size. They may purely meet the mission of community colleges to offer associate's degrees and transfer degrees. *Community college*, however, may also refer to institutions that offer community college baccalaureate degrees. In any case, all institutional members of AACC are, for purposes of this study, *community colleges*.

In terms of attributes lawyers may bring to community college leadership, terms such as *strength*, *weakness*, and *bias* must be defined. *Strength* refers to the quality or state of being strong, the ability to do or to bear, capacity for exertion, whether physical, intellectual, or moral. It could also mean force, vigor, power, for example, strength of body, mind, or character (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). The term *weakness* means the quality or state of being powerless, want of strength or firmness; lack of vigor, feebleness (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). A *bias* refers to incline to one side; to give a particular direction to, to influence; to prejudice (Webster's Dictionary, 2011). Data were collected

to ascertain the strengths, weaknesses, and biases of lawyers working in community college leadership to determine how they would lead.

Limitations

In order to properly manage the scope of this dissertation, a listing of limitations and delimitations was necessary. A limitation identifies potential weaknesses of a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). The major limitations in this study include a relatively small participant sample and no observations. Access to information was a challenge as well as obtaining an adequate participant sample of up to 20 senior-level community college leaders with law degrees. This study was qualitative, comprehensive, and consumed a great deal of time to complete. It was also a challenge to win the cooperation of busy senior-level community college leaders for this qualitative study. Moreover, the researcher had to guard against making presuppositions and being biased for one outcome over another at the outset. Yet another limitation was human bias coming from human subjects, the attorney-administrators. Attempts to minimize this bias were made in the form of formulating relevant and probing questions as well as diversifying the large pool of interviewees from numerous community colleges.

Delimitations

A delimitation addresses how a study will be narrowed in scope at the discretion of the researcher (Merriam, 2001). In the interest of time, the researcher set a deadline of two calendar years as the time frame to complete this study. Another important delimitation concerns sample size and geography. Due to time and resource restraints, this study was limited to cover only attorney-administrators who work at community

colleges in the United States. The sample size of the participants interviewed was restricted to 20 attorneys working as community college leaders. Because the main method of data collection was interviews, it was better to inquire in depth with fewer rather than more participants. In closing, it was critical to conduct this study with the research design most fitting to elicit the best data and findings for this study.

Accordingly, the researcher believed a case study would accomplish this objective.

Anticipated Outcomes

It was anticipated that there were growing numbers of administrators with the *Juris Doctor (JD)* degree who were doing very well at their respective colleges. Many of these professionals had traits, skills, experiences, and motivations that are similar as well as those that may be dissimilar. The researcher's hypothesis was that these attorney-administrators will have favorable service records at their colleges. There were a class of administrators who possess law degrees and other advanced degrees that might further set them apart as highly educated professionals who solve problems that are legal or otherwise. In the least, the pursuit of at least a Master's degree perhaps in education would be enough to demonstrate commitment to working in higher education since the motives of lawyers may be challenged if they are seen to work in a field other than law.

The research findings, however, also revealed outcomes that turn out different than initially anticipated. The skills of lawyers in higher education leadership may be similar, yet the traits, experiences, and personalities could not be more diverse, such is the nature of all humans as being unique individuals. Naturally, there were also some unanticipated outcomes that arose. As it turns out, the researcher was able to locate and

recruit sufficient numbers of attorney-administrator participants who turned out to be quite diverse in background.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 1 shed light on the impending shortage of community college leadership because senior level administrators are nearing retirement. Fortunately, opportunity could meet challenge due to the fact that many lawyers, with unique skill sets, found motivation for transition into educational leadership. This study attempted to answer questions concerning career change, transition, and preparation for leadership through the lens of personality types and competencies for community college leadership. Chapter 2 offers a literature review on the leadership gap, career transition, transferrable skills, and preparation for community college leadership. Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology, covering the research design, sample plan, data collection, and data analysis for this qualitative case study. Chapter 4 reports about findings on career transition and recommendations for aspiring community college leaders. Chapter 5 addresses findings on participant perspectives relating to AACCC leadership competencies and other transferable skills. Lastly, Chapter 6 completes this study by discussing the implications of the findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In embarking on this study, a thorough inspection of related literature was necessary to find the specific areas that needed further discovery (Heppner & Heppner, 2004). The goal was to launch a broad strategy of review leading to more focused research to identify and examine a body of literature relevant to motivations for career transition and leadership qualities necessary for community college leadership. Books, journals, and reviews of past dissertations pertinent to the scope of this research were vital to inform the researcher and to perhaps contribute, in some small way, to the knowledge that came before.

Impending Leadership Crisis

According to Shults (2001), the impending retirements of community college leaders and others in the leadership pipeline present a major challenge to such colleges. Because college presidents, executive administrators, and faculty leaders have been retiring at a critical rate, community colleges are facing a leadership gap. In fact, 45% of community college presidents planned to retire by 2007 with more set to retire thereafter. In 2000, the average age of senior community college administrators was 52 (Shults, 2001). Accordingly, increasing numbers of administrators must be trained to fill these leadership vacancies at community colleges. The key is to find well-qualified individuals to replace those retiring. At the same time, this also presents an opportunity to identify people with new visions that fit the needs of the college. Impending retirements affect

not only senior-level leadership but also the leadership pipeline that has experienced aging and retirement as well.

Research from the AACC offered rich insight into community college leadership and the presidency. In 2006, a study was published from the survey results of 545 community college presidents, 88% of whom were White and 71% of whom were male (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). The theme of impending leadership crisis due to retirement rang true with 84% of community college CEOs stating in 2006 that they planned to retire within 10 years with the average age of presidents standing at 58 years old (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). Although diverse applicants were joining the ranks of senior-level leadership, the majority of community college presidencies were still occupied by white males.

In his article *Leadership, Change and the Future of Community Colleges*, Riggs (2009) explained that changes for the betterment of institutions must be purposeful, well planned, and strongly executed by capable leaders. Unfortunately, fewer and fewer well-prepared individuals are available and capable of entering into community college leadership, while veteran administrators at all levels are leaving at an alarming rate (Riggs, 2009). According to Chris Duree, who led a large study at Iowa State University in 2008, over 75% of community college presidents surveyed planned to retire by 2012 (Riggs, 2009). As emerging mid-level administrators move up the pipeline to fill executive leadership positions, the vacuum of leadership is clear even in mid-management, the front line of community college leadership. Riggs proposed ideas to meet the leadership gap of our time. We must first create a year-long administrator

internship program; develop and implement a meaningful professional development program for all college leaders; provide financial support and release time for current and future college leaders to complete a doctorate in educational leadership or comparable program (Riggs, 2009); encourage and assist all college leaders to keep informed about important trends, research, and best practices in community college education; provide financial support for memberships in professional associations and attendance at conferences; avoid interim appointments which lure applicants who focus on maintaining norms rather preparing for the next shift; insist that future leaders become actively involved in the community; and lastly, foster an institutional culture that values innovation and transformation, where every college employee has the privilege and responsibility to be a change agent (Riggs, 2009).

AACC Leadership Competencies

As mentioned as a conceptual framework, AACC's *A Competency Framework for Community College Leaders* highlighted core competencies for those wishing to advance to community college leadership (AACC, 2013). The major leadership competencies include: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism. Organizational strategy requires that the community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, looks after students, and upholds the community college mission. Effective resource management entails equitably and ethically handling of people and resources to meet college goals and visions which heavily involves development and fundraising abilities (AACC, 2013). Communication involves the use of listening, speaking, and writing to

engage in open dialogue at the college and within the community to promote mutual success. Collaboration with the campus or the community, for the good of the college, is also a vital competency for community college leaders. An effective community college leader understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the college (AACC, 2013). Further, a community college leader exudes professionalism by meeting high standards of work and integrity while serving the best interests of the college. In addition to the emergence of six key competencies for community college leaders, certain principles also emerged. Leadership can be learned. Many members of the community college community can lead. Effective leadership is a blend of effective management and vision. Learning leadership is a lifelong process. The leadership gap can be addressed through a host of strategies such as college grow-your-own leadership programs (AACC, 2013).

In Chris Duree and Larry Ebbers, *The AACC Competencies in Action*, the researchers examined presidential perceptions of the AACC competencies. In particular, the research pointed out what competencies are viewed as most critical, what competencies need further professional development, and what competencies are less practiced (Duree & Ebbers, 2012). Individuals interested in advancing in leadership positions should consider: completing the doctoral degree prior to assuming a presidency; holding academic leadership positions within the community college setting; participating in institutional, regional, or national leadership development programs; working with a mentor to guide progress along the leadership pipeline; gaining experience in fund development and fundraising prior to assuming a presidency; honing

communication and relationship-building skills to effectively navigate legislative advocacy, board of trustee relationships, and building of workforce development partnerships; and understanding how to use data to document student learning progress and completion and to use data for organizational decision making (Duree & Ebbers, 2012).

Although dissertations on lawyers as higher education leaders were sparse, there exist several significant studies concerning AACC leadership competencies. Christopher A. Duree focused his dissertation on the *Challenges of the Community College Presidency in the New Millennium: Pathways, Preparation, Competencies, and Leadership Programs Needed to Survive* (Duree, 2007). The purpose of this study was to review how current community college presidents' backgrounds, leadership programs, and educational preparation developed their leadership skills rooted in the AACC's *Competencies for Community College Leaders*. Over 400 community college presidents responded to *The Community College Presidency: Demographics and Leadership Preparation Factors Survey* (Duree, 2007). The findings uncovered that: (a) the top five challenges facing current community college leaders are: fundraising, student enrollment and retention, legislative advocacy, economic and workforce development, and faculty relations; (b) overall, presidents rated themselves prepared or well-prepared in the AACC's *Competencies for Community College Leaders*; (c) current community college leaders were less likely to be prepared in the skill sets of organizational strategy and resource management; and (d) formal leadership programs and educational preparation in the highest degree earned play significant roles in how presidents perceived their level of

preparation prior to assuming their first presidency (Duree, 2007). Similarly, Gregory R. Schmitz studied *Leadership Preparation and Career Pathways of Community College Presidents* (Schmitz, 2008). This dissertation examined, based on the individual's career path, how the presidents perceived the importance of the leadership skills as identified in AACC's Competencies for Community College Leaders (Schmitz, 2008).

Lastly, Anthony M. Hassan, Richard James Haney, and Joseph M. J. Kools completed dissertations centered on leadership competencies of various types of community colleges. In *Competencies for Community College Leaders: Community College Presidents' and Trustee Board Chairpersons' Perspectives*, Hassan (2008) showed there was consensus among New York and Florida community college presidents and trustee board chairpersons that all six competencies identified by AACC are critically important for the success of community college leaders and supported that leader development can be learned and that leadership experiences contribute differently to the development of the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders (Hassan, 2008). Likewise, Haney studied *Illinois Community College Administrators' Perceptions of the American Association of Community Colleges Six Competencies for Community College Leaders*, which showed that there were some differences placed on the importance of competencies based on the demographics of the presidential interviewees (Haney, 2008). Finally, Kools examined *Leadership Competencies for College Leaders of Public Small, Rural, Single-Campus and Large, Urban, Multiple-Campus Colleges* to find that community college presidents from both sizes of college campuses widely regarded the AACC competencies as important to effective leadership and provided

insight into the experiences that helped form the characteristics related to the development of the competencies (Kools, 2008). Practical implications for the development and hiring of leaders to perform senior leadership roles within are offered by each of these researchers.

Career Transition

As the review of literature accelerates regarding career change motivation and transition and preparation of lawyers for community college leadership, the findings and conclusions will crystallize. Unfortunately, the results of the initial review of dissertations and publications revealed few results related to lawyers working as higher education leaders. Although a few publications have been found, including scholarly articles and dissertations about the need for administrators to be knowledgeable about certain areas of higher education law, it appears that lawyers as administrators is a research field that is largely yet to be researched. Library databases such as ERIC (Education Resources Information Center), ABA (American Bar Association) publications, Pro Quest Dissertations and Dissertation Express, to name a few, have been exhausted with few results. The primary results of this search for attorneys or those with law degrees working as higher education leaders, have exclusively led to publications that suggest regular administrators must be well versed in particular areas of higher education.

Many publications concerning alternate career options for lawyers were found to be readily available. This demonstrates an abundance of law school graduates who cannot or prefer not to practice law. This group of persons comes in such high numbers

as to warrant the publication of several lawyer career change books. Common in several of these publications for lawyers is the notion that work in education is a good match for those who are inspired by public service and that working in education employs many skills that directly transfer from practicing law.

For this qualitative study of motivation for career change, transition and preparation of lawyers shifting to community college leadership, the qualitative approach from *The Wounded Leader* was informative in how it elicited openness, rich and emotional data from the participants (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002). This work highlighted school leaders to illustrate how crisis can challenge leaders while simultaneously causing them severe wounds. The authors found that genuine leadership may emerge from a humbling and openness from wounding experiences. Two main questions guided the authors' work. First, how does a school leader preserve a healthy sense of self in the face of factors that may challenge that self or even lead to a wounding crisis? Second, what perspective on leadership can shed light on these challenges and produce a mind-set that leaves the leader open to grow from such experiences (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002). Through qualitative data collection and analysis, readers learn that a leader's key obligation is to engage continually in a reflective process of making sense of his or her leadership and to trust it. The chief lesson here, as with those who had worked in combative settings of law, often lies in self-awareness, which allows individuals to truly learn and grow even if they had been wounded.

Unfortunately, books and articles directly on point regarding lawyers as administrators are not available in the existing body of literature. What was found are

publications on laws for college administrators or books covering alternate career options for lawyers. The following is a list of publications pertinent to the study of lawyers as higher education leaders. A book by Hindi Greenberg, *The Lawyer's Career Change Handbook: More Than 300 Things You Can Do With a Law Degree*, highlights careers that match one's skills and personality best. This book describes how lawyers can get started securing jobs beyond the traditional practice of law (Greenberg, 1998). Similarly, Hillary Mantis also, in *Alternative Careers for Lawyers*, addresses career evaluation and alternatives from her perspective as director of law school career services (Mantis, 1997). In *Judgment Reversed: Alternative Careers for Lawyers*, Strausser (1997) makes the case for other appealing employment for lawyers. In *What Can You Do With A Law Degree?: A Lawyer's Guide to Career Alternatives Inside, Outside and Around the Law*, Deborah Arron thoroughly covers career assessment, options, and resources for lawyers pursuing new horizons (Arron, 1999).

Overall, certain literature including *Stress Management for Lawyers: How to Increase Personal & Professional Satisfaction in Law* explores in-depth the emotional toll taken in the practice of law, and explores the reasons why alternate careers are even desirable (Elwork, 2007). An Internet search about career change for lawyers resulted in an informative website where Celia Paul Associates, Inc., offers premium career management for lawyers and makes the assumption that a career is an expression of one's life. One lawyer noted, "After all these years practicing law, I get no pleasure from it now. I have talents that could better serve me in another field" (*Career Change Ability*, 2011). For many lawyers who are dissatisfied with the practice of law, *Career Change*

Ability offers coaching and career renewal strategies that attempt to help lawyers use their transferable skills to successfully land in new and alternate careers. All told, the existing literature on motivation on career change informs readers that lawyers can be dissatisfied with the practice of law, that they have directly transferable skills, and that they would welcome entry into new careers that allow for fulfillment by making a difference with their perceived skills in persuasion, communications, analysis and problem-solving.

Transferable Skills

Although Richard N. Bolles is best known since 1970 for job hunting advice from his series *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, he also imparts considerable knowledge about career change and transferable skills (Bolles, 2013). According to Bolles (2013), career-changers transition in search of hope, encouragement, and inspiration for work that reflects their values and mission in life. Bolles (2013) went on to recommend seven rules for changing careers, including: consider any career that seems fascinating or even interesting, make sure to preserve constancy as well as change during career transition, consider a career that one is enthusiastic about rather than what the market needs, the ideal career will be one that utilizes one's favorite transferable skills in areas of interest, spend ample time discerning and choosing career options, career change is an imperfect process so learn from the mistakes on the journey to the right job, and try to make the career change process a fun rather than tedious one (Bolles, 2013). Regarding transferrable, functional skills, Bolles made certain assumptions he called truths: (a) transferable skills are the most basic unit of whatever career one may choose; (b) one should always claim the highest skills one can legitimately justify, on the basis of

demonstrated performance; (c) the higher the transferable skills, the greater job freedom one will enjoy; (d) the higher one's transferable skills, the less competition one will face in job searches because jobs that require such skills will seldom be advertised through normal channels; and (e) do not confuse transferable skills with traits (Bolles, 2013).

Even though there exists precious little literature on the topic of lawyers transitioning into higher education leadership, let alone community college leadership, there are a few relevant studies on transferring leadership skills at the collegiate level. Deborah L. Floyd and Berta Vigil Laden explore *Transferring Leadership Skills: When Community College Presidents Become University Professors* whose research explores lessons learned from former community college presidents about transition into faculty careers at universities (Floyd & Laden, 2007). Although these new faculty leaders carry with them strong transferable skills and experience, they are still vulnerable to facing career transition difficulties in their new roles. Among the helpful transferrable skills and knowledge were a wealth of stories and experiences, significant contacts and networks from community colleges as well as from the communities in which they serve to seek help, and the vision to see the big picture (Floyd & Laden, 2007). Although transition into teaching presented challenges such as emphasis on research, working in isolation, limited staff and fiscal resources, the rewards were still significant. Many career-changers enjoyed the benefits of: teaching, helping students grow, autonomy, flexibility of schedule and anonymity (Floyd & Laden, 2007).

Similarly, the purpose of *The Grass is Always Greener on the Other Side of the Fence: Making a Transition from Student Affairs Administrator to Full-Time Faculty* was

to discover the advantages and challenges faced by practitioners when moving from an administrative position to a full-time faculty position in a student personnel preparation program (McCluskey-Titus & Cawthon, 2004). Examined were factors respondents considered when shifting to a full-time faculty position, challenges participants encountered in making the career change, differences between past administrative positions and current faculty positions, and type of preparation participants reported were necessary for success as faculty members. Favorable changes participants shared included: freedom over their quality of life, the ability to focus on teaching and research, and the ability to contribute to the profession. Difficulties included adjusting to the faculty culture and work expectations, development of a research agenda, having fewer resources as full-time faculty members, and a difference in quality and nature of relationships (McCluskey-Titus & Cawthon, 2004).

