

2015

# Community College Leaders' Experiences in Adapting to Changing Student Demographics

Joyce Hewett  
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# Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Walden University  
2015

Abstract

Community College Leaders' Experiences in Adapting to Changing Student

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by

Joyce Hewett

Dissertation Submitted in Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Organizational Psychology

Walden University

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## Abstract

The demographics of community colleges are rapidly changing. The culture composition of the student population in community colleges has expanded, and includes larger percentages of African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic Americans, and Native Americans than are found in other higher education institutions. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experiences of 10 community college leaders, consisting of 4 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 1 faculty/administrator, in their attempt to adapt to the changing demographics of the student population. Multicultural lens, the conceptual framework for the study, helped guide leaders in assessing their levels of multicultural sensitivity and competence in relation to the culturally diverse student population. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews; these data were then sorted, coded, and analyzed for central themes. The emergent themes—factors in leaders adapting to the changing student demographics—included leaders' educational, personal, work, and leadership experiences. The leaders' lived experiences contributed to them identifying with and understanding the various educational, family, financial, and cultural challenges these students encounter. The results of the study might help administrators, faculty, staff, and trustee boards continue valuing and promoting an environment of inclusion by improving the policies and practices related to student diversity and student success.

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Joyce Parker-Hewett

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## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of my mother, Mary Elizabeth McMillan Parker, who instilled in me a love for education, taught me the importance of accepting God in my life, and impressed upon me that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Additionally, I dedicate this dissertation to the memory of my late uncle, Dr. William Asbury McMillan, who instilled in me the value of education, supported me in my endeavors, and contributed to my self-esteem in telling me that I was somebody important. Finally, I dedicate this dissertation to my brother Thermon L. Parker, Sr., who always gave me sound advice and encouraged me to continue with my educational journey.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

From their inception, community colleges have supported an open access policy to people desiring higher education. That policy, according to Nevarez and Wood (2010), has contributed significantly to the increasingly diverse student population that now characterizes community colleges. But this growing diversity presents leaders with unique challenges that must be addressed in a variety of ways. The intent of this study was to understand the experiences of those leaders as they attempt to adapt and remain relevant.

According to Rifkin (2012), community colleges are not as forthcoming as 4-year institutions in promoting diversity among their leaders. Community colleges have made advances in hiring more minority leaders, but these advances are not proportionate to the rapidly growing diverse student population they serve. The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) (2008) reported that a larger percentage of African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic American, and Native American students, including students with disabilities, are served by community colleges than other higher education institutions. This rapidly changing transition to diversity presents college leadership with significant challenges and tensions related to multicultural sensitivities, communication skills, and learning success strategies. Thus, this study was interested in the lived experiences, adjustments, adaptation, and transformation of community college leaders.

Community colleges do not always follow a planned process in hiring leaders, which may affect how leaders adjust and adapt to the growing diverse student population

(Nevarez & Wood, 2010). Riggs (2009a) noted that community colleges over the past decade have replaced administrative shortages with a progression of interim appointments. According to the American Council on Education (2008), the hiring of full-time community college faculty is decreasing and those that are hired are more mature in age than their former colleagues. Additionally, leadership in community colleges has problems at both ends of the continuum: There are not enough qualified individuals who want to become leaders and too many seasoned leaders are leaving (Riggs, 2009a). Riggs suggested that community colleges might need to concentrate more on hiring for the present instead of the future when addressing the problem of fewer capable candidates.

The ingeniousness of leaders in addressing learning success strategies and the cost-effectiveness of these strategies are important areas in exploring lived experiences. According to Patton (2012), when leaders are calculating funds to help students complete degrees, the cost of degree completion should be included up front, especially when the budgets for college education are tightening, and at the other end of the continuum, student diversity is rapidly increasing. Involving faculty and administrators in the process of increasing the completion of degrees and certificates of all students is crucial to student success. Improving student retention and expectations of success will require time, money, and financial support. Budget limitations can hinder leaders in being innovative in increasing student success (Kocher, 2010). Academic integration, which constitutes the interactions of faculty and students, has directly affected retention rates. A major goal of both universities and community colleges is moving rapidly toward

retention-to-degree institutions, which supports retaining a larger percentage of students until they complete a degree. Thus, leaders in community colleges may continue to be challenged with a myriad of issues such as retaining students, acquiring funding, hiring qualified leaders, and the growing diversity of the student population. These issues prompt the need for a study of community college leader experiences as they attempt to understand and adapt to such a significant transition in their field.

This study has two potential social implications. First, it could encourage leaders in developing cultural competency training for community college leaders and employees. Such training would support leaders' readiness in responding to the needs of the growing diverse student populations and promoting an organizational culture of inclusion. Second, leaders could develop a logical process of integrating the leadership competencies they value into the community college environment. Leaders can serve as agents of change in facilitating understanding of the changing demographics of the student population and creating programs and policies that meet the needs of these students.

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 discusses the nature and scope of the study. Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of the literature and discusses at length main points of the study. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology of the study, including the research questions, data collection, protocols, and guidelines. Chapter 4 consists of an analysis of the data collected, and the results of the study. Chapter 5 includes an overview of the findings, implications, and recommendations for future studies.



## **Background**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has been characterized by changes that affect all organizations and institutions (Eddy, 2010). Community colleges are multifaceted educational institutions and are encountering various leadership challenges, such as securing effective leaders, integrating leadership competencies in the community college environment, promoting leadership development, and addressing an increasingly diverse student population (Eddy, 2010; Nevarez & Wood, 2010; Riggs, 2009b). The diversity and inclusiveness of community colleges is greater than at any other higher education institutions in the United States (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

According to Eddy (2010), a core challenge of community colleges is to balance the demands of students, faculty, staff, community, and stakeholders, which will engage leaders in responding to the changing needs of community colleges. The changes that community colleges undertake must have a purpose that is strategically planned and robustly performed by competent leaders, even though the competencies these leaders value may vary according to the level of the leader. The current leaders in community colleges will require “different skill sets” (p. 5) than before to navigate 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges.

Dembicki (2010) noted that community colleges are pursuing a nationwide goal of assisting an additional 5 million students in completing college by 2020. But community colleges must reallocate their present resources; they cannot rely on new funding, and because the cost of higher education is escalating, students may leave college before degree completion. Community college leaders must learn to refocus and

reallocate resources. Goldric-Rab (2010) asserted that policies community colleges have endorsed will affect their capacity to serve students, and are significant in relation to the growing diverse student population. Community colleges serve more students of color than any other higher education institutions across the United States (Provasnik & Planty, 2008). There is little research in the literature about how leaders are adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, but the issue of diversity continues to be discussed in the areas of education in relation to creating awareness and understanding. Moreover, a challenge of community college leaders may be recognizing the complexity of the diversity issues on their campus and identifying components of diversity (Provasnik & Planty, 2008).

According to Chavez and Weisinger (2008), diversity highlights the composition of the population or demographics, whereas inclusion requires that organizational processes support engagement, involvement, and integration of diversity. Although a diverse group of employees is present in community colleges, these employees may not completely understand the complexity of diversity issues. It is important that leaders understand how they perceive the role of cultural diversity in the community college environment. Leaders who allow others to bring their own diverse style into the campus environment are significant components in recognizing other cultures (Turnbull, Greenwood, Tworoger, & Golden, 2010). Leaders can aid students in becoming more integrated and more persistent in completing their goals by validating the sincere efforts students give to overcoming various cultural challenges (Barnett, 2010). As the cultural setting of community colleges continues to transform—and leaders are being challenged

by this transformation—there is a need to explore the lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics on individual campuses.

Understanding the experience of leaders who are attempting to manage the transformation is the center of this study.

The challenges and changes community colleges are encountering are affecting the institutions' leadership and the competencies leaders value. The increasingly diverse student population may challenge the competencies leaders possess—communication, organization, resource management, and professionalism—as they work for inclusion in the college environment. The AACC asserted that the number of leadership skills required for community college leaders has increased and such factors as the “growing student diversity, advances in technology, accountability demands, and globalization” (p. 1) are key components for consideration in acquiring new skills and knowledge (2010).

In collaboration with a group of community college leaders, the AACC (2010) developed six leadership competencies: organizational strategy, communication, resource management, collaboration, professionalism, and community college advocacy. Competencies are usually considered to be skills, attributes, behavior, and knowledge, which generally include a group of “skills and complementary traits” (Yukl, 2006, p. 201). Due to the changes that community colleges are encountering, McNair (2010) indicated that U.S. community colleges are confronted with a shortage of prepared leaders ready to accept leadership positions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Examining the lived experiences of leaders in relation to the competencies they valued was an additional goal of this study.

### **Problem Statement**

The student population in community colleges is growing rapidly and becoming more diverse. The changing demographics can offer challenges for community college leaders in relation to multicultural sensitivities, communication skills, and learning success strategies. Community colleges are still seen as the lifeblood of higher education and foundational to the success and strength of the communities they serve (Hellyer, 2012).

A phenomenological study was needed to examine the lived experiences of community college leaders and explore how they are adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. This phenomenological research strategy recognized “the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13) and used semistructured interviews to explore common characteristics and meanings.

Community college leaders’ awareness of enrollment shifts, changing admission standards, age differences, gender composition, and racial and ethnic identities of students are significant components in exploring the experiences of leaders adapting to the changing demographics. As the student body diversifies and sociocultural backgrounds change, institutions will be required to do more to create an environment that welcomes students and their diversity (Johnson et al., 2007). Johnson et al. wrote that nontraditional students are left to find a sense of belonging by themselves, and to establish a welcoming environment, it is essential that leaders recognize the importance of adapting to students from diverse backgrounds. Therefore, exploring the meaning community college leaders give to their lived experiences was central to this study. The

American higher education system is serving an ever-changing and growing student population, and that meaning could affect the changing demographics in relation to retention and funding.

According to the literature, the changes community college leaders concentrate on are mainly advancing the academic culture and maintaining strong operations and fiscal environments; little research has been done on the experiences of leaders in adapting to the changing demographics. Leadership competencies are critical to the success of community colleges in promoting diversity and inclusion (AACC, 2010).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of community college leaders in their attempt to adapt to the changing demographics of the student population. It was important to understand those lived experiences that supported the leadership competencies they valued, and the meaning leaders gave them.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population?
2. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value?
3. What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment?
4. What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness?

## **Conceptual Framework**

This phenomenological study was based on the conceptual framework of multicultural lens. According to Delgado and Stefancic's definition (as cited in Cuyjet, Hamilton-Howard, & Cooper, 2011), multiculturalism is defined as a perspective through which "social institutions . . . reflect on many cultures" (p. 151). Cuyjet et al. reported that many colleges and universities desire to sustain or build supportive environments for all students. Upon examining their experiences, community college leaders may seek to discover ways to create multicultural programs and propose funding for diversity issues on their college campus. The increasing diversity of the student population can encourage leaders to become multiculturally competent and incessant advocates of diversity.

## **Nature of the Study**

The phenomenological research method was chosen for this study because the goal of phenomenological research is to construe the performance of people in the social world (Creswell, 2009). How individuals make sense of the social phenomena is consistent with the goal of this study. Examining the experiences of community college leaders was significant in determining how these experiences contributed to leaders enhancing their awareness of multiculturalism in the college environment.

An advantage of qualitative methods is that they produce better understanding of the persons being examined. Data were collected using a semistructured interview approach, interactive process, and open-ended questions. All interview data were compared to the literature on community college leadership and leaders' experiences in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, and I used qualitative

data analysis techniques to analyze interview transcripts, for example, identifying patterns and themes, memoing, clustering patterns and themes, and identifying implications (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009). A thorough analysis of the findings indicated the significance of examining the lived experiences of leaders adapting to the diverse student population, which added to the body of literature. A phenomenological research method helped in developing an in-depth examination of the lived experiences (Creswell, 2009) of community college leaders.

The methodology was a phenomenological study, which was more suitable than other research methodologies to investigate the problem. The qualitative phenomenological research method allows for a purposeful selection of participants and the use of general open-ended questions and involved analyzing their lived experiences. The phenomenological method describes and codes instead of trying to explain or analyze a phenomenon. Qualitative data vary and can consist of observations, excerpts from documents, quotations, interviews, and text and image analysis (Creswell, 2009).

According to Creswell (2007), “qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, and a study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribed to a social or human problem” (p. 37). The phenomenological method is inductive, which involves transcribing the data and coding them into themes. The analysis therefore included collecting the data, organizing them, and using NVivo as the qualitative instrument to sort and code, looking for emerging themes and patterns. The themes and patterns could have been words, phrases, or events gathered from the

interview that I could place into the same group to clarify the phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

### **Definitions**

The following definitions were relevant to the problem and variables addressed in this study.

*American Association of Community Colleges:* Provides support for community colleges in the United States (AACC, 2010).

*Cultural competence:* The respect of other cultural beliefs and attitudes, and a genuine willingness and desire to learn about other cultures (Bhui, Warfa, Edonya, McKenzie, & Bhugra, 2007).

*Epoché:* An ancient Greek word meaning to take a pause or stop that includes adopting the attitude of noninvolvement concerning observation and reasoning and viewing things, people, and events as an initial experience (Moustakas, 1994).

*Transformational leaders:* Leaders who motivate followers to rise above their own self-interests and are proficient in having an insightful and amazing effect on followers (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

### **Assumptions**

This study was based on the following assumptions:

- All questions about leaders' lived experiences were answered truthfully.
- Leaders had knowledge of how to integrate the meaning acquired from their lived experiences into the community college environment.



- All questions about leadership competencies leaders value were answered truthfully.
- Leaders were knowledgeable of the competencies that the community college industry promoted and how these competencies supported them in becoming effective community college leaders.

### **Scope and Delimitations**

The scope and delimitations of this study included several factors. First, the population of this study was limited to community colleges leaders in North Carolina. Second, the leaders selected for the study were based on their title (faculty and administrators), but not every leader who holds these titles was interviewed at every college selected for the study.

The delimitations of the phenomenological qualitative study centered on 10 community college leaders in 4 community colleges in North Carolina. The study included 4 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 1 faculty/administrator, who participated in interviews that involved open-ended interview questions until data attained saturation (Moustakas, 1994). Qualitative research studies usually have smaller sample sizes than quantitative studies because each interview yields an abundance of information to transcribe and consumes an excessive amount of time and expense; however, quantitative studies can also have small sample sizes representing the population under investigation, that is, statistical representation (Creswell, 2009).

### **Limitations**

Potential limitations to the study were that the qualitative design allowed participants to express fully and openly their responses to the questions. Another limitation was the researcher practicing epoché: setting aside her prejudgments, preconceptions, and biases to perceive the experience completely, without being influenced by prior knowledge, beliefs, and theories. A qualitative phenomenological study allows for questioning to occur until acquiring saturation point (Moustakas, 19904). I provided the original response and the interpretation with the results to minimize bias and account for validity. Engaging in the epoché process also served to minimize researcher bias and ensure the validity of the data (Moustakas, 1994). A potential bias that occurred was that the researcher was a former employee of the North Carolina Community College System, but is no longer employed by it and was never employed by any college that was identified in the study. Thus this potential bias was addressed by excluding the community college where I worked. The leadership development of leaders varied according to their position, which affected the experiences they encountered. Some participants in administrative positions had less direct contact with students and their leadership development centered more on supporting leaders who had more direct contact with students.

### **Significance**

The significance of this study was fourfold as it addresses the lived experiences of faculty and administrators in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, how these lived experiences contributed to leadership effectiveness, how

leaders integrated their lived experiences into the community college environment, and how their lived experiences contributed to the competencies they valued.

First, the study identified the lived experiences of community college leaders. Even though their experiences varied according to the leader and title, the meaning given to their experiences indicated support for effective leadership behavior and for the changes that community colleges undertake in educating their students and securing adequate funding. Based on the study, community college leaders gained an understanding in how their lived experiences contributed in adapting to the changing demographics, and whether the meaning they gave to their experiences encouraged leaders in learning to devise new ways of thinking in relation to student retention, student success, funding, and diversity.

Second, the study identified how leaders' lived experiences contributed to their leadership effectiveness. The study confirmed that leaders' effectiveness centered on the success of their students. When students graduate with a degree it adds to the effectiveness of the leaders, but when a student is placed in a job it completes the success story for the student and enhances the effectiveness of the leader.

Third, the study identified how the meaning of the lived experiences of community college leaders can be integrated into the community college environment to support the diverse student population. The study showed that community college leaders might need to examine whether their respective college is meeting the needs of all students including race, age, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and students with disabilities.

Fourth, the study identified how lived experiences of the community college leaders contributed to the competencies they valued. These leadership competencies extend beyond knowledge, skills, and attributes. The leadership competencies that 2-year community college leaders need in supporting the academic community in progressing in and sustaining strong operational and financial environments in advancing the academic culture and maintaining strong operational and fiscal environments were identified.

Students who are identified as diverse or minority without considering other factors may lead to stereotyping and the results may limit the student choices and potential, for example, if minority students are advised only by minority faculty and staff members (Deutsch, Doberstein, & White, 2008). The large number of stereotypes with which minority students were tagged in the last two decades continues to impede the academic progress of culturally diverse students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Recognizing and embracing diversity of students in the community college setting entails more than accepting various groups of people. Deutsch et al. concluded that the word *diversity* often does not highlight the different needs of students. This term often groups people together based on similarities and fails to acknowledge individual priorities and needs. Diversity is often viewed as a color or gender issue, and other differences are disregarded as insignificant. Leaders need to recognize that viewing diversity through the lens of stereotyping and simply continuing to respect cultural differences of their students are outdated. Faculty and administrators embracing diversity may come to understand that transfer students, nontraditional students, Hispanic, African American, Asian, Native American, and international students, even White American students, have individual

needs. Therefore, the term diversity should be viewed to mean *difference* instead of using the term as a universal grouping for students who can be linked with particular minority groups.

Leaders need to examine their experiences because of increased diversity in the student population, progress made in technology, demand for increase in responsibility, and globalization (AACC, 2010). During this self-examination, leaders must ensure they remain abreast of the latest technology which can help their students compete in the workforce. Institutional demands may require leaders to attend professional development training to support them in their increased responsibilities. Leaders' self-examination from a global perspective may encourage students to compete globally for educational opportunities and the workforce. Leaders need to give meanings to their experiences and their meanings may give them the opportunity to examine their individual thoughts and feelings about their experiences. If leaders examine their experiences, it may help them gain understanding of their significant experiences in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. Community colleges must begin to provide a culture that offers access and support to all students in completing a degree (Risley, 2010).

The implication for positive social change—consistent with and delineated by the range of the study—is that policies may be implemented that support cultural competence training for community college leaders and employees. Leaders with diversity experiences can use their experiences to promote cultural diversity in the community college environment. Such leaders can serve as agents of change in facilitating

understanding of the changing demographics of the student population and creating programs and policies that meet the needs of these students.

### **Summary**

Chapter 1 supported the need for examining lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics of their student population, the importance of the meaning given to these experiences in supporting the competencies leaders valued, contributing to leadership effectiveness, and identifying how leaders integrated the meaning of their experiences into the community college environment.

Chapter 1 contained a brief discussion on challenges community colleges leaders encounter in adapting to the increased student diversity. The chapter also included information on the role of culture diversity on community college campuses, the increase in leadership skills that community college leaders need in working with the diversity of the student population, as well as information pertaining to the problem statement, purpose, research questions, conceptual framework, and nature of the study, its assumptions, scope of delimitations, limitations, and significance.

Chapter 2 contains a review of the literature relating to changes in the student population of community colleges. The literature review includes a brief background and history of community colleges, future outlook of community colleges, unique challenges and complexities, leadership competencies, and community college development programs. Chapter 3 includes a description of the qualitative research methodology using a phenomenological design to investigate community college leaders' lived experiences adapting to the changing student demographics. The phenomenological approach

involved obtaining the experiences of the participants through in-depth interviews of 10 participants. Sorting and coding the data helped to identify common themes among the participants. Ethical concerns, including informed consent, were identified to ensure the confidentiality and ethical protection of participants. Chapter 4 contains the findings of the study. The data of the 10 participants were analyzed, transcribed, and coded, producing 10 themes. Chapter 5 interprets the findings presented in Chapter 4, as well as discusses how the findings compared to current research. Chapter 5 also contains the limitations of the study, recommendations for action, recommendations for future research, and the social change implications of the study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this qualitative, phenomenological research study was to examine the lived experiences of community college leaders in their attempt to adapt to the increasingly diverse student population. The focus of the review of literature is community college leaders and a critical analysis of studies pertaining to the various challenges leaders encounter in helping a diverse student population attain an education despite culture, age, gender, and racial differences. Leaders understanding the diversity of their experiences may provide information to this growing population of students from diverse backgrounds opportunity for access to a postsecondary education.

The literature review includes a historical overview of community colleges, future outlook of community colleges, and unique challenges community colleges face. The chapter also includes other research and findings on leadership competencies and community college development programs. The study involved a phenomenological approach to analyze the population under study.

### **Research Strategy**

I conducted a literature search from 2006 through 2013. The following databases were used: Academic Search Premier, Business Source Complete, Education Research Complete, Google Scholar, ProQuest Psychology Journals, ProQuest Education Journals, ABI/INFORM Complete, PsycINFO, ERIC, PsycArticles, and SAGE. Internet sources included web pages of recognized educational organizations (for instance, the American Association of Community Colleges).