Regarding midlevel academic leadership, Jeffrey L. Buller of Florida Atlantic University offers administration lessons in his *The Essential Department Chair*. Based on a series of workshops on faculty and administrative development, Buller (2006) addresses crisply the most important information chairs must know. He inspires department chairs to develop new visions for their discipline or even for their entire institution. But in order to make that vision a reality, chairs must know how to excel at the many administrative tasks. Buller advises mid-managers in academia the importance of honing skills in: hiring, mentoring challenges, evaluation and assessment, budget, leadership, and how to manage faculty and the department (Buller, 2006). He also advises how to cultivate a potential donor for needed departmental resources. Buller also

teaches how to get department members to work in harmony. He also instructs on keeping followers motivated and seeing the big picture (Buller, 2006).

Preparation for Leadership

Recently in 2013, in her dissertation *Leading the Charge: A Multiple Case Study of Presidential Perceptions of Essential Leadership Characteristics for the 21st Century Community College*, Jeanne B. Bonner informed this research as to perceptions of essential leadership characteristics (Bonner, 2013). For this qualitative case study, nine sitting community college presidents from a Midwestern state were interviewed. The findings suggest: (a) new presidents may struggle with the solitary nature of the presidency during their first years in office; (b) prospective presidents should develop diverse professional experience and demonstrate characteristics such as passion for the presidency and the ability to adjust to the job demands; and (c) presidents should possess the energy, persistence, and toughness necessary for the long hours and pressures associated with modern presidencies (Bonner, 2013).

Also in 2013, Matthew W. Miller studied the *Role of the Community College President in Fundraising: Perceptions of Selected Michigan Community College Presidents*, (Miller, 2013). The findings from this multiple case study convey that, among options, community colleges in this study were turning to fundraising as an alternative revenue source. Presidents have the opportunity to lead fundraising efforts and, as organizations change, it is likely that the role of the organizational leader will change as well (Miller, 2013). This study indicated that a competency in fundraising requires strategic planning, creating a vision for the fundraising activities, supporting the

fundraising team with adequate resources, and the capacity to become actively involved in the community. Additionally, the ability to make friends, or utilize people skills to tell the college's story and connect with donors, represents a critical skill set and was identified as one of the most important roles of the president (Miller, 2013).

Although there are many ways to prepare for leadership, the AACC competencies can be viewed as useful outcomes for either formal or informal leadership training. Much preparation is indeed required in or to replace senior level administrators at community colleges. In his article, "Keep the Talent Pipeline Flowing through Succession Planning," President Emeritus Donald Cameron of Guilford Technical Community College highlighted the urgency for succession planning (Cameron, 2013). In the January 2011 issue of *Community College Review*, Delores McNair, Christopher Duree, and Larry Ebbers provided an excellent survey of succession planning issues. They concluded that community college presidents had a responsibility to "integrate the AACC leadership competencies into the hiring, selection, and evaluation of administrators while keeping an eye on the immediate and long-term needs of the college" (McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011). Janice Gilliam, president of Northeast State Community College (Tenn.) called it:

The single most important thing I have done as president, so that when I leave, many people will be ready to continue to move the college forward. It has created a new culture on campus in which the employee is valued as the greatest asset of our organization. (Cameron, 2013, p. 4)

Demands have never been greater on college leaders. We are all too familiar with the issues and with putting out fires on a regular basis. Colleges are asked to retain open access while increasing student outcomes in an environment in which already-strained resources are declining and global competition is at an all-time high. Community colleges must recruit and equip leaders who can navigate the choppy and often unfamiliar waters of regulation, accountability, continuous improvement, acceleration and technological revolution, while ensuring for transformative education and training that lead to real employment for our students (Mathis & Roueche, 2013).

In *Preparing Community College Leaders: The AACC Core Competencies for Effective Leadership & Doctoral Education*, Delores E. McNair examined how education and training can prepare leaders in the competencies (McNair, 2009). Using the core competencies as a framework, this study analyzed California community college leaders' perceptions of these competencies, including those which they believe can be acquired and developed through doctoral studies. Additional competencies participants thought could be developed through doctoral studies in educational or community college leadership. The narrative responses included fund raising, institutional advancement, strategic thinking, being a mentor, community development and leadership, working with diverse populations, technology, collaboration with K–12 partners, and data-driven decision making (McNair, 2009). Others commented that doctoral studies could supplement but not supplant on the job training, mentoring, and professional development.

Moreover, Pamela L. Eddy also offers researched suggestions on how to prepare to be tomorrow's community college leader. She introduces a multidimensional leadership model. Recognizing that future community college leaders at all levels will manage increasingly complex organizations, and face very different challenges than their predecessors, her multidimensional model of leadership is suited to these new demands and environments (Eddy, 2010). The model addresses issues of leader cognition, race and gender, the importance of culture, and the need for more collaborative modes of communication and decision making to frame and implement change. It recognizes that there is no longer any one way to lead, and that the next generation of leaders will be more diverse, possess experience and qualifications from a wider variety of careers, and follow new pathways to their positions. Leaders in the future will possess a cultural competency that is fostered by being lifelong learners (Eddy, 2010). Through over 75 individual interviews with leaders and campus members, Eddy is able to provide examples of the model's components in practice, and to illuminate which experiences proved the most relevant for these leaders on their route to upper administration. She shows how her model intersects with the new leadership competencies defined by AACC, and proposes strategies for future leadership development (Eddy, 2010).

Other scholars on strategic and general leadership include John Pisapia and Stephen Covey. Covey's *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People* explains that effective individuals or leaders should: be proactive, begin with the end in mind, put first things first, think win-win, listen, synergize, and sharpen the saw (Covey, 1989). Strategic and general leadership skill sets will be studied from Pisapia's contributions to the field of

strategic leadership (Pisapia, 2009). According to Pisapia (2009), author of *The Strategic Leader*, diverse leadership tactics are required for successfully running global organizations. These tactics include using both artistry and agility to anticipate, articulate, align, and assure to realize your vision for organizational success. Strategic leadership blends management with leadership, politics with ethics, and strategic intent with tactics and actions (Pisapia, 2009). In order to truly become a strategic leader, it is important to demonstrate use of a wide array of competencies. Pisapia's principles can be viewed as habits which include: (a) Artistry: leading, managing, transforming, ethical and political actions; (b) Agility of the Mind: reframing, reflecting and systems thinking; (c) Anticipating: gathering environmental and social intelligence; (d) Articulating Strategic Intent: light the way and run to daylight; (e) Aligning: bonding, bridging and bartering; and (f) Assuring Results: performance and institution building (Pisapia, 2009). Equally important, trust is earned by leaders through benevolence, integrity and competence.

In 1969, Hersey and Blanchard professed that situational leadership theory refers to belief that the relative importance of leadership behaviors depends on the situation, which they assessed later through use of the Situational Leadership II Model covering delegating supporting, coaching and directing. There are benefits to switching instinctively between leadership styles according to the people and circumstances with which leaders work (Blanchard, 1985). It has yet to be determined whether lawyers get to practice much leadership save over their associate attorneys, paralegals, law clerks, and other staff.

Path-goal theory is yet another effective leadership practice whereby the leader attempts to enhance follower performance and outcomes by supporting them in their pursuit of accomplishing their goals (Evans, 1970). The leader helps followers overcome obstacles to meet goals resulting in productivity. Path-goal theory defines goals, clarifies path, removes obstacles, and provides support. Lastly, leadership behaviors are directive, supportive, and participative or achievement oriented (Evans, 1970).

Moreover, there are several psychodynamic assessments for leadership including the Myers-Briggs Typology Inventory (MBTI) assessment instrument for psychological type. The MBTI was created by Katherine Cook Briggs and Isabel Briggs Myers and originated from Jung's functions and preferences regarding personality studies (Northhouse, 2007). Because they are not professional test developers, the MBTI may pose reliability or validity issues.

For the past 20 years David Keirsey has been a scholar in personality differences refining his theory of the four temperaments and to define the facets of character that distinguish one from another. His findings form the basis of *Please Understand Me II*, an updated and greatly expanded edition of the original (Keirsey, 1998). As in the original book, *Please Understand Me II* begins with The Keirsey Temperament Sorter, the most used personality inventory in the world (Keirsey, 1998). According to Keirsey (1998), each person has four kinds of intelligence: tactical, logistical, diplomatic, strategic, though one of the four interests us far more than the others, and thus gets far more practice than the rest. Strength in many of these intelligences help makes for a more effective leader. What is interesting to note in terms of career transition, from law to

education, is how close in personality type lawyers are to teachers, both of whom are considered idealists. Whereas counselors are introverted, intuitive, feeling and judging (INFJs), teachers are just one personality identifier off as extroverted, intuitive, feeling and judging (ENFJs); (Keirse, 1998).

Another significant psychology based theory of leadership is transformational leadership. On the one hand, transactional leadership concerns the management of people and resources to ensure results and is essential to completing tasks. On the other hand, transformational leadership is what provides the zest that causes people to excel in meeting organizational goals (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership creates meaningful and positive change in subordinates with the end goal of changing them into leaders. It is uncertain whether lawyers receive much practice in this area.

In the 1930s, Kurt Lewin developed a leadership framework based on the decision-making behavior of leaders. Lewin explained that there are three types of leaders: autocratic, democratic/participative, and laissez-faire (Lewin, Lippit, & White, 1939). Due to the aggressive nature of their work, lawyers will be studied for their autocratic or democratic leanings. Autocratic leaders make decisions without consulting their teams. This may be necessary when decisions genuinely need to be taken quickly and when team agreement is not necessary for a successful outcome. Democratic or participative leaders allow the team to provide input before making a decision. This approach is important when team agreement matters, but it can be frustrating when too many voices and opinions desire to be heard (Lewin et al., 1939).

Next, Collins (2001) showcases how attorney-administrators might advance institutions in *Good to Great*, explaining: (a) good is the enemy of great, (b) level 5 leadership, (c) first who...then what, (d) confront the brutal facts, (e) the hedgehog concept (simplicity within three circles, know one main service or product, be passionate about it and be the best in world at it), (f) a culture of discipline, (g) technology accelerators, (h) the flywheel (steps forward, visible results, energized by results, flywheel builds momentum), (i) the doom loop (start with disappointing results, no buildup or momentum, move in new direction, and react without understanding), and (j) from good to great to built to last

For those who have prepared for executive-level leadership, these demands have broadened over the years with presidents spending an increased amount of time on the external responsibilities of the presidency. Regarding highest degrees earned by presidents, 88.4% had a PhD or EdD, 9.7% had a Master's degree, and only 1.9% possessed a professional degree such as a JD (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). At 37.3%, the overwhelming majority of presidents helped the position of Chief Academic Officer prior to ascending to the presidency. Also, 39% of presidents obtained their position through a search entity. Although much has changed about the highest level of leadership at community colleges, academic administration remains the most common pathway to the presidency and those seeking advancement should prepare with this in mind.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 2 reviewed the literature on the leadership shortage at community colleges, career transition, transferable skills, and preparation for leadership. By

reviewing the existing knowledge on career transition and on leadership competencies, the researcher hopes to possibly report useful themes, findings, and recommendations regarding career transition and necessary skills for community college leadership. Findings pertinent to whether lawyers meet certain collegiate leadership competencies could possibly emerge to inform readers about skills helpful for community college leadership. Chapter 3 follows setting forth the research methodology for a qualitative case study. Chapters 4 and 5 discuss the findings. Lastly, Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the findings, and offers conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Research Design

This study of lawyers transitioning into community college leadership was best served by a qualitative study, specifically a case study research approach. Qualitative research tends to produce more in-depth and comprehensive information (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). Such research may use subjective information collected from participants from interviews (Merriam, 2001). Comprehensive data is gathered through open-ended questions that provide direct quotations where the interviewer is an integral part of the investigation (Creswell, 2007). This differs from quantitative research, which gathers data by objective methods to provide information about relations, comparisons, and predictions and tends to remove the investigator from the research (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). In short, qualitative research seeks a wider and perhaps deeper understanding of attorney-administrators studied and therefore this study was exclusively qualitative.

This specific study was a case study of lawyers who were actively working in senior-level community college leadership positions across the United States. A case study is “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2008, p. 18). A case is a design well suited to studies in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context (Merriam, 2009). Similarly, Creswell (2007) explained:

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a *case*) . . . over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 73)

Qualitative case studies can be characterized as being particularistic, descriptive, and heuristic. Case studies are particularistic because they focus on a particular situation, event, program, or phenomenon (Merriam, 2001). Descriptive means that the report of a case study is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon under study. Case studies are heuristic because they give insight into the reader's understanding of the phenomenon under study (Merriam, 2001). The product of a case study investigation is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single entity, phenomenon, or social unit (Merriam, 2009).

All told, qualitative research concerns how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives within their worlds (Merriam, 2009). The primary goal of this qualitative study was to discover and interpret these meanings through the use of interviews and document analyses (Merriam, 2009). The present study focused on understanding the particulars of attorney-administrators in all their complexity. Further, this study attempted to focus on participants in their natural settings to the extent permitted by time and resources.

Sampling Plan

Site

Since this case study focused on attorney-administrators across American community colleges rather than a case study set at a particular site, site for purposes of this study was less important. Site would be important in smaller or rural community colleges and certain conditions in some states, that is, joblessness, may impact career transition. Participants were targeted nationally in scope, drawn from community colleges across America. Interviews and data collection were conducted remotely by phone. Limited funding and resources on the part of the researcher made the cost-benefit of visiting the sites an impractical choice. Equally important, interviews, which were done remotely, were the primary method of data collection for this case study research. As such, site was important but more so in regards to which participants could be recruited to volunteer for this study.

Participant Selection

The sampling plan to recruit participants for this study was critical to the data yielded (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). This study employed a purposeful and snowball or rolling sampling of up to 20 community college leaders who had legal backgrounds (Bogdan & Biklen, 2005). Having a legal background means that the participant had either earned a law degree, a *Juris* Doctorate, or has practiced law as a member of a state bar. The researcher employed a Google search methodology to identify and assess the availability of different types of community college leaders who came from legal backgrounds. The researcher was fortunate to identify and interview 20 senior-level,

community college leaders across the United States who had a legal background. For a breakdown, please see Appendix D for the Participant Demographics Table.

The sample of 20 participants was comprised mostly of senior-level community college leaders who are clarified under the sample demographic section of the methodology. By targeting fewer rather than more participants, the researcher was able to go deeper into the interviews rather than explore on the surface. Participants from a senior-level academic division within a community college are significant because presidents tend to advance from the ranks of academic affairs vice presidents more so than from other divisions (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). Attempts were made to enlist the aid of senior-level administrators including presidents, vice presidents, staff counsel, and various other community college leaders. Provided they report directly to the president and/or have significant supervisory responsibilities, participants came from student affairs, development, human resources, or the general counsel's office.

When possible, the characteristics of the sample were diverse in terms of gender, age, and ethnicity. For selection, years of work as community college leaders were less important than transition experiences, transferable skills, and significant leadership experience gained in respective positions. Senior-level community college leaders generally arrived at their positions with significant years of experience. Even so, the researcher identified and recruited potential participants who possessed at least three years of experience in community colleges. Having worked three years at a community college allowed for participants to speak with some authority on career transition, transferrable skills, and preparation for community college leadership.

Participant Demographic

Since the sample of up to 20 participants is a serviceable number, the researcher set out to use email, list-serves, referrals, and social media to enlist volunteer participants. As a reference, please see Appendix D for the Participant Demographics Table. Google search methodology was used to identify and locate participants beyond academic affairs, including various deans, vice presidents, or presidents of community colleges. Although the Google methodology is not an exact science, an extensive national search relevant to community college leaders with JDs resulted in the following samples: 12 presidents, one provost, one chancellor, five vice presidents, and one dean. Equally important, the researcher understood the importance of homogeneity and parameters for a distinct and uniform sample.

Data Collection

Once the participant sample was identified, interview protocols, collection, and analysis procedures were drafted to obtain informed consent and ensure anonymity and confidentiality for the participants while simultaneously yielding fruitful data. Sound data collection strategies were imperative to the successful completion of this research. Interviews and document reviews were utilized in order to collect and analyze data for this study. This case study required the drafting of protocols and procedures for interviews and collecting curriculum vitae or resume for analyses. The key data collected came from interviews which delved into the hearts and minds of lawyers to uncover the stresses behind practicing law and the rewards from working in higher education leadership as a background for motivating career transitions. Because this study focused

on the perceptions, experiences, and beliefs of participants, observations of present day activity were not necessary.

Interviews

The dominant method of data collection came in the form of interviews with lawyers working in various mid- to senior-level leadership positions at community colleges. Specifically, qualitative interviews were conducted of community college leaders who possessed law degrees. Conducting telephone interviews of college administrators with legal backgrounds provided greater insight into motivations for career transition, transferable skills, and preparation of the participants for leadership.

The researcher interviewed 20 participants about one hour each with questions pertinent to motivation to work in education rather than law and what they perceive as ways they may contribute as higher education leaders. An interview protocol was drafted to best elicit responses to the research questions on motivation and how lawyers' talents may translate to the community college arena. Since the participant sample was located across the United States, the exclusive method of conducting the interviews was via telephone and audio recording of such calls.

Document Analysis

Second, data were identified and collected through the review of pertinent documents primarily in the form of resumes or curriculum vita (CV). Those responding positively to a recruitment email were asked to send the researchers their current resumes or CV. Although job descriptions and journals gave clues about motivations for career transition and preparedness for leadership, these documents were not requested because

participants may not have saved or may have declined to surrender these. Participants were asked to email the researcher a current resume or curriculum vitae. Eighteen were received from the 20 applicants. All told, these documents provided findings and themes to paint a clearer picture of the skills and attributes lawyers may possess toward their service in higher education leadership, along with clues to why they transitioned out of law.

Data Analysis

Once the data were retrieved, the next step was to systematically analyze it for this case study inquiry. In a case study, it is important to analyze data through description of the case and themes of the case (Creswell, 2007). A first step in data analysis is to understand that it is best conducted in conjunction with data collection (Merriam, 2001). Additionally, binder and computer organization of data files allowed the researcher to organize and analyze the massive amount of data typical of many qualitative studies. Data management was utilized to organize a sufficiently ample amount of data so that coding may categorize and formulate greater meaning from the data (Merriam, 2009). At the coding stage, the researcher assigned short-hand designations to various aspects of the data so that specific pieces of the data could be retrieved. Coding was conducted by identifying information about the data and by interpreting constructs related to the analysis (Merriam, 2001). Finally, the culmination of the coding and analysis resulted in a report of the themes and findings that emerged from the data to answer research questions on perspectives of lawyers who have shifted to senior-level community college leadership.