The keywords or educational terms used alone or in combination included community colleges, competencies, faculty, community college leaders, students, cultural competence, diversity, education, ethical leadership, leadership, leadership assessments, leadership competencies, leadership theories, North Carolina Community Colleges, student diversity, and transformational. The reference lists from selected articles revealed additional relevant articles.

### **Background and History of Community Colleges**

The history of community colleges has not followed a unified and coordinated path; consequently, this history is as multifaceted as the various institutions that comprise this system. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), a community college is “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (p. 5). The period between 1901 and 1920 is called the Origin Period (Nevarez & Wood, 2010), which was the first period of development for community colleges. As the 20<sup>th</sup> century ushered in new changes and opportunities, higher education institutions changed with the introduction of community colleges, which were first viewed as expanding high schools and then as a component of universities (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). The American community college was structured in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Community colleges expanded into a national network in the 1960s comprising 457 public, community colleges; however, each community college is a distinct educational institution. Community colleges are open admission institutions and traditionally tuition is low, which all community colleges practice. Additionally, community colleges have survived and thrived, and have shown extraordinary resiliency

in becoming institutions offering educational opportunities readily available to all seeking an education. The mission of community colleges is instrumental in shaping the character and value set that relates to the institution, guiding the institution in a definitive path toward achieving its goals. Mission, in this context, is defined as “the process the community college follows to attain its long-term aspiration” (Nevarez & Wood, 2010, p. 4). The mission offers a beacon light for leaders in examining whether or not the views of their students are prevailing in relation to the institution’s mission.

The American Association of Community Colleges represents nearly 1,200 community colleges (AACC, 2010). Moreover, 44% of all high school graduates are enrolled at community colleges in the United States, encompassing 52% of Hispanic students and 43% of African American students. Currently, community colleges are leading other sectors of higher education in the U.S. enrollment by enrolling approximately 46% of all undergraduates in the nation (AACC, 2013). As community colleges continue to define their goals and view colleges as institutions of opportunity, the growing diverse student population and leadership competencies are areas that will require collaborative efforts among leaders, students, staff, and community members (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). However, each community college operates separately from the other and is less connected through the sharing of goals and services. Community colleges are being challenged as the demographics of the student population shift and they encounter an increasing number of students from different backgrounds and different experiences. Exploring the lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the rapidly growing diverse student population can impact leaders’ awareness

and understanding of these demographic changes. Currently, there is a gap in the research pertaining to the lived experiences of community college leaders and their attitudes and perceptions of the growing diverse student population.

Wallin (2010) reported that the roles of leaders in community colleges are changing throughout the campus environment, and the continuing complexities of society will affect how leadership will be refined. Wallin further stated that the past success of community colleges has been remarkable, but whether they continue to be successful will require community college leaders to be more alert concerning the cultural environment of their institutions. Managers and leaders will face enormous and accelerating changes because situations confronting organizations today are different from the past, requiring new organizational methods (Brown, 2011). Brown stated that organizations are never totally stagnant, they exist among other entities. Organizations interact on a continuous basis with external forces, which include, but are not limited to: “competitors, customers, governments, stockholders, suppliers, and society” (p. 3). The competencies and skills that leaders possess are usually influenced by their leadership experiences and the meaning that they attribute to them.

Competencies are skills, and they generally include a group of particular skills and complementary traits (Yukl, 2006). Similarly, Duree (2007) defined the term competency as essential knowledge, aptitude, or proficiency in exact areas of expertise or skills. Defining competencies in the framework of knowledge, skills, behaviors, and attributes may prove useful in determining their significance for effective leadership and achieving necessary organizational results (Smith & Wolverton, 2010). Smith and

Wolverton asserted that leaders in higher education must assist in balancing the interests of their various constituents and faculty even though the interests maybe conflicting.

According to Haviland and Rodriguez-Kiino (2009), the student population at community colleges is becoming increasingly diverse ethnically and culturally, even though the composition of faculty members has remained the same. Conway (2009) indicated that policies community colleges establish should support and not hinder the diverse student population in pursuit of higher education. In the quest for higher education community colleges will be the focus for this growing diverse student population according to Conway; thus, providing access and inclusion to postsecondary education for a growing population of students with diverse backgrounds has become a necessity. As the community college population continues to grow, addressing the needs of the growing diversity of students in this growth process is needed (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009).

According to AACC (2010), community colleges are distinguished as more diverse and inclusive than any other higher education institution in the United States, serving greater percentages of “African Americans, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, and students with disabilities” (p. 1). Women comprise the majority of the students in these groups. However, progress is slow in identifying and employing leaders (presidents, vice presidents, chief academic officers, deans, department chairs, and faculty) who embody the changing demographics of the student population and the various communities in which the colleges serve.

Faculty commitment to students is to teach all students, inclusive of nontraditional students and individuals who are acquiring access to higher education. Even though community colleges have made gains in hiring more minorities as faculty members, the gains are not representative of the growing diverse student population they serve. Educational demands of an open access institution can be exasperating and will entail further attention as the community college student population becomes more diverse. Endeavoring to meet societal demands for educational opportunity for all students who can benefit from higher education is not an easy task. The future of community colleges providing a path for educational opportunity is contingent upon community college leaders, and possibly the meaning they attribute to their lived experiences (Rifkin, 2012). Rifkin further asserted that a diverse faculty in community colleges provides an effective and evident support system for the changing demographics.

Similarly, the AACC stated that it has a definite commitment of including diversity in its policies, programs, and relationships, support maintaining and promoting a culture of equity and inclusion. The AACC asserts that in a self-governing society it is fundamental that the need for diversity is supported and diversity augments the educational experience. This organization further asserts that diversity should value and embrace differences and is needed amid colleges and individuals (AACC, 2012). Additionally, addressing the lived experiences of leaders as it relates to diversity in an organization will require that leaders become aware of the impact they have on others. Moreover, managing diversity will require leaders to adopt an approach that is sensitive to race and ethnic differences and consider the background of all individuals. Diversity in

organizations may be maintained by a set of practices that will address issues relating to fair treatment, inclusion, and the commitment of leadership to diversity (Visagie & Linde, 2010).

In an attempt to manage today's organizations in this fast-paced world, managers and leaders will find that failing to recognize the changing environment may create problems for them (Brown, 2011). Brown noted that a substantial number of organizations are confronted with global and domestic competitors. Even though many organizations have embraced the rapid changes in information technology, adapting to the social and cultural settings has not been as swift. Change transpires so rapidly and makes change unavoidable in an environment that dictates change; and, organizations adjusting to the changes they are confronted with make it difficult. Moreover, the technological, social, and economic environments are changing rapidly, and organizations will survive only if they can anticipate and react in an effective manner to these changing demands.

### **The Future Outlook of Community Colleges**

Encouraging collaborative efforts among students, staff, faculty, and community members are areas that need addressing by community college leaders. Community college leaders must assess their programs and personnel services, continuously assuring that the changing needs of the students are addressed. Additional areas to address are varying resources, rapport with faculty, and uncertainty of fiscal resources, constantly changing community needs, and varying support from federal, state, and local agencies.

Even with these challenges, leaders must demonstrate comprehensive leadership in the changing community college environment (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Perrakis and Campbell (2009) indicated the importance of diversity in community college leadership and the prevailing shortage of underrepresented groups, even though community colleges employ more minorities in top-level leadership positions than 4-year institutions. Eddy (2010) asserted that it is necessary for leaders in community colleges to acquire an array of competencies, “some skill based, some personality based, and others learned through years on the job” (p. 91). According to Eddy, the development and execution of organizational strategy is a core AACC competency critical to the administration of community colleges. The AACC (2010) stated that a leader competent in organizational strategy is one who improves the quality of the institution, plans for quality improvement of the institution, ensures that the organization survives for many years, encourages the success of all students, and maintains the integrity of the community college mission as it relates to organizational knowledge, its surroundings, and how it will move forward.

Cooper (2009) indicated that educational leaders must be better prepared and encouraged to accept responsibility for “serving a diverse and changing public” (p. 695). Likewise, students prefer leaders who are willing to become cultural change agents amid the demographic changes. Cooper challenged educational leaders to implement cultural work centering on expanding their cultural knowledge, participating in evaluation and confrontation of cultural diversity, and framing alliances with people of diversity encouraging cultural acknowledgment, educational equity, and social justice. Similarly,

the AACC organizational strategy competency indicated that leaders will illustrate this competency when they systematically assess and react to the culture that is prevalent in the organization, varying demographic, and the needs of the students and community in relation to economic, political, and public health (AACC, 2010). Chin and Sanchez-Hucks (2007) noted that incorporating the dimensions of diversity in an organizational environment is both significant and complex.

According to Zarate and Burciaga (2010), the significant change needed in the educational system in America is the opportunity for Latino students to acquire increased accessibility to higher education. Latinos comprise 16% (U.S. Census, 2011) of the population in the United States and are the leading non-White ethnic group. Latinos are represented less in higher education than any other racial groups and simultaneously enrollment rates are growing at an accelerated rate compared to other racial groups in the nation (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010). Similarly, Fry (2011) indicated that the increased growth of Latino students in higher education has occurred in the community college sector. Comparably, the AACC collaboration competency stated “an effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college mission” (2010, p. 6). Leaders are responsible for guiding the college in achieving its goals and adhering to its mission and vision. As a result of the community college open access mission, the diversity among students has been supported. However, as community colleges look to the future, their



capacity to remain committed to the open access mission will be challenged (Nevarez & Woods (2010).

### **Unique Challenges and Complexities**

Community colleges are open access institutions offering opportunities to all students desiring to obtain a postsecondary education, but the open access rule is currently being challenged. The demographics of the student population in community colleges are changing, and it is critical that faculty and administrators prepare their institutions to address the needs of the growing student diversity (Nevarez & Woods, 2010). Community college leaders are continuously seeking guidance in learning to advance their leadership skills and effectiveness (Eddy, 2010). These leaders include presidents, chief academic officers, vice presidents, deans, department chairs, and faculty.

Strong emphasis is placed on community college presidents as critical to the continued success of the institutions, but the vice presidents, deans, faculty, and midlevel administrators have the deepest influence on how the college functions and activities the organization selects (Eddy, 2010). Even though the institutions employ a diverse group of people, this does not mean that the complexity of the diversity issues is understood. The challenge to faculty and administrators is to move out of their comfort zone and to be accepting of the fact that there is more than one way to allow others to bring their own authenticity and creativity to the community college environment (Turnbull et al., 2010).

Faculty and administrator awareness that others can bring authenticity and creativity to the community college environment suggests that they understand the importance of how their experiences can assist them in supporting the increased diversity

of the student population. Exploring the attitudes and perceptions of leaders in relation to culture differences was an interest of this study. Eddy (2010) suggested that cultural competency and the AACCC leadership competencies are connected; comparably, cultural competence infuses each of the six competencies but the emphasis of this phenomenon is delineated vaguely in these six leadership competencies. Similarly, the collaboration competency can be illustrated through community college leaders (a) embracing diverse values, ideas, and styles of communication; (b) expressing the relevancy of cultural competency as universal; and (c) calling for students, faculty, staff, and other constituents to become involved and committed to this ideal.

The Hispanic and immigrant populations are progressively growing, fused with the issue of diversity (Rice, 2007). Eddy (2010) indicated that cultural competency is a significant component relevant to community college leadership, and is not specifically identified with the six competencies developed by the AACCC. Cultural competency, according to Bhui et al. (2007), is showing respect for other cultural beliefs and attitudes, and a genuine willingness and desire to learn about other cultures. It is important that new leaders purposely scan their college environment relevant to what is recognized as a value in the culture of the organization and manage in a manner that these values are respected (Eddy, 2010). Specifically, leaders acquiring training in cultural competence may be seen as beneficial in guiding their institution toward an understanding of the growing diverse student population (Eddy, 2010).

Riggs (2009b) indicated that community colleges are embedded in obsolete ways of managing, having defunct organizational delivery methods and outmoded services that

attempt to support students and the institution. Riggs further suggested that community colleges are simply powerless in functioning as sustainable egalitarian forces and maintaining the economy for a transforming population, a transforming world, and the quickly progressing future. The organizational changes that community colleges undertake must have a purpose, must be strategically planned, and must be robustly performed by competent leaders. Thus, leaders who are capable of guiding community colleges into the future should think differently and devise new ways of thinking about leadership and leadership competencies and the changing demographics of the student population.

Riggs' (2009b) research detailed the urgency for community college leaders to implement an institutional culture where organizational innovation and transformation become the responsibility of every employee. Because organizational transformation is significant for the survival of community colleges, instead of a preference or an option, the increasingly diverse student population warrants inclusion in the organizational transformational process. Leadership competencies place emphasis on the ability of leaders in influencing others to work together in achieving organizational objectives. The leadership competencies that organizations maintain are constructing and repairing relationships, promoting interaction among people, and listening (Visagie, Linde, & Havenga, 2011). Leaders set the tone and expectations for how diversity will be managed in an organization by their behavior, messages they share with members of the organization, and decisions they make (Hays-Thomas, Bowen, & Boudreaux, 2012). Hays-Thomas et al. suggested that values, knowledge, and skills are significant in

working with diversity. Leaders may be required to consider diversity in their organizational goals and recognize how diversity may contribute to achieving these goals. Leaders have a profound influence over organizational policy and structure, which puts them in a position to guide members in a refined level of collaboration. The effectiveness of diversity in an organization is facilitated when its members value diversity, flexibility is the norm, and members develop new ways of doing things that represent inclusion.

Employers are requesting that students have some global or international experience that prepares them for work in the global economy. For this purpose, community colleges undertake this concern with diligence by allowing community college students to enroll in study abroad programs, supporting study by foreign students on community college campuses, and ensuring that the global student initiative is a campuswide effort. The awareness of this demanding global initiative may cause community colleges leaders to consider the importance of valuing all cultures in their institution (Riggs, 2009b). The student population in community colleges is becoming more diverse and the presence of different cultural values will continue to be important facets in community college leadership.

According to Conceicao and Altman (2011), leaders guide the culture of an organization and create the manner in which people interact within the organization. Advocacy is an AACC competency that supports understanding culture in an organization and is illustrated through the integration of diversity, equity, and academic distinction in campus relationships. It encourages equity, accessibility, training, knowledge, and innovation as fundamental objectives for the institutions, and pursues

appreciation for how these changes will eventually assist in dialogue with every stakeholder (AACCC, 2010). Delineating the role of culture as a separate category in the AACCC competencies is debatable, but the role of culture has descriptive implications within some of the six leadership competencies. Eddy (2010) indicated that examples of cultural competency in the AACCC competencies emphasize three different viewpoints: (a) assess and respond to culture in relation to organizational strategies, (b) embrace a culture with respect to diversity and position within a global society, and (c) make available channels to reflect and respect culture overall. The role, equity, and importance of cultural competency in higher education research are missing. Collaboration, another AACCC competency, addressed the term cultural competence in stating that leaders need to display cultural competence comparative to a universal society (AACCC, 2010).

When considering variables that may influence student success, Burns (2010) indicated that community college faculty and administrators agree that open access institutions refine the manner in which leaders support students committed to obtaining a degree. Burns further suggested that leaders refrain from being selective in supporting students in achieving their goals. Many students served by community colleges present challenges because a number of them possess characteristics that are negatively correlated to educational attainment. According to Biswas (2006), these characteristics include home care for children, single parenting, becoming financially independent, delaying enrollment after high school graduation, being first in their family to attend college, commuting, not acquiring a high school diploma, part-time attendance at college, and full-time and off-campus work.

Community colleges face institutional challenges beyond measuring the performance rates of their students because they have institutional characteristics that impact the success of students such as the size of the institution, student diversity, number of part-time students attending, part-time faculty, and expenditures. Additionally, community college students' commitments and goals are more extensive than the educational research community understands. The ability of researchers to evaluate the data generated about student success is hampered by the complexities of community colleges (Burns, 2010).

Since the publication of the AACCC's six leadership competencies, community colleges are facing other challenges. Community colleges are encountering a period of limited resources, which are stretched in different directions by multiple constituents. It is important for community colleges to overcome many barriers, such as government regulations, relationship to communities, and funding (Cain & Picquest, 2011). According to McNair, Duree, and Ebberts (2011), the competency domains included an extensive range of skills and the authors suggested that additional knowledge of fundraising, supervision of building projects, and knowledge in the management of bonds are necessary.

Nevarez and Wood (2010) reported that community colleges are undergoing an accelerated paradigm shift, and their mission and vision require reexamining. It is necessary that community colleges ensure that their mission and vision are aligned with meeting the growing needs of their constituents. Community colleges are the vanguard of an increasing financial crisis because of the reduction in state funding. It is imperative

that leaders identify and accept the colossal challenges confronting these institutions. Moreover, community colleges are depending more on fundraising to remain self-sufficient (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

The Obama administration announced a plan in July 2009 to support community colleges on the national level in graduating 5 million more students than previously by 2020. The Obama administration was committed to providing \$9 billion dollars in federal grants to community colleges, which would aid them in obtaining this goal. According to Nevarez and Wood (2010), this funding may come with strict standards regarding degree completion, preparing graduates for the workforce, and “career placement since many public leaders (e.g., government, education) are critical of the community colleges’ success in graduating students” (p. 282). Moreover, this assessment of community colleges implied that community colleges are adhering to the mission, which entails serving the needs of their local communities, a charge that resounds on a national level (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Leaders’ responsibilities to students include confirming that the mission of their respective institution is pertinent to the present needs of the growing diverse student population. Community college leaders remaining supportive of the mission of their institution may lead to a basic shift in the way community colleges are funded. Currently, community colleges are funded by state and local funds based on student enrollment; however, the guidelines for new federal grants could change. The federal government may consider funding community colleges based on the number of students that graduate instead on enrollment (Field, 2011). However, meeting the needs of students through

comprehensive programming can be difficult, especially when student needs are incongruent. A unique challenge for community colleges is meeting the needs of the growing diverse student populations amid dwindling resources.

The AACC is leading the evaluation of community colleges through its two-phase 21<sup>st</sup>-Century Initiative in response to President Obama's challenge to community colleges in educating an "additional five million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by 2020" (Kent, 2012, p. 2). On April 12, 2012, the AACC released a report that called for dramatic changes to community colleges in America to ensure that America remains competitive. The report, *Reclaiming the American Dream: A Report From the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Commission on the Future of Community Colleges*, outlined seven specific recommendations for reforming the nation's community college system, emphasizing the "Three Rs of reform: Redesign, Reinvest, and Reset" (Kent, 2012, p. 1). These three Rs entail revamping educational experiences of students, redistributing institutional positions, and repositioning the organization to encourage motivation for the success of students and institution. The seven recommendations:

1. Increase completion rates of community college credentials (certificates and associate degrees) by 50% by 2020, while preserving access, enhancing quality, and eradicating attainment gaps associated with income, race, ethnicity, and gender.
2. Dramatically improve college readiness: By 2020, reduce by half the numbers of students entering college unprepared for rigorous college-level work, and



double the rate of students who complete developmental education programs and progress to successful completion of related freshman-level courses.

3. Close the American skill gaps by sharply focusing career and technical education on preparing students with the knowledge and skills required for existing and future jobs in regional and global economies.
4. Refocus the community college mission and redefine institutional roles to meet 21<sup>st</sup> century educational and employment needs.
5. Invest in support structures to serve multiple community colleges through collaboration among institutions and with partners in philanthropy, government, and the private sector.
6. Target public and private investments strategically to create new incentives for educational institutions and their students and to support community college efforts to reclaim the American Dream.
7. Implement policies and practices that promote rigor, transparency, and accountability for results in community colleges. (as cited in Kent, 2012, p. 2).

The AACC's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Commission indicated that community colleges give consideration to the way they work and their roles because these institutions perform a critical task in confirming that the American population is highly educated, which is essential to the growth of America's economy. The report from Phase 2 of AACC's 21<sup>st</sup> Century Initiative delineated information in relation to how community colleges may educate "additional five million students with degrees, certificates, or other credentials by 2020" (Kent, 2012, p. 2). In September 2012, members of the AACC 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Initiative performance teams began structuring strategies concerning how 2-year colleges can merge the suggestions featured in AACC's *Reclaiming the American Dream: Community College and the Nation's Future* report in the community college environment (Dembicki, 2012). The study referenced above will include AACC's leadership competencies that were developed by community college professionals. According to McNair (2010), these competencies are useful for both leaders and institutions.

### **Leadership Competencies**

Community colleges are presently encountering leadership changes and challenges that have not occurred since the pervasive expansion of 2-year colleges in the 1960s (Eddy, 2010). Eddy further stated that community college leaders are continuously seeking guidance concerning the development of their leadership skills and leadership effectiveness. According to the AACC (2010), leaders learning how to integrate the six leadership competencies in the community college environment need a new set of leadership skills. However, an exclusive and established body of knowledge for community college leaders does not exist, a result of each institution's multifaceted and comprehensive mission (Eddy, 2010). Given the amount of research on leadership and the commonality that exists from one study to another (e.g., Eddy in 2010, McNair in 2010), elucidating the specific leadership skills required for community college leaders remains vague in the literature (Eddy, 2010).

The increasing turnover of community college leaders prompted the AACC (2010) to develop a competency-based framework for present and future leaders to

measure their leadership development and ready them for top-level leadership positions in community colleges (Eddy, 2010). As a component of its “Leading Forward” initiative, the AACC developed six leadership competencies (Eddy, 2010).