Coding procedures were used to catalog the qualitative responses from transcribed interviews with lawyers working as higher education leaders. This helped to support the validity of the research study. It was essential to communicate the intentions and reasons behind the coding of data into major themes extrapolated from the interview responses. This helped the researcher and later the readers to evaluate the choices made and procedures followed. The research instruments needed for this case study research included interview protocols and document review rubrics, but the primary instrument in a case study was the researcher-interviewer himself.

Measures to ensure the study's validity and reliability were incorporated into this study. Triangulation and member-checking were utilized as safeguards to protect the validity of the research (Merriam, 2009). Typically, triangulation involves using several sources of data to compare or cross-check the data collected from different people or documents with different perspectives, or from follow-up interviews with the same people (Merriam, 2009). Since observations were not conducted, triangulation was primarily done by cross-checking participants' interviews with documents. Member checks, the process of returning to the participants to ask if the data recorded were accurate and true to their sentiments, improved the validity and reliability of the study (Merriam, 2009). In the instant case, upon completing the interviews and transcription, the researcher emailed the transcripts to participants for verification of accuracy.

Role of the Researcher

By collecting the data personally, the researcher was an instrument in this qualitative research project. The researcher performed extensive interviews and collected

documents in order to analyze data relevant to understanding the perspectives of attorneys as they have transitioned from the practice of law into senior-level community college leadership. It would have been ideal for the researcher to study the participants in their natural environments when possible, where they were comfortable, and would give accurate responses to questions about their career transition, transferable skill, and preparation for community college leadership. Because almost all participants reside beyond South Florida, travel costs made in-person interviews prohibitive. Reflexivity was also utilized by the researcher to understand the ways in which a researcher's involvement with this study influenced and informed such research. The researcher acknowledged his own experience as a licensed attorney, prior to presently working as a department chairperson at a large community college, yet conducted this study as objectively as possible. Reflexivity required an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the building of meanings throughout the research process, and an admission that remaining completely objective regarding the subject matter was not always possible (Creswell, 2007).

Chapter Summary

Chapter 3 presented the research methodology that was utilized in this qualitative case study. Because this research sought to gain an understanding of lawyers and their perceptions on career transition, transferable skills, and preparedness to lead at community colleges, a case study inquiry approach was used to collect and interpret data in response to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). Chapters 4 and 5 discuss findings

whereas Chapter 6 presents implications of the findings and offers conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Findings on Career Transition and Recommendations for Aspiring Leaders

The purpose of this qualitative case study is to describe perspectives of top-level community college leaders, who had trained as lawyers, to provide insight into how they might contribute as a unique source of leadership. Please see Appendix E for the Major Themes and Findings Table. The research also explores what triggers the career transition of lawyers who wish to work in community college leadership. The research questions for this qualitative case study are:

1. What are the career transition experiences of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?
2. What are the transferable skills of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?

Sub-Question: How do these transferable skills align with the AACC's Community College Leadership Competencies?

3. How does a legal background prepare an individual for community college leadership?

This research used a case study method in order to examine perspectives of senior-level community college leaders who had legal training. Twenty top-level community college leaders were interviewed using questions from an interview protocol.

A Google search method was primarily used to identify and recruit participants from across the United States.

The breakdown of senior-level community college leader participants was: one provost, one vice chancellor, one dean, eight vice presidents, and 12 presidents. Concerning pathways to current leadership positions, 10 came from Academic Affairs, five were from General Counsel, two came from Student Affairs, and three were from other pathways including Administrative Affairs. Participants hailed from 12 continental states. Each geographic region was represented including from the Northeast, Southeast, South, Southwest, Pacific Northwest, Mountain West, and the Midwest. Thirteen of the participants had experience practicing law. Ten participants had earned a Masters degree in addition to their *Juris* Doctorates. Four participants had earned their PhDs along with another achieving ABD status. Those with PhDs had earned them prior to law school. The participant who earned the JD first later earned his ABD. Regarding ethnicity, 13 were Caucasian, three were Black, two were Hispanic, one was Asian, and one was Native American. Lastly, 12 participants were men whereas eight were women.

Participants were scheduled for phone interviews at times most convenient for them. During the interviews, participants were introduced to and asked questions about each of the AACC leadership competencies. The candor and cooperation displayed by such high caliber participants made the interview process a pleasure for the researcher. Curriculum vitae were also requested for the document review. Synthesizing the data from various sources triangulated the information and certain themes emerged. The themes were reduced into the following four major findings:

1. **Career Transition Into Community Colleges:** Participant perceptions revealed a transition to make a difference, the transition process was smooth and transition was made for a better work environment.
2. **Recommendations for Aspiring Community College Leaders:** When asked for specific recommendations, participants advised career changers from law to informally learn about community colleges, gain work experience therein and to earn another degree.
3. **AACC Leadership Competencies:** A majority of participants self-reported high abilities in communications and professionalism which are current AACC leadership competencies. A few reported low collaboration competencies. Participants recommended positive reinforcement, teamwork and problem-solving as additional and necessary AACC leadership competencies.
4. **Other Transferable Leadership Skills:** In addition to AACC leadership competencies, participants voluntarily reported other transferable skills that came from their legal experience. These other transferable skills include legal expertise, business sense and analytical skills.

This chapter discusses these four major findings in detail while introducing participants through their stories and in their own words.

Career Transition Into Community Colleges

This finding discusses the career transition perspectives of lawyers as they entered into work at community colleges. Findings and subthemes resulted from coding the

frequency of themes that emerged from analyzing the data. Participant quotes were selected based upon the ability of the quote to demonstrate a particular finding or subtheme. The subthemes that arose were that participants largely transitioned to make a difference, their transition was smooth, and they transitioned for a better work environment.

Regarding the specific career transition breakdown, all told, 16 of 20 participants actually transitioned from law school (two) or law related work (14) to higher education positions. Fourteen out of 20 participants practiced law as a member of a state bar. The 15th participant has a law background as a police officer but he did not practice law. Ten of 20 participants transitioned from law into higher education careers. Of the ten, seven had practiced law, two had graduated from law school only, while one worked in law enforcement prior to making a career transition into education. Four of 20 participants made no transition at all. These four started at a community college, earned their law degree, and remained working in higher education. Six of 20 participants started out at a community college. These six earned their law degrees, practiced law for a number of years, then chose to transition back into higher education.

Transition to Make a Difference

Regarding motivation for transition from law into community college leadership, nine out of 16 career changers articulated that they made a transition to make a difference or to do public service. The questions posed were largely open-ended so that participants could freely and objectively voice their reasons to transition out of law and into higher

education. Most participants expressed little reason to run away from law but rather were attracted to community colleges where they could help others.

One of the first participants interviewed was Student Affairs Dean Vivian Baker who hailed from a large community college in Sunny State. She holds a PhD in Administration and Supervision, an MS in Education prior to earning her *Juris* Doctorate. She has 36 years of experience in higher education, mainly in student services at a community college. Dean Baker saw helping students early as a chance to prevent them hardship later. She shared her opportunity to make a difference as follows:

I already worked in education. I have a PhD in Education, so when I studied Law, I really wanted to practice because I knew there were many groups from the population that I could help; such as special education programs, issues with women, and high risk students . . . I think that the experience of dealing with real life situations with people, and you can see a direct relationship between the criminal history of a young adult and the lack of educational support, lack of educational degree, or family . . . poverty and lack of education are very tied to the criminal behavior . . . Being able to transition from the end of the process to one where I could influence the community college program and processes, I think that's where I saw the possibility, instead of just doing the individual cases when the kids were already in trouble.

Similarly, Vice President for Student Services Meagan Davis from a community college in Star State saw higher education as a vehicle to help minorities and low-income students to learn and to expand their opportunities. She has practiced law representing

Star State's legislative council. Vice President Davis holds a Ph.D. in Higher Education Administration and an M.A. in Speech Communication in addition to her JD. She has also worked for 35 years in higher education, sharing:

I wanted to go into the community college because I saw that as a point where the future would be in serving diverse students that need an education . . . I wanted to work with the diverse population that is underserved, the Latinos, African Americans, the low income students, first generation students, so I knew the community college would be the place I would go. I decided because of all my interests in Student Affairs and students, that I had a good fit working in a college setting in Student Services.

Vice President for Institutional Advancement Susan Ellis from Patriot State has not practiced law but she has 30 years of higher education experience largely in institutional advancement and development. Vice President Ellis has also earned an M.S. in Diplomatic History in addition to her JD. She stressed that she wanted to work at a community college which is where the real "action" is.

I have loved my experience at community colleges . . . Community colleges . . . are where the real action is and where you have the real ability, on the smaller scale, whether it's a large community college, you work at a much bigger one than I do, or smaller one, the opportunity to have impact in what you do, is just so tremendous.

President Matthew Foster from a community college in Motor State initially chose working in law to make a difference. He has a degree in marketing, an MBA and

had previously worked for Ford Motors. He found the allure of working in higher education offered an avenue to make a positive change in people's lives. President Foster voiced, "In education and in the community college world, I felt I had a great opportunity to really make a difference in people's lives, in a positive way, as opposed to fighting over the divorce settlement or will." Although he appreciated the legal profession, it seemed that he had become frustrated with it.

The nature of legal work was certainly challenging and rewarding in its own sense, but I also found I sometimes took too much of my clients problems on my own shoulders and I was frustrated that I couldn't do enough.

President Chris Ingram, from another community college in Star State, has served as president of three institutions. He previously had worked on and off as an attorney for over 25 years. President Ingram wanted to work in education because he enjoyed helping young people and needed passion for his work. He was first drawn to law for the earning power, but quickly learned that he must love his work. President Ingram went on to share how higher education leadership offers tremendous high and low experiences. This exciting job is not for the weak but those who choose this path may find adventure on the path to helping students.

I had great experiences in law. Even the failures were great. I think what drove me was a burning desire to try what I wanted. I wanted to get into education. I found out I could use my skill sets, very transferable, because I like creating new fields of study. I like creating new opportunities. It wasn't that I didn't like it. I can tell you that you don't have high highs being a lawyer, but you don't have

low lows either. You win a case, that's great! Being a college president or vice president or dean, or running a legal program, you have tremendous high highs. The students appreciate it. When you go up to presidency, you have tremendous high highs, but you have tremendous low lows. Other than losing a friend from early death, I've never had such low lows; being a college president, you will have to have alligator skin and lawyers have alligator skin. If they don't, they shouldn't be a president or a litigation lawyer. Collaboration and effective negotiation are what presidents do. I couldn't think of a better profession!

Similarly, President Lawrence Lang from a community college in Emerald State was drawn to a career in higher education leadership primarily because he was motivated to do public service. He had practiced criminal law for about five years before working in higher education for 19 years, largely in administration and human resources. In his own words, President Lawrence Lang from Emerald State shared how impactful “lawyering” was to his effectiveness as a community college leader. President Lang had previously worked as an attorney for the state prosecutor’s office. He imparted,

Well, I really knew I wanted to go to law school because I wanted to make a difference . . . I didn't know what I was going to do, other than make a difference. My focus wasn't necessarily practice non-practice . . . I certainly cared about public service. Anything that was going to take me down a public service career track was something very attractive. Also, I thought that maybe I like to be a litigator, so being in the courtrooms and handling those kinds of things. I had a number of different ways, but at the end of the day, really, public service was my

focus . . . You have to go back to my childhood really to fully appreciate why I've always wanted to help people. As for a job, I was never worried about what was going to happen to me . . . I just wanted to make sure people were treated fairly and had opportunities to make something for themselves, whatever that would be. Then discovering that law might be a way to do that and then discovering that higher ed. could be another way to do that . . . challenge who you are as a person, develop a sense of strong character, care about the betterment of society.

Coming from yet another college from Sunny State, President James Phillips had previously worked as a solo practitioner for 20 years, as special counsel for his college and also as an elected legislator for Sunny State. He has over nine years of higher education experience. President Phillips was attracted to helping residents from the community he was from. He expressed:

Understanding of the incredible role the Sunny State College system plays in higher education and economic development in Sunny State; just learning about everything that we do was very interesting. Much more motivational however, for me, was this is my home and the opportunity to come back home and work in the community that elected me to serve in the legislature and try to make a difference in my community was by far the biggest draw. It was a much bigger draw to come back home and be the president of this college or work at this college than to work at a bigger college in a bigger city somewhere else in Sunny State.

Transition Process Smooth

Regarding career transition into community colleges, 12 out of 16 participants who made a transition remarked the process from law to education went rather smoothly. For many of these leaders, the transition was rather easy and their transitions happened in a short period of time. None of the participants reported that the transition process was particularly difficult or challenging. The five participants who did not articulate that the transition process was smooth indicated that their transition process into community colleges was moderately difficult.

For Provost Kristen Clark, from a community college in Sunny State, the transition from law to education was not terribly difficult. She started out with 11 years of law practice experience before embarking on 21 years in higher education as a trustee or academic administrator. Provost Clark had formerly worked as a private practitioner in civil law and as a prosecutor in criminal law. Provost Clark noted:

I would say it was rather smooth and I had a little bit of a niche . . . I taught Paralegal courses, that what I was hired to do . . . I stood out quickly because if they were looking for someone to do a project, I would say “I’ll do it! I’ll do it!” because I needed to keep busy . . . [As an attorney] all your cases would still be present and you could not turn it off. What I love to say now, my biggest challenge as a faculty member was, “Did that student deserve a B or C?” These are my biggest issues.

Vice President from Star State Meagan Davis also discussed how her experience from law to education was a smooth one. Her story was a bit different in that she had

started working in higher education, decided to earn her law degree along the way, and then returned to higher education leadership. Previously, Vice President Davis had a good career as an attorney and counsel for the Star State legislature but she opted instead to help young people to achieve their dreams through education. Vice President Davis shared:

I applied to law school and I was working full-time while I went to law school full-time . . . My goal was not to be a lawyer. My goal was to be working in a community college or higher education using the law as a background and to help me because in administration there are a lot of issues with the law and you need to understand it. I ended up also earning my law degree while I was working full-time in the University of Star State, first with the President and then with the Vice President for Student Affairs . . . I had just had a child in '86 and I was finishing up law school, so I went ahead and took a job as a lawyer and I practiced law with the Star State legislature for 3 years. Meanwhile, I adopted a child and practiced law for three years. I was keeping an eye out for jobs and found they had a position available at All-Star Community College as the Director of Student Services, so applied for it and as I tell everyone, the rest is history.

Vice President Davis opined that not only did a legal education make her advancement smooth, it may have backfired. Employers became reluctant to hire her because they feared that she would advance too quickly and only stay in a job for a short duration. She shared a particular challenge as Student Services Director.

Once I got hired, the Vice President I was going to work with said, “I just want you to know that our President was really concerned about offering you the job because everyone feels you're so highly qualified having your JD and PhD and the big concern of the President was that you would just come and stay for a little while and be gone.” Once you break that door or enter into the door of whatever career you are trying to pursue then of course it gets easier in terms of the transition. I had all the skills and transferable skills, but I needed an opportunity to demonstrate I could be a good community college administrator.

Moreover, President Richard Duncan from a community college in Hawkeye State also shared how his career transition was rather smooth. He explained that in a short period of time, he was able to leverage his legal experience and related skills to efficiently move up the community college career ladder. President Duncan had previously practiced law for about 40 years and solidified his collegiate credentials with an MS in Educational Administration. In fact, 10 out of 20 participants hold a Master’s degree in addition to the JD. Four out of 20 participants even earned PhDs, one other is ABD, which may explain that additional education makes career transition less difficult. President Duncan hinted that both degrees and backgrounds helped to ease his transition. His pathway to promotion was largely done through Academic Affairs. He noted that his transition was

Very smooth, although I had never worked at community colleges before, I had a pretty good understanding of educational governance and . . . collaborative . . . relationships you need to develop. I've always been good to working in teams and

it was extremely easy. I moved pretty fast. When I went to work to Santa Felipe, it was as the Assistant to the President and Legal Counsel. The next year, I was made Dean of Advancement, which was not fund-raising, it was working with Admissions and Marketing. My next position . . . was as President of Hawkeye Community College. It was a fairly quick ascension.

Previously introduced President Matthew Foster from Motor State similarly shared that his

Transition initially into full-time community college work was relatively painless. I had been teaching as an adjunct for seven years at the institution where I was hired full-time, so I knew a lot of people and knew the culture and was able to assimilate quickly into that. I didn't have too many rocky roads in that sense. I was comfortable in the place to begin with and felt I knew what I was getting into. The transition was a good one and . . . I've never looked back and regretted my decision.

Returning to President Chris Ingram from Star State, he discussed his smooth transition into community college leadership. He applied his effective use of trial notebooks to compiling notebooks to organize for collegiate initiatives. Further, President Ingram shared how he was able to apply for his first Presidency less than 20 years ago without much resistance.

My board of trustees thought it was smooth . . . Who used to take me out of the mix, were the faculty because they didn't think I had the appropriate credentials. Who kept putting me back in the mix, were the trustees. I thought it was easy.

Instead of preparing my trial notebook, I'll prepare for whatever I am doing, like I would be going to trial. So, if I'm going to give a major national speech or if I'm going to try to get a new initiative through for faculty, I'll prepare a notebook ... I decided to apply for a presidency, I'll apply for presidency . . . I can do this! Or I'm going to go back to the law practice. Like a naive human being, I applied for 10 jobs; I had a guy telling me that there's no way in heck I would get a job with just a JD degree. I didn't have a Master's or PhD. I only applied to 10. I got three interviews, which was amazing at the time; it's very different from now, now there are 30 or 40 applicants for these jobs. I got my first job in Mile-High State, there [were] 227 applicants, and it was a multi-campus operation. I had never been a president. I applied and got offered two jobs. I took the job in Mile-High State.

Additionally, President Jack Lewis from a community college in Mile-High State eased into higher education without incident. He came equipped with a law enforcement background, a legal education and currently has 27 years of higher education experience largely within Academic Affairs. President Lewis elaborated:

There is no question in my mind that my law degree training has helped me, in terms of my ability to be ready for those kinds of positions. It comes down to critical thinking skills that seem to be inherent with going to law school, focusing . . . two sides to the issue, and . . . an advocate for your position . . . Experiences in law school really lent themselves to me in order to move into these roles, having a little bit of law training also helps with policy issues and state standards.

Sometimes I grasp those things a little bit quicker than others. I can . . . make an argument about why a policy is good or bad.

President John Ross from a community college in central Sunny State had worked as a very successful attorney for 14 years, trying cases in the state's Supreme Court. He later served as trustee and as general counsel for his college prior to ascending to executive vice president and eventually to president amassing about five years of experience in higher education. President Ross shared when describing transition, that for him it was

Extremely smooth, I haven't had any troubles at all in any regard . . . I was kind of a private general counsel, had all kinds of experiences such as transactional, corporate, real estate, and litigation . . . Then I started as general counsel at the college . . . taking it from a different entity's perspective . . . I started advising them from an internal perspective.

Transition to a Better Work Environment

Concerning a change in work environment, 11 of 16 participants noted that they underwent a career transition to take advantage of a better work environment at community colleges. It should be noted that not all participants transitioned from practicing law. Motor State President Matthew Foster, who has a JD and MBA, shared just how attracted he was to a better work environment.

I found the most enjoyment . . . feeling of fulfillment was in the classroom as an adjunct faculty member. It got me thinking long and hard about a 'someday', and then 'someday' finally came. I made the choice to take the different path . . . The

number one reason . . . a sense of fulfillment career-wise. When I was an adjunct faculty member, it became a labor of love. I had good mentors early on in my career who always told me “find something you love and you’ll never work a day in your life” . . . a cliché but this was also very true for me. It wasn’t work; it was much more something that I truly enjoyed and the interaction with students on a college campus was just always something I enjoyed doing . . . I always enjoyed being a student . . . When I was able to get in full-time, it was everything that I had hoped for.

Senior Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly from Star State also earned an M.B.A. and a M.Ed. in Secondary Curriculum and Instruction on top of his JD. He has a handful of years of experience in law as a sole practitioner before earning over 15 years of higher education experience. Over time, the practice of law seemed to lose his interest. He truly enjoyed his transition to a better work environment as follows.

I was putting in so many hours a week practicing law. I was a little bit bored with it and I decided that I just wanted to spread my wings. Even though I still put in a tremendous amount of time, I get to do such a wide variety of things, whether it may be sitting here at my desk working on HR issues or Institutional Effectiveness issues.

For many participants, such as President Lawrence Lang from Emerald State, it seems that they truly enjoy working in a thriving campus setting where they can be among learners.

Fortunately, I got a chance to live in the dorms . . . stuff that goes with the college experience. I want everybody to have that experience, I want everyone to know what it's like to live in a dorm and have roommates because that's part of your maturation process. Along that way, also challenge who you are as a person, develop a sense of strong character, care about the betterment of society . . . It was easy for me to make that kind of transition because that's what I cared about.

Not all participants adored the practice of law. Provost Kristen Clark from Sunny State stated,

Basically, I did not enjoy the practice of law. I found it to be weighing on me psychologically. I couldn't sleep at night because I would worry about clients, cases, deadlines and I had recently become a parent. It was keeping me away from my children and I was simply miserable.

Although many participants chose to run towards a better work environment, select participants could be seen as wanting to avoid the toil of practicing law.

Amply educated President Travis West from a community college in Gopher State had earned a PhD in Educational Leadership in addition to his law degree. He possesses over seven years of law practice experience and 14 years of higher education experience as he rose through the general counsel pathway. President West was similarly attracted to working in a new environment with different responsibilities and hours. He spoke of getting away from a negative experience, which would weaken the assertion that most participants enter collegiate work to make a difference.

I was fortunate to be able to transition to teach at The University of Show Me School of Law. I founded their clinical programs and taught criminal law and consulted on the side. It was a great job. I found that the practice of litigation was really wearing. I got a chance to teach and I enjoyed it. As you can imagine, it's really not a bad deal, you have a nice parking space, you have a certain amount of free time, and you get paid pretty well.

Recommendations for Aspiring Community College Leaders

In response to inquiries for advice for lawyers wishing to transition into community college leadership, participants recommended informally learning about community colleges, gaining work experience at community colleges and earning another degree.

Learn About Community Colleges

Regarding preparation for community college leadership, participants were asked an open-ended question about what they would generally recommend to individuals who wanted to transition into community college leadership. Even though participants could have responded with numerous and different answers, several participants had similar recommendations. Ten participants stressed the importance of informally learning about community colleges.

As a first and vital step to entering higher education, Dean Vivian Baker recommended informally learning about community colleges.

Definitely the person should learn about higher education. Not only study the law and organizational structure, but also about curriculum and the dynamics of

faculty. Academia is a totally different world. When you work in community colleges . . . you have to be able to see that faculty think in a very different way and write and make decisions not necessarily just thinking.

Moreover, Vice President Meagan Davis elaborated that her career transition was made easier by taking progressive steps to learn about and earn her way up in community colleges.

My transitioning was easier because I had content background and had studied and researched community colleges at the doctoral level. I had already demonstrated that I had some special knowledge that I could apply and become an administrator . . . or taking some graduate courses on the community college that are now offered at the universities. I ended up with the law background and I concentrated on higher ed. law when I was practicing . . . What is one of the competencies that I would consider to be really important . . . it takes a lifelong approach to understanding a social identity, social capital, equity, and multi-cultural understanding. The AACC actually talks about that, especially equity, but that is really very important because of the global economy we face now.

President Chris Ingram spoke directly in presenting how community college insiders and doubters must be addressed and answered. One can overcome the gatekeepers only by learning about community colleges and earning your way in.

I think what you have to . . . fill your gaps, so they [employers] can't rule you out . . . People don't know the language of higher education. Individuals need to know the language of higher education if they're lawyers. They need to know . . .

how they are governed. I get calls at least once a week saying, “Gee, I like to teach at your community college.” I ask, “You do have a Master’s?” No. “Do you have a PhD?” No. “Well, what do you have?” I have a BA . . . I had a lawyer who wants to teach here, and I said great, we take an online application. He said, “That’s bull! I’m not doing that!” He wanted to do a hard copy and we said we don’t do paper any longer because we want to see if you’re competent. I asked him if has ever taught before and he says yes for 25 years in the courtroom . . . the biggest disconnect with lawyers is that they don’t have the language and they have gaps in knowledge . . . in budget, that’s a gap. They are not prepared. Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly shared his journey towards earning his way into community college work. Others cannot believe your commitment to career transition unless they see a literal “leap of faith.”

I knew I wanted to work in the community college setting and I was limited since the law practice took a lot of time . . . I was able to volunteer as an adjunct with certain events . . . I was also able to subscribe to periodicals and things that educators would read. In making that transition, I worked on an MBA. I wanted to be exposed to the language of academia. I like the concept of a community college, although I’ve never attended one, I really appreciated the mission of the community college. That would be my recommendation to any lawyer thinking about it is; how are you going to know? There has to be something that draws you to it. You need to weigh-in and expose yourself to it.

President Lawrence Lang similarly explained that career changers must network, build bridges and earn their way into community college leadership.

You can learn from others who have gone before you and then maybe accelerate possibilities. What you are doing is very vital. What I would recommend to you is, after the research is done, connect the people up. Now you know where everybody is . . . Connecting the dots would be great and then getting some who have gone on to come and reach back and work with those who are trying to come up, building the legal profession within the larger community of higher education. We have our bar association, but what we don't have is that same community within educational leadership.

Lastly, if a career transition is contemplated, Vice President Grace Thomas, from a community college in the south, advised, “I think I would have integrated into the community college experience sooner. I would've gone to some of their events and community programs. I might have learned more about the institution before coming here.” She has 22 years of experience practicing law and 18 years of experience in Student Affairs at community colleges. Vice President Thomas holds a JD and an MA in Student Personnel Administration.

Gain Work Experience at Community Colleges

Furthermore, participants were again asked an open ended question about what they would generally recommend to individuals who wanted to transition into community college leadership. Even though participants could have responded with numerous and different answers, several participants had similar recommendations. Nine participants

stressed the importance of gaining work experience at community colleges to help newcomers transition into and advance up institutions.

Vice President Meagan Davis counsels those entering community colleges to first gain work experience to ease the transition. She elaborated:

As far as transitioning . . . I would say to someone who has been an attorney to get experience in higher education, whichever way they would get it; either by practicing law in the higher ed. arena, employment law in higher education, working in those areas . . . If possible, work as an intern at the community college even for just for one semester. Any of those experiences are really helpful in making the transfer. The transfer was easier for me because I already had the university administrative experiences and doctoral work.

President Richard Duncan also shared that to be considered for community college leadership an individual must first gain experience, if not mastery in this arena.

I think it would be relatively difficult for an attorney who had never had any higher education experience to move into the community college or education world. What I recommend if someone would be interested that they go to a good institution and pick-up a Master's in Higher Education Administration and get involved with a community college foundation or advisory committee. Then actually accomplish something taking a leadership role and make something happen.

According to Vice President Susan Ellis, aspiring higher education leaders should enjoy making a difference at colleges and one can start fairly early by getting in the door.

I have loved my experience at community colleges; I've worked at two of them.

If I went all the way back to the start, I would've looked for a community college to work at to begin with, instead of thinking that I needed to be at a four year college and really do something meaningful . . . whether it's a large community college . . . or smaller one, the opportunity to have impact in what you do is just so tremendous.

President Jack Lewis recommended gaining work experience at community colleges by immersing oneself in the college community.

If you are not teaching and wanted to get into community college administration, I think that's a little bit of a tougher task because you have to be able to show your metal, skills and ability to succeed. You have to get those lower-level positions and prove yourself. If it's student services wonderful. If it's within the academic structure, great! Whatever it is you are doing . . . you have to show from the start that one you are capable of doing that job they are asking you to do and capable beyond that. If you are truly interested in community college leadership, you have to become engaged, going to every school event, volunteer, get involved in organizations, get involved in the community.

Like Vice President Thomas previously, President James Phillips advises aspiring leaders to break into the field early. He explained,

The only thing I would've done differently if I decided I wanted a career in higher end, I would've sought out opportunities within higher ed. at a younger age. I

didn't go into the practice of law with any thought other than I was going to practice law.

Earn Another Degree

Lastly, participants were asked an open-ended question about what they would generally recommend to individuals who wanted to transition into community college leadership. Even though participants could have responded with numerous and different answers, several participants had the same recommendations. Four participants emphasized the importance of earning another graduate degree in addition to the doctorate in jurisprudence which most lawyers possess.

President Chris Ingram believes, "Three percent of entire college and university presidents have a JD degree, but it's only three percent, so it's not a lot. It's not so unique any longer." Although it may be less rare to lead a community college with just a JD, President Ingram's statement infers that ascension to senior leadership would be easier with a traditional doctorate degree.

Similarly, Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly shared that his earning a graduate degree in education first softened his landing into higher education. This helped him adjust to the language of higher education. He stated:

I went back to school in my mid-thirties and got a MEd because I knew I wanted to go into higher ed., and I was drawn to the mission of the community college . . . It all just worked and the stars lined up right, I started applying for a couple entry-level higher administrative positions. Much to my surprise, they seemed to be attracted to the MBA, JD, and MEd. . . . In making that transition, I worked on

an MBA . . . I did that on the weekend, executive MEd program, it was hard and took a lot of sacrifice and time to practice law all week and give up your weekends to go to school. It's not a jump you want to make unless you're sure. How are you going to be sure if you don't expose yourself to education, whether it is community college or four-year?

Even though President Donald Stevens, from a community college in Windy State has an MA in Diplomacy, an MBA in Finance and Marketing, and a PhD in International Economics and Political Relations, he credits his JD with imparting on him much knowledge. He earned his JD while he was already working in higher education. Although he never practiced law, he has earned over 23 years of higher education experience. President Stevens shared that lawyers overcome barriers, real or imaginary, by earning work experience or by attaining other advanced degrees. President Stevens recommended:

1. Teaching, it's important to get some teaching experience.
2. Even though a JD may be a . . . degree to extend everything, it helps to have another doctoral degree. So the combination of the two puts you in a much stronger position than either one alone. Even though I do not practice, when people recognize that I am an attorney, it is additional luster to the credential, and the way that I'm viewed. When you get into the presidency, it's important you have that doctor title. Some people with JDs call themselves doctors and everything, but it's not generally that way. A person with only a JD would be able to get into the presidency probably at the same institution, where they are known, their skills are appreciated and then

they say you can step in and do the job. If you apply elsewhere, you are in a competitive disadvantage. So with the two degrees you are definitely in a stronger role.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 presented the findings from this study on lawyers as senior-level community college leaders. The research showed that participants perceived that they changed careers to make a difference, such transition was smooth, and such transition was for a better work environment. As participants looked on their careers, they also had recommendations for aspiring community college leaders. Chapter 5 features findings regarding AACC leadership competencies, transferable skills from law, and recommendations for new AACC leadership competencies.

Chapter 5: Findings on AACC Leadership Competencies and Other Transferable Skills

This chapter continues to report findings but focuses on the AACC leadership competencies and other transferable skills. Please see Appendix E for the Major Themes and Findings Table. Regarding existing AACC leadership competencies, participants perceived that their legal background attributed to their high-level competencies in communications, which included writing prowess and professionalism. Participants were specifically asked during the interview to what degree their legal background helped with the AACC competencies. A few also reported low collaboration competencies. Aside from existing AACC competencies, participants were asked whether they would add any particular leadership competencies. In response to specific questions, participants recommended positive reinforcement, teamwork, and problem-solving as additional and necessary AACC competencies.

AACC Leadership Competencies

High Communications Competency

Using AACC's competencies as a reference point for leadership, participants were asked to discuss whether their legal background prepared them for leadership at their institutions. Twenty out of 20 participants responded that their legal training helped them to achieve high communications competencies. No one responded that their legal training offered them medium or even low communications skills. Although AACC

includes written along with oral communications under the communications competency, writing was identified as an important skill in and of itself. Nineteen out of 20 participants noted the significance of written communication and that law definitely increased their strength in this transferable skill. A few participants noted that law was not the only source of their training on how to write well; however, 19 stated that law training empowered them to write and research well.

Regarding the high communications competency, Vice President Meagan Davis from Star State earned a PhD in Higher Education Administration, an MA in Speech Communication in addition to her JD. She emphasized that the Socratic Method of training received in law school helps lawyers to think critically and on their feet.

In law school . . . they use the Socratic Method and . . . you had to be ready to respond to any question and that's definitely part of communication. You had to be analytical and be on top of your game to be able to analyze a case and talk about what were the facts and what were the issues and what laws were applied for resolution. That all has to do with both verbal and of course we had written test where you had to do all the analysis; they were timed tests. You had the bar exam and had to be very analytical. The training . . . as a lawyer certainly helps me with my communication skills because I can be very analytical and problem-solve a situation quickly. Then of course as a lawyer, we had to be present and work with legislators and answer their questions and help guide them to the law as they were preparing to make law.

Similarly, President Richard Duncan from the Hawkeye State went on to convey that communication is vital to successful relationships and that the written word may help or hurt individuals because they end up being evidence. President Duncan elaborated:

Biggest weakness, whether a marriage or business [is a] failure to communicate. My legal skills have been extremely important because I've litigated a number of cases where communication at some levels was the issue. Particularly understanding what you put down in writing is evidence. Whether I am working with the unions or working with business, vendors, or donors; words are important.

From the Patriot State, Vice President Susan Ellis who also earned an MS in Diplomatic History elaborated about the communication competency.

This is where I think it's most important. In my job, I do a ton of writing, whether I am writing a grant application or I'm writing . . . I do a lot of writing for the President. I am writing letters, draft legislation, just a whole gamut that I do. I think absolutely this is the most important place that a law career helps you in. When I write something, I don't care whether it's a letter, or a grant application . . . it has to make sense and it has to be logical. I think that's what I learned in law school. It has to make sense, even if he's writing a short column for the newspaper . . . it's the ability to make sense in a logical progression.

Likewise, President Matthew Foster from the Motor State noted how important his legal background was in helping him communicate with many community college

constituents. He clarified that the written word is a powerful instrument and that if done right, the cliché of the pen being mightier than the sword holds much truth.

Every hour, every day . . . with a leadership team . . . or with students . . . I am called on a lot to . . . do the welcome, make the presentation, and be the keynote. All the oral and written communication experience I had both in grad school as well in law school and . . . in my practical career experiences, it's been very critical. You know how much writing you do in law school. I think the law school experience has helped me refine my writing skills to get to the point and make my arguments clear . . . In terms of the ability to turn a word on the page or make that presentation go well, it has helped a lot.

President Chris Ingram, currently working at a community college in Star State, and had previously served as president of two other institutions, shared how much he values the communications skills he honed while practicing law. Moreover, readers may appreciate the art of simplifying complex matters through writing.

I think the legal background is very critical in communication. I think I'm a more effective communicator because of my legal background . . . Every week, I am updating the board and any emergency that happens, even the smallest thing; I let the board know, so there are no surprises to them. I learned this from being a lawyer; you always want to keep your clients informed . . . We have about 100 people show up to the board meetings and . . . 3,000 employees . . . Everyone will open up their emails and will be informed as to what happened at the meeting and what things are happening at the college. You learn that from being a lawyer . . .

What do lawyers do well? We may have strengths in comprehending complex matters . . . we're really good with analytical ability, our word . . . and how to respond to volatile situations. Communication, I can't think of a better training ground for a lawyer.

President Jack Lewis from Mile-High State shared that his effectiveness as a communicator traced back to learning how to speak plainly and simply. He explained, "When I was going to law school . . . there was a real emphasis about 'plain speak.'" I remember . . . our instructors talking about, "don't talk like a lawyer." . . . We all get into our fields and we use the lingo and jargon from those fields. The people outside of those fields look at you like, "what are you talking about?" And there is community college talk. When I go out to the community, I often have to remind myself, "Ok, don't use that acronym or that acronym." . . . Being plain spoken is very important and necessary. It doesn't mean you're dumbing down your message, it just means that you're getting your message to everyone so they can understand it clearly. I also think . . . You have to have a sense of humor . . . not take yourself so seriously, finding humor in things . . . One thing that I've learned as a teacher, if you are not entertaining, captivating, and capturing the hearts and minds of those students, then you're failing. I think my legal background helped in how you . . . communicate. The plain speak was a message I heard very clearly in law school and I took it to heart.

President James Phillips from Sunny State had worked as a successful solo practitioner, elected state legislator, college counsel, and trustee prior to assuming his

presidency. He stressed that his law background definitively advanced his written and verbal communications skills enough that he was able to use it effectively in law, politics and beyond.

For 20 years that's what I did, I wrote, dictated, and created pleadings that were in written form of communication for clients in the formal legal world and I spoke. There is no doubt that a legal background, especially in the practice of law, hones my oral and written communication skills significantly . . . My ability to communicate, especially oral, was an asset and my ability to understand law and draft new laws, to understand amendments; I was a law-maker for 8 years! . . . My background as a lawyer helped me as a lawyer with my ability to write, speak and comprehend things we were considering as a legislator. That certainly has helped my communication.