Hassan, Dellow, and Jackson (2010) agreed that the six leadership competencies need additional examination with an expanded community college audience. According to Richards (2008), a vast number of organizations in the United States have adopted a competency-based framework for developing their leaders and prior research (e.g., Hawke in 2000, Hodge in 2007, as cited in Richards) has affirmed that this is the fundamental policy. McNair et al. (2011) emphasized that community college leaders can utilize the competencies the AACC developed as an outline for administrative teams relating to “recruiting, hiring, evaluating, and ongoing development of executive-level administrators” (p. 18).

The W. K. Kellogg Foundation gave the AACC a grant name, “Leading Forward,” which addressed the needs of community colleges nationally. The AACC hosted a series of leadership summits comprising diverse constituent groups creating unanimity; indicating specific knowledge, values, and skills that community college leaders need; and ascertaining a superlative way to develop and support leaders. The ACT, Inc. submitted an “AACC commissioned report, *A Qualitative Analysis of Community College Leadership* from the Leading Forward Summits” in July 2004 (AACC, 2010, p. 1). The report presented the AACC with substantial qualitative data delineating an expanded outline of the competencies. The AACC surveyed participants of the leadership summits and members of the Leading Forward National Advisory Panel.

The survey response rate of 76% was an overwhelming indication that the six leadership competencies are required competencies for community college leaders. Consensus of the survey respondents reported that the leadership competencies were particularly or exceedingly essential to community college leaders performing effectively, which supports the validity of the competencies outlined by the Leading Forward initiative. The AACC Board of Directors unanimously approved the six leadership competencies on July 9, 2005 (AACC, 2010).

Moreover, each competency is expansive, definitive, and extends beyond leadership trust (Eddy, 2010). Eddy suggested that community college leaders must continuously reflect on their actions and organizational outcomes to enhance components of their leadership that are positive, acquiring new leadership competencies when the opportunity is presented. Eddy further stated that the backgrounds of community college leaders are dissimilar, they come from different places, they have different individual experiences and beliefs, and they handle challenging situations differently.

The evolving research (e.g., Hassan et al., 2009; McNair, 2010) recommends widespread support for the integration of these competencies in the community college leadership environment. Eddy (2010) stated that cultural competence should be included as a significant competency in relation to the six leadership competencies community college leaders agreed as essential to leadership. Eddy further suggested that cultural competency is mentioned infrequently in the research by avoiding its inclusion in leadership competencies, and awareness and support of this phenomenon among

community college leaders are vague to unknown. The six leadership competences are outlined below with additional explanation from one other researcher.

### **Organizational Strategy**

Skills in organizational strategy are significant to the operation of community college because of the continuing complexities of the institutions. A leader competent in organizational strategy, according to the AACCC, is one who advances the excellence of the institution in a strategic manner, protects the overall condition of the institution, ensures that all students succeed, and maintains the mission of the community college in relation to understanding the organization, its surroundings, and potential trends (AACCC, 2010). Eddy (2010) indicated that the organizational strategy competency's basic concern is with the alignment of management issues that concern process, personnel, and approach, which can lead to creating a positive organizational culture of inclusion.

### **Resource Management**

The manner in which resources are managed is closely related to organizational strategy. Resource management, according to the AACCC leadership competency, requires that successful leaders in community colleges fairly and justly maintain personnel, procedures, and data including material and fiscal resources to accomplish the mission, vision, and objectives of the institution. The various components in this competency include the capability to oversee organizational operations and personnel competently, require selective funding allotments, keep accurate records, and search for innovative funding sources (AACCC, 2010). Additionally, the way leaders address these resource challenges will differ (Eddy, 2010).

**Communication**

Communication is crucial within a community college and is a significant core competency for leaders. Effective leaders in community colleges utilize distinct listening, verbalizing, and writing skills that will employ straightforward, open communication throughout the college environment, support the premise that all students will succeed, and maintain the mission of the community college (AACC, 2010). Verbal and nonverbal communications are significant components of effective communication on the college campus. Additionally, the communication process includes leaders communicating with search committees, faculty, and staff in forums and all students regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, and disabilities (Eddy, 2010).

**Collaboration**

Colleges are often asked to accomplish mutual goals, and these collaborative efforts are increasing. In addition, collaboration entails working within the college in a collegial and complementary manner. The collaboration competency stated that effective community college leaders continue open, supportive, reciprocally useful, and moral domestic and outside affiliations that foster diversity, encourage overall student success, and maintain the mission of the community college (AACC, 2010). Therefore, leaders who are skillful in negotiating between parties are able to foster meaningful, collaborative efforts (Eddy, 2010).

**Community College Advocacy**

Leaders in community colleges are summoned to be advocates for their institutions, specifically in relation to budget cuts the educational systems face. An

effective community college leader comprehends, entrusts, and supports the mission, vision, and objectives of the community college. Leaders' knowledge of the mission and supporting education are significant components in adhering to this competency (AACC, 2010). Additionally, leaders keeping the needs of the college as a precursor in policy discussions may do a better job of securing financial and other avenues of support (Eddy, 2010).

### **Professionalism**

Leadership effectiveness is viewed from the perspectives of leaders serving as role models and evaluating their ability regarding how they represent their college. The competency stated that effective leaders in community colleges manage in a just manner to implore exceptional values for others and self, indicating answerability for continued viability of the college and community they serve (AACC, 2010). Eddy (2010) emphasized that transformational leadership is a critical component to the community college leaders' professionalism; this type leadership allows the leader to assess individual improvements and recognize that work–life balance integration is significant. The expectation is that leaders supporting this competency will participate in professional development programs and assume appropriate leadership roles within the college.

### **Community College Development Programs**

The demands by community college leaders attending development programs are significant, and community colleges are faced with such issues as: (a) operating under limited budgets, (b) travel funds are unrealistic budget line items, or (c) time away from the institution is difficult. The participation of community college leaders in national

leadership programs is low due to cost and duration of the programs. In the United States, a significant number of organizations have adapted a competency-based framework in developing their leaders and prior research has affirmed that this is the fundamental policy (Eddy, 2010).

The lived experiences of community college leaders are important in relation to understanding their roles and duties in the college environment. Therefore, research on leadership development supporting an empirical foundation is increasing (Eddy, 2010). Organizations are faced with rapid changes which are impacted by globalization, diversity, and managerial challenges. In examining the lived experiences of community college leaders, such leaders may be able to determine whether they have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge needed for success in their positions. Organizations are aiding leaders in coping effectively with these challenges, and committing to invest in educating and training their leaders (Day, 2008). The AACC (2010) supported professional development principles under the organizational strategy that community college leaders:

- Solve problems, become excellent decision makers, and strategic planners in which data-driven facts and verified procedures from stakeholders inside and outside of the organization are utilized; and
- The mission, systems, and resources are positioned in accordance with the institution.

In addition, the AACC (2010) supported professional development for leaders under the communication competency, which includes:



- Distribute and maintain policies and approaches;
- Listen vigorously to recognize, realize, evaluate, connect, and perform; and
- Develop confidence and react sensibly and discreetly.

Phenomenological inquiry will be the methodology used for this study, in which lived experiences of community college leaders will be examined as they relate to leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, in addition to how the leaders' lived experiences will contribute to the competencies they value.

### **Literature Related to Methodology**

Phenomenological inquiry using a semistructured interview approach was the methodology selected for this study, which helped the researcher to identify the lived experiences of faculty and administrators in four community colleges as it related to leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the student population.

Phenomenological inquiry “identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2009, p. 13). The researcher learned how community college faculty and administrators described, in their own words, lived experiences they reported as significant to the changing demographics of the student population. Additionally, the researcher audiotaped and transcribed interviews, and reflected on the conversations and experiences of leaders (Baker, Jensen, & Kolb, 2005) through their position as community college leaders. A more in-depth discussion of the methodology is presented in Chapter 3.

A concentration on shared experiences of leaders instead of on nominal social groups may be viewed as a suitable and useful avenue in achieving goals and refining an

understanding of cultural differences. When the concentration is on the nominal group, more significant cultural processes may be overlooked (Bergey & Kaplan, 2010). According to Wygal (2006), shared experiences provide an opportunity for leaders to enter into dialogue. Leaders can benefit from sharing experiences, recognizing that each has valuable resources which may go unnoticed unless sharing is encouraged. The focal point of Wygal's research was on senior leaders sharing more than research findings with their faculty, but emphasized creating collegial dialogue. The academic environment found value through the shared experiences of senior leaders relevant their own ability to respond and develop professionally. Additionally, Herbert-Swartz and McNair (2010) indicated that a refined set of skills or competencies is required to operate successfully in community colleges. The authors further suggested that leaders apply creativity in the community college environment and creativity alone may not be teachable, but it can be encouraged through sharing experiences and observing others. McNair's (2010) research concerning other competencies that can be obtained or expanded through community college development programs included the following: acquiring resources, advancing the institution, fund raising, tactical thinking, mentoring, community development, management, supporting diverse populations, technology, and using data in decision making. Many of these suggested competencies were not included in the AACCC's six leadership competencies.

### **Summary, Discussion, and Conclusion**

Higher education in the U.S. is experiencing more cultural diversity than ever before in its history. Thus, it is vital that members of the campus communities,

particularly students, faculty, and staff, are able to communicate effectively across cultural differences (Gayle, 2009). The leadership skills currently required for community college leaders have expanded because of the growing student diversity, globalization, accountability demands, and advances in technology. The AACC supports the premise that leadership can be learned through experiences, the aptitude of the leader, and the leaders' exposure to leadership theories. Learning leadership is a lifelong process and is influenced by the maturity level of the leaders and their development process (AACC, 2012).

Faculty and administrators at community colleges are faced with multifaceted issues and challenges. Understanding their inner selves, adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, knowing how the meaning of their lived experiences impact leadership effectiveness, and being aware of the competencies they valued were some of these issues. The primary purpose of this study was examining the lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. It is important to gain an understanding of how lived experiences of community college leaders affect the future of community colleges and the growing diverse student population.

The changing demographic landscape of higher education and America must be addressed and community college leaders, in examining their lived experiences, can bring understanding in addressing this change. The National Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Research in Education (2011) stated that:

The changing demography of our nation, which has as its fastest growing groups, people of color, immigrants, and English Language Learners must be at the forefront of higher education discussions and are a critical component of efforts to secure America's future. The importance of equity in America's higher education agenda cannot be overstated.... Resolving the inequality in higher education and diversity is not only an essential component of the democratic mission of higher education, but a necessary one considering that America is experiencing one of the most rapid demographic shifts in history. (p. 4)

Considering the globalization of America's society, diversity needs to be abstracted as an asset instead of a deficit. The United States is at the crossroads of tremendous demographic changes, and it is imperative that the American higher education respond. Leaders in community colleges will be challenged concerning their responses to these changes.

According to Dreachslin (2007), diversity is viewed as multidimensional. It entails more than the usual dialogue about racial, ethnic, and gender identities, and such factors as "sexual orientation, generation, social class, psychical ability, family, religion, professional, political, and other personal objectives" (p. 8) are crucial to consider. It is important that community college leaders continue to perform a cultural analysis of their institution and the environment in which it functions.

### Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to examine the lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. In order to address this issue, the phenomenological research strategy was used to identify the essence of participants' experiences. Chapter 3 describes the methods and procedures for collecting and analyzing data from a sample of community college leaders, using phenomenological semistructured interviews.

The chapter first provides a discussion of the phenomenological research tradition, role of the researcher, and research methods employed. The next section identifies the data collection instrument, interview protocol, recruitment of participants, and data collection plan. The final section provides information about trustworthiness and ethical procedures.

#### **Research Design and Rationale**

The research design connects the philosophy, the strategies of inquiry, and precise methods of research (Creswell, 2009). Creswell stated that researchers need to consider the philosophical worldview suppositions they bring to a study, the strategy of inquiry that is connected to the researcher's worldview, and the precise methods of research that turn the approach into action. Qualitative research was the approach used for this study. The preferred methods used in qualitative inquiries are narrative interviews, biographical research, group discussion, and observation. Huber et al., (2007) suggested that qualitative methods offer to the field of psychology the development of the degree of research questions that psychological projects are able to undertake; the opportunity for

contextualized research questions is probable, and this method is considerably more exploratory in relation to the complex and socially entrenched analyses of psychological phenomena. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), qualitative research employs words or open-ended questions. It allows the researcher to investigate and comprehend the meaning individuals or groups give to a social or human condition. This process entails evolving questions, and the research questions begin to operationalize the conceptual framework, and the framework includes a combination of clear research questions.

### **Research Questions**

Research questions identify components of an “empirical domain that researchers want to explore, and they may be general or particular, descriptive or explanatory” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 23), and may be constructed at the beginning of the research or later into the research. I framed the following questions for the research study:

1. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population?
2. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value?
3. What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment?
4. What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness?

### **Phenomenological Research Tradition**

The empirical phenomenological approach encompasses a return to experience, and complete descriptions will be achieved, providing the foundation for a “reflective structural analysis that portrays the essence of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13).

Moustakas defined “phenomenology, ethnography, grounded research theory, hermeneutics, empirical phenomenological research, and heuristic research as the five human science research models” (p. 13) within the qualitative tradition of research.

Segments of these models have common features:

1. The value of qualitative designs and methodologies are recognized, studies of human experiences that are not open through quantitative approaches.
2. The completeness of the experience instead of focusing only on its objects or parts.
3. The meanings and fundamental natures of experience instead of dimension and details.
4. The narratives of experience entailing first-person descriptions in familiar and recognized discussions and interviews.
5. The data of experience is regarded as essential in accepting human behavior and as support for scientific examinations.
6. The questions and problems are formulated that reveal the significance, participation, and individual dedication of the researcher.

7. The experience and behavior are viewed as an integrated and indivisible association of subject and object and of components and total. (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13)

An alternative to seeking objective answers or testing a hypothesis, the study involved participants in interviews to obtain their verbal accounts of the lived experiences they found to be important. These experiences included adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, contributing to leadership effectiveness, integrating their lived experiences into the community college environment, and contributing to the competencies they value. The researcher was objective, and did not assume that there was a fixed body of knowledge or facts about lived experiences of leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. The researcher sought to identify whether lived experiences of all leaders in the community colleges identified in the study were the same, and the study assumed that the reality for community college leaders is socially constructed. Creswell (2009) opines that social constructivists embrace assumptions in which individuals strive for understanding of the world in which they live and work, developing particular meanings of their experiences. By seeking to learn how community college leaders describe, in their own words, the experiences they report being significant in relation to the changing demographics of the student population, the study utilized a semistructured interview approach, and ascertained the meaning of the conversations and experiences of the leaders.

Moustakas (1994) reported that it is essential that four major processes are present before conducting phenomenological research: epoché, phenomenological



reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis. In using these processes, an individual learns to see a fresh new perspective, values conscious experience, respects the confirmation of one's senses, and moves "toward an intersubjective knowing of things, people, and everyday experiences" (p. 101). Phenomenological reduction entails looking at the experience repeatedly, which is the focal point of the research, describing the textural qualities in varying degrees of intensity and from different viewpoints, recognizing that each angle of perception contributes to increasing the knowledge of an individual of a phenomenon. The researcher utilized bracketing, which placed emphasis on research in brackets, allowing the complete research process to be grounded specifically on the topic and question, and setting aside everything else. In this portion of the process, the researcher used horizontalizing, in which every statement was viewed initially, giving equal value to every statement. In the later portion of the process, statements that were considered unrelated to the topic and question, including those that were repetitive or overlapping, were deleted, and only the horizons remained. Thus, the horizon enables the researcher to complete the phenomenological reduction by forming the horizons into themes, and the horizons and themes were organized into a logical textural account of the phenomena.

In the imaginative variation process, the researcher used imagination in acquiring meanings in which the frames of reference vary, using polarities and reversals, aiming to develop structural descriptions of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas further stated that the goal is to capture the structural descriptions of an experience, describing what is being experienced. Therefore, imaginative variation seeks to build on what is

being experienced to highlight how it is being experienced. The phenomenological research process used synthesis of meanings and essences in the final portion of the process. Essences of an experience are continuous, and the essential textural-structural synthesis denotes the specific time and place as it relates to essence.

The phenomenological research method was chosen for this study because the goal of phenomenological research is to construe the actions of individuals in the social world and the manner in which individuals give meaning to social phenomena, which was consistent with the study's goal. Examining the lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the diverse student population was an area that needed further research to ascertain with greater certainty the lived experiences that community college leaders report being significant in the changing demographics of the student population. In phenomenological research, participants verbalize their experience of the phenomenon and the data were detailed using a semistructured interview process. A complete expressive narrative of the experience was developed from the data. The researcher put the information into meaningful parts, which become the basis of a concise description of the phenomenon (Murk, 2010).

### **Role of the Researcher**

The role of the researcher was to gather, organize, and analyze perceptions from people who have experienced a phenomenon. The researcher presented the experiences of the research participants, extracting from the interviews sufficient detail, and the readers of this study will become aware of the participants' experiences and gain knowledge of the issues (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher is a former employee of the North Carolina Community College System, but the participants selected for the study were from different community colleges. I did not have any personal or current professional relationships with any individuals selected to participate in the study because of the length of time I have been away from the North Carolina Community College System.

### **Researcher Bias**

The empirical phenomenological approach was separated from other research models by the practice of epoché; therefore, the researcher set aside prejudgments and preconceptions. The biases of the researcher were set aside with the intent to perceive the experience completely, allowing her to disclose or uncover the essences and meanings while reporting the experiences in an unbiased manner (Moustakas, 1994). Epoché is a Greek word which means to “stay away from or abstain” (p. 85). The practice of epoché may give the researcher a unique vantage point, persuading the researcher to analyze prior knowledge, beliefs, or theories she may have but remain open to receive whatever comes forth in consciousness.

### **Other Ethical Issues**

According to Wertheimer and Miller (2012), using any forms of incentive to research participants is an issue with ethical concerns. In the literature of research ethics, Wertheimer and Miller suggested that the payment of research participants as an inducement to participate in a research study includes both coercion and undue influence. The practice of using incentives may compromise the scientific integrity of the research, which may be seen as coercive if the incentives compromise the validity of consent, and

may cause the participant to respond in a manner that is not logical or judicious. The authors concluded that incentives given for research participation increase the moral displeasures and such payments might encourage people to do things that are out of the norm. No incentives were offered in this study.

Singer and Couper (2008) argued that, in order for undue influence to occur, larger incentives must induce participants to endure risks they may not endure if the incentives were smaller. Singer and Couper suggested that the payment to participants for participation in research may compel them to be reluctant in participating in future research that will profit less than the present research, and smaller studies that may not be well funded will be at risk. My research study did not present any physical and psychological risks or harm to the participants. The informed consent form outlined any possible risks whether they were small or large and asked if they would accept the risks, if any. The form states “there is no identified risk to this study.”

### **Methodology**

The sample consisted of 10 community college leaders who were employed by community colleges located in the southeastern area of North Carolina and whose positions involved leadership responsibilities for two or more years. According to Creswell (2009), 10 or 12 participants are an adequate number for purposeful sampling, which was the sample strategy this study used. Community college leaders from four different community colleges were selected based upon the size of the student body and the location of the college, which gave the researcher diversity in the student population.

These leaders generated findings potentially useful in learning about their lived experiences in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population.

### **Sampling Strategy**

The sampling strategy for this study was purposeful sampling, which is effective when a researcher chooses to conduct phenomenological inquiry and individuals were selected because they have experienced the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009).

Creswell further stated that purposeful sampling will give the researcher control instead of being identified with any type of selection bias that is identified with preexisting groups. This research study identified and interviewed 10 community college leaders, all of whom have experienced working in the position of leadership in a community college, which was verified by the participant, and met the aforementioned selection criteria. Thus, they have experienced the same phenomenon, working as a community college leader, developing as a community college leader, and adapting to the growing diverse student populations; therefore, purposeful sampling supported the goal of this study.

The researcher recognized that the satisfactory sample size for interviews was achieved when the identical stories, themes, issues, and topics became known from the participants. In determining the number of participants selected for the study, sufficiency was first considered. Sufficiency entailed the numbers selected for the study and reflected the range of participants and sites that were indicative of the population selected for study, whereas individuals outside of the sample had an opportunity to associate with the experiences of the sample participants. Saturation of the information was considered. Saturation occurs when the interviewer hears the same information repeatedly (Seidman,

2006). Applying in-depth, phenomenological interviewing to a sample of participants experiencing related structural and social situations provided enormous power to stories of a comparatively few participants (Seidman, 2006). In deciding the number of participants for the study, the researcher considered the time required to interview them and then analyze and interpret the data.

The participants were identified from colleges located in southeastern North Carolina. The researcher identified leaders employed at community colleges according to the student population of the four colleges, which ranges from 1,300 to 14,000. The criteria for selection of participants for the study included the following: two or more years of experience in community college leadership, and the leaders represent the positions designated (president, vice president, chief academic officer, dean, department chair, and faculty). Participants were added to the sample until saturation of the information occurred.

The relationship between saturation and sample size is that the sample size was representative of the population selected for the study. The size of the sample is critical to analyzing the data collected. Qualitative researchers aim to extract meaning from the data, whereas saturation considers how much contact with the participants was required for saturation to occur (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007).

### **Instrumentation**

The interview protocol included the rules that guided the administration and implementation of the interviews. These rules foundationally ensured consistency between the interviews, which enhanced the reliability of the results. The interview

protocol was provided in Creswell's 2007 and 2009 publications. The researcher received permission to use the protocol in this study February 7, 2013 (Appendix A, IRB approval code 11-26-13-0147970). The interview protocol included the following:

- A heading, including date, place, interviewer, and interviewee.
- Instructions for the interviewer, ensuring standardized procedures are used in all interviews, including informed consent and ensuring confidentiality of the interviews.
- An icebreaker question is used first, following with four to five questions.
- Initiate follow-up questions asking the participant to explain in detail their ideas or elaborate on their comment(s).
- Allow time for the interviewer to record responses between the questions.
- Thank you statement acknowledging the time the interviewee gave for the interview (Creswell, 2009).

Prior to the interview, the researcher engaged in the epoché process, which is setting aside as much as possible any biases, preconceived beliefs, prejudices, understandings, facts, and interest, so as not to flaw her ability to perceive the interviewees' experiences as described. The researcher allowed the participants the opportunity to share their experiences without interruption or interjecting any prior knowledge she had about the subject. The three-interview series process, which entailed six weeks, utilized in-depth, phenomenological interviewing (Seidman, 2006). The task of the first interview was to place the experiences of the participant in perspective relevant to the topic. The participant was asked to share information about him or herself

in relation to the topic. The second interview pertained to the specific details of the participant's current experiences in relation to the study. Participants had the opportunity to reconstruct details of their experiences. The third interview gave the participants the opportunity to return to their experiences and the meaning of the experiences.

Participants were asked to address their rational and expressive correlations between work and life. The use of this interview structure allowed the interviewer to sustain a subtle balance between providing sufficient openness for the participants to communicate their stories and enough concentration, allowing the structure to work (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher utilized open-ended, in-depth inquiry that encouraged the participants to remain focused in each interview (Sideman, 2006). The researcher used the following interview questions:

1. What are your experiences that will support you in adapting to the increasing diverse student population?
2. How do your experiences support you in being an effective leader?
3. What are your experiences that contribute to the leadership competencies you value and how may they support the increasing diverse student population?
4. How do you integrate these leadership competencies in the college environment?

These interview questions established the purpose of the interview. The interviewer asked follow-up questions as appropriate, such as: How does the integration of the competencies you value support the diverse student population? Why are these experiences significant? What additional experiences do you need to help you adapt to



the changing demographics of the student population? The interviewer can use follow-up, probing questions to attain a wealth of vital information that is fundamental to the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

All interviews were recorded using the Zoom H2 Handy Recorder, and transcribed using Express Scribe software. The Zoom H2 Handy Recorder is a portable digital recorder providing 360 degree coverage. The researcher installed the Express Scribe software on only one personal computer, accessible by the researcher only and password protected. Access to recorded conversations and transcripts was available only to the researcher.

Member verification was achieved by providing individual participants with transcripts after their interviews. Interviewees were asked to review the transcripts and reflect on them, and interviewees were able to provide comments concerning their transcripts and any other feelings or thoughts in relation to the interview experience.

The three-interview structure integrated components that increased the achievement of validity, which supported the context of the participants' responses. The three-interview structure encouraged the participants to check for the internal consistency of their comments as they proceeded through the interviews (Seidman, 2006). Moreover, interviewing a number of participants, connecting the experiences, and checking the comments of one participant against the comments of another participant contributes to internal consistency and supports validity. The final aim of this process is to understand how the participants interpret and create meaning of their experiences. If the three-interview structure allows the participants to make sense to themselves and the

interviewer, then it has progressed increasingly toward validity. As time progressed from the first interview, the internal consistency and inconsistency of the interview data, sentence structure, speech, and even parts of the interview that are nonverbal, and the sense of learning that the researcher will discover from reading the transcripts, will lead the researcher to remain confident of his or her accuracy (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher provided each participant with a consent form and asked participants to sign agreeing to participate in the interview process. The consent form was discussed with each participant before commencing with the interview process. The consent form described the purpose of the study and included the participant's right to be released at any time during the study. The researcher advised participants of the steps that were taken to ensure confidentiality.

### **Pilot Study**

The researcher did not conduct a formal pilot study. However, the researcher tried out the research questions with leaders who were knowledgeable about the research topic and who were selected using the same criteria as the research participants. This informal procedure aided the researcher in determining whether the interview questions were appropriate for the study.

The participants were asked for recommendations or any changes to the questions and aid the researcher in determining whether the interview questions needed modifying. The same data collection procedures for the research study were used for this informal process.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

The criteria for recruiting participants for the study were two or more years of experience in community college leadership germane to the leadership positions named previously. Contact with the participants was made by the researcher without third-party intervention. The initial step in recruiting potential participants was through telephoning leaders in the positions identified previously. The researcher gave a brief introduction including information about the study, explained that their names were taken from the personnel directory listed on the Internet, and an initial meeting was arranged to discuss the study. An initial phone contact established a foundation gaining mutual respect that was significant to the interview process, ascertained if potential participants were interested in the study, initiated the informed consent process, and assessed whether the potential participant was suitable for the study. The researcher kept a record of the potential participants who were suitable for the study, recognizing specific characteristics that were related to the researcher's topic for study. The contact visits of potential participants increased the participant pool (Seidman, 2006).

The researcher constructed a participant information form, Appendix B, which assisted in communication between both the interviewer and participants, and recorded basic data about the candidate, informing the researcher of which candidate to include or exclude. The form included the candidate's name and work addresses, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and appropriate time to contact. The contact visit was used to determine the appropriate times, places, and dates that candidates could be interviewed. The contact visits provided the researcher with a pool of participants who were not used

in the first selection, but could be used if the initial recruitment generated too few participants. The follow-up plan—if too few participants were recruited—was to expand the numbers of the participant pool with the names of individuals who were not selected from the first recruitment round because the quota had been reached.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

The data were collected by the researcher on the campus of the designated community colleges. Data collection occurred from three different one-half hour interviews, which supported Siedman's (2006) interview model. The researcher audiotaped the interviews and used handwritten notes to ensure accuracy and completeness of the interview in case of equipment failure. The audiotapes were transcribed utilizing Express Scribe, which was loaded on only one personal computer. Transcribed scripts were uploaded into and analyzed using NVivo, a software package for qualitative research.

Data were collected using an interview protocol that involved a casual, collaborative process, and used open-ended questions (Seidman, 2006) that were outlined in the interview questions section. All interview data were compared to the literature pertaining to community college leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, community college leadership, and leadership competencies. The researcher utilized qualitative data analysis techniques to analyze interview transcripts, included identifying patterns and themes, memoing, clustering of patterns and themes, and identifying implications (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Saldana, 2009).

Data were collected following Seidman's (2006) three one-hour interview model: (a) Formal Life History, (b) The Details of Experience, and (c) Reflection on the Meaning. The collection of the data took approximately six weeks because of the proximity of the community colleges and the interview model that was used. The demographic data collected from each participant were name, tenure with current employer, years in community college leadership role, and years in community college leadership role with current employer. Demographic data were collected to provide context for participants' responses to the questions as the data were considered of possible value in assisting the researcher in interpreting the data collected. All participants' data was preserved as confidential and private and stored in a secure, locked location in the researcher's office. The researcher conducted the interviews using the series of questions identified previously with the intent to invoke an understanding of how "participants understand and make meaning of their experiences" (Seidman, 2006, p. 24) of the phenomenon.

The researcher used the following techniques in analyzing the interview data as suggested by Miles and Hubberman (1994):

1. Patterns and themes in participants' responses and comments they made in the interview were noted. Counting was used in identifying patterns and themes from the interview transcripts, which aided in ensuring the honesty of the researcher and protecting against bias in the analysis. Patterns and themes were used to identify evolving themes and succinctly put large portions of material into meaningful and parsimonious units of analysis. Patterns and

themes gave the researcher an opportunity to identify invariable meaning horizons, textural descriptions of experiences, and invariant structural themes. This technique was used in identifying the lived experiences of community college leaders.

2. Memoing was used in the coding process indicating the relationship between different data.
3. Clustering was assembled and conceptualized ideas that had related patterns or characteristics were used. Clustering represents the “process of inductively forming categories, and the interactive sorting of things...into those categories” (p. 249). This technique was used in identifying invariant meaning horizons, invariant structural themes, and lived experiences of community college leaders.
4. According to the patterns, themes, and clusters, the researcher identified suggestions for relevant important experiences that were reported from the lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population, community college leadership, and leadership competencies.

The interview data were analyzed to develop an understanding of (a) participants’ lived experiences they identified as important as a community college leader, (b) what they learned from the experiences they described, and (c) how they learned what they reported learning (or translated their experiences into competencies they value). All interviews were transcribed, and participants were provided an opportunity to review

their respective interview transcripts; each participant was asked to provide additional information to clarify his or her responses, to correct or edit transcript reports, and to ask questions of the researcher. The researcher began data analysis of the interview transcripts after each participant had been given the opportunity to validate his or her individual transcripts.

The researcher analyzed the interview transcripts produced using Express Scribe and identified repetitive ideas and themes from the interviews. The researcher used NVivo on only one personal computer, available only to the researcher and password protected. Interview transcripts from Express Scribe were uploaded into NVivo for analysis. The researcher prepared to analyze the transcripts by identifying and clarifying any biases prior to reading each transcript and read the transcripts repeatedly in viewing the phenomenon. Every statement in each transcript was treated “as having equal value” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97), then irrelevant and repetitive statements were deleted to arrive at horizons. The researcher clustered the horizons into themes and, subsequently, organized the horizons and themes into textural descriptions of the phenomenon. This activity centered around identifying whether the research participants’ lived experiences in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population included what they experienced as well as what they learned from their experiences.

Based on the horizons, themes, and textural descriptions of the phenomenon that were developed using phenomenological reduction, the researcher looked for similar meanings from the interview transcripts and employed imaginative variation, reflecting on the variations of meanings to develop structural descriptions of the experiences

expressed by the research participants. This activity involved reflecting on the many different possible structural meanings that underlay the textural meanings that were identified through phenomenological reduction. The researcher reflected on and imagined possible meaning horizons; this activity enabled her to recognize the basic themes or contexts that accounted for the evolving of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher considered the universal experiences that might precipitate the research participants' feelings and thoughts in relation to the phenomenon, including time, space, causality, relation to self, and relation to others. The researcher identified examples to show the structural themes that were unchanging and promote the development of a basic description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

Building a relationship between the interviewer and the participants is encouraged, and the interviewer ensured that the participants were allowed enough space such that their responses were independent and without bias (Seidman, 2006). An interviewer who is open about the participants' rights at the beginning of the interview process, and who controls the relationship between the participant and the interviewer, establishes the condition for a trustworthy relationship.

Truths may vary: The thoughts and motives of researchers and participants are unknown and the researcher understands the importance of valuing truth in the research process (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Williams and Morrow suggested three major categories of trustworthiness that all qualitative researchers must consider: "integrity of data, balance between reflexivity and subjectivity, and clear communication of findings"



(p. 577). The researcher ensured the integrity of data through the adequacy of the data and the dependability of the data. The researcher established trustworthiness as long as the data were clear and the interpretation of the data represented the contributions of the participants. In establishing trustworthiness, the researcher needed to ensure balance between what the participant said and the ways in which the researcher interpreted the meanings of the words. The significance of establishing balance depends heavily upon subjectivity and reflexivity. The researcher sought to be subjective, ensuring that the study's findings were free from biases and self-interest of the researcher (Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for appraising interpretive research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was established through the triangulation of sources used in the study. Collecting evidence from multiple participants, multiple types of participants, such as males and females, and multiple leadership positions supports triangulation (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010). The interview structure used allowed the participants the opportunity to make sense to themselves and the interviewer had the opportunity to make judgments about the findings, which augmented transferability to dissimilar settings and perspectives. The reliability of the research was enhanced through an audit trail which included retrieving, tracking, and selecting the data received. The interviewer connected the experiences of the participants and related the comments of one participant against the comments of other participants, which tested the consistency of the process. Confirmability checks the reliability of the research product, specifically, the data, the

findings, the interpretations, and recommendations, which were reflected by the field notes of the researcher (Fingeld-Connett, 2010).

### **Ethical Procedures**

There were no identifiable risks to participants in this study. Precautions were exercised to ensure protection of human participants by obtaining their informed consent. All participants were asked to complete an informed consent form in compliance with the Walden University requirements. Participants were informed initially of the purpose of the study by telephone and received more in-depth information at the face-to-face meeting. Participants were informed about the procedures that were to be used in data collection, their right to exit voluntarily from the study any time, and their confidentiality. A referral form was not used to address any adverse events because no risks were associated with the study.

### **Summary**

Chapter 3 provided information about the methodology selected for the study. The phenomenological research method was chosen for this study because it allowed the researcher to interpret the experiences of the participants and the manner in which they gave meaning to their experiences as community college leaders and their experiences in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. The findings from this analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 4: Results

In this phenomenological study, I elicited the lived experiences of leaders from four community colleges in southeastern North Carolina to examine and interpret their attempts to adapt to changing student demographics utilizing Moustakas's (1994) method with semistructured audiotaped interviews. The research questions identified in Chapter 1 and methodology defined in Chapter 3 are presented in Chapter 4 along with the data analysis.

The following research questions formed the foundation of the study.

1. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population?
2. What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value?
3. What meaning do leaders give to their experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment?
4. What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness?

Chapter 4 contains eight parts. The first part includes a discussion of the appropriateness of the interview questions used in the study; the questions were tested by presenting them to two community college leaders from colleges other than the ones selected for the study. Part 2 identifies the setting and includes a discussion of the conditions that influenced participants' experiences during the study. Part 3 highlights the demographic profiles of the participants, which the researcher obtained from the

interview transcripts. Part 4 identifies the frequency of data collection, recording of the data, and any variations in collecting the data (as noted in Chapter 3). Part 5 includes the data analysis process and the codes, categories, and themes. Part 6 presents evidence of trustworthiness and describes the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability consistent with the strategies stated in Chapter 3. Part 7 presents the results of the interview data. I used patterns and themes to identify large portions of data and to organize the data concisely into meaningful units (Miles & Hubberman, 1994). Part 8 summarizes the findings, and includes a transition to Chapter 5.

### **Pilot Study**

I did not conduct a formal pilot study; however, in an effort to determine the feasibility of the interview questions, I tested the interview questions with two leaders from two different community colleges than those in the study. I interviewed these two respondents using the same criteria as the interview participants, and asked them to elaborate on whether the interview questions were related to the research study topic and to suggest revisions to the questions. Both respondents said that the interview questions were clear and relevant to the study. They added that the interview questions gave an opportunity for them to examine the diversity of their lived experiences in an attempt to adapt to these students.

### **Setting**

Community colleges are open-admission institutions that offer opportunities to all students who desire to obtain a postsecondary education. Community colleges have institutional characteristics that contribute both positively and negatively to student

success, such as the size of the institution, student diversity, and sufficient funding. According to Friedel and Thomas (2013), community colleges are encountering an unwelcomed fiscal storm that includes both reductions in state appropriations and substantial enrollment growth. Leaders in community colleges are faced with how they can compensate for these budget cuts and continue to meet the mandates of student access. The issue of whether some students will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition because of regulations the state sets is an added concern. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act determines which undocumented young immigrants in the United States will pay. This DREAM Act allows for conditional green cards to be given to undocumented youth who meet certain requirements, including being a high school graduate and having arrived in the United States before the age of 16 (American Immigration Council, 2011).

Some of the participants indicated that their college had recently completed their accreditation processes, which required the colleges to develop a quality enhancement plan (QEP). The QEPs centered on different components of student success. One institution's QEP centered on improving its students' writing skills. A different college initiated a requirement for first-year students to take an introductory course related to the institution giving students tips and pointers for navigating around the institution. Students will also take an interest inventory that helps them discover their strengths and weaknesses, which they can then utilize when choosing an appropriate career choice.

## Demographics

In this qualitative phenomenological study, the researcher examined the lived experiences of 10 community college leaders in their adaptations to an increasingly diverse student population. The study included four community colleges in southeastern North Carolina. The North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS) has 58 community colleges with an estimated enrollment of 840,000 students. The NCCCS is the third largest community college system in the nation based on the number of colleges.

I searched the website of the four colleges selected and identified 33 names of possible participants for the study who held the following positions: president, vice president, chief academic officer, dean, department chair, and faculty. I contacted the candidates by phone and e-mail to invite them to participate; 10 agreed, 5 females and 5 males. The participants included four administrators, five faculty members, and one faculty/administrator. The diversity of the participants included one Brazilian, one Chilean, one Puerto Rican, two African Americans, and five Whites. The participants were selected according to the positions they held. All the participants have master's degrees in varying disciplines. Three of the participants are currently in doctoral programs. In addition, all participants have been employed in higher education a minimum of 8 years to a maximum of 38 years. The researcher used pseudonyms for the participants: Each participant was assigned a code to protect his or her identity and preserve confidentiality. To create the codes the researcher replaced participants' names with the first several letters of the words indicating faculty or administrator, then the

numbers 1 through 6 to represent the interviewees' numbers among faculty members or administrators (e.g., Admin1).

Admin1 is a male administrator. He has been in education for 10 years and has been in his current position for 2 years. Admin1 came to the United States to learn English and has attended only private schools.

Admin2 is a male administrator. Admin2 has been in education for 10 years and has been in his current position for 4 years. Admin2 attended a diverse high school and lived in a diverse neighborhood in terms of racial and cultural differences.

Admin3 is a male administrator. He has been in education for 20 years and has been in his current position for 15 years. Admin3 feels that diversity of the student population has always been present, but the degree of diversity is increasing.

Admin4 is a male administrator. He is currently working on his doctorate, has been in education for five years, and has been in his current position for five years. Admin4 stated that education has changed his whole life.

Fac1 is a female instructor. She has been in education for eight years and has been in her current position for seven years. Fac1 is a first-generation college student who spent a considerable amount of time in a different Southern state with a diverse population of people.

Fac2 is a female instructor. She has been in education for 25 years and has been in her current position for 10 years. Fac2 believes that online classes represent the future of education.

Fac3/Ad is a female with both administrative and teaching responsibilities. She has been in education for 25 years, and has been teaching for 14 years. Fac3/Ad has been in education her entire professional life and has been exposed to a lot of diversity in a public school system as a teacher.

Fac4 is a female instructor. She has been in higher education for 38 years and has been in her current position for 4 years. Fac4 has worked with people with disabilities and in federal programs.

Fac5 is a female instructor. She has been in higher education for 12 years and has been in her current position for 8 years. Fac5 worked with people who were first-generation, rural, low-income, disabled students.

Fac6 is a male instructor. He has been in education for 38 years and has been in his current position for 14 years. Fac6 started his associate degree at a community college in North Carolina.

Tables 1 through 4 list the demographic data of the four community colleges from which participants were recruited. Table 5 lists the demographic data of the participants.



Table 1

*Demographics for Community College A (Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race)*

|                           | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Student Population  | 12,732    | 12,732    | 12,732    |
| Asian                     | 115       | 43        | 67        |
| Black                     | 1,904     | 2,046     | 2,069     |
| Hispanic                  | 340       | 444       | 488       |
| American Indian/Alaskan   | 102       | 95        | 100       |
| Hawaiian/Pacific Islander | 135       | 17        | 25        |
| White                     | 9,129     | 9,281     | 9,263     |
| Multiple                  | 461       | 96        | 211       |
| Unknown                   | 546       | 710       | 509       |

*Note.* Data excerpted from the “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2009-2010,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2010; “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2010-2011,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2011; *Curriculum Student Information II: Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College: ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2011-2012*,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2014.

Table 2

*Demographics for Community College B (Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race)*

|                           | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Student Population  | 5,766     | 5,644     | 5,263     |
| Asian                     | 50        | 14        | 13        |
| Black                     | 1,294     | 1,234     | 1,205     |
| Hispanic                  | 273       | 298       | 324       |
| American Indian/Alaskan   | 43        | 34        | 32        |
| Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |           | 24        | 16        |
| White                     | 3,921     | 3,837     | 3,446     |
| Multiple                  | 185       | 14        | 24        |
| Unknown                   |           | 189       | 203       |

*Note.* Data excerpted from the “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2009-2010,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2010; “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2010-2011,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2011; *Curriculum Student Information II: Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College: ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2011-2012*,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2014.

Table 3

*Demographics for Community College C (Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race)*

|                                     | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Student Population            | 2,052     | 2,008     | 1,916     |
| Asian                               | 8         | 5         | 7         |
| Black                               | 824       | 861       | 847       |
| Hispanic/Latino                     | 146       | 140       | 158       |
| American Indian/Alaskan             | 9         | 7         | 14        |
| Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander |           | 2         | 3         |
| White                               | 1,030     | 963       | 865       |
| Multiple                            | 35        | 12        | 15        |
| Unknown                             |           | 18        | 7         |

*Note.* Data excerpted from the “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2009-2010,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2010; “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2010-2011,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2011; *Curriculum Student Information II: Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College: ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2011-2012*,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2014.

Table 4

*Demographics for Community College D (Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race)*

|                           | 2009-2010 | 2010-2011 | 2011-2012 |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Total Student Population  | 2,078     | 2,002     | 1,976     |
| Asian                     | 9         | 4         | 5         |
| Black                     | 737       | 682       | 630       |
| Hispanic/Latino           | 204       | 203       | 258       |
| American Indian/Alaskan   | 56        | 52        | 57        |
| Hawaiian/Pacific Islander |           | 2         | 2         |
| White                     | 1,044     | 1,030     | 982       |
| Multiple                  | 28        |           | 2         |
| Unknown                   |           | 29        | 40        |

*Note.* Data excerpted from the “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2009-2010,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2010; “Curriculum Student Information II: Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College (Unduplicated Headcount): ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2010-2011,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2011; *Curriculum Student Information II: Unduplicated Student Enrollment by Race and Gender by College: ANNTBL8 - II: Reporting Year: 2011-2012*,” by North Carolina Community College System, 2014.