Finally, President Beverly York attested that years of legal training in legal writing, analysis, and research truly empowers lawyers to move follower, to truly lead them.

My legal background helped particularly in the area of writing . . . My role as an advocate for the community college and for our students is that biggest part of what I do, really . . . It's part of what you are taught in law school. Outside of our ability of research, write, and make arguments . . . our other goal in law school is to advocate for our clients. In the case of community college education, my client is the student most of the time and the college itself. I used the skills that I learned in law school to advocate for my students and it's also advocating for

social justice. The community college is very much about being democracy's college . . . colleges for the masses or colleges for common people.

High Professionalism Competency

Regarding the competency of professionalism, which often requires competence, responsibility, and ethics, 20 out of 20 participants, stated that a legal background trained them extremely well in this competency. No participants reported low or even medium levels of professionalism as transferred from their legal backgrounds. As follows, participants shared how they defined professionalism and how law prepared them to display maximum professional responsibility.

Returning to President Richard Duncan from the Hawkeye State, he credits his legal background in preparing him in the important competency of professionalism. He stated that professionalism helped him.

It's all about your reputation and your ability to accomplish so much is based on personal relationships and people's reliance and trust in you. Being an attorney was a big help, because in law you worry about the appearance of impropriety . . . How do you validate what you say? I think that's been very helpful from the law. Even in legal cases, you have to be able to backup what you say.

President Matthew Foster echoed similar beliefs about the significance of professionalism in law and in education.

Without it, you have nothing. People can see through others very quickly if they are not legit and if they are not ethically operating or doing what they say they are doing. You know that canon for professional ethics for lawyers? That's some

good stuff that has applicability in a lot of different roles . . . I consider honesty, good communication, “don’t beat around the bush” strategies as standards for professionalism.

Further, Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly from Star State described professionalism as a broad quality that impacts your reputation and affects to what degree a person will have success in working with others.

The biggest thing that the legal background helped me with, besides how to put on a coat and tie, was the ethics, integrity part of being a lawyer . . . Lawyers really are held to a higher standard and were expected to be the most ethical of people . . . I try to set an example of professionalism. I believe in coming to work every day to be respectful to people, accept differences of opinions in a respectful manner. Even when it comes to termination of someone through our HR process, you can do that and have people still leave with their heads held high.

As experienced by President Lawrence Lang from the Emerald State, he learned about professionalism early during law school, and that it starts with a strong sense of morality and ethics.

They drill it in our heads . . . professionalism, ethics, role-modeling. That is the cornerstone . . . of the profession. You are representing something larger than yourself. In representing something larger than yourself . . . every moment becomes important because it reflects back to the people around you. As president, it is paramount that the way you behave affects everyone around you. As a lawyer, you understand that better than most people understand . . . Granted,

not all lawyers get it . . . Our profession puts a great focus on ethics. You can lose your license based on your lack of professionalism.

To President Jack Lewis from Mile-High State, professionalism was also learned from law practice. Perception can be reality and one should strive to project professionalism through their attire and their positive actions.

I think one of the things you learn in law school is that you play the role to some extent. You have to look and play the part. You don't go into court . . . unprepared. You don't represent your client in a halfhearted way; you do so zealously. Professionalism to me is those things. One of the things that drive me crazy in the community college education is that we . . . have instructors who walk into the classroom wearing jeans and a tee shirts or short and sandals. They'll do their jobs very well, but to me that is not very professional. I look at those folks and say that they have great skills and abilities and know how to handle their classrooms very well . . . They are not going to go anywhere because they are not presenting themselves in a professional way.

President James Phillips from Sunny State shared that the strict rules of procedure in court helped him to abide by a high standard in working to satisfy judges and the rule of law. It appears President Phillips carried over into higher education leadership similar high standards of professionalism and decorum.

There are rules that lawyers have to abide by, the code of ethics to the legal profession, there are rules of court and procedure, and there is a certain protocol and decorum that is required within the legal process, especially within the

courthouse in front of a judge. I certainly think that helped a bit because I was used to having a structure that governed your conduct.

Finally, President John Ross also of Sunny State expressed how law absolutely helped with his professionalism.

We are ethically bound in so many ways as lawyers and we operate ourselves based on those. That gives you a sense of professionalism and pride in what you do every day and when you take it into an organization and community college, people feed off that and want to operate the same way.

Lower Collaboration Competency

Although participants generally described their legal training as an asset in community college leadership, some of the data revealed a few common weaknesses within in the AACC leadership competency of collaboration. Six out of 20 participants stated that a legal background attributed to low proficiency in the collaboration competency. Of these six, one had not practiced law, two were litigators and three practiced transactional law. Although 11 of 20 participants indicated that lawyers would rate high in collaboration, this total was the lowest total for “high” of any AACC leadership competency. Of these 11, three had not practiced law, two were litigators and six practiced transactional law. Lastly, three of 20 participants described lawyers as having medium level collaboration skills. Of these three, two had not practiced law, which included one police officer, and one participant practiced transactional law.

Participants did not strongly attribute law school versus law practice as reasons for high or low collaboration ratings. The interview protocol did not lend itself to asking

questions to ascertain what training would result in high or low collaboration skills. This research question could be pursued in a future study. What stood out was that, of the 11 who noted high collaboration abilities, six had practiced transactional law. Transactional law often takes the form of business deals, which tend to be collaborative, whereas litigators are trial lawyers whose work tends to be adversarial. It was also noted that four of 20 participants had an MBA or Master's in Accounting. These participants described themselves as having high collaboration qualities which may have resulted from the group assignments required in business school and/or in the business field.

Dean Vivian Baker from Sunny State described possible deficiencies in lawyers in terms of collaboration and teamwork.

I would say that team effort and integration of that, layered with skills from a team work perspective needs to be developed. I think I could do it because I have my additional preparation in Mediation and also as an Educator and Administrator because of my additional degree in Education. For example, I see in my position when I have a situation, even though I am a lawyer and I'm thinking, I use my knowledge, my experience, my training, I am able to work with people much easier than most of my colleagues that have studied law, because they don't have that training.

Similarly, Provost Kristen Clark from a community college in the Southeast also echoed concerns over the collaboration competency for those coming from legal backgrounds.

I think being a lawyer has negatively impacted me in the area of collaboration. It took me four to five years to realize you just don't push things through. When I first became Dean and oversaw faculty in any respect, I had to relearn how to handle people. I had the background of saying, "we need to do this, this and this. You do this and I'll do this and get it done by this date. We'll move forward and input minutes to everybody!" Well, that's not how a college works, it's "what do you think? How about this? How do you think we should do this?" I had to learn collaboration. I didn't have that gift.

Likewise, President John Ross from a community college in the Southeast shared concerns over possible weaknesses in collaboration as well. He expressed about collaboration:

I don't know if the law background helps there as much. Unfortunately, lawyers have a tendency to be singular in their approach to problems and be adversarial. They are not as collaborative as what you might want to be . . . Where we would like to take the profession in the future is much more about collaboration . . . That's an evolving concept.

Lastly, President Beverly York from a community college in the South elaborated her uneasiness with the weakness in collaboration for some individuals coming from law.

A little less but still fairly important, my legal background didn't help me much. Because in law school it's really more advisory, much more competitive . . . I did my fair share of mediation and arbitration and . . . for dispute resolutions that was

much more collaborative, but at the end of the day, law school was still very . . . not cooperative.

Positive Reinforcement Recommended

In addition to being asked about AACC's competencies and transferable leadership skills, participants were asked an open-ended question about what new or underemphasized leadership competency would they add to the existing ones from AACC. From this question, there emerged a few skills or competencies that repeated. Four participants stressed the importance of positive reinforcement or motivation as a leadership competency.

Participants, including Vice President Meagan Davis, gave their unique perspectives on leadership qualities that would be beneficial as AACC competencies. Ms. Davis stressed the importance of encouragement or positive reinforcement to effective leadership.

I've mentioned as a core competency that is very important is being able to work with a diversity of individuals and feeling comfortable with being inclusive and understanding people of different cultures. Being able to collaborate with people and motivate cross-cultural, cross-generation type of groups because that's what we work with is that environment. I know the American Association of Community Colleges has also looked at that as a competency that is needed and is one that I really believe as important.

Vice President Susan Ellis noted that compassion would help leaders to connect with followers and that compassion would provide and inspiration and motivation in leadership.

The elements that I think make a community college leader successful are probably more, of the not directly related to content competency, . . . compassion, the ability to make decisions, which is tricky sometimes . . . Without that leadership quality, decisions almost make themselves, when you actually have the opportunity to make them more positive. The ability to make the tough decisions which are not going to be popular and yet have that compassion of being able to connect to the people that work for you. You can get as many degrees as you want and have all these strategies and things, but that ability to truly lead people; you have to have some of these human qualities.

Similarly, President Jack Lewis believed positive reinforcement must be achieved and can be done so by using the power of “nice.”

I don't think you can put enough stock in being a nice person, somebody that other people like to work with . . . As we hire someone, are they truly a nice person and do we know that? When we talk to their former colleagues do they say that yes this is a person I enjoy going to work with every day? . . . If you have somebody you don't enjoy working with or who is a cancer in the clubhouse, your organization really falters and struggle. People don't enjoy going into work with those situations because you have one or two employees that are just pains in the ass. As president . . . I will say what is it about so and so that you really like?

Well, they have this credential and they've worked here and they have this degree and they're really suited. I'll say, do you really want to work with them; is this someone you think you are going to like working with? . . . If you are not going to like working with the person, that organization is not going to do well . . . I use the terminology, getting the right people on the bus. If you have a bus load of people that are all nice people that you like spending time with, I think that's a more pleasant bus ride. If you have a bus with bunch of people that don't like each other, then that's a pretty lousy bus ride. They might be the most qualified, prepared, most highly credentialed people, but if they are jerks; you don't like working with them. You have to get along. Do they play well with others? If they play well with others, I think they have an opportunity to be successful, even if they don't have the credentials or background experience sometimes you are looking for. If they are a nice person . . . and truly interested in how other people feel and if they enjoy their colleagues, then I think they make things happen.

President Jesse Sullivan hails from a community college in Buckeye State.

Besides his JD, he earned an MA in Accounting. President Sullivan did not practice law but did earn 22 years of higher education experience rising through the Academic Affairs pathway. He elaborated that effective leadership can be forged by extending ample praise or appreciation when it is deserved.

It probably has to do with recognition of your staff . . . recognition for a job well done, maybe it's part of communication or collaboration, but you don't have to reward, people just want to be recognized. If you do a good job, comment on that

“great job on that evaluation of our utility cost” or “great job with relating our exposure in this particular contract!” I think people just like to hear that kudos and it doesn’t have to be monetary as long as they are appreciated and recognized. . . . I think it’s more recognition of employees and how you make them part of a team.

Teamwork Recommended

Although not all participants were familiar with the competencies, a majority of them expressed general knowledge concerning the competencies. Along with being asked about AACC’s competencies and transferable leadership skills, participants were asked an open-ended question about what new or underemphasized leadership competency would they add to the existing ones from AACC. From this question, there emerged another skill or competency. Four participants emphasized the importance of teamwork or the ability to work with others. Teamwork relates to the AACC competency of collaboration. Regarding collaboration, 12 out of 20 participants believed that their legal backgrounds helped them have strong collaboration skills. Five indicated that law helped them achieve moderate, and three said law helped them minimally with the collaboration competency.

Many participants had little experience with AACC, including Dean Vivian Baker, yet she recognized the importance of teamwork to the art of leadership. She expressed:

At the community college, there are so many intricacies related to law and many issues that sometimes, I am not sure if the legal education prepares people to work

as part of a team at the community college . . . In terms of the preparation of the lawyers; it is more of an individual approach. I would say that team effort and integration of that, layered with skills from a team work perspective needs to be developed. I think I could do it because I have my additional preparation in mediation and also as an educator and administrator because of my additional degree in education.

Similarly, President Jack Lewis noted that teamwork in the form of working with and among stakeholders in your college community is essential to leading your community college.

You have to become engaged, that means going to every school event, volunteer, get involved in organizations, get involved in the community . . . I think if you are interested in the community college leadership . . . it becomes part of your life and family life as well. Last night, my wife and I went to our college's talent show . . . That's what a college president does. I started doing that when I was a teacher, I started going to every athletic game, every music concert, every theater production, everything that students were involved in, I went to them. I thought our students appreciate it and I think they do. I know students here often tell me that they haven't seen the last five presidents, that they wouldn't be able to tell you who they were, but they know who I am because I show up to everything. I'm part of the Lions Club, economic development committees, and five other committees within the college here. This means your calendar is always very

busy and always on the go, but shows you are committed to doing well in those roles.

President John Ross also stressed understanding and working with others and with the community in order to achieve mutual success.

I actually think, not just having the JD, I actually do believe, that actually practicing, whether it's for a year, 2 years or 5, 10, or 20; it's very helpful because you are able to touch real people in the real world who are not in the college. They [lawyers] tend to be more result oriented and straight-forward. People don't move with the same . . . sense of urgency. If they don't get the job done, it's someone else's problem kind of thing. I think that was very helpful for me and my board really appreciates that and I think that's part of the success I am having.

Problem-Solving Recommended

Again, participants were asked an open-ended question about what new or underemphasized leadership competency would they add to the existing ones from AACC. The emerging skills or competency that emerged was problem-solving. Four participants stressed the importance of problem-solving skills as a leadership competency. This transferable skill is vital to lawyers because clients come to them regularly to solve their most important legal and life issues.

Vice President Michelle Martin focused on the skill of solving problems as a necessary component to leadership. She has over 18 years of law practice experience and over 12 years of experience at the collegiate level and rose through the general counsel pathway. Vice President Martin expressed,

I guess it's an almost tired phrase you have to think critically and analyze any issues you encounter in the broader picture and be able to forecast what implications there are related to the issue maybe past the initial analysis.

Likewise, President James Phillips recognized the importance of a leadership competency geared toward a narrow focus of problem resolution.

Maybe one of the six encompasses this, but one of the surprising things to me was how much time is spent managing people . . . When I was considering applying for the job of Commissioner of Education, I asked what was the most surprising thing about the job; he said how much time he had to spend managing people or managing issues created by people. That's my experience here as well. We are approaching 350 full-time employees on 3 different campuses in three different counties; all are very different culturally, economically, and geographically. Human resource management, the management of people and the situations caused by people, is a significant competency.

According to Vice President Grace Thomas,

Problem solving is probably integrated into those somewhere, but for me, being an administrator it is very important to learn how to strategically solve problems when you have a lot of people involved. Being a lawyer helps you segregate what the issues are, as they relate to the different people involved and trying to go for the best resolution of that problem.

Other Transferable Leadership Skills

While coding the frequency of AACC leadership competencies among attorney participants, certain other skills or competencies emerged. While participants were asked how they rated among existing AACC competencies, certain other transferable skills were mentioned. Because of the prevalence of certain common transferable other skills, the researcher identified and coded for these as well. Additional strengths of participants that were not listed among the AACC leadership competencies included legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills.

Legal Expertise

Beyond the AACC's recommended competencies for community college leadership, the researcher identified and coded other transferable leadership skills or competencies. All participants were asked about each of the six AACC leadership competencies and whether their legal training helped with each competency. Participants spoke to some degree about how their legal background may have been applied to community college leadership. Among those most frequently coded was legal expertise. Nineteen out of 20 participants articulated how important legal prowess was to their success as community college leaders. The lone participant who was not coded for legal expertise was President Mason Parker from a community college in the Southwest. Although he did not use any words that triggered a coding for legal expertise, he had worked for over 10 years as a tribal lawyer and rose to President as a general counsel. In most cases, participants believed that their legal expertise helped rather than hurt them as leaders.

Vice President Meagan Davis of Star State explained that her legal background allowed her to develop much legal expertise and experience which directly translated into community college leadership.

I think my legal background always helps me because I was provided in law school our analytical and problem solving skills. So you take a situation and your organization and you are able to analyze what you need to do in order to improve things . . . Then you have the actual legal skills that would help you recognize any major impediments that you have to work through that may have a legal implication. The way that the legal skills helped is that I took courses in Property, Contracts, and Higher Ed. Law; they taught you some of these principles that you can use to make sure that you use your resources wisely . . . Look at any challenges that might come up in a legal perspective . . . respond to any issue that comes up related to the projects I am working.

Similarly, President Matthew Foster from Motor State believes his legal expertise or experience allows him to think and act quickly in public to guide people in the direction where they need to be led.

I am pretty good when I am on my feet in front of a group and that comes from courtroom, dealing with clients . . . It's more of the overall experience of law school and the practice of law. You are trained to see both sides of the story. You are trained to understand the ins and outs of how both sides have a viewpoint that they think is right and sort through the junk . . . 95% is all about the people. Having that kind of background and training has helped tremendously, and I don't

think people in the general public or in education appreciate that as much as its reality.

Many participants, including President Chris Ingram, noted how their legal experience instilled in them a strong and indefatigable work ethic. “As a lawyer, you can put in all these hours and get paid for it, but I am not embellishing, I do 66 hours a week.” He would regularly work a Saturday or Sunday each week but take the other day off for rest and religious observance. “I know some presidents that don’t and they do a good job, but most, if you don’t put in the time, you won’t do a good job.”

Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly appreciated that his legal grounding helped him prepare for figurative combat in the courtroom or to possibly collaborate with opposing counsel if a win-win resolution could be had.

As a lawyer we have to think very analytically. You think in structure and you always think everything in a pyramid or horizontal or vertical. I think most lawyers are very analytical in their thinking . . . I've learned when to fight the battle and when to wave the white flag. . . . The law degree and background did help because often we are placed in adversarial situations. We have to find some common ground and have the parties work collaboratively together. Every day, is like juggling balls in the air, you are just making sure all of the right pieces fit and people work together.

President Lawrence Lang went on to share that the ability to think like a lawyer and project in advance the moves of others truly served him well in higher education.

My background in law helps me because, I . . . never ask a question you don't know the answer to. This forces you to . . . do your homework. Before you walk into the room, you've considered all the possibilities . . . you can step onto the other side and make the other guy's argument . . . Because of the legal perspective, you have to be thinking of the different components that will impact on your case . . . looking at all the elements bearing on this issue . . . As lawyer, you know your case can hinge or turn on understanding the full scope and magnitude of the problem . . . You have to get your different people working together to help you solve that problem.

Further, President Jack Lewis imparted that his legal training allowed him to organize this thoughts and arguments to appeal to people logically and emotionally to achieve results.