Table 5

*Demographic Data of Participants*

| Participant | Years With<br>Current Employer | Years in Community<br>College Leadership | Years in Leadership With<br>Current Employer |
|-------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Admin1      | 2                              | 2                                        | 2                                            |
| Admin2      | 4                              | 4                                        | 4                                            |
| Admin3      | 15                             | 20                                       | 15                                           |
| Admin4      | 8                              | 7                                        | 7                                            |
| Fac1        | 7                              | 8                                        | 7                                            |
| Fac2        | 11                             | 11                                       | 11                                           |
| Fac3/Ad     | 14                             | 14                                       | 14                                           |
| Fac4        | 4                              | 4                                        | 4                                            |
| Fac5        | 12                             | 12                                       | 8                                            |
| Fac6        | 14                             | 14                                       | 14                                           |

**Data Collection and Face-to-Face Interviews**

According to Creswell's (2009) recommendation, the researcher used purposeful sampling, and all 10 community college leaders had experienced the central phenomenon. I selected leaders who had two or more years in community college leadership as an administrator or faculty member to participate in the study. I e-mailed a consent form and a participant information sheet to each participant after the initial contact. Interviews were scheduled via e-mail and telephone after the return of the signed forms. Interview reminders were sent via e-mail. Data collection consisted of Seidman's (2006) three-interview process, which utilizes in-depth phenomenological interviewing. The in-depth interviews consisted of open-ended questions highlighting the experiences of the leaders. Data collection included four open-ended interview questions. The responses to the questions provided background information about participants' lived experiences adapting to the changing student demographics.

In February 2014, I searched the websites of the four community colleges for participants. I obtained the names of 31 individuals, whom I contacted by telephone within two days. I advised the potential participants about the research study and requested their participation. Potential participants were informed that the study would examine lived experiences of community college leaders in adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. I sent a follow-up e-mail message that contained the basic telephone script, information about the study, consent form (see Appendix A), and participation information sheet (see Appendix C) to 15 respondents on February 10, 2014. Within a week, 9 respondents replied consenting to participate in the study. One of the original respondents withdrew. Two additional respondents agreed to participate in the study by February 24. I made follow-up telephone calls and sent e-mails to confirm a time for the semistructured face-to-face interviews.

I thanked each participant for taking time out of his or her busy schedule to participate in the study. During the audiorecorded interviews, the participants were advised regarding the purpose of the study and were asked for honest responses to the questions. I requested that participants indicate whether they felt uncomfortable talking about anything related to the questions asked and asked them to provide as much detail as possible about experiences relating to adapting to the diverse student population.

I informed all participants that their identities would not be revealed in the study and the information they provided would be compared with the information of other participants to identify common patterns and themes. The interviews were divided into three half-hour segments, which totaled 1 to 1.5 hours depending on the depth of the

participants' information. Only one interview lasted less than an hour. All interviewees elaborated on their backgrounds and discussed their employment histories. They freely shared their experience, related education, and personal education concerning diversity in relation to the student population and personal stories. I recorded the information with a Zoom H2 Handy Recorder and downloaded the information using a Phillips docking station and transcribed the interviews using Express Scribe and written notes. I listened to the audio versions repeatedly to ensure accuracy of the transcripts. According to Moustakas (1994), the repetition process ensures accuracy of the data. I forwarded the transcripts to the participants within two days after the interviews and asked the participants to review the transcripts, make any necessary changes, and return any comments to the researcher via e-mail within a week.

From the 10 participants, the researcher received replies from 2 respondents with changes to the transcripts. I reviewed the transcripts again for accuracy and formatted all the transcripts with consistent headings before downloading them into NVivo 10. I securely locked the copies of the final transcription summary in a fireproof safe, where they will remain for at least five years.

### **Data Analysis**

Miles and Hubberman (1994) indicated that qualitative research uses open-ended questions. Qualitative research allows the researcher to investigate and comprehend the meaning individuals or groups give to a social or human condition. After the interviews had been typed, and participants had reviewed them, the researcher copied and coded the interviews in NVivo. The interview data were organized into themes which were ideas or

concepts derived from participants' lived experiences. NVivo allows themes to be established as nodes and coded (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). According to Bazeley and Jackson (2013), coding in qualitative research allows text to be tagged with codes and indexed to assist in the retrieval of the text later. They further stated that "coding in NVivo is stored in nodes" (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013, p. 75). A node is created for each topic or concept stored. Each node holds one category or concept. Themes can be coded at multiple nodes. Some answers for Research Question 2 overlapped or repeated for Research Question 4.

I coded the four interview questions, which had been developed to answer the four research questions. The interview questions linked the conversations and were used as a guide to interpret, describe, compare, contrast, and evaluate the true meaning of the participants' answers.

The study was guided by four research questions. The research questions addressed in this study and the interview questions (IQs) designed to answer the research questions (RQs) were as follows:

RQ1: What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population?

IQ 1: What are your experiences that will support you in adapting to the increasing diverse student population?

IQ 2: Would you please tell me a little about yourself in relation to your education, how long have you worked in education, and your level of education?

IQ 3: What influenced you to choose this course of work and what influences you to continue?

RQ 2: What are lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value?

IQ 4: What are your experiences that contribute to the leadership competencies you value, and how may they support the increasing diverse student population?

IQ 5: Why do you think these competencies are important?

IQ 6: Consider the six leadership competencies the AACCC developed, which ones do you value as a leader?

IQ 7: How does funding affect you in working with the increasing diversity of your student population?

RQ 3: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment?

IQ 8: How do you integrate these leadership competencies in the college environment?

IQ 9: What type of platform do you have for these students in determining what is or is not working?

RQ 4: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness?

IQ 10: How do your experiences support you in being an effective leader?

IQ 11: Why are the things that you named significant in making you an effective leader?

IQ 12: What type of increase have you seen in the diversity of your students?

IQ 13: What additional experiences do you think that you might need to help you adapt to the diversity of the student population?

A goal of this study was to identify emergent themes revealed during the 10 interviews. I established themes based on the participants' responses. I read all the data, organized statements into similar themes, labeled the themes, and identified patterns in the themes. The lived experiences of the 10 participants revealed 20 themes; however, 10 significant themes were common among the interview transcripts related to the participants adapting to the changing demographics of the student population: diversity experiences, educational experiences, personal influences, diversity work experiences, leadership competencies, integrating competencies, leadership effectiveness, funding challenges, student initiatives and activities, and professional development. For the codes to be considered significant, at least half (5 of 10) of the participants had to use similar words or statements during the interview. Other categories included leader diversity, student diversity, global experiences, collaboration, communication, community college advocacy, organizational strategy, professionalism, and resource management. The other categories, although important, did not have at least five interviewees who responded similarly. Many of the statements concerning the other categories are captured in the responses to the semistructured questions. Table 6 identifies the themes, code numbers, and relationship between the significant codes and research questions.



Table 6

*Common Codes and Their Relationship to Research Questions*

| Code    | Correspondence to Research Question | Description                    |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Code 1  | 1                                   | Diversity experiences          |
| Code 2  | 1                                   | Educational experiences        |
| Code 3  | 1                                   | Personal influences            |
| Code 4  | 1                                   | Diversity work experiences     |
| Code 5  | 2                                   | Leadership competencies        |
| Code 6  | 3                                   | Integrating competencies       |
| Code 7  | 4                                   | Leadership effectiveness       |
| Code 8  | 4                                   | Funding challenges             |
| Code 9  | 4                                   | Student initiatives/activities |
| Code 10 | 4                                   | Professional development       |

**Coding Procedure**

I imported each verbatim transcript audio interview into NVivo 10 and used Moustaka's (1994) modified Van Kamm method of analysis of phenomenological data. NVivo 10 software application for qualitative data analysis is used to manage the data and examine, code, and categorize the repetitive themes (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). NVivo coding involves coding data in the participants' words, also called horizons by Moustakas. Each code or horizon allows for new insights or themes in the research. The NVivo 10 software was used primarily to establish nodes indicating specific topics or concepts such as diversity experiences, educational experiences, diversity work experiences, personal influences, leadership competencies, integrating competencies, funding challenges, student initiatives and activities, and professional development. NVivo was used to manage the data, comparing or isolating comments to be coded.

Every comment was not considered a code but was used for clarifying initial themes in the research.

Moustakas outlined five definite segments of coding and clustering qualitative data to embody the essence of participants' lived experience. The first segment of coding was horizontalization, which included separating blocks of text that are distinctive to the experience illuminated by the identifiable node is created for each unit of meaning or distinct idea. In this process, all statements that have relevancy to the phenomenon are maintained. The quoted text was coded according to the experience expressed by each participant that was germane to the node and every response was highlighted related to participants adapting to the changing student demographics. This step provided a list for each unit of meaning significant to the participants' experience in response to the interview questions. The participant who experienced the experience was grouped into a particular unit associated with the related interview question.

The second step involved excluding nodes of meaning that were unsuitable or unrelated to the research questions or specific interview question. This step included checking data for any experiences that were pertinent and appropriate for understanding the phenomenon of adapting to the changing student demographics. The process of elimination and reduction required that each transcript be read repeatedly to capture the distinctive elements of the research study, and discover the unique experience and remove statements that did not answer the guiding question. As recommended by Moustakas (1994), clusters of related ideas or experiences from the participants were labeled to identify emerging themes. The coded results were confirmed by the researcher

reviewing transcripts to verify that the coded themes for that participant were compatible with the essence of the experience reported. The NVivo 10 program for coding helped in identifying and labeling the nodes during the process of reduction and elimination. The combined description of the essence of the group's experience collectively was formed.

The third step included clustering and labeling the codes. The many responses of the participants contributed to the various experiences, and the labeled codes contained the core themes of the experience. Each theme was created by clustering and prioritizing the data to discover the core meanings and essence of the participants who lived the experience as recommended by Moustakas (1994). The delineation of each emerging theme and its significance in the group's lived experience, with certain participants' supporting statements, illuminated later in the emerging themes. The 10 major themes were formed with the consistency of the data collected from the transcript.

The final step was the comparison of the emerging themes with the transcripts of the interviews, checking for relevance and compatibility of the information as suggested by Moustakas (1994). The process of checking and rechecking the emerging themes against the individual transcripts contributed to confirming the accuracy and relevancy of the phenomenon examined. Rechecking helped the researcher to choose the themes that were dominant in all or almost all of the participants' stories, whether their experiences were positive or negative. The individual textual descriptions of the phenomenon and examples of participants' transcripts of the interviews were used to cluster the codes, create themes, develop similar categories, and check to confirm the consistency of the themes.

## **Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is established with participants as long as the data are clear, and the interpretation of the data represents the contributions of the participants. The researcher must ensure balance between what the participants say and ways in which the researcher will interpret the meanings of the words (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for appraising interpretive research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### **Credibility**

Credibility may be established through the triangulation of sources used in the study (Fingeld-Connett, 2010). The researcher established credibility through the triangulation of sources, which included multiple participants (10), various types of participants (females and males), and multiple positions (vice president, dean, directors, faculty/administrator, and faculty members). The researcher conducted semistructured interviews with open-ended questions, which gave participants the opportunity to make sense of their experiences through verbalization.

### **Transferability**

The interview structure the researcher used allowed participants the opportunity to make sure their responses made sense to them and gave the interviewer an opportunity to make judgments about the findings, which augmented transferability to dissimilar settings and perspectives (Fingeld-Connett, 2010). The researcher retrieved data using Express Scribe and tracked and selected data using NVivo.

### **Dependability**

The researcher enhanced the reliability of the research through an audit trail that included retrieving, tracking, and selecting the data received (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010). The researcher connected the experiences of the participants through retrieving the recorded information, tracking the data, and selecting the data using NVivo.

### **Confirmability**

Confirmability aids the researcher in checking the reliability of the research product, specifically the data, the findings, the interpretations, and recommendations, which will be reflected in the researcher's field notes (Finfgeld-Connett, 2010). The researcher checked the reliability of the data through analyzing the data, connecting themes and patterns, and analyzing the findings.

## **Results**

After narrowing down the total number of themes following a more thorough research review, I examined the same data, comparing each transcript to every other transcript by comparing responses and codes from one transcript to responses and codes from other transcripts, which helped to generate 10 themes.

### **Themes for Research Question1: What Are Lived Experiences of Community College Leaders in Relation to the Changing Demographics of the Student Population?**

The common characteristics, experiences, and beliefs demonstrated how people with different backgrounds tend to have similar experiences and beliefs. Most participants had diversity experiences which included childhood, private or public school,

work, and students. The themes generated from research question 1 were diversity experiences, educational experiences, personal influences, and diversity work experiences.

**Theme 1: Diversity experiences.** Ten (100%) participants described the diversity of their lived experiences, whether personal, work or educational, that contributed to them adapting to the changing student demographics. The majority of the participants had diversity experiences. Participants reported that they had worked with people from different backgrounds, attended diverse schools, and grew up in diverse neighborhoods that contributed to their diversity experiences. Some participants indicated that they had global experiences. All faculty members indicated that they had taught diverse populations of students including African American, Hispanic, Latino, Arabic, Chinese, and Asian students from the ages of 15 to 65; low-income and rural populations; and at-risk students. The common characteristics, experiences, and beliefs demonstrated how people with different backgrounds tend to have similar experiences and beliefs.

Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin1 said:

I work with people from different countries, different languages, I believe that the person in the position of responsibility needs to naturally, not force, but love all sorts of people. You need to love all sorts of backgrounds and understand that everybody is an individual, understand that your experiences are different than theirs.

Admin2 said, “In high school, I was around a lot of diversity and in my neighborhood there were not only Whites, but other cultures.” Admin3 said, “I do not work with students one-on-one, but the diversity of the student population has always been there. The degree of diversity is increasing.” Admin4 said, “Coming from an unincorporated territory of the United States in 2001, all I had was a high school diploma and I saw how hard it was even to be able to get a job at that time and to have the opportunity to start at a community college and get a degree was significant.”

Fac3/Ad said:

I love school, and I love education. That’s probably what kept me in the field and probably what has ended up providing such diverse experiences. Educating a diverse population of students is what has kept me in and seeing the difference it makes. I worked in community college teaching English as a Second Language to a very diverse population of people. Everything from Latino people to Arabic-speaking people, Chinese-speaking people, just whoever signed up for the class. Fac6 said, “It is nothing I had to do to adapt; it has been a natural process to try to help people of all diversities.”

Participants believe that prior skills, values, and knowledge they have acquired, as well as their diversity work experiences, are significant in helping their students. Some participants reported that they experienced different cultures in the neighborhoods they grew up in and schools they attended, and while teaching in both public and private schools. Participants also agreed that the diversity of their lived experiences contributed to them gaining an understanding of this diverse student population.

Fac1 said, “I interacted with people who come from different traditions and customs or whose primary language is something other than English. I think that has helped me adapt to the changing population at this school.” Fac2 said, “I worked at two historically Black colleges and universities where I experienced diversity.” Fac4 said, “I worked in a federal program that was for low-income, at-risk children and was exposed to their families of various cultures. We had many Hispanic and Asian families, not just African Americans and Caucasian families.” Fac5 said, “My experiences in the . . . Program have been beneficial to me for my classroom. I worked with individuals that were first-generation, rural, and low- income students.”

**Theme 2: Educational experiences.** Ten (100%) participants indicated that their experiences in obtaining an education were significant. They agreed that an education positively influenced their lives, and they encountered financial difficulties in achieving an education such as working to fund their education, being the first in their families to attend college, and returning to college as an adult. The educational challenges and experiences the participants faced are similar to those of their students, and they believe these educational experiences will support them in adapting to these students. The following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin4 said:

I am a product of the community college. Coming from an unincorporated territory of the United States in 2001, all I had at the time was a high school diploma, and I saw how hard it was to get a job at that time. I have a master’s in . . . in . . . and . . . education.



Fac1 said:

Both my bachelor and master degrees are in . . . , and I am a first-generation college student. It took me 12 years to get from start to finish from starting college to my master's degree. I had to work to support myself financially through the process.

Fac3/Ad said, "I have pretty much been in education my entire professional life. I have a master's degree. I funded my graduate school education."

All 10 (100%) participants hold master's degrees. Three participants are currently in a doctoral program. In addition, some participants deemed obtaining a degree from a community college, coming to the United States to learn English, and obtaining an administrative role because of a master's degree as significant educational experiences. Participants indicated that tuition uncertainty was not an issue they faced, however, their students face this issue.

Admin1 said, "I came to the United States of America in 1994 to stay here for a little while and learn English. I studied my entire childhood in private education in my country. I had an opportunity like no other to get a liberal arts education. I have a master's degree." Admin2 said, "I decided that it was something missing, so I went back into . . . , and I got my master's." Admin3 said, "I have been in the education field for almost 20 years at this profession at this school and another school; I have a master's. Education is important." Fac2 said, "I have a M. A. in . . . from . . . and I am from another country." Fac4 said, "I started my degree program at a community college. I have a master's through the . . . . I am now in a doctorate program." Fac5 said, "This is my first

and only job in education. I have a master's degree in . . . . I have also taken classes at NC State in . . . and . . . education." Fac6 said, "I graduated from . . . with a master's. I took correspondence courses to get my 18 graduate hours in . . . and . . . . I attended . . . community college, which helps me to identify with student diversity here."

**Theme 3: Personal influences.** Nine (90%) participants described how their experiences relating to educational and personal influences contributed to them being a positive influence with a diversity student body. Participants reported that former teachers, former professors, and former supervisors encouraged them to complete their education, to apply for a higher-level position within the organization, to teach in a certain discipline, and to obtain a master's degree. Following are some of the response that captured the essence of this theme.

Fac3/Ad said:

My part-time job which was GED, human resource development, and of course, ESL course, and this time I wasn't teaching it I was coordinating, was getting the program courses lined up helping them find instructors. I was all of these three things as a part-time job and it became available as a full-time job and I applied for the full-time job. They called me and said that they have another position available that we know that you are qualified for and would consider interviewing for Early Childhood instructor. So I came over and I interviewed for that and it was a much better situation for me than what the ESL Coordinator was going to be and it was using what I had gone to school for so I took that position.

Fac4 said:

I was influenced to teach in community college during my bachelor's degree program. There were instructors who encouraged me. The dean of the program encouraged me to explore and reach out for goals higher than a bachelor's degree. I now have the opportunity to pass that on to my students.

Fac5 said:

My first influence was working with them, . . . Program, and getting to know that particular demographic, that particular type of student. Now my influence is that I am teaching English full-time, and I am focusing more on getting students to transfer and to increase their learning skills. All of this helps me in adapting to the diverse student population.

Participants believed the diversity of personal influence experiences allowed them to serve as positive influences for their students. Participants indicated their parents also provided positive influences.

Admin1 said:

I contribute this [my education] to the wonderful professors I had. When I was 14, my father told me that he would get me any tutoring I wanted and education I wanted outside of school but I was going to learn physics, and I was perfectly capable of doing it. I got through physics with some tutoring and became so good at it because of the right help and I put the effort in it, of course.

Admin4 said, "What influenced me, to be very honest and frank, is mainly the fact that I understand how education has changed my whole life. I advocate every day for the

quality of education and the impact it will have on the students.” Fac1 said, “I am one of eight children and my mom never finished high school. Things were rough financially and most of the time we lived in condemned housing. I asked what I could do not to end up here. So that was a big influence.” Fac6 said, “I think that I always wanted to be a teacher. I did my first year at a community college, and that is when I got so interested in the community college system, because of the fine instructors.”

**Theme 4: Diversity work experiences.** Nine (90%) participants described how their work experiences created unique, diverse experiences that contributed to them adapting to the increased student diversity. Participants worked with and taught different genders, races, ages, and ethnicities. Diversity work experiences included working with unskilled workers, different age groups, veterans, students with disabilities, students from homeless shelters, and the Boys and Girls Club of America. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin2 said:

I work with local industries in bridging the gap between unskilled workers and bringing them into the workforce. I work with a variety of individuals. I have some who are 18 and some in my classes that are 50 or more years old. I work with the Veterans Affairs Office.

Fac3/Ad said:

If we want to talk about diversity, I had a lot of diversity in . . . County Schools as an Iterant Spanish teacher. I did that for one year, which was a kind of agreed-upon arrangement when I took the job. I worked at . . . Elementary after that in

elementary education for a few more years. I worked in an inner-city school, and it created a lot of unique, diverse experiences for me—homeless shelter, Boys and Girls home fed into that school and I taught these students.

Fac4 said:

I worked in the early childhood program for 32 years and a federal program that was for low-income at-risk children, so I was exposed to families of various cultures in that job position. We had many Hispanic families; we had multiple Asians families, we even had Haitians, and it was not just African Americans or Caucasian families. More than 20 or 30% of those students on our campus are Hispanic, as well, and I try to ensure that they are receiving what they need to get through these classes.

Additional diversity work experiences of participants included working with incoming freshmen students only, adult students, displaced workers, children with mental health challenges, and low-income and at-risk children. Teaching at historical Black colleges and universities, public and inner-city schools, and teaching GED and ESL courses all contributed to participants' unique diversity work experiences. Participants indicated that they provide a welcoming environment in their classrooms or the college environment because of prior diverse work experiences.

Admin1 said:

You need to get some females in here; they are around the campus. You just need to start looking at what they do differently. If you get some African Americans and some Chinese students in here working, that will be great. Let's start doing

that. We started hiring females to work with us, and all of the sudden things started to work better.

Admin4 said:

I see every day freshmen, adults, folks that may have been laid off from work, and any individual that would like to further their education would come through me on a daily basis. Once having that experience and working with children because I used to work with the department of social services with children and also the department of mental health in the educational side for children with special needs.

Fac2 said, “I worked at historical Black colleges and universities, and at some other institutions. These experiences have helped me in adapting to the diversity of the student population.”

Fac5 said:

I worked specifically with the students that were first-generation, rural, low-income disabled students. I worked closely with them, taking them from not just their academic career and academic life but personal skills, life skills, and that sort of thing, which helps me in adapting.

**Themes for Research Question 2: What Are Lived Experiences of Community College Leaders in Relation to the Leadership Competencies They Value?**

Participants agreed that listening, professionalism, collaboration, communication, resource management, organizational strategy, trust, respect, honesty, community college advocacy, and commitment are the various leadership competencies they value. The

majority of the participants agreed that their experiences of promoting these competencies supported them in contributing to the success of these students. The majority of the participants supported the six leadership competencies that the AACC (2010) developed—professionalism, collaboration, communication, resource management, organizational strategy, and community college advocacy. Some participants were not overwhelmingly supportive of these leadership competencies in their individual positions or individual college environments, but the majority of the participants were familiar with them. Eddy (2010) and McNair (2010) reported that clarifying and interpreting specific leadership skills required for community college leaders remains unclear in the literature.

**Theme 5: Leadership competencies.** Ten (100%) participants indicated the leadership competencies they value were based on their leadership experiences and were important to them in relation to student diversity. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin2 said, “Resourcefulness, organization, management, respect, and trust. I think trust is the foundation of trustworthiness. Collaboration, I collaborate with other colleges infrequently. These are the competencies I value.”

Admin4 said:

I advocate every day for the quality of education. I think professionalism is also a key. You have to welcome students, but you also have to be a professional because they are looking to you for guidance, they are looking to you for the structure. Respect and trust—when a student comes in, and they have a legitimate

concern, you are going to treat them with respect and you are going to help them. Collaboration, you have to be able to collaborate. I come in every day, and I work with wonderful women, and we collaborate on everything. Under organizational strategy, as an institution we have a QEP— quality enhancement plan. A lot of it focuses on first-year students. It focuses on areas of admission for our students, and I think that we have a lot of those strategies in place to accommodate all of the students. Communication competency, *a voice*—advising, value, opportunities in career and education, we are trying to give students a voice. Resource management, we are a small school, and I think that resources and how you manage them are important, especially with our students.

In addition, some leaders named the following as significant relevant leadership competencies: culture, message, execution, resourcefulness, manageability, being detailed, having self-worth, serving, and caring.

Admin1 said:

Culture, message, and execution—if I had to make my own list that would be it. First and foremost, one of the most important things you got is culture. It is creating a certain understanding between everybody else as to who you are and where you are going. Message, how do I communicate to you what I do? My message is that we care about you. Execution, get it done. If you have something to do, put a deadline on it. I learned something very important, communication.



Admin3said:

The competencies listed by the AACC are very comprehensive in terms of what makes a leader a leader. No one of the competencies outweigh another because a leader in an educational environment needs to be able to comprehend and activate that quality that is needed at that time.

Fac1 said, "Resource management, I haven't acquired that. Communication campuswide I think is an issue, and is one of the initiatives as an institution that needs addressing.

Other competencies I value are caring, respect, and fairness." Fac3/Ad said:

Resource management, as a leader we are held responsible for managing resources and fiscal resources. We are a state institution, and we are trusted with those funds. I think the professionalism piece is real important. I think of professionalism just not, in a way, of the surface-level professionalism, I think of professional growth. Collaboration, I'll use an example of something we have here.

Fac4 said:

Ethically and morally honest, organized, advocate for community college, professionalism, and the collaboration piece. When it comes to organization they did work with us on the importance of making sure as instructors whether you are in the leadership for the staff position as well as faculty that we are organized with our lessons with our classes, that we actually have our schedules slated early, that we put in the time to prepare our lessons on weekly basis, and even organize dates and times for students. Another one of the part of the competency is when it

came to communication and those kinds of things that we communicate with each other in our faculty development, faculty council or whether it is in our administrative program.

Yes, and in the collaboration piece we actually meet with . . . Community College. It is one that I collaborate with and . . . Tech, as well. That is how we end up teaching online classes for them and making sure that the virtual learning center was a place that all students from all sectors can participate. We actually have working partnership agreements with . . . College where our students can get their third year here on our campus. They can get their associate's degree in early childhood education; carry that 2-year program to . . . for third year right here on our campus. And then we have actual agreements with other colleges too.

Ok, professionalism. This is where we actually looked at if there is a certificate that the staff here on campus go through for professional development. We have to make sure we have a certain number of hours and I have actually done mine with my doctoral studies at . . . . So we have days when students are out that is called professional days and they have training right here on campus for us and for people to look at the professional side of it, making sure that we understand the importance of it and going into Raleigh and being an advocate for the community college sector and all of that is done sometimes during the professional development training courses.

Fac5 said:

Competencies for leadership, first of all, I think what is needed in order to be a leader is having a lot of support from your administration. Communication, emphatic listener, collaboration—I think that we collaborate and communicate very well between the departments.

**Themes for Research Question 3: What Meaning Do Leaders Give to Their Lived Experiences That Support Them in Integrating the Competencies They Value Into the College Environment?**

Participants reported that they integrated their leadership competencies through feedback, teamwork, and serving on boards and committees. The participants in this study agreed that it was important to integrate leadership competencies in the community college environment but did not identify an agreed-upon integration process.

**Theme 6: Integrating competencies.** Seven (70%) participants' lived experiences contributed to the methods they used in integrating their valued competencies into the college environment. Some leaders reported participating in college and career fairs, giving tips and pointers to students about being successful, giving students a voice, working on committees and boards, working with other professionals, promoting professional development activities, and creating advisory boards for all programs. Other participants reported doing things by example, exhibiting teamwork, receiving information and suggestions from others in making decisions, exchanging experiences in a nonthreatening environment, openness in terms of letting

others know what is going on, mentoring others, valuing others' opinions, and being an ambassador. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin1 said:

You have to live them every day. You have to do these things by examples, not just telling people. Culture, I am not only constantly telling people but show them how you get to that point. Number two is the message. Every time you say it, you say it consistently, so people are not confused about that in which you believe. You can't have 30 ideas in your message. Have one, two, or three, that's it, and you push those things forward. And the next is execution, the way you are going to deliver, showing it by going to the next thing, deliver that one thing, and then go to the next thing, and deliver that one. A lot of self-advocacy is one of the fallacies I see of people going into a leadership position, and I don't know if they are very good leaders, but here is the deal. People say that I don't like to brag about the things I do. If not, people will never know what you do. What you have to do is do it, and then you tell people that I have done this, this, and this. You get out of the way and say: "Look, what my staff did is amazing."

The end result is teamwork, which is what my staff did. Understanding that when your folks do well you do well or when your staff does well. So continually out them in front of the wins. They're happy, and when they are happy, they produce more, and when they produce more, everybody does better. That's what I think, that you do it by example.

But if you look at the six competencies, how does professionalism push for diversity? How does collaboration push for diversity? You can look at those things, and how does the communication push for diversity? You look at those things, and you can get the least diverse people in the world, and that will work within those groups. I don't think that diversity lives within a framework. We have a diversity committee here that I am not used to having. The diversity committee is doing some amazing things, and they are now just starting to blossom into this beautiful thing of creating activities here for folks that are most useful. There are some things that you can do as an organization to do that, so, yes, it is a part of collaboration. Let's not go to collaboration competency and say that is the answer, because it isn't. It is collaboration with a purpose with a framework, it is a culture with a framework, it's a message with a framework, and it's an execution with a framework. So it goes back to the personal thing. It is a personal framework, you can put these beautiful things on top, and it will work.

Admin2 said:

Professionalism—two years ago, I was the staff association president, and that's how I guided my leadership. I mentored several other directors in my department, also mentored the two staff association presidents that have come behind me. I listen, and I take their opinions. I have a one-on-one relationship with students. I don't tell them to feel intimidated if they have to approach me before the class ends. I ask them to come and see me.

Admin3 said, "It's an attitude. Recognizing that collaboration by a group often helps

move something forward. Openness is important in terms of letting them know what's going on. It helps in keeping them energized of the operation." Admin4 said:

How to integrate competencies personally, as for me, I think that a lot of it has to do with other people. The more that you work in committees and the more that you work in boards, the way you work in the QEP, the way you work with others, I think that is the best way when working with other professionals who are able to promote these competencies. I think that doing activities on campus that promote leadership, which promote the values of the instruction, and that will go with student activities. With the faculty, we do a lot of professional development activities here on the campus. And I think that is the best way to have these competencies to be developed.

Communication—we do college fairs, and we do careers fairs and we hear what the community wants, so it does help us from the diversity and the everyday changing in the community that we have here. A *VOICE*—advising, value opportunities, in career and education; we are trying to give students a voice. All of our committees are diverse. All of our programs have advisory boards, and they are also very diverse because we bring in faculty, and we also bring in stakeholders.

Organizational strategy—we have over 22 courses, and one is our introductory course to the institution. I think that one of the latest strategies is that in the student's first semester, they have to take that course, and it gives those tips and pointers on how to be a more effective student here in the college, and it goes

through the whole process. Community resources—we do a counseling breakfast and bring in superintendents, counselors, stakeholders from secondary institutions to come in and meet with us, which may be used as a recruitment tool.

Participants reported maintaining relationships across campus, fostering relationships, partnering with other programs, promoting self-worth through recognizing students with certificates, and putting student recognition in the newspapers to support students. Attending leadership conferences, talking with people one-on-one instead of as a whole group, giving feedback daily, talking about demographic data, making change effective, promoting a constant circle of change, enhancing communication as a college, improving customer/student services, producing critical thinking, and also making a difference not just on campus, but doing something that will make a difference locally are inclusive of integrating competencies.

Fac3/Ad said:

If we are doing it right daily it all leads together. It is just one great feedback loop. I strive to incorporate it with the faculty that works with me, the other leaders that I work with, with the students that I work with and I hope that I am incorporating it everywhere. Then I hope with all of the support services, and they are supporting all of that. I hope that all the demographics that we are looking at and talking about that kind of data and make changes effectively and improve it so we can start doing it all again and keep that constantly going. It is a constant circle of change and improvement.

Fac4 said:

Meeting their needs for diverse lifestyles, the timeframes for online classes where some students because of finances don't have computers at home, they are allowed time to do their classes in our academic support. We have placed computers on campus where those students can do their online programs right here on campus. Collaboration—partner with other programs, partnership agreement for the early childhood program, and co-op work experience for students. Performing as professionals, so when you are looking at promoting self-worth in relation to our students you are teaching them the importance of feeling good about themselves, gaining independence, the autonomy that they gain and once they gain the knowledge we reward them in giving them actual certificates. We give five certificates once a year to different students saying that instructors see and recognize their efforts.

Fac5 said:

I am an ambassador for people. I've tried to work toward maintaining my relationships in student services, financial aid, in the business office, in the foundation. I try to keep a relationship across campus, my personal relationships, and my professional ones because I think that it will help my students. I think that the more involved I am across campus with other offices and departments, the more information I'll have. I can foster relationships all over campus, but I am liable to request information, relevant information sooner than someone else would. So, that is how I integrate that for me, personally. Community college



advocacy—I have served for a year on our foundation board of directors, and I am from this area originally, and I grew up here, and I am close to the community. So, I advocate the college on a regular basis, to be honest. I help friends and neighbors and church members and different people. I go out into the community and say, “Hey, we need some help.” That’s my personal advocacy.

Participants did not indicate a definitive method of integrating leadership competencies on their individual college campuses. Some participants did not overwhelmingly support the six leadership competencies developed by the AACC and the integration of these competencies into the college environment. Widespread support of integrating the leadership competencies the AACC developed is recommended in the community college leadership environment (Hassan et al., 2010; McNair, 2007).

Admin1 said:

But if you look at the six competencies, how does professionalism push for diversity? How does collaboration push for diversity? How does communication push for diversity? You look at those things, and you can get the least diverse people in the world, and that will work within those groups. I don’t think that diversity lives within a framework. We have a diversity committee here that I am not used to having, the diversity committee doing some amazing things, and they are now just starting blossoming into this beautiful thing of creating activities here for folks that are most useful. There are some things that you can do as an organization to do that, so, yes, it is a part of collaboration. Let’s not go to the collaboration competency and say that is the answer because it isn’t. It is

collaboration with a purpose with a framework, it is a culture with a framework, it's a message with a framework, and it's an execution with a framework.

Admin3 said:

Those competencies that are listed by the AACCC are very comprehensive in terms of what makes a leader a leader. No one of those competencies outweighs another because a leader in an educational environment needs to be able to comprehend and activate that quality which is needed at that time, being in a committee relationship or in a forum where discussion is going on related to organizational redirection or a focus on educational needs for a community.

**Themes for Research Question 4: What Meaning Do Leaders Give to Their Lived Experiences That Contribute to Leadership Effectiveness?**

The majority of the participants indicated that they are effective leaders when their students are successful. Participants revealed that the funding challenges they faced contributed negatively to their effectiveness as a leader. Many participants indicated that funding for community colleges is an area of concern that affects their programs, courses, professional development, and student success as it relates to tuition. Participants reported that they had to seek alternative funding to support their classes or programs. Community college budgets are tight, and funds for new student initiatives and activities are hampered. In-house professional development training for faculty does not compare to professional training programs for faculty and administrators. Responses related to research question 4 identified the following four themes: leadership effectiveness, funding challenges, student initiatives and activities, and professional development.

**Theme 7: Leadership effectiveness.** Six (60%) participants described how the meaning they give to their lived experiences relating to leadership effectiveness contributed to the success of these students. Completing their master's degrees in education were constants among the majority of the participants relevant to being effective leaders. Establishing positive relationships in the campus environment contributed to participants' effectiveness as a leader. Sharing with others the importance of the mission of the institution, realizing the need to have everybody on your team, loving them, and caring for them are significant to leadership effectiveness. Dealing with the issues related to diversity, relationships, and gender contributed to their effectiveness, which in turn supports the increasing diversity of the student population. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin1 said:

One thing that allows you to have authority is that you have a sincere interest in the advancement and success of others. The key to leadership is real understanding that when another does well, you do well, your business does well, so on and so forth. Learn to be accepting, be inclusive. A lot of people don't understand that your openness to others will determine openness to you.

Admin2 said:

I am an effective leader because I live by what I say. If I say that you are going to work hard, and I am going to do my best to help you to succeed. That has allowed me to be an effective leader; I live by example. I sit with the student one-on-one because I want to establish that trust with them first, and then we move forward

from there. I tell them what I expect, and they tell me what they expect out of this course.

Fac3/Ad:

I have one real advantage that has helped me a lot in my leadership role here at the college is having an educational background. I always had to work my way through school, and my students do that too. Even now being a student and working full-time. I tell my students that I am a student, I feel your pain, and you know how it feels to go to work all day, and you're tired, and now you are here at night class. I do that, too; we are going to make it, and we are going to do this together. I think that those kinds of things help and those kinds of experiences just contribute to leadership effectiveness.

The majority of the participants indicated that the experiences they encountered such as being able to relate to people as individuals, relate to people from different cultures, learn a different language, learn to individualize learning strategies for some students, ensure that students understand the classroom material, and help students to understand the concepts before tests contributed to the participants being effective leaders.

Admin4 said:

My experiences help me in being an effective leader as it applies to the things I have learned as far as relating to people as individuals and people from different cultures. The knowledge I gained from learning some of the things as far as language, the importance of knowing that you have to individualize for students,

make sure students understand before you test, make sure they understand as you are going through and giving general knowledge in classes. In providing this, students feel comfortable in approaching you. They can call or come to you if they have questions. That has been very good learning experience for me that has helped me to understand and know my place as being a part of the community college setting. I love it because I open my doors; I open my phone, I open my home to talk with students, and they know that they can reach me no matter what it is that they need from me, I will be there.

Fac4 said:

My experiences help me in being an effective leader as I apply the things I have learned in the . . . Academy. These experiences taught me self-management and how to relate to others. I learned to put first things first and then how to carry out my responsibilities. I learned the importance of respecting others and relating to people as individuals, from different cultures. I also learned the importance of knowing that you have to individualize for them, make sure they understand before you test, make sure they understand as you are going through giving general knowledge in your classes. Providing students a safety net if they need it, which allows the students to call or come to me if they have questions or problems understanding educational information related to their classes. I have an open-door policy, and students can call me at work, home, or on my cell. I talk to my students and with my students, and they know that they can reach me; no matter what it is that they need from me, I will be there.

Fac5 said:

The more that I teach, the more confident I am. The more time I spend with my students, the longer that I advise them, the longer that they are here, and when I see them start out as a brand-new student, and they graduate, the more confident I get, and my ability to lead a classroom or lead the students. The longer I am with students who are going all the way through and finishing up shows that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. When they are successful, I feel successful. My experience in advising and I have learned a lot about what students need, about what their concerns are, about their education.

**Theme 8: Funding challenges.** Six (60%) participants indicated that they experienced funding challenges in relation to adapting to this population of students. The majority of participants indicated that funding for community colleges is an area of concern that affects their programs, courses, professional development, and student success. Some participants reported that they had the experience of seeking alternative funding to support their classes or programs. Participants agreed that the budgets at their individual colleges were tight, and that had a negative effect on requests for field trips, attending conferences, and establishing clubs. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Admin2 said:

I have experienced how funding impacts my programs. In the beginning, it affected it a lot. I was limited to what I could buy, supplies; I was limited on certifications I pursued, but I did not let that hinder me. That is why I pursued

since I've been here three years in the education role, grants that will pay and offset that cost. I have come up with alternative funding to keep my programs running. Alternative funding allows me for certifications, pay instructors, and purchase supplies that student's need. A lot of students have daycare and transportation issues, and the grant will not pay for that. However, I receive assistance from local organizations to pay for these as long as they are getting some training, getting a certification. The additional funding will pay for those individuals to come to class that offsets their transportation and daycare needs.

Fac1 said:

It's very difficult, the state right now, every year pretty much ever since I have worked here there has been less money available for requests. I don't know how political it is or is it the lack of my experience, or I am writing my requests for funds that, in a way, would be more inclined for approval, but it's gotten more increasingly difficult as the budget continues to be cut year after year.

Fac5 said:

Right now we have very very few funds to support going to conferences. I went to one conference in January and that simply because we are working on the developmental reading and English redesign and they needed somebody from our department and it was for our benefit, so I had to go. There is so little money that folks cannot participate in the kind of professional development that we need. I would love to be able to go specifically to conferences and meetings where there are other community colleges' . . . instructors. Unfortunately, we can ask to go to

conferences, and if there is extra funding in the budget that they can work with, then people can go. But it is very frustrating.

Participants agreed that funding challenges affect both the institution and students. Students are faced with the dilemma of possibly not qualifying for the DREAM Act, as well as the concern of paying out-of-state tuition. The state of North Carolina took away the senior citizen waiver for free courses at community colleges through continuing education and curriculum. Participants indicated the state of North Carolina sets the budget for community colleges, and the majority of the colleges for the last few years have been feeling that pinch. Participants agreed that it was crucial that the institutions do the absolute best they can with those funds so that the students do not feel uneasiness among the leaders. Less money is available for requests from faculty, as well. In assessing programs and services and assuring that the changing needs of the students are addressed, community college leaders must address the varying resources, uncertainty of fiscal resources, and declining financial support from federal, state, and local agencies (Nevarez & Wood, 2010).

Admin4 said:

From my experience I will say, "I want to implement this and I know that it has a cost. Have you found alternatives that may be a little bit more affordable for us to do it?" That has been very useful for me. At the same time, unfortunately, there are sometimes you have to do it. We just have to talk with a supervisor, vice presidents, and the powers that be and present your case. Tell them the importance of the mission and what you are trying to accomplish with your vision



for that process and with hopes that you can receive the funding at some point or at least get some feedback. I put it in and see if it gets approved. It's an everyday thing, and I think that coming to education you can see that every day it is a struggle.

Fac3/Ad said:

To be able to go out and say “We want you to come” but not be able to say with confidence “We can get you through a 2-year program, and this is the kind of tuition you will have to pay”—that’s hard, and that is hard for us and that’s very hard for the student. It is hard for the student who wants to start a 2-year program and not knowing that this semester or this academic year I may get to pay in-state tuition or next year I may have to pay out-of-state tuition or maybe I can apply for financial aid or maybe I can’t. The DREAM Act is in place, and next year it may not be. That is not a good situation. It is not a situation that we have created for ourselves, but nonetheless it affects our ability to work with that population. I am sure it is political in nature to some degree. We try to think about those students who are marginalized, and we try to think of ways to help. For example, we have an early college high school on our campus. We know students who might not otherwise be eligible to get two years of education, they come in through the early college, and they are high school students; we know they can get two years of college. Same is true through the Career and College Promise Pathways. Career and College Promise Pathways once was called Dual Enrollment high school students, where they can take college courses while they are still in high school.

Again, because of the way that pathway works they don't pay tuition, so it doesn't matter whether they are in-state or out-of-state [tuition]. So we know that there is an opportunity there for those I like to think that are marginalized.