I think my experience from law school really did help how I look at issues and present my thoughts. As a person that has looked at prosecution work, I always focus on the facts. What are the things . . . I can prove to the jury or judge . . . My leadership style . . . comes . . . from my law school experience. How to organize, how to make your pitch, how to put your thoughts in such a way that you'll make a convincing argument and you'll have your facts in front of you.

Lastly, President John Ross explained that his legal expertise makes it possible to work with large numbers of people and lead them to find common purpose. In a way, this is the essence of leadership.

Lawyers, ones who've dealt with business organizations get paid on a daily/hourly basis to plan . . . Whether you do a business organization or trial, you are always planning . . . The law degree . . . allows me to practice law in the community and if you are going to be successful as a lawyer in the community, you're going to have to be in the community and understand the players and understand the motivations behind the community . . . It was so easy for me to get into this role because I already knew everyone in the community, I knew where they were coming from, knew a lot of their business and what their needs might be and could anticipate.

Business Sense

Because higher education institutions have to function with reduced resources yet have to perform at peak levels, business sense is vital to operational success and community college leadership. This is further described by the participants that follow. In this area, 19 out of 20 participants expressed instances where their legal background heightened their competencies in business related aspects of leadership.

Vice President Meagan Davis elaborated on how law helped her strategically plan business assets including the efficient use of monetary, physical and human resources.

Resource management is a very important competency because you need to know how much money you have and how you're going to allocate it . . . based on what your strategic goals are so that you achieve what it is you want to achieve to support student success. The way that the legal skills helped is that I took courses in Property, Contracts, and Higher Ed. Law; they taught you some of these

principles that you can use to make sure that you use your resources wisely . . .

When I was a lawyer, I got a lot of insight into resource management, because the legislators have to manage the state resources and always account for a bill or law, how much is that law going to cost to implement? Is it going to affect the whole state or certain counties? I got plenty of experience.

Regarding entrepreneurship, President Richard Duncan shared that he ran his own business. He shared, “I did budgeting, meeting payroll, revenue projections were a big part of that. That would've been any business, not specifically law, but having had my own practice does give me some insight.”

President Matthew Foster mostly credits his legal background for his business acumen but objectively hints that law at times was not as useful for business.

Yes, resource development, resource acquisition, resource management are all important parts of the job. My legal training helps . . . I am pretty good when I am on my feet in front of a group and that comes from courtroom, dealing with clients, it also comes from my marketing background. . . . My legal background helped with this skill yes and no . . . when you are working as an attorney you are always trying to cut deals.

Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly opined that communicating with and working for clients translates well into meeting expectations of customers and businesses.

I am very business-minded. I like to be given a project and see that project go from start to finish. That's sort of the business side of me and I looked at the law practice the same way. I liked having a client . . . a business comes to me, tells

me their situation then takes the steps to correct it. That's why the business of law appealed to me, helping people.

President Jack Lewis realizes the importance of budgets to any organization from a firm to an institution. Legal expertise would be beneficial in explaining what budgets mean and how best to use the data from such budgets.

People know that if they make a good coherent argument, that I'll listen to it and we'll make adjustments accordingly . . . I love data, I love numbers, I want to see why we should do something, and they know that if I need to convince the president to do something, they have to come in with the information to convince me otherwise . . . If you can't manage a budget, you can't do this job. You've got to be very mindful of the budget all the time. You have to understand those numbers well, you have to be able to present them well, you have to be able to convey to your community with what's going on with your budget, you have to convey to your colleagues and employees of the institution. . . . Law school helps you present that argument and how you roll out those budgets.

Vice President Michelle Martin also expressed how managing a small practice can be scaled up to overseeing business decisions for a larger institution.

This is a tremendous part of probably all of our jobs in the community college arena these days. You just have to be able to manage resources both human capital and operating and make good choices for the benefit of people and students . . . Working in private practice is just a matter of scale and scope. If

you're a business person, you bring those skills with you to work in private practice.

President James Phillips echoed the same sentiment about how running a law practice is great preparation for leadership at a community college.

I think that having run a solo practice gave me that background, but that would be the same for running any business as it relates to resource management . . . It helped me with . . . human resources, managing employees and clients.

In his previous work in business and employment law, President Jesse Sullivan described how he had learned skills to work with unions and with general employees.

My legal background helped . . . especially with some of the more exposure to labor relations, employment relations, negotiations . . . it's helped it, it's what is has. I already had the background of this skill, but the law degree reinforced it.

Along the same line, President Beverly York expressed how legal experience helped her to work well with different stakeholders in her past and future ventures at community colleges.

I work with a lot of different constituencies; everything from the legislature, local community, chambers of commerce's, professional organizations . . . private donors. My role as an advocate for the community college and for our students is that biggest part of what I do. My legal background helped with this skill. . . .

Outside of our ability of research, write, and make arguments . . . our other goal in law school is to advocate for our clients. In the case of community college education, my client is the student most of the time and the college itself. I used

the skills that I learned in law school to advocate for my students and it's also advocating for social justice.

Analytical Skills

Further, analytical skills, the ability to analyze, think critically, including risk management, were identified and coded as important competencies for leadership. Here, 19 out of 20 participants voiced that analytical skills are important and that analytical skills are developed when participants worked previously in law. No participants reported that analytical skills were not heightened from legal practice or training.

Vice President Susan Ellis from the Patriot State discussed how her legal training and experience helped to hone her analytical skills.

The most important thing that legal background brings is the ability to think clearly and logically. This is something I think that's particularly important as you're doing organizational . . . development. I think the legal background from this perspective of strategy is very important . . . the ability to research legislation, to be able to read and translate legislation . . . into what it's going to mean for the college. Being able to pick out what's important, actually, being able to advocate.

President Chris Ingram also vouches for lawyers to be able to simplify complex matters and to reframe the issue to get maximum buy in from others. He said,

What does a lawyer do well? We may have strengths in comprehending complex matters . . . We are really good with our analytical ability, our words and media [sense], communication and how to respond to volatile situations.

Communication, I can't think of a better training ground for a lawyer.

Upon some reflection, President Lawrence Lang first formally learned about analytical skills during law school and it continued being used well to this day.

You have to be able to look across multiple fields of endeavor and think what's going on that's going to impact what we do at my institution . . . What it forces you to do it to consider the Black Swan. Most people don't consider the Black Swan and then they are all surprised and don't see it coming . . . Strategic planning . . . focuses on . . . the strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats . . . My background in law helps me . . . Before you walk into the room, you've considered all the possibilities . . . Absolutely, it is essential, but it's not enough. Again, what kind of life experiences are you bringing to the table. You either have lived a life or haven't lived a life. I've lived in 3 different continents. I've been around so many different cultures. I've had so many different kinds of life experiences. It's not out of books. I've lived!

President Jack Lewis related analytical thinking that lawyers develop to critical thinking skills when leaders must organize their thoughts into persuasive and logical arguments.

I'm more of a crisis management kind of guy. I believe that you have to adjust to what is happening in front of you, which is ever changing and you have to be able to adjust on the fly. And be able to move quickly to make things happen and use those episodes to make your organization better and always continually look to improve and update.

Related to analysis and good decision-making, President Lewis elaborated that data-driven decisions are helpful. Additionally, a leader must be stable and consistent which is why we rely on precedents in case law that allow for predictability and equal application of justice.

It's good to make plans, but you shouldn't be surprised that those plans don't come to fruition because you have a lot of things that are happening . . . that need your attention. I will tell you that one of my strengths is . . . is being personally well organized. I don't live in chaos myself . . . I know what's going on in my life. I know what needs to be done. I would consider myself a very stable, if not boring person. I've been with my wife for over 30 years. My two kids grew up in a very traditional kind of way and they turned out to be really great adults doing wonderful things. I'm the oldest of five siblings and I take care of stuff for my family and parents . . . I know my calendar, I know what it is I need to be doing . . . I want people to feel when they are working with me, is that I am a very open book and stable person . . . There are no surprises that come out of me. People know where I stand . . . I listen and take careful consideration of all ideas that come through and I am not afraid of changing my mind based on new information coming in ... They also know that I love data, I love numbers . . . They know that if they need to convince the president to do something, they have to come in with the information. There's that kind of stability I think that good presidents need. I think my experience from law school really did help kind of how I look at issues and present my organizational thoughts. One of the things, as a person that has

looked at prosecution work, I always focus on what are the facts . . . What are the things I can prove to the jury or judge . . . to say that this is what really happened? That's one of the reasons why I didn't go into other types of work, because I always felt that prosecutors were the true bearers of truth . . . My leadership style comes . . . from my law school experience. How to organize those things, how to make your pitch, how to put your thoughts in such a way that you'll make a convincing argument and you'll have your facts in front of you.

Lastly, President Beverly York from Star State believes that law trains participants to not only know their clients but to know and be able to counter the arguments of the opposition.

Yes, my legal background helped me. Legal education, if it does nothing else for you, it teaches you to take both sides of any given issues. You have to not only make your case for your client, but you have to make the case for the other side just as equally well . . . When you look at organizational strategy, there's too often that we don't ask the question coming from the other direction. I think sometimes people look at you like if you're the naysayer because of that. At the end of the day, the perspective is more fully developed than if it is only coming from a lot of assumptions that may or may not be actually true.

Chapter Summary

Chapter 5 presented the findings from this study on lawyers as senior-level community college leaders. The research showed that participants perceived that they had various strong AACC leadership competencies, certain transferable skills from law,

and recommendations for new AACC leadership competencies. This chapter closed by exploring the few common perceived weaknesses possessed by participants with legal backgrounds. Chapter 6 features a discussion of the implications of the findings, the conclusion, and the recommendations.

Chapter 6: Implications of Findings, Recommendations and Conclusion

This chapter features a discussion of the implications of the findings, recommendations for future research, and conclusion. The conceptual framework for this study used the lens of community college leadership competencies from the AACC (AACC, 2013). The major competencies recognized for community college leaders were: organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, community college advocacy, and professionalism.

In the context of community colleges experiencing a shortage of senior-level administrators due to the fact that many leaders are entering retirement, new means are required to meet the talent gap (Weisman & Vaughn, 2007). Meanwhile, more attorneys prefer to work in new arenas in which they may positively impact others. It is anticipated that the perspectives of lawyers turned administrators may provide rich data and perspectives toward understanding a different source for leadership. There is insufficient qualitative literature on career transition, transferable skills, and preparation for community college leadership, especially from those with legal backgrounds. There is also sparse literature on perspectives of lawyers on core competencies for effective community college leadership. Accordingly, this study contributes to that body of literature to help meet the impending community college leadership shortfall.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to describe perspectives and experiences of lawyers working as community college leaders to provide insight into how

they lead at community colleges. The intent of this research was also to explore what motivations trigger the career transition of lawyers who wished to work in community college leadership. By examining the data, including from interviews with 20 attorney-administrators, and review of curriculum vita, the researcher gained a better understanding of these individuals and their perceptions on how lawyers contribute as educational leaders and what drives their career choices.

The research questions for this qualitative case study were:

1. What are the career transition experiences of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?
2. What are the transferable skills of lawyers shifting into community college leadership?

Sub-Question: How do these transferable skills measure up to the AACC's Community College Leadership Competencies?

3. How does a legal background prepare an individual for community college leadership?

This research was a qualitative case study of lawyers working as senior-level community college leaders in America. This study took over two years to complete. Interviews and document reviews were utilized in order to collect and analyze data. The purposeful sample of senior-level community college leaders included presidents, vice presidents, and other community college executives provided they report directly to the president and have significant supervisory responsibilities. Participants came largely from academics, student affairs, and business affairs. Participants possessed at least three

years of experience in community colleges, which allowed them to speak with some authority on career transition, transferrable skills, and preparation for community college leadership. Senior-level community college leaders possessing law degrees were interviewed for in-depth knowledge about motivations for career transition, transferable skills, and preparation of the participants for leadership

Discussion of Findings

The four major findings include the following clusters: (a) Career transition into community colleges: transition to make a difference, transition process was smooth, and transition to a better work environment; (b) Recommendations for aspiring community college leaders: learn about community colleges, gain work experience at community colleges, and earn another degree; (c) AACCC leadership competencies: high communications competency, high professionalism competency, lower collaboration competency, positive reinforcement recommended, teamwork recommended, problem-solving recommended; and (d) Other transferable leadership skills: legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills.

Career Transition Into Community Colleges

The findings from this study support that succession planning is critical and that lawyers can help keep the talent pipeline flowing into community college leadership. The existing literature suggests that community colleges must aggressively recruit and train tomorrow's leaders for contemporary challenges of regulation, accountability, and innovation. The findings from this study reveal that participants have the necessary legal

expertise and business sense. This study also reveals how accountability may be met through heightened professional responsibility.

Although there are many ways to prepare for leadership, the AACCC competencies can be useful learning outcomes for either formal or informal leadership training. Much preparation is needed to replace senior-level administrators at community colleges. In his article, “Keep the Talent Pipeline Flowing Through Succession Planning,” President Emeritus Donald Cameron of Guilford Technical Community College pressed the urgency for succession planning (Cameron, 2013). In the January 2011 issue of *Community College Review*, McNair et al. (2011) provided an excellent survey of succession planning issues. They concluded that community college presidents have a responsibility to “integrate the AACCC leadership competencies into the hiring, selection, and evaluation of administrators with an eye to the immediate and long-term needs of the college” (McNair et al., 2011, p. 22).

Moreover, Janice Gilliam, president of Northeast State Community College (Tenn.), calls succession planning:

The single most important thing I have done as president, so that when I leave, many people will be ready to continue to move the college forward. It has created a new culture on campus in which the employee is valued as the greatest asset of our organization. (Cameron, 2013, p. 4)

There have never been greater challenges facing community college leaders. They are all too familiar with the fiscal and completion hurdles and with putting out fires daily. Colleges are asked to protect open access while increasing student performance in

a climate in which already-strained resources are further reduced and competition from proprietary colleges is at an all-time high.

Community colleges must recruit and equip leaders who can navigate the choppy and often unfamiliar waters of regulation, accountability, continuous improvement, acceleration and technological revolution, while ensuring for transformative education and training that lead to meaningful employment for our students. (Mathis & Roueche, 2013, p. 5)

Transition to make a difference. The existing literature on motivation on career change informs readers that lawyers can be dissatisfied with the practice of law, that they have directly transferable skills, and that they would welcome entry into new careers that allow for fulfillment by making a difference with their perceived skills in persuasion, communications, analysis, and problem-solving (*Career Change Ability*, 2011). This study revealed that lawyers changed careers to make a positive impact on others. For example, President Lawrence Lang from a community college in Emerald State was drawn to a career in higher education leadership primarily because he was motivated to do public service. He cared immensely for the betterment of society and eventually realized that this goal could be achieved while making a difference in education rather than in law.

Transition process smooth. Although Richard N. Bolles is best known for job hunting advice from his series *What Color Is Your Parachute?*, he also imparts considerable knowledge about career change and transferable skills (Bolles, 2013). The findings from this study suggest that career transitions may be smooth if the skills to be

transferred are strong. For instance, President Jack Lewis from a community college in Mile-High State eased into higher education without incident. He attributed his legal background to facilitating his smooth transition into leadership position. From law, he learned to think on his feet, to dissect multiple sides of an issue, and then to persuasively present his case.

Transition to a better work environment. From the existing literature and studies, one lawyer noted, “After all these years practicing law, I get no pleasure from it now. I have talents that could better serve me in another field” (*Career Change Ability*, 2011). Many participants echoed this point, including Motor State President Matthew Foster who has a JD and MBA. President Foster shared just how attracted he was to a better work environment. He was drawn to all the trappings of a vibrant college community from the energy, optimism, and thirst for knowledge.

Recommendations for Aspiring Community College Leaders

When asked in this study for specific recommendations, participants advised career changers from law to informally learn about community colleges, gain work experience therein, and to earn another degree. In *The AACC Competencies in Action*, researchers Chris Duree and Larry Ebbers identified which competencies are viewed as most critical, what competencies need further professional development, and what competencies receive less attention in practice (Duree & Ebbers, 2012). The findings here very much aligned with the research. Such research stated that individuals interested in promotions to leadership positions should consider: completing a doctoral degree prior to assuming a presidency; holding academic leadership positions within a community

college; participating in institutional and external leadership development programs; working with a mentor to progress along the leadership pipeline; gaining experience in fund development and fundraising prior to assuming a presidency; honing communication and relationship-building skills to effectuate legislative advocacy, build board of trustee relationships; building of workforce development partnerships; and using data to document student learning and completion; and using data for organizational decision making (Duree & Ebbers, 2012). The findings from this research similarly showed an alignment with AACCC's competencies and extended by adding which competencies held as important to community college leadership.

Additionally, the presidents in a particular study stressed that the AACCC leadership competencies are now more important and relevant than ever. Asked if there were any competencies missing from the framework, the presidents offered insightful feedback that can serve as a basis for future studies about community college leadership (McNair & Phelan, 2012). Their suggestions for augmenting the competencies included three areas: entrepreneurial thinking; commitment to diversity and equity; and taking a systems perspective. "Developing visioning and/or scenario-planning skills could set the stage for potential innovations, which assumes an ability and willingness to take risks and challenge current assumptions" (McNair & Phelan, 2012, p. 92). The findings from this instant case align well with the current literature. Participants self-reported they rate well in business sense, analytical skills, and legal expertise which helps minimize risk. These recommended areas for leadership growth truly show that participants had the desire to hone their skills in areas of leadership need such as entrepreneurial.

Using presidential commentary from a national study, a study suggested presidents perceive gaps in prior preparation and offered recommendations to support the professional development of future leaders. The findings illuminated that participants wished they had known then much more about resource management, collaboration, and professional development (McNair et al., 2011). The study showed competencies to be effective in the development of future leaders and suggest that leadership development is a very personal journey. Consequently, a specific set of activities will not meet all needs. Because the journey is personal, an overarching framework, such as the AACC competencies, can help ensure that, regardless of the path followed, aspiring leaders can rest assured that they will gain the skills needed for successful leadership (McNair et al., 2011).

Learn about community colleges. As suggested by Duree and Ebbers (2012), as a first and vital step to entering higher education, Dean Vivian Baker recommended informally learning about community colleges. Informally learning about these institutions is critical because the culture and mindset of academia is vastly different from law or from any other organizational culture for that matter. One must plunge himself or herself into this world to be worthy of taking a leadership role in it.