For those marginalized students to get a foot in the door, if they started taking classes their junior year in high school, they can get a whole semester for free. So even if they are faced with that hurdle of what if they don't qualify for the DREAM Act, what if they are faced with paying out-of-state tuition, could we at least give them a certificate? We talked about this; we talked about these things. We do try to think about the means we can help these people. The state of North Carolina took away the senior citizen waiver—free courses for senior citizens for community colleges through continuing education and curriculum. Again, that's a thing in our county which is an aging county, that took away some of our latitude for serving our local area. We try to make things available as much as we can. We can't follow those trends, but we talk about them and try to work through everything that we can. As tight as they are now, and the budget is set in the state of North Carolina for the last few years, everybody feels that pinch. I think that it is just so crucial to do the absolute best that we can with those funds so that the students don't feel it because every community college mission focuses on the student.

Fac4 said:

As far as providing us financial support when we are on co-op visits, they give us a mileage per diem; we just have to turn it in. When it comes to my lab activities

and supplies, they have cabinets full of materials and supplies even before I came that were generous and available for my early childhood students.

**Theme 9: Student initiatives and activities.** Five (50%) participants indicated that they had experienced challenges of not being able to develop new student initiatives and activities that nurture and support student diversity. Participants indicated that community college budgets were tight, funds for new student initiatives and activities were hampered, and requests for student field trips seldom received feedback. Some clubs that were available have now faltered because the institution itself does not support student organizations according to one participant, and that participant felt that this was a detriment to recruitment and retention. Some participants agreed that the colleges establish various student clubs and organizations to support students. Some participants indicated they experienced difficulty in pursuing new initiatives and student activities because of a lack of funding. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Fac1 said:

A colleague of mine is working on an international cultural center here because we have not had one prior to now. I tried to get funding to take my social club on a trip, but I just haven't been successful. We used to have a multicultural club that faltered; we used to have a physical science club that faltered because the institution itself does not support student organizations, which I feel is a detriment to retention. I put in a request, and I said that "We have talked about this before, and I have never heard back from you. The students are excited and want to attend

this conference. Can you give me confirmation when you receive an application for the funding?” The club that we are doing and any events that we do or plan, I try to make sure that they are in line with the vision of the college, which is to produce critical thinking and also make a difference not just on campus, but try to do something that’ll make a difference locally. I am sure we are not doing what we could be doing for sure. Looks like we are falling short.

Fac3/Ad said:

When we are looking at our quality enhancement, I thought of our financial resources and as bad as the budget is the chance right now of getting money to start any new initiative is slim to none. We have an excellent opportunity to start a new initiative, but we have no money.

The participants indicated that many colleges have established a minority male mentoring group in support of the increasing male population. The participants agreed that most colleges have student government associations, and other student initiatives including a business club, cosmetology club, Native American club, and a female mentoring program. One college offers a variety of clubs because it does not offer sports to its students because of the size of the college and funding. All the clubs that the participant mentioned were very diverse. One college even provided 30 to 40 computers for students on a daily basis until 8 p.m., because many students cannot afford personal computers to take online courses.

Admin4 said:

We do have a minority male mentoring group, SGA [Student Government Association], and clubs etc. for our students. Clubs anywhere between criminal justice, nursing, business clubs, cosmetology club, Native American club, and we have a unity support group for students. We are very diverse in our clubs. We do offer a lot of clubs for our students to be a part of because we do not offer sports.

Fac4 said:

Meeting students' need for diverse lifestyles, the timeframes for online classes where some students financially are unable to have computers at home. They are allowed time to do their classes in our academic support lab. We have placed computers on campus where those students can do their online programs right here on campus. Thirty or 40 computers are provided, and students can go into different rooms and use those computers on a daily basis, and it is open until 8 at night. So students that are daytime students can do their work in there, and night students.

**Theme 10: Professional development.** Five (50%) participants indicated that they have had various experiences relating to professional development on their campuses and how these experiences affect the diversity of students on their campuses. Participants indicated that their attendance at professional development conferences would give them an opportunity to collaborate with leaders in other community colleges, where they could discuss how to enhance their programs and courses in support of these students. One participant expressed that she could benefit from other community college

faculty sharing new techniques and strategies relating to students if she could attend professional programs. Following are some of the responses that captured the essence of this theme.

Fac5 said:

There is so little money that folks cannot participate in the kind of professional development that we need. I would love to be able to go specifically to conferences and meetings where there are other community colleges' English instructors. There is a lot of fear among us as faculty about a new initiative being implemented this fall that affects our students. It worries us, and I would like some professional developmental on that, quite honestly, because I need to know what do I do with that student.

Admin4 said, "We do have professional development for our faculty." Fac1 said, "Primarily when it comes to leadership activities, there are other schools we have relationships with, but they are academic and not professional development." Fac6 said, "Of course we learned a lot from the NAEYC [National Association for the Education of Young Children] that is very important and also the NEA [National Education Association] is very important. We learn so much about professionalism in these organizations so we have to be a professional."

Funding issues hamper employees' involvement in professional development programs and activities off campus even though it is requested and the need is evident. Some participants indicated that their community college conducts in-house professional development training, and stated that local professional development training could be

conducted more professionally. Participants agreed that through their experiences in-house professional development training for faculty does not compare to professional training programs for faculty. One participant reported being involved in a leadership academy. Community college leaders' demands to attend professional development programs are significant, and community colleges are faced with such issues as (a) operating under limited budgets, (b) travel funds being unrealistic budget line items, and (c) time away from the institution is difficult. The participation of community college leaders in national leadership programs is low because of cost and duration of the programs (Eddy, 2010).

Fac4 said:

We have days when students are out that is called professional days, and they have training right here on campus for us and for people to look at the professional side of it, making sure that we understand the importance of it. In the area of community college management, we have a leadership group, and I was a part of that leadership process. They took us out to different places with the thought that as an instructor, if later that you would like to be in management or leadership positions.

Table 7 shows a comprehensive overview of themes and participants' supporting statements. Table 8 shows the themes identified, along with the number and percentages of participants that had the experience.

Table 7

*Themes With Participants' Supporting Statements*

| Themes                  | Participants' Supporting Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Diversity Experiences   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I work with people from different countries, different languages.</li> <li>• In high school, I was around a lot of diversity and in my neighborhood, there were not only Whites, but other cultures.</li> <li>• I do not work with students one-on-one, but the diversity of the student population has always been there. The degree of diversity is increasing.</li> <li>• Coming from . . . in 2001, all I had was a high school diploma and I saw how hard it was even to be able to get a job at that time and to have the opportunity to start at a community college and get a degree was significant.</li> <li>• Educating a diverse population of students is what has kept me in and seeing the difference it makes . . . I worked in community college teaching English as a second language to a very diverse population of people. Everything from Latino people to Arabic-speaking people, Chinese-speaking people, just whoever signed up for the class.</li> <li>• It is nothing I had to do to adapt; it has been a natural process to try to help people of all diversities.</li> <li>• I interacted with people who come from different traditions and customs or whose primary language is something other than English. I think that has helped me adapt to the changing population at this school. I worked at two historically Black colleges and universities where I experienced diversity.</li> <li>• I worked in a federal program that was for low-income, at-risk children and was exposed to their families of various cultures. We had many Hispanic and Asian families, not just African Americans.</li> <li>• My experiences in the . . . Program have been beneficial to me for my classroom. I worked with individuals that were first-generation, rural, and low-income students.</li> </ul>                                                                             |
| Educational Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I am a product of the community college . . . I have a master's in education in career and vocational education.</li> <li>• Both my bachelor and master degrees are in sociology, and I am a first-generation college student. It took me 12 years to get from start to finish from starting college to my master's degree. I had to work to support myself financially through the process.</li> <li>• I have pretty much been in education my entire professional life. I have a master's degree. I funded my graduate school education.</li> <li>• I came to the United States of America in 1994 to stay here for a little while and learn English. I studied my entire childhood in private education in my country. I had an opportunity like no other to get a liberal arts education. I have a master's degree.</li> <li>• I decided that it was something missing, so I went back into education, and I got my master's in education.</li> <li>• I have been in the education field for almost 20 years at this profession, at this school and another school, I have a master's.</li> <li>• I have a M. A. . . . and I am from another country. My plan was to study something in a different field, but for personal reasons I had to switch to something that could give me more time because of the language gap at the time.</li> <li>• I started my degree program at a community college. I have a master's . . . I am now in a doctorate program.</li> <li>• This is my first and only job in education. I have a master's degree in English . . . I have also taken classes at NC State in adult and community college education.</li> <li>• I graduated . . . with a master's in education. I took correspondence courses to get my 18 graduate hours in sociology and psychology. I attended . . . Community College, which helps me to identify with student diversity here.</li> </ul> |
| Personal Influences     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My part-time job, which was GED, human resource development, and of course ESL course, and this time I wasn't teaching it I was coordinating. I was all of these three things as a part-time job and it became available as a full-time job and I applied for the full-time job. They called me and said that they "have another position available that we know that you are qualified for," and would I consider interviewing for early childhood instructor? So I came over and I interviewed for that and it was a much better situation for me than what the ESL Coordinator was going to be and it was using what I had gone to school for so I took that position.</li> <li>• I was influenced to teach in community college during my bachelor's degree program. There were instructors who encouraged me. The dean of the program encouraged me to explore and reach out for goals higher than a bachelor's degree.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

*(table continues)*



| Themes                     | Participants' Supporting Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| Diversity Work Experiences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My first influence was working with the . . . Program and getting to know that particular demographic, that particular type of student. Nontraditional students will tug at my heartstring. Now my influence is that I am teaching English full-time, and I am focusing more on getting students to transfer and to increase their learning skills. All of this helps me in adapting to the diverse student population.</li> <li>• I contribute this to the wonderful professors I had. When I was 14, my father told me that he would get me any tutoring I wanted and education I wanted outside of school, but I was going to learn physics, and I was perfectly capable of doing it. I got through physics with some tutoring and became so good at it because of the right help, and I put the effort in it, of course.</li> <li>• What influenced me, to be very honest and frank, is mainly the fact that I understand how education has changed my whole life. I advocate every day for the quality of education and the impact it will have on the students.</li> <li>• I am one of eight children and my mom never finished high school. Things were rough financially and most of the time we lived in condemned housing. I asked what I could do not to end up here. So that was a big influence.</li> <li>• I think that I always wanted to be a teacher. I did my first year at a community college, and that is when I got so interested in the community college system, because of the fine instructors.</li> </ul><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I work with local industries in bridging the gap between unskilled workers and bringing them into the workforce. I work with a variety of individuals.</li> <li>• I have some who are 18 and some in my classes that are 50 or more years old. I work with the Veterans Affairs Office.</li> <li>• If we want to talk about diversity, I had a lot of diversity in . . . County Schools as an itinerant Spanish teacher. I did that for one year, which was a kind of agreed-upon arrangement when I took the job. They would be happy to find me an elementary classroom after that, which they did. I worked . . . in elementary education for a few more years.</li> <li>• I worked in an inner-city school, and it created a lot of unique, diverse experiences for me—homeless shelter, Boys and Girls home fed into that school and I taught these students.</li> <li>• I worked in the early childhood program for 32 years and a federal program that was for low-income, at-risk children, so I was exposed to families of various cultures in that job position. We had many Hispanic families; we had multiple Asians families; we even had Haitians, and it was not just African Americans or Caucasian families.</li> <li>• You need to get some females in here; they are around the campus. You just need to start looking at what they do differently. If you get some African Americans and some Chinese students in here working, that will be great. We started hiring females to work with us, and all of the sudden things started to work better.</li> <li>• I see every day freshmen, adults, folks that may have been laid off from work, and any individual that would like to further their education would come through me on a daily basis. Once having that experience and working with children, because I used to work with the department of social services with children and also the department of mental health in the educational side for children with special needs.</li> <li>• I worked at historical Black colleges and universities, and at some other institutions. These experiences have helped me in adapting to the diversity of the student population.</li> <li>• I worked specifically with the students that were first-generation, rural, low-income, disabled students. I worked closely with them, taking them from not just their academic career and academic life but personal skills, life skills, and that sort of thing, which helps me in adapting.</li> </ul> |
| Leadership Competencies    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I advocate every day for the quality of education. I think professionalism is also a key. You have to welcome students, but you also have to be a professional because they are looking to you for guidance, they are looking to you for the structure. Respect and trust—when a student comes in, and they have a legitimate concern, you are going to treat them with respect, and you are going to help them.</li> <li>• Collaboration, you have to be able to collaborate. I come in every day, and I work with wonderful women, and we collaborate on everything. Under organizational strategy, as an institution we have a QEP—quality enhancement plan. A lot of it focuses on first-year students. It focuses on areas of admission for our students, and I think that we have a lot of those strategies in place to accommodate all of the students. Communication competency, a voice—advising, value, opportunities in career and education—we are trying to give students a voice. Resource management, we are a small school, and I think that resources and how you manage them are important, especially with our students. Culture, message, and execution—if I had to make my own list, that would be it. First and foremost, one of the most important things you got is culture. It is creating a certain understanding between everybody else as to who you are and where you are going. Message, how do I communicate to you what I do? My message is that we care about you.</li> <li>• Execution, get it done. If you have something to do, put a deadline on it. I learned something very important, communication.</li> <li>• The competencies listed by the AACC are very comprehensive in terms of what makes a leader a leader. No one of the competencies outweigh another because a leader in an educational environment needs to be able to comprehend and activate that quality that is needed at that time.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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| Themes                   | Participants' Supporting Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| Integrating Competencies | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resource management, I haven't acquired that. Communication campuswide I think is an issue, and is one of the initiatives as an institution that need addressing. Other competencies I value are caring, respect, and fairness.</li> <li>• Resource management, as a leader we are held responsible for managing resources and fiscal resources. We are a state institution, and we are trusted with those funds. Of course we should be managing those to the absolute best of our ability. I think the professionalism piece is real important. I think of professionalism just not, in a way, of the surface-level professionalism, I think of professional growth. Collaboration, I'll use an example of something we have here. We have a relatively new president, and he brought a fabulous thing with him from his previous college that we have never had before, and I have enjoyed having a planning council.</li> <li>• Ethically and morally honest, organized, advocate for community college, professionalism, and the collaboration piece. When it comes to organization, they did work with us on the importance of making sure as instructors, whether you are in the leadership for the staff position as well as faculty, that we are organized with our classes, that we actually have our schedules slated early, that we put in the time to prepare our lessons on weekly basis, and even organize dates and times for students. Another one of the part of the competency is when it came to communication and those kinds of things that we communicate with each other in our faculty development, faculty council, or whether it is in our administrative program. We joined the community college leadership academy. We actually have been a part of it in Raleigh making sure that we advocate for community colleges. Yes, and in the collaboration piece we actually meet with . . . community college. It is one that I collaborate with and . . . [another college], as well. That is how we end up teaching online classes for them and making sure that the virtual learning center was a place that all students from all sectors can participate. We actually have working partnership agreements with . . . [another] college where our students can get their third year here on our campus. They can get their associates degree in early childhood education; carry that 2-year program to . . . for third year right here on our campus . . . . And then, we have actual agreements with other colleges too.</li> <li>• Ok, professionalism. This is where we actually looked at if there is a certificate that the staff here on campus go through for professional development. We have to make sure we have a certain number of hours and I have actually done mine with my doctoral studies . . . . So we have to turn them in quarterly as well.</li> <li>• Competencies for leadership, first of all, I think that is needed in order to be a leader is having a lot of support from your administration. Communication, emphatic listener, collaboration—I think that we collaborate and communicate very well between the departments.</li> </ul> |
|                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have to live them every day. You have to do these things by examples not just telling people. Culture, I am not only constantly telling people but show them how you get to that point. Number two is the message. Every time you say it, you say it consistently, so people are not confused about that in which you believe. You can't have 30 ideas in your message. Have one, two, or three, that's it, and you push those things forward. And the next is execution, the way you are going to deliver showing it by going to the next thing, deliver that one thing, and then go to the next thing, and deliver that one . . . . What you have to do is do it, and then you tell people that I have done this, this, and this. You get out of the way and say, "Look, what my staff did is amazing."<br/> The end result is teamwork, which is what my staff did. Understanding that when your folks do well you do well, or when your staff does well. So continually put them in front of the wins. They're happy, and when they are happy, they produce more, and when they produce more, everybody does better. That's what I think, that you do it by example.<br/> But if you look at the six competencies, how does professionalism push for diversity? How does collaboration push for diversity? You can look at those things, and how does the communication push for diversity? You look at those things, and you can get the least diverse people in the world, and that will work within those groups. I do not think that diversity lives within a framework. We have a diversity committee here that I am not used to having, the diversity committee doing some amazing things, and they are now just starting to blossom into this beautiful thing of creating activities here for folks that are most useful. There are some things that you can do as an organization to do that, so yes, it is a part of collaboration. Let us not go to collaboration competency and say that is the answer, because it isn't. It is collaboration with a purpose with a framework, it is a culture with a framework, it's a message with a framework, and it's an execution with a framework. So it goes back to the personal thing. It is a personal framework, and you can put these beautiful things on top, and it will work.</li> <li>• Professionalism—two years ago, I was the staff association president, and that's how I guided my leadership. I mentored several other directors in my department, also mentored the two staff association presidents that have come behind me. I listen, and I take their opinions. I have a one-on-one relationship with students. I don't tell them to feel intimidated if they have to approach me before the class ends. I ask them to come and see me.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

(table continues)

| Themes                   | Participants' Supporting Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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|                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It's an attitude. Recognizing that collaboration by a group often helps move something forward. Openness is important in terms of letting them know what's going on. It helps in keeping them energized of the operation.</li> <li>• How to integrate competencies personally, as for me, I think that a lot of it has to do with other people. The more that you work in committees and the more that you work in boards, the way you work in the QEP, the way you work with others—I think that is the best way when working with other professionals who are able to promote these competencies. I think that doing activities on campus that promote leadership, which promote the values of the instruction, and that will go with student activities. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication—we do college fairs, and we do careers fairs and we hear what the community wants, so it does help us from the diversity and the everyday changing in the community that we have here. A voice—advising, value, opportunities in career and education—we are trying to give students a voice. All of our committees are diverse.</li> <li>Organizational strategy—we have over 22 courses, and one is our introductory course to the institution. I think that one of the latest strategies is that in the student's first semester, they have to take that course, and it gives those tips and pointers on how to be a more effective student here in the college, and it goes through the whole process.</li> <li>Community resources—we do counseling breakfast and bring in superintendents, counselors, [and] stakeholders from secondary institutions to come in and meet with us, which may be used as a recruitment tool.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If we are doing it right daily, it all leads together. It is just one great feedback loop. I strive to incorporate it with the faculty that works with me, the other leaders that I work with, with the students that I work with, and I hope that I am incorporating it everywhere. Then I hope with all of the support services, and they are supporting all of that. I hope that all the demographics that we are looking at and talking about that kind of data and make changes effectively and improve it so we can start doing it all again and keep that constantly going. It is a constant circle of change and improvement.</li> <li>• Meeting their needs for diverse lifestyles, the timeframes for online classes where some students, because of finances, don't have computers at home, they are allowed time to do their classes in our academic support. We have placed computers on campus where those students can do their online programs right here on campus. Collaboration—partner with other programs, partnership agreement for the early childhood program, and co-op work experience for students. Performing as professionals, so when you are looking at promoting self-worth in relation to our students you are teaching them the importance of feeling good about themselves, gaining independence, the autonomy that they gain and once they gain the knowledge, we reward them in giving them actual certificates. We give five certificates once a year to different students saying that instructors see and recognize their efforts.</li> <li>• I am an ambassador for people. I've tried to work toward maintaining my relationships in student services, financial aid, in the business office, in the foundation. I try to keep a relationship across campus, my personal relationships, and my professional ones, because I think that it will help my students . . . Community college advocacy—I have served for a year on our foundation board of directors, and I am from this area originally, and I grew up here, and I am close to the community. So, I advocate the college on a regular basis, to be honest. I help friends, and neighbors, and church members, and different people.</li> <li>• Those competencies that are listed by the AACC are very comprehensive in terms of what makes a leader a leader. No one of those competencies outweighs another because a leader in an educational environment needs to be able to comprehend and activate that quality which is needed at that time—being in a committee relationship or in a forum where discussion is going on related to organizational redirection or a focus on educational needs for a community.</li> </ul> |
| Leadership Effectiveness | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• One thing that allows you to have authority is that you have a sincere interest in the advancement and success of others. The key to leadership is real understanding that when other does well, you do well, your business does well, so on and so forth.</li> <li>• Learn to be accepting, be inclusive. A lot of people don't understand that your openness to others will determine openness to you.</li> <li>• I am an effective leader because I live by what I say. If I say that you are going to work hard, and I am going to do my best to help you to succeed. That has allowed me to be an effective leader; I live by example. I sit with the student one-on-one because I want to establish that trust with them move forward from there. I tell them what I expect, and they tell me what they expect out of this course.</li> <li>• I have one real advantage that has helped me a lot in my leadership role here at the college is having an educational background. I always had to work my way through school, and my students do that too. Even now being a student and working full-time. I tell my students that "I am a student, I feel your pain, and you know how it feels to go to work all day, and you're tired, and now you are here at night class. I do that, too; we are going to make it, and we are going to do this together." I think that those kinds of things help and those kinds of experiences just contribute to leadership effectiveness.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

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|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My experiences help me in being an effective leader as it applies to the things I have learned as far as relating to people as individuals and people from different cultures. The knowledge I gained from learning some of the things as far as language, the importance of knowing that you have to individualize for students, make sure students understand before you test, make sure they understand as you are going through and giving general knowledge in classes. In providing this, students feel comfortable in approaching you. They can call or come to you if they have questions. I love it because I open my doors, I open my phone, I open my home to talk with students, and they know that they can reach me no matter what it is that they need from me—I will be there.</li> <li>• My experiences help me in being an effective leader as I apply the things I have learned in the . . . Academy. These experiences taught me self-management and how to relate to others. I learned to put first things first and then how to carry out my responsibilities. I learned the importance of respecting others and relating to people as individuals from different cultures. I also learned the importance of knowing that you have to individualize for them, make sure they understand before you test, make sure they understand as you are going through giving general knowledge in your classes. I have an open-door policy, and students can call me at work, home, or on my cell. I talk to my students and with my students, and they know that they can reach me no matter what it is that they need from me—I will be there. My experience working with students with disabilities has helped me support students who come through our programs.</li> <li>• The more that I teach, the more confident I am. The more time I spend with my students, the longer that I advise them, the longer that they are here. And when I see them start out as a brand-new student, and they graduate, the more confident I get, and my ability to lead a classroom or lead the students. The longer I am with students who are going all the way through and finishing up shows that I am doing what I am supposed to be doing. When they are successful, I feel successful.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Funding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have experienced how funding impacts my programs. In the beginning, it affected it a lot. I was limited to what I could buy, supplies; I was limited on certifications I pursued, but I did not let that hinder me. That is why I pursued since I've been here three years in the education role, grants that will pay and offset that cost. I have come up with alternative funding to keep my programs running. That allows me for certifications, pay instructors, and purchase supplies that students need. A lot of students have daycare and transportation issues, and the grant will not pay for that. However, I receive assistance from local organization to pay for these as long as they are getting some training, getting a certification. The additional funding will pay for those individuals to care needs.</li> <li>• It's very difficult, the state right now, every year pretty much ever since I have worked here there has been less money available for requests. I don't know how political it is or is it the lack of my experience, or I am writing my requests for funds that, in a way, would be more inclined for approval, but it's gotten more increasingly difficult as the budget continues to be cut year after year. I make a request and put it in writing because I still get credit for professional development even if I don't get to go.</li> <li>• Right now we have very very few funds to support going to conferences. I went to one conference in January and that simply because we are working on the developmental reading and English redesign and they needed somebody from our department and it was for our benefit, so I had to go. There is so little money that folks cannot participate in the kind of professional development that we need. I would love to be able to go specifically to conferences and meetings where there are other community college English instructors. Those are my people. Those are the ones that I have most in common with and I can learn from. Unfortunately, we can ask to go to conferences, and if there is extra funding in the budget that they can work with, then people can go. But it is very frustrating. From my experience I will say, I want to implement this and I know that it has a cost. Have you found alternatives that may be a little bit more affordable for us to do it? . . . We just have to talk with a supervisor, vice presidents, and the powers that be and present your case. Tell them the importance of the mission and what you are trying to accomplish with your vision for that process and with hopes that you can receive the funding at some point or at least get some feedback. I put it in and see if it gets approved. It's an everyday thing, and I think that coming to education you can see that every day it is a struggle.</li> </ul> |

*(table continues)*

| Themes                           | Participants' Supporting Statements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To be able to go out and say we want you to come but not be able to say with confidence "We can get you through a 2-year program, and this is the kind of tuition you will have to pay"—that's hard, and that is hard for us and that's very hard for the student. It is hard for the student who wants to start a 2-year program and not knowing that this semester or this academic year I may get to pay in-state tuition or next year I may have to pay out-of-state tuition or maybe I can apply for financial aid or maybe I can't. The DREAM Act is in place, and next year it may not be. That is not a good situation. It is not a situation that we have created for ourselves, but nonetheless it affects our ability to work with that population . . . . We try to think about those students who are marginalized, and we try to think of ways to help. For example, we have an early college high school on our campus. We know students who might not otherwise be eligible to get two years of education, they come in through the early college, and they are high-school students; we know they can get two years of college. Same is true through the Career and College Promise Pathways. Career and College Promise Pathways once was called dual enrollment high school students, where they can take college courses while they are still in high school.</li> <li>As far as providing us financial support when we are on co-op visits, they give us a mileage per diem; we just have to turn it in. When it comes to my lab activities and supplies, they have cabinets full of materials and supplies even before I came that were generous and available for my early childhood students.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Student Initiates and Activities | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A colleague of mine is working on an international cultural center here because we have not had one prior to now. I tried to get funding to take my social club on a trip, but I just have not been successful. We used to have a multicultural club that faltered; we used to have a physical science club that faltered because the institution itself does not support student organizations, which I feel is a detriment to retention. I put in a request, and I said that "we have talked about this before, and I have never heard back from you. The students are excited and want to attend this conference. Can you give me confirmation when you receive an application for the funding?" The club that we are doing and any events that we do or plan, I try to make sure that they are in line with the vision of the college, which is to produce critical thinking and also make a difference not just on campus, but try to do something that will make a difference locally. I am sure we are not doing what we could be doing for sure. Look like we are falling short.</li> <li>When we are looking at our quality enhancement, I thought of the chance right now of getting money to start any, new initiative is slim to none. We have an excellent opportunity to start a new initiative, but we have no money. We do have a minority male mentoring group, SGA, and clubs for our students. Clubs anywhere between criminal justice, nursing, business clubs, cosmetology club, Native American club, and we have a unity support group for students. We are very diverse in our clubs. We do offer a lot of clubs for our students to be a part of because we do not offer sports.</li> <li>Meeting students' need for diverse lifestyles, the timeframes for online classes where some students financially are unable to have computers at home. They are allowed time to do their classes in our academic support lab. We have placed computers on campus where those students can do their online programs right here on campus. Thirty or 40 computers are provided, and students can go into different rooms and use those computers on a daily basis, and it is open until 8 at night. So students that are daytime students can do their work in there, and night students. I would love to see more diversity male involvement.</li> </ul> |
| Professional Development         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is so little money that folks cannot participate in the kind of professional development that we need. I would love to be able to go specifically to conferences and meetings where there are other community colleges' English instructors. There is a lot of fear among us as faculty about a new initiative being implemented this fall that affects our students. It worries us, and I would like some professional developmental on that, quite honestly, because I need to know what do I do with that student.</li> <li>We do have professional development for our faculty. We have days when students are out that is called professional days, and they have training right here on campus for us and for people to look at the professional side of it, making sure that we understand the importance of it. In the area of community college management, we have a leadership group, and I was a part of that leadership process. They took us out to different places with the thought that as an instructor, if later that you would like to be in management or leadership positions.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |

Table 8

*Themes, Numbers, and Percentages of Participants Offering the Experience*

| Themes                             | Participants Who Offered Experience | % of Participants Who Offered Experience | Which Participants Offered This Experience                            |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Diversity Experience               | 10                                  | 100%                                     | Admin1, Admin2, Admin3, Admin4, Fac1, Fac2, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5, Fac6 |
| Educational Experiences            | 10                                  | 100%                                     | Admin1, Admin2, Admin3, Admin4, Fac1, Fac2, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5, Fa6  |
| Personal Influences                | 9                                   | 90%                                      | Admin1, Admin2, Admin4, Fac1, Fac2 Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5, Fac6          |
| Diversity Work Experiences         | 9                                   | 90%                                      | Admin1, Admin2, Admin4, Fac1, Fac2, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5, Fac6         |
| Leadership Competencies            | 10                                  | 100%                                     | Admin1, Admin2, Admin3, Admin4, Fac1, Fac2, Fac3, Fac4, Fac5, Fac6    |
| Integrating Competencies           | 7                                   | 70%                                      | Admin1, Admin2, Admin3, Admin4, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5                   |
| Leadership Effectiveness           | 6                                   | 60%                                      | Admin1, Admin2, Admin4, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5                           |
| Funding Challenges                 | 6                                   | 60%                                      | Admin2, Admin4, Fac1, Fac3/Ad, Fac4, Fac5                             |
| Student Initiatives and Activities | 5                                   | 50%                                      | Admin4, Fac1, Fac2, Fac3/Ad, Fac4                                     |
| Professional Development           | 5                                   | 50%                                      | Admin4, Fac1, Fac4, Fac5, Fac6                                        |

**Themes and the Conceptual Framework**

Chapter 1 showed how I used the conceptual framework of this study, multiculturalism, to guide the research. The results showed that the framework provided a

concrete foundation for the findings. Chapter 5 contains a thorough examination of the connection between the conceptual framework and the themes. A clear link exists between each of the themes and the framework.

Cuyjet et al., (2011) reported that Delgado and Stefancic defined multiculturalism as a perspective through which “social institutions should reflect on many cultures” (p. 151). Additionally, Cuyjet et al, stated that many colleges and universities desire to sustain or build supportive environments for all students. The increasing diversity of the student population can encourage leaders to become multiculturally competent and incessant advocates of diversity instead of occasional ones.

A common theme in the findings and the literature was the diversity of leaders’ experiences. Riggs (2009b) reported the importance of community college leaders valuing all cultures in their institution. The presence of the different cultural values will continue to be an important facet in community colleges as the student population becomes more diverse. The diversity of participating leaders’ educational experiences, personal influences, and diversity work experiences showed that leaders had experiences with many different cultures in their neighborhoods, schools attended, and colleges or organizations where they were employed. In addition, these themes emphasized that leaders had experiences with diverse age groups, gender diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, diverse educational settings, and various income levels. Leaders advocating diversity on a continuous basis supported the study’s multicultural framework.

The findings in this study echoed the literature suggesting that community college leaders must continuously reflect on their actions and organizational outcomes to enhance

components of their leadership that are positive, thus acquiring new leadership competencies when the opportunity is offered (Eddy, 2010). Multiculturalism supports the desire for leaders to sustain and build supportive environments for all students. Leaders indicated that it was important to listen to their students through giving them a *voice*, and seek sources for additional funding for classes or programs. Cain and Picquet (2011) indicated that community colleges are encountering a period of limited resources, which are stretched in different directions by multiple constituents. It is important for community colleges to overcome many barriers, such as government regulations, relationship to communities, and funding. The findings indicated that funding hampered support leaders desired to give to new student initiatives and attending professional development training and conferences in order to remain abreast with new programs and courses. Collaborating with other colleges was significant because this allowed leaders to support diverse students through expanding course offerings through using other colleges. Leaders learned to continually improve upon teaching methods or, for example, enroll in a Spanish course in support of the student diversity in their classes or programs.

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 contained the findings of the study which study involved interviewing 10 participants and analyzing their responses to four interview questions. The responses led to themes regarding the phenomenon of lived experiences of leaders adapting to the changing student demographics. The 10 themes identified provided a diversity of experiences from the data, presented in the participants' own words. Chapter 5 contains an interpretation of the findings from Chapter 4, the limitations of the study,



recommendations for action, and recommendations for future research, as well as the implications of social change for the study.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The American higher education system is serving an ever-changing and growingly diverse student population. The meaning leaders give to their lived experiences can affect these students. The changing demographics of the student population can offer challenges for community college leaders in relation to multicultural sensitivities, communication skills, and learning strategies (Johnson et al., 2007). The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to capture the perceptions, beliefs, and meanings of human experiences from a purposive sample of community college leaders in their attempt to adapt to these diverse students. The interviews revealed the participants' lived experiences and meanings they gave about how they are adapting to the diverse student populations on their college campuses.

Via open-ended semistructured interviews and follow-up e-mails, 10 participants—4 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 1 faculty/administrator—shared their varied experiences and perceptions in an attempt to adapt to the increasing student diversity. Ten core themes emerged from a modified phenomenological analysis (adapted from Moustakas, 1994) of the interviews. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of these 10 themes; it also includes an in-depth examination of the findings described in Chapter 4, along with discussions of the findings, implications, conclusions, and suggestions for future research.

### **Summary of the Findings and Interpretations**

The four research questions in the study were as follows:

- RQ1: What are the lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population?
- RQ 2: What are the lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value?
- RQ 3: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment?
- RQ 4: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness?

The research questions and the essential problem of community college leaders' attempt to adapt to the increasingly diverse student population were the motivating factors to understand the lived experiences of people who experience a phenomenon. An in-depth examination of the findings took place in an attempt to interpret and make sense of the data.

The participants in the current study clearly represented leaders who had diverse experiences that contributed to supporting a diverse student population; therefore, the participants were able to help students' obtain their educational goals and overcome family and tuition challenges. In some cases, having access to computers for online classes, having funds for childcare expenses, and having an introductory course for freshmen students to introduce them to the campus environment made the learning process suitable for students to pursue education, despite the challenges.

### **Analysis of Interview Data**

The 10 major themes revealed from the data analysis were: (a) diversity experiences, (b) educational experiences, (c) educational and personal influences, (d) diversity work experiences, (e) leadership competencies, (f) integrating competencies, (g) leadership effectiveness, (h) funding challenges, (i) student initiatives and activities, and (j) professional development. In comparing the themes, I discovered the personal stories of the participants, and the phenomenon of the lived experiences of community college leaders attempting to adapt to the changing demographics of the student population. The findings revealed answers for the four research questions. The central topics that the researcher addressed in the study were related to the themes; therefore, the themes presented support the research questions.

#### **Theme 1: Diversity Experiences**

A dominant theme among participants was that their previous, varied diversity experiences had a positive effect on their lives. These diversity experiences included teaching diverse populations of students in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, and socioeconomic status. Teaching students whose primary language was not English, working with at-risk children and their parents of various cultural backgrounds provided unique experiences for participants as well. Attending diverse schools and living in diverse neighborhoods were significant experiences that contributed to leaders' adapting to student diversity. Three respondents had global experiences. The findings of the study illuminated that the diversity of the leaders' experiences contributed to them understanding and supporting the different cultures students bring to campuses. The

research indicated that leaders addressing the needs of the growing diversity of students on community college campuses are needed (Haviland & Rodriguez-Kiino, 2009). Because of the participants' experiences with diversity, participants have learned to love all types of people and understand that everybody is an individual, and although students' experiences may be different from the participants, there are many similarities. The diversity of the participants' experiences has contribute to them becoming committed to being inclusive in developing and implementing advising and teaching strategies for these students from different cultures. Helping these students by learning how to identify with their culture, as well as the cultures of other students, is aligned to Hays-Thomas et al.'s (2012) findings on leaders establishing the tone and setting expectations for how diversity will be managed on their college campuses.

### **Theme 2: Educational Experiences**

Prior literature revealed that the future of community colleges providing a path for educational opportunity is contingent upon community college leaders (Rifkin, 2012). This theme resounded with participants remembering the significance of their educational experiences and how those experiences changed their lives by providing opportunities for them that they may not have been able to achieve without an education. These experiences can help leaders in determining whether they have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge needed for success in their positions (Day, 2008).

All participants had obtained a master's degree, and three participants are currently in a doctorate program. The findings indicated that many participants worked to help fund their educations, and some were first in their family to obtain a degree. Some

participants attended community colleges before entering a 4-year institution. All participants' pursuit of education did not follow a direct path. It took 12 years for one participant to complete both bachelor's and master's degrees. These types of educational experiences contributed to participants identifying with their students' desires for an education. All respondents were enthusiastic that their experiences encourage them to have a stronger commitment to helping these students achieve a degree, as supported by the literature that leaders must accept responsibility for serving student diversity (Cooper, 2009). This commitment can motivate leaders to investigate various ways to help these students pay tuition, and establish relationships with community partners to employ these students after completion of degrees or certificates. Leaders can enhance these students' educational experiences through implementing a multicultural program for both students and employees. Such a program could give students the opportunity to explore cultures, as well as recognize biases that will affect how they interact with others in the classroom and on campus.

### **Theme 3: Educational and Personal Influences**

Wygall's (2006) research indicated that when the nominal group is the focal point, significant influences from others might be overlooked. Recalling the encouragement they received from former college professors, former supervisors, former teachers, former colleagues, and parents, this study's participants agreed that their lives were enriched because of these influences. The majority of participants believed that their experiences gave them the desire to help students, as others had helped participants in obtaining a degree or encouraging them to go beyond what they had already

accomplished. Some participants believed that their educational and personal influences contributed to them understanding who they are and what they believe in life. Parental influences on participants' education included supporting their education efforts and hiring a tutor. On the other hand, it took one participant 12 years to complete both bachelor's and master's degrees because of no financial support from her family. The study found that both educational and personal influences of the leaders deepened their desires in seeking to understand their diverse students and their various cultures, and work with them at the various levels needed—whether academic, social, or financial—upon entering college. This theme reminded leaders of how others influenced them positively.

The participants acknowledged the importance of providing an environment that embraces diversity and cultural differences, allowing others to bring their authenticity and creativity to the college environment as supported by Turnbull et al. (2010). These students do not always receive family support; they often work while completing their degree, so any support and influences shown to these students should be positive. Some faculty members have learned to reward students for their classroom accomplishments, which adds to students' self-esteem.

#### **Theme 4: Diversity Work Experiences**

This study is in agreement with the reviewed literature that educational leaders are challenged to implement cultural work with a concentration on expanding their cultural knowledge and confronting cultural diversity (Cooper, 2009). The majority of participants described the diverse populations they worked with, which included diverse

age groups, gender diversity, racial and ethnic diversity, diverse educational settings, and diverse income levels including populations of low-income areas, homeless shelters, and the Boys and Girls Club of America.

Some participants had worked at two different historically Black colleges and universities, one of which consisted of predominately female African American students and the other predominately male African American students, and these experiences were significant in the leaders' attempts to adapt to student diversity. Some participants' unique diversity work experience included ensuring that the lab environment included diversity in relation to hiring females, African Americans, and Chinese students, and "things started to work better" (Fac1) because of that inclusion. Research indicated that failing to recognize the changing student environment might create problems for leaders (Brown, 2011). Leaders assisting unskilled workers in bridging the gap between them and industries, and allowing the unskilled workers to enter the workforce, contributed to leaders' diversity work experiences.

The diversity of the respondents' work experience differed according to their particular educational work setting. Whatever the setting, participants' experiences were both unique and diverse, which emphasized their awareness of the diversity of students in their classrooms, programs, and college campuses. Not all leaders have direct contact with these students, but learning to support these students in every phase of their educational program is significant. Considering the different cultures of these students even when purchasing computer programs, computer software, and developing computer



courses needs to be a focal point, as this consideration and access will continue to contribute to the success of diverse students.

### **Theme 5: Leadership Competencies**

Richards (2008) indicated that a vast number of organizations in the United States have adopted a competency-based framework in developing leaders; prior research (Hawke in 2000, Hodge in 2007, as cited in Richards) has affirmed that this is the fundamental policy. In this theme participants focused on competencies they valued and considered important to leadership, supporting students, and communicating with others on their college campuses. Those valued competencies included listening, communication, trust, respect, honesty, and commitment. Eddy's (2010) research stated that it is necessary for leaders in community colleges to acquire an array of competencies. Similarly, many participants supported the six leadership competencies the AACCC (2010) developed, which are professionalism, collaboration, communication, resource management, organizational strategy, and community college advocacy.

The majority of the participants indicated that the community college advocacy competency had a definite effect on them in relation to supporting student diversity in community colleges. Many participants experienced collaboration as a competency they valued because it allows them to collaborate with other schools in offering online classes and students having access to a virtual learning center. One respondent reported the college formed a planning council in support of the collaboration competency, where leaders take their concerns, then take information back to their departments, and let the information flow for greater transparency.

The findings indicated that all respondents agreed that the professionalism competency was important in relation to how they work with diverse students in the classroom, providing for the technology students need, respecting students and their coworkers, and providing structure and guidance. One participant named his three leadership competencies, which he believed encompass the AACC's six leadership competencies, as culture, message, and execution. One respondent viewed the competencies developed by the AACC (2010) as very comprehensive in terms of what makes a leader a leader. It was found that the participants did not have an established set of competencies that is significant to leadership at their colleges or definitive competencies that will support them in adapting to the diverse student population. Eddy's (2010) research found that understanding leadership competencies and how competencies can support student diversity and enhance the components of leadership that is positive are areas leaders need to consider with intensity. Developing definitive leadership competencies that all leaders can both identify with and support in their colleges can contribute to a concise understanding of leadership competencies. Not all of the respondents overwhelmingly supported the six leadership competencies developed by the AACC. Herbert-Swartz and McNair (2010) indicated that a refined set of skills or competencies is required to operate successfully in community colleges.

### **Theme 6: Integrating Competencies**

Findings in this study were compatible with those found in the literature review. According to the AACC (2010), leaders learning how to integrate the six leadership competencies in the community college environment need a new set of leadership skills.

Respondents reported that integrating their valued competencies in the college environment was significant to supporting the diverse student populations, colleges, and employees. Enhancing communication was significant for giving students a voice, working on committees and boards, and creating advisory boards for all programs. Participants agreed that the collaboration competency is integrated not only with other people on their campuses but other community colleges in receiving online courses to help students take courses not being offered by their respective college.

Additionally, teamwork, getting information and suggestions from others in making decisions, exchanging experiences in a nonthreatening environment, and mentoring others are ways of integrating competencies in the college environment. Participants reported that advocating for their colleges both locally and on the state level established a deeper commitment to supporting their students and sent students a welcoming, caring, message that said the college exists because of you.

The professionalism competency prevailed as a constant in integrating competencies in support of student diversity