Gain work experience at community colleges. Similarly, President Jack Lewis recommended gaining work experience at community colleges by immersing oneself in the college community, which aligns with the existing research on career transition into community college leadership. Gaining work experience at community colleges whether as faculty, as staff, or as a volunteer in co-curricular activities will help a person achieve

the goal of learning how community colleges function. Work experience will also serve as a gesture of goodwill as seen by doubters who are suspicious of career changers hoping to migrate from law to higher education leadership.

Earn another degree. Lastly, the literature was affirmed when Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly shared that his landing into higher education was softened by his earning a graduate degree in education first. This helped him adjust to the language of higher education. It almost seems that earning the right or traditional education is a rite of passage to being accepted as an educator. This investment in an education beyond the law degree cements a career-changer's perceived loyalty to community colleges as the permanent employer.

AACC Leadership Competencies

High communications competency. In a new study, Boswell and Imroz (2013) investigated how community college leaders from Pennsylvania viewed the AACC leadership competencies as important for effective community college leadership. Further, the community college leaders were asked to identify experiences that they found effective in developing the AACC leadership competencies. Accordingly, participants most valued the communication competency and least valued the professionalism competency. The findings also revealed that on-the-job experience is one of the most effective development activities of the AACC leadership competencies (Boswell & Imroz, 2013). The findings from this study aligned and also did not align with existing research pertaining to communications and professionalism.

Participants in this study echoed the vital role communication plays in a leader's success. President Matthew Foster from Motor State noted how important his legal background was in helping him communicate with many community college constituents. He clarified that the written word is a powerful instrument. President Foster credited his legal education and training with cultivating his ability to write assertively and persuasively.

High professionalism competency. Although Boswell and Imroz (2013) did not value professionalism as high as other competencies, other researchers and this study showed high professionalism impacts one's ability to lead. A leader's ethical framework and its influence on decisions stem from a lifetime of experiences and are influential in all aspects of leadership and choices (Eddy, 2010). Ethics influence the behavior of both leaders and followers, and the intentions behind and implications of personal ethics should be visible. "The intersections of ethics, leadership, and decision-making should be considered carefully" (Garza Mitchell, 2012, p. 71).

The finding from this study ties ethics to professionalism. Professionalism affirms a leader's moral high ground and allows followers to trust and be led. Vice Chancellor Ryan Kelly from Star State described professionalism as a broad quality that impacts your reputation and affects to what degree a person will have success in working with others. Professionalism, according to Vice Chancellor Kelly, may take the form of being ethical to being positive and caring for subordinates.

Lower collaboration competency. In *Preparing Community College Leaders: The AACC Core Competencies for Effective Leadership & Doctoral Education*, Delores

E. McNair examines how education and training can prepare leaders in the competencies (McNair, 2009). Using the core competencies as a lens, this study analyzed California community college leaders' perceptions of these competencies. Participants believed additional competencies could be developed through doctoral studies in community college leadership. The "responses included fund raising, institutional advancement, strategic thinking, being a mentor, community development and leadership, working with diverse populations, technology, collaboration with K-12 partners, and data-driven decision making" (McNair, 2009, p. 212). Others noted that doctoral studies could supplement, not replace, on-the-job training, mentoring, and professional development.

In the instant study, it was found that a few participants reported low levels of the collaboration competency. Many participants recognized the value of collaboration to leadership and many in fact felt lawyers rated satisfactorily in this area. However, the ability to collaborate was viewed as a quality not always possessed by lawyers.

Positive reinforcement recommended. Participants extended the AACC competencies with findings that recommended positive reinforcement, teamwork, and problem-solving as additional and necessary leadership competencies. Vice President Susan Ellis noted that compassion would help leaders to connect with followers and that compassion would provide an inspiration and motivation in leadership. The data suggested and Ms. Ellis reinforced that a leader's success is related to her ability to motivate and make employees want to perform at peak levels. This is often achieved by providing positive feedback when warranted.

Teamwork recommended. Related to teamwork, a relevant study in 2009 (Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2009) examined how a group of community college presidents and board of trustee chairpersons from New York and Florida viewed the competencies, characteristics, and professional skills identified by the AACC (AACC, 2013) as important for effective community college leadership. The presidents were asked to identify activities and experiences that they found useful in developing the AACC leadership competencies, and listed were graduate programs, in-house programs, workshops, challenging job assignments, and hardships (Hassan et al., 2009). The findings from this study suggest that community college presidents, vice presidents, and other senior administrators largely agree in their respect for the AACC competencies. Surprisingly, the competencies rated least important were resource management followed by collaboration both of which lawyers had not shown as much strength. Practice implications for hiring and developing community college leaders were also offered in this study (Hassan et al., 2009).

Just as participants noted that collaboration was not many lawyers' strongest competency, they confirmed this assessment by recommending that the ability to work in teams was vital to foster leadership success. Many participants had little experience with AACC, including Dean Vivian Baker, yet she recognized the importance of teamwork to the art of leadership. Working at a community college requires leaders to work productively and collegially with others.

Problem-solving recommended. The recommendation of a problem-solving competency adds to or extends the literature on AACC competencies. Although

problem-solving may be seen as a subset of organizational strategy, resource management, or collaboration, participants recognized it as a separate and critical competency in itself. In a study by Cejda and Jolley (2013) on *Developing Leadership Competencies in the Heartland*, researchers examined the impact of informal leadership activities. Activities perceived as important in developing the AACC competencies include: opportunities for additional responsibilities; work on special task forces, committees, and commissions; and in-service staff development (Cejda & Jolley, 2013). Two activities reported as least helpful toward competency development were sabbaticals and election to positions at local schools (Cejda & Jolley, 2013).

Related to Cejda and Jolley, the ability to problem-solve is akin to working on special task forces to informally build one's leadership prowess. According to Vice President Grace Thomas, the ability to solve problems is critical. She believes that a legal education trains leaders to identify issues and to then work with others in order to solve them.

Other Transferable Leadership Skills

Legal expertise. There is sparse research or literature on the role of legal expertise as a leadership competency. Even so, the revelation or finding that legal expertise is a powerful asset for leaders has much merit. In the modern error of litigation, regulation, and risk-management, leaders with legal knowledge are priceless to their institutions. President Lawrence Lang shared that the ability to think like a lawyer and anticipate the actions of others truly served him well in higher education.

Business sense. In addition to AACC leadership competencies, participants voluntarily reported other transferable skills that came from their legal experience. These other transferable skills include business sense and analytical skills in addition to legal expertise. This business sense finding is related to the AACC competency of resource management. An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college (AACC, 2013). President Jack Lewis realized the importance of budgets to any organization from a firm to an institution. Legal experience would be beneficial in explaining what budgets mean and how best to use the data from such budgets.

Analytical skills. In *A Holistic Perspective of Leadership Competencies*, Pamela L. Eddy (2012) examined competencies arranged as clusters which pertain to this finding on analytical skills. Eddy advocates for the use of clusters in thinking about the AACC competencies. Four clusters are proposed: inclusivity, framing meaning, attention to the bottom line, and systems thinking. Central to these clusters is the need for contextual awareness in which leaders align their approaches based on their college's mission and values (Eddy, 2012).

In the instant study, analytical skills are essential to what Eddy referred to as framing meaning, attention to the bottom line, and systems thinking. Vice President Susan Ellis from the Patriot State discussed how her legal training and experience helped to hone her analytical skills. Similarly, President Beverly York from Star State believes

that law trains participants to not only know their clients but to know and be able to counter the arguments of the opposition.

Implications for Theory, Policy and Practice

This study presented key implications for theory, policy, and practice pertaining to the AACC leadership competencies. Regarding theory, this study extends or adds to the AACC leadership competencies with a fresh perspective that is law based. Participants brought valuable transferable skills that came from their legal experience. These transferable skills include legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills. Although business sense is to some degree covered in the resource management AACC competency, legal expertise and analytical skills can be addressed more prominently or even be featured as its own unique competency for higher education leaders.

Concerning policy, community colleges may be wise to broaden the scope of job requirements and descriptions to include consideration of the JD as a related degree when hiring select applicants for leadership positions. Experience in practicing law could also be viewed as a major asset when enforcing hiring policies. Moreover, institutions can enhance their much needed succession and training policies to include formal and informal training or education in law. This may include training in regulations, collective bargaining agreements, risk, contract negotiations, and analytical thinking.

Similarly, this study has practice repercussions that align with the policy implications. Practice implications and steps can be taken by community colleges and by individuals to further the cause of fostering excellence in higher education leadership. Institutions can enact broader hiring practices to include applicants with legal education

or experience for employment. Law related training should be incorporated into formal and informal education and training programs for education leaders. The benefits of such training include better negotiations with faculty unions, better compliance with regulations, reduced risk, and improved business sense and analytical thinking.

By the same token, the implications for individuals seeking leadership positions at community colleges are significant as well. Career changers coming from law need to formally and informally train in the culture and nuts and bolts of higher education leadership. This self-initiated education or training prepares aspiring leaders to take charge. It also demonstrates a gesture of good will and commitment toward making a permanent career change to higher education leadership. After all, many participants chose to study law originally to make a difference. Most participants noted that this goal was more than achieved by the opportunity of working as higher education leaders.

Summary of Research Questions

The three research questions and one sub-question were answered in the four research findings. The first question was answered in Finding 1. Participants had career transitions into community colleges to make a difference, the transition process was smooth and they transitioned for a better work environment. The second question was answered in Finding 4. Other transferable leadership skills include legal expertise, business sense and analytical skills. Question two's sub-question was answered in Finding 3. Participants reported the following AACC Leadership Competencies: high communications competency, high professionalism competency, and lower collaboration competency. And finally question three was answered by Finding 2. Participants

recommended that aspiring community college leaders learn about community colleges, gain work experience therein, and earn another degree. Finding 3 also answered question three. Participants recommended the ability to give positive reinforcement, knack for teamwork, and problem-solving skills as additional methods to prepare for community college leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

All told, this study revealed that community college leaders with legal backgrounds were highly motivated and possessed many AACC leadership competencies along with other directly transferable skills. These skilled leaders possess a cluster of skills and attributes which help to serve students and communities (Eddy, 2012).

Recommendations for future research may include a study to learn about the AACC leadership competencies of perhaps lawyers or others at the mid-management level. Such a study may disclose whether there is a better or different set of competencies for mid-management. Much research exists regarding leadership at the presidential and executive level of higher education yet there is much less attention focused on mid to lower levels of leadership. The presidency received much of the spotlight from researchers; however, mid to lower level leaders help students at the front line of education. Similarly, perspectives of lawyers turned university leaders can be examined at four year institutions as opposed to at community colleges.

Further, another recommended study could involve a 360-degree assessment of lawyers as community college leaders as discussed in *The Strategic Leader* (Pisapia, 2009). Since self-reported interviews tend to show positive bias for lawyer-leaders, a

survey or other assessment conducted of subordinates, co-executives, and even trustees would provide a more objective truth about the strengths and weaknesses of participants. Such a study of others' perspectives of lawyers as community college leaders would be less vulnerable to personal or lawyer based bias. This study could be qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method depending on the exact research questions to be answered.

Moreover, because budget and financial resources have been less plentiful in recent history, another recommended study is of successful business leaders as community college leaders. Much can be learned about whether a business expert is needed to meet today's financial challenges for higher education. To further explore different types of leadership, a different study can examine strengths and weaknesses of leaders from diverse leadership backgrounds, from previous researchers, to fund-raisers, to student service specialists, to business affairs specialists, back to academic leaders.

Finally, politicians, many of whom are lawyers, have in modern times transitioned successfully into higher education leadership. On the national stage, former Indiana governor Mitch Daniels and former secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano became presidents in 2013, respectively, of Purdue and the University of California system (*Politico*, 2014). University of Miami President Donna Shalala previously served as the secretary of Health and Human Services under President Bill Clinton (*Politico*, 2014). Former Florida Atlantic University President Frank T. Brogan, had previously served as Florida's lieutenant governor and is the current Chancellor of the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education, 2014). Whether or not they can deliver, former politicians have been asked to serve as

higher education leaders for their perceived influence, leadership and ability to raise money. A study of former politicians transitioning into higher education leadership, particularly those with law backgrounds, would add much knowledge to the existing literature on power and leadership competencies.

Conclusions

In summary, this case study to a large degree completed what it set out to accomplish. The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe perspectives and experiences of certain lawyers working as community college leaders. In the end, the research netted insight into how former lawyers might contribute as a viable source of leadership. Even though many lawyers are raw in the nuts and bolts of management, many possess traits or have honed their skills in the art of leadership. Although leadership can be learned, there are certain traits, including intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity, and sociability, that are key to leadership success according to Stodgill and other proponents of the trait leadership school of thought (Northhouse, 2007). In addition to these leadership traits, findings ascertained from this study reveal that former lawyers rate very high in the AACC leadership competencies. Furthermore, participants expressed a few new competencies, which would make community college leaders even more effective if adopted.

Through the rich stories of participants in their own words, this research study resulted in the emergence four major findings, which have far reaching implications. These major points cover career transition into community colleges, recommendations for aspiring community college leaders, AACC leadership competencies, and other

transferable leadership skills. Specifically, participant perceptions revealed a transition to make a difference, the transition process was smooth and transition was made for a better work environment. When asked for specific recommendations, participants advised career changers from law to informally learn about community colleges, gain work experience therein, and to earn another degree. A majority of participants reported proficiency in communications and professionalism, which are current AACC leadership competencies. A few reported low collaboration competencies. Participants recommended positive reinforcement, teamwork, and problem-solving as additional and necessary AACC leadership competencies. In addition to AACC leadership competencies, participants voluntarily reported other transferable skills that came from their legal experience. These other transferable skills include legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills.

In closing, this study of lawyers' perspectives on transferable competencies and transition informs educators much about how law-related skills and knowledge may positively impact theory, policy or practice in community college leadership. This research also reveals much about the journey of lawyers who transitioned into community college leadership. Many participants retreated from the public life of lawyering in order to continue serving the public in a different arena—one of education. Just as one of the findings that leaders originally studied law to make a difference, working in educational leadership similarly allows individuals to positively impact lives. As opposed to killing all the lawyers in *Henry VI*, Shakespeare in *As You Like It* offers more suitable counsel, declaring “this our life, exempt from public haunt, finds tongues in trees, books in the

running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything” (Shakespeare, trans. 2005, 2.1.1-17).

Chapter Summary

This final chapter completes this study by discussing the implications of the findings, offering recommendations for future research, and by stating the conclusions. The four major findings include: (a) Career transition into community colleges: transition to make a difference, transition process was smooth and transition to a better work environment; (b) Recommendations for aspiring community college leaders: learn about community colleges, gain work experience at community colleges and earn another degree; (c) AACC leadership competencies: high communications competency, high professionalism competency, lower collaboration competency, positive reinforcement recommended, teamwork recommended, problem-solving recommended; and (d) Other transferable leadership skills: legal expertise, business sense, and analytical skills.

Recommendations for future research include: (a) a study of how lawyers would fair as mid to low level community college leaders; (b) a 360-degree assessment to determine the strengths and weaknesses of lawyers as community college leaders as described by peers, subordinates and supervisors; and (c) a study of business leaders as senior level community college leaders, since today’s challenges often deal with budgets, management, and funding shortfalls. Lastly, this study concluded with beneficial implications for theory, policy, and practice in utilizing lawyers as source for community college leadership.

Appendix A
Adult Consent Form

ADULT CONSENT FORM

1) **Title of Research Study:** Perceptions of Lawyers on Career Transition, Transferable Skills and Preparation for Community College Leadership

2) **Investigator(s):** Principle Investigator/Professor, Deborah L. Floyd, Ed.D., and Co-Investigator/Doctoral Candidate, Thomas T. Nguyen, J.D., Florida Atlantic University

3) **Purpose:** The purpose of this research study is to investigate perceptions of lawyers on career transition, transferable skills and preparation for leadership. Insight is sought on whether individuals with law degrees would be prepared for community college leadership. This research should provide insight for community college hiring officials so that they can fill vacant senior-level posts with administrators with legal expertise. The data should also inform lawyers contemplating career change the opportunities afforded in community college leadership.

4) **Procedures:** Participants of this study will be asked to email the investigators their current resumes or curriculum vita (CV). Investigators will conduct interviews of approximately one hour with participants. If you agree to participate in this study, please read and sign this written consent form. This written consent authorizes the interview, audio recording of the interview, and the transcribing of the interview into an “interview transcript”. You will be asked questions about career transition, transferable skills and leadership preparation. The interview recordings will be coded so no one will know the name of the person interviewed. You will be emailed a verbatim transcript of only your individual interview to provide feedback for accuracy.

5) **Risks:** Your participation in this study is voluntary. The risks involved in participating in this study are no more than one would experience in normal daily activities. You may, however, refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions, or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

6) **Benefits:** The benefits to you are anticipated to be positive. By reflecting on and sharing your experiences and beliefs with the researchers, you may find satisfaction in contributing to your profession and the body of knowledge about lawyer career transition, transferable skills and preparation for senior-level community college leadership. You will also be given an executive summary, conference and/or dissertation report upon request.

7) **Data Collection & Storage:** All data from this study, including interview transcripts and resumes or CV, will be kept confidential and secure. Unless compelled by law, only the investigators of the study will see your data. Your identity will be concealed through the use of a pseudonym. Confidentiality will be maintained involving storing all data in a locked file cabinet for the duration of three years, after which they will be destroyed. The results and information in this study will not be released in any way that may reveal the identity of the participants without

their lawful assent. Upon receipt of the data, only the investigators of the study will be authorized to have access.

8) Contact Information: For related problems or questions regarding your rights as a participant, the Office of Sponsored Research at Florida Atlantic University can be contacted at (561) 297-2310. For other questions about the study, you should call the principal investigator, Deborah L. Floyd, Ed.D., at (561) 297-2671 or, the co-investigator, Thomas T. Nguyen, J.D., at (954) 328-6248.

9) Consent Statement: I have read or had read to me the preceding information describing this study. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and freely consent to participate. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

I agree ____ I do not agree ____ be audio-recorded

Signature of Participant: _____ Date: _____

Printed name of Participant: First Name _____ Last Name _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B
Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Title of Study:

Perceptions of Lawyers on Career Transition, Transferable Skills and Preparation for Community College Leadership

Name of Participant:

Gender:

Ethnicity/Race:

Employer and Job Title:

Degrees:

Location of interview:

Date, Start and End Time:

Introduction:

Thank you for volunteering for this interview. Because there is little literature on lawyers as community college leaders, the purpose of this qualitative case study is to research their perceptions on career transition, transferable skills and preparation for community college leadership. This interview should last about an hour. As sent in the consent form, if you agree to participate in this study, you may refuse to answer any question, and may stop the interview at any time. Your name will not be used when reporting this study. Do you agree to participate in this study? May I have permission to make a voice recording? Thank you.

Interview Questions:

1. Prior to earning your JD, did you plan to practice law after graduation?
Probe: What other career choices did you consider prior to and after earning your JD?
Probe: Why were you drawn to these careers?
2. Why did you choose to work as a community college leader rather than practice law?
Probe: What experiences motivated you to transition into community college leadership positions rather than practice law?
3. What were your career transition experiences from lawyer to senior-level community college leader?
Probe: What careers or jobs did you work along the way, e.g., professor?
4. To learn how your legal background prepared you for community college leadership, please review the AACC's Core Competencies for Community College Leaders sheet recently emailed to you.
Probe: How well do you think your legal background prepared for each of the competencies?
5. What in your legal experience equipped you to prepare for each of the six competencies?
Probe: Did you learn this competency from earning the JD and/or from practicing law?
6. If you learned the competency from your law practice, what field of law provided the greatest learning in the particular competency area?
7. Is there a leadership competency not listed, but is vital to your success as a community college leader?
8. What advice or lessons would you offer to those in law considering a career change into community college leadership?
Probe: What do you wish you knew entering community college leadership that you know now?

9. Since senior-level community college leaders with law degrees are in scarce supply, would you mind referring others who may be willing to be interviewed?

Closing:

Your contribution to this study is immensely appreciated. Again, your identity will be protected and the information you provided will be kept confidential. I will provide you with a copy of the interview transcription for you to verify and ensure its accuracy. Is there a particular email or address where you would like the information sent? If you have any additional information you would like to share, please feel free to contact me directly. May I also follow up with you later if I have questions? Thank you again for allowing me to interview you.

Recruitment Email

Dear Vice/President X:

Hello, my name is Tom Nguyen and I am a Higher Education Leadership Ph.D. student from Florida Atlantic University. I am working on my dissertation about lawyers as senior-level community college leaders. The research will help to understand the perceptions of lawyers on career transition, transferable skills and preparation for community college leadership.

I am writing to request your participation in an individual phone interview, which should take approximately one hour. Your participation is voluntary. Responses will be completely confidential, your name will not appear anywhere in the final write up. There are minimal risks associated with this phone interview and forwarding of your resume/curriculum vitae. This interview will be audio-recorded.

Should you be available to assist with this research, please contact me directly at (954) 328-6248 and/or tnguye68@fau.edu. For your convenience, I can also follow-up this communication by calling your office.

Thank you for considering my research request!

Tom Nguyen, Esq.

Appendix C
Document Review Template

Document Review Template

<u>Name of Document</u>	<u>Summary of Contents</u>	<u>Research Question(s)</u>	<u>Interview Question(s)</u>	<u>Significance to study</u>	<u>Site/Date/Received</u>
Resume/CV from Community College Leader X					

Appendix D

Table D1: Participant Demographics

Table D1

Participant Demographics

Name	Gender/Race/ Region	Pathway to Present Position	Degrees	Experience in Law	Experience in Education
Baker, Vivian (Transitioned)	Female/Latina/ Southeast	Academic Affairs	PhD in Administration, Supervision and Curriculum of Physical Education <i>Juris</i> Doctorate MS in Education BA in Secondary Education in Physical Education	Practiced law 6 years Solo Practitioner 2001- 2007, mediation, criminal and family law	36 years in Higher Education 174,000 students at comm. college Dean of Student Services Large Sunny State CC 2011-Present Department Chair, Large Sunny State CC 2007-2011 Dean of Education, International University, Puerto Rico 2005-2006
Clark, Kristen (Transitioned)	Female/Caucasian/ Southeast	Academic Affairs/ Trustee	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate	Practiced law 11 years Private Practice Attorney 1992-94 Civil Practice Attorney, 1985-92 Asst. State Atty., 83-85	21 years in Higher Education 28,000 students at community college Provost, eCollege2009-Present Provost, Central CC Campus 2007- 2009 Provost, Trident/Virtual Campus 2004-2007 President, Virtual Campus 2002– 2004
Davis, Meagan (Transitioned)	Female/Latino / South	Student Affairs	PhD in Higher Education Administration <i>Juris</i> Doctorate MA in Speech Communication BS in Speech Communication	Practiced law 3 years Attorney, Star State Legislative Council 1986 –1989 Litigator	35 years in Higher Education 46,204 students at community college VP for Student Dev. Services, Town County College, 2009-Present Dean, Student Services, All-Star Community College, 1989-2009 Assistant to the Vice President for Student Affairs, U of Star State, 1981–1986
Duncan, Richard (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ Midwest	Academic Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MS in Educational Administration BS in Economics and Political Science	Practiced law 13 years Private Civil Practice, 1989-1995 Private Civil Practice, 1982-1989 Associate University Attorney, 1979 –1982 Transactional law	40 years in Higher Education 24,580 students at community college President, Hawkeye State Community College, 2003-Present President, Plain State Community College, 1998-2003 Dean for Institutional Advancement, Santa Felipe Community College, 1997-1998

Ellis, Susan (Transitioned)	Female/Caucasian/ Northeast	Institutional Advancement	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MS in Diplomatic History BA in English and History	Practiced law 0 years Admitted to Bar	30 years in Higher Education 7,912 students at community college VP, Institutional Advancement, Patriot State Community College, 2003-Present Dean, Institutional Advancement, Patriot State Shore Comm. College, 1998-2003 Title III Coordinator, Patriot State Comm. College, 1995-2005
Foster, Matthew (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ Midwest	Academic Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MBA BS in Marketing	Practiced law 11 years Attorney /Law Clerk, 1977-1988 Transactional law and business experience	33 years in Higher Education 2,200 students at community college President, Motor State Community College, 2009-Present VP for Academic Affairs/Dean of Instruction, Musket Comm. College, 1996- 2009 Dean of Occupational Programs, Musket Comm. College, 1996-2003
Kelly, Ryan (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ South	Academic Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MBA MEd in Secondary Curriculum and Instruction	Practiced law <5 years Solo Practitioner Business/ transactional law	>15 years in Higher Education 77,877 students at community college Sr. Vice Chancellor Chief Operating Officer, Little Star College Ex. VP of Planning and Development, College of Desert Ex. VP of the Cheese Technical College System
Ingram, Chris (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ South	Academic Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA in Mathematics	Practiced law >25 years Poverty Lawyer, Migrant Legal Assistant Program Business/ transactional law	28 years in Higher Education 53,000 students at community college President, Cooper College, 1999-Present President, Valley Community College President, Range Community College

Lang, Lawrence (Transitioned)	Male/Asian/ Pacific-Northwest	Administrative / HR	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA in Liberal Arts	Practiced law >5 years Attorney for State Prosecutor's Office Criminal law	19 years in Higher Education 6,314 students at community college President, Emerald Community College, 2005-Present VP for Human Resources/Legal Affairs, Emerald Community College, 2005-2005 VP for Human Resources/Legal Affairs, Castle College, 2000–2004
Lewis Jack (Transitioned)	Male/ Caucasian/ Mountain West	Academic Affairs/ Law Enforcement	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA in Criminal Justice	Practiced law 0 years Law related experience as a police officer	27 years in Higher Education 2,214 students at community college President, Northland Junior College, 2012- Present VP for Instruction, Northland College, 2008-2012 Dean of Career and Technical Education, Rocky Community Tech College 97-08
Martin, Michelle (Transitioned)	Female/Caucasian/ South	General Counsel	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BS	Practiced law >18 years Private Practice Attorney Property, contract, family, criminal, elder, general law	>12 years in Higher Education 7,449 students at community college Exec. VP, Seaside State College Assistant Vice President and Gen. Counsel, Seaside State College
Parker, Mason (Transitioned)	Male/ Native American/ Southwest	General Counsel	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA	Practiced law 10 years Business and tribal law	>6 years in Higher Education 607 students at community college President, Boomtown Community College
Phillips, James (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ Southeast	General Counsel Elected Legislator	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA	Practiced law 20 years Solo Practitioner Education, business, family and transactional law	9 years in Higher Education 7,449 students at community college President, Central State College Special Counsel for the President, Central State College
Ross, John (Transitioned)	Male/Caucasian/ Southeast	General Counsel	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BA in Accounting	Practiced law 14 years Private Law Practice, 1994-2008 Business/ transactional law	5 years in Higher Education 28,000 students at community college President, Central Community College Executive VP, Central Community College General Counsel, Central CC

Roberts, Joan (No transition)	Female/ African American/ Midwest	Administrative	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate BS in Psychology	Practiced law 0 years No legal experience	7 years in Higher Education 200,000 students at community college VP of Development, Techville Community College
Stevens, Donald (No transition)	Male/ Black African/ Midwest	Academic Affairs	PhD in International Economics / Political Relations <i>Juris</i> Doctorate MBA in Finance and Marketing MA in Law and Diplomacy BS in Eco./ Poli. Sci./ History	Practiced law 0 years No legal experience	23 years in Higher Education 18,758 students at community college President, Motor State Community College, 2007-Present President, Northern College Dean of the Innovation College, University of Ascension VP of Faculty and Instruction, Huntington Community College
Sullivan, Jesse (No transition)	Male/Caucasian/ Midwest	Academic Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MA in Accounting BS in Business Administration	Practiced law 0 years No legal experience	22 years in Higher Education 16,996 students at community college Interim President, Buckeye Community College Ex. VP of Business Affairs, Buckeye Community College Asst. VP of Academic Finance, University of Tornado
Thomas, Grace (Transitioned)	Female/ African American/ South	Student Affairs	<i>Juris</i> Doctorate MA in Student Personnel Administration BA	Practiced law 22 years Solo Practitioner Business, family and probate law	18 years in Higher Education 45,100 students at community college VP, Human Resources, Atomic Community College, 1999-Present Dean of Student Affairs, Western School of Professional Psychology, 1972-1975 Interim Director of Admissions, Beltway University, 1971 – 1972

West, Travis (Transitioned)	Male/ Caucasian Midwest	General Counsel	PhD in Educational Leadership / Policy Studies <i>Juris</i> Doctorate BSS in Political Science	Practiced law >7 years Litigator, Civil and Criminal Attorney, Law Clerk Employment, contract and transactional law	14 years in Higher Education 9,850 students at community college President and CEO, Inver Hills Community College, 2008 - Present Chancellor and CEO, Iowa Valley Community College, 2002 – 2008
York, Beverly (No transition)	Female/Caucasian/ South	Academic Affairs	PhD in Higher Education Leadership <i>Juris</i> Doctorate LLM in Business Law MEd in Higher Education BBA in Acct./ Mgmt./Bus.	Practiced law 0 years No legal experience	25 years in Higher Education 70,524 students at comm. college President, Rocket Community College, 2009-Present President, ABC Technical Community College, 2007-2009 President, Pacific State Community College, 2003-2007 Asst. VP for Academic Services, Fulton University, 2003

Appendix E

Table E1: Major Themes and Findings

Table E1

Major Themes and Findings

Participant Statements and Self-Assessments		Participants Reported /Total Participants
<u>American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Leadership Competencies</u>		
o	ACMH Communication High (includes Writing Skills)	20/20
o	APH Professionalism High	20/20
o	ACLH Collaboration High	11/20
<u>Other Transferable Leadership Skills/Competencies</u>		
o	OA Ability to Analyze and think critically, including risk management	19/20
o	OB Business /entrepreneurial sense	19/20
o	OL Legal expertise/experience	19/20
<u>New AACC Leadership Competency if They Could Add One</u>		
o	NPR Positive Reinforcement or motivation	4/20
o	NSP Solving Problems or problem-solving	4/20
o	NT Teamwork	4/20
<u>Recommendations for Aspiring Higher Education Leaders</u>		
o	RD Earn another formal Degree, e.g., a masters or doctorate in ed.	4/20
o	RL Informally Learn about college operations, culture and lingo	10/20
o	RW Get Work experience at a college	9/20
<u>Career Transition into Community Colleges</u>		
o	TD Transition to make a Difference or for public service	9/16
o	TE Transition to better Environment (education as opposed to Law)	11/16
o	TPS Transition Process Smooth	12/16

References

- Ackerman, R. H., & Maslin-Ostrowski, P. (2002). *The wounded leader: How real leadership emerges in times of crisis*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- American Association of Community Colleges [AACC]. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/About/Who/Pages/default.aspx>
- American Bar Association. (2013). Retrieved from http://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/migrated/marketresearch/PublicDocuments/lawyer_demographics_2013.authcheckdam.pdf
- Arron, D. (1999). *What can you do with a law degree?: A lawyer's guide to career alternatives inside, outside and around the law* (4th edition). Seattle, WA: Niche Press.
- Blanchard, K. H. (1985). *SLII: A situational approach to managing people*. Escondido, CA: Blanchard Training and Development.
- Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. (2005). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bolles, R. N. (2013). *What color is your parachute? 2014: A practical manual for job-hunters and career-changers*. Berkeley, CA: Ten Speed Press.
- Bonner, B. J. (2013). *Leading the charge: A multiple case study of presidential perceptions of essential leadership characteristics for the 21st century community college*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from

<http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1433293534?accountid=10902>

- Boswell, R. A., & Imroz, S. M. (2013). The AACCC leadership competencies: Pennsylvania's views and experiences. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(11), 892-900.
- Buller, J. L. (2006). *The essential department chair*. Bolton, MA: Anker.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Cameron, D. (2013, February 18). Keep the talent pipeline flowing through succession planning. *Community College Week*, p. 4.
- Career Change Ability. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.careerchangeability.com/lawyers/index.html>
- Cejda, B. D., & Jolley, M. R. (2013). Developing leadership competencies in the heartland. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 37(3), 160-167.
- Collins, J. (2001). *Good to great*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.
- Covey, S. (1989). *Seven habits of highly effective people*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Duree, C. A. (2007). *The challenges of the community college presidency in the new millennium: Pathways, preparation, competencies, and leadership programs needed to survive* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from

<http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304856553?accountid=10902>. (304856553)

- Duree, C., & Ebbers, L. (2012). The AACC leadership competencies in action. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 159, 41–52.
- Eddy, P. L. (2010). *Community college leadership: A multidimensional model for leading change*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Eddy, P. L. (2012). A holistic perspective of leadership competencies. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 159, 29–38.
- Elwork, A. (2007). *Stress management for lawyers: How to increase personal & professional satisfaction in the law* (3rd ed.). North Wales, PA: Vorkel Group.
- Evans, M. G. (1970). The effects of supervisory behavior on the path-goal relationship. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, 5, 277-298.
- Floyd, D. L., & Laden, B. V. (2007). Transferring leadership skills: When community college presidents become university professors. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 31(11), 913-932.
- Garza Mitchell, R. L. (2012). Doing the right thing: Ethical leadership and decision making. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 159, 63–71.
- Greenberg, H. (1998). *The lawyer's career change handbook: More than 300 things you can do with a law degree*. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Haney, R. J. (2008). *Illinois community college administrators' perceptions of the American Association of Community Colleges six competencies for community college leaders* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from

<http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304626624?accountid=10902>. (304626624)

Hassan, A. M. (2008). *The competencies for community college leaders: Community college presidents' and trustee board chairpersons' perspectives* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/304460678?accountid=10902>

Hassan, A. M., Dellow, D. A., & Jackson, R. J. (2009). The AACC leadership competencies: Parallel views from the top. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 34(1-2), 180-198.

Heppner, P. P., & Heppner, M. J. (2004). *Writing and publishing your thesis, dissertation and research: A guide for students in the helping professions*. Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thompson Learning.

Kaplin, W. A., & Lee, B. A. (2007). *The law of higher education* (4th ed., Student Version). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons.

Keirse, D. (1998). *Please understand me too ii: Temperament, character, intelligence*. Del Mar, CA: Prometheus Nemesis Books.

Kools, J. M. J. (2010). *Leadership competencies for college leaders of public small, rural, single-campus and large, urban, multiple-campus colleges* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/759372987?accountid=10902>.

- Lewin, K., Lippitt, R., & White, R. K. (1939). Patterns of aggressive behavior in experimentally created social climates. *Journal of Social Psychology, 10*, 271-301.
- Mantis, H. (1997). *Alternative careers for lawyers*. New York, NY: Princeton Review.
- Mathis M. B., & Roueche J. E. (2013, June 24). Preparation of future leaders takes on a new urgency. *Community College Week*, p. 5.
- McCluskey-Titus, P., & Cawthon, T. W. (2004). The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence: Making a transition from student affairs administrator to full-time faculty. *NASPA Journal, 41*(2), 317-335.
- McNair, D. E. (2009). Preparing community college leaders: The AACC core competencies for effective leadership & doctoral education. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(1-2), 199-217.
- McNair, D. E., Duree, C. A., & Ebbers, L. (2011). If I knew what I know now: Using the leadership competencies developed by the American Association of Community Colleges to prepare community college presidents. *Community College Review, 39*(3), 3-24.
- McNair, D. E., & Phelan, D. J. (2012). Reflections from the field: Voices of experience. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 159*, 85-94.
- Merriam, S. B. (2001). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

- Miller, M. W. (2013). *The role of the community college president in fundraising: Perceptions of selected Michigan community college presidents* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/1351382426?accountid=10902>. (1351382426)
- Northhouse, P. (2007). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.passhe.edu/inside/directory/pages/chancellor.aspx>
- Pisapia, J. (2009). *The strategic leader*. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.
- Politico*. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.politico.com/story/2014/01/university-presidents-politicians-101738.html>
- Riggs, J. (2009). Leadership, change and the future of community colleges. *Academic Leadership: The Online Journal*, 7(1), 1-3.
- Schmitz, G. R. (2008). *Leadership preparation and career pathways of community college presidents* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <http://ezproxy.fau.edu/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/194015707?accountid=10902>
- Shakespeare, W. (2005). *The oxford shakespeare: The complete works 2nd edition*. In S. Wells, G. Taylor, J. Jowett, & W. Montgomery, (Eds.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.

- Shults, C. (2001). *The critical impact of impending retirements on community college leadership*. Leadership Series Research Brief No. 1. Washington, DC: American Association of Community Colleges.
- Strausser, J. (1997). *Judgment reversed: Alternative careers for lawyers*. Hauppauge, NY: Barron's Educational Series.
- Time Magazine*. (2009). Retrieved from http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1937938_1937934_1937914,00.html
- Webster's Dictionary Online*. (2011). Retrieved from <http://www.websters-dictionary-online.org/>
- Weisman, I. M., & Vaughn, G. B. (2007). *The community college presidency: 2006*. Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Yin, R. K. (2008). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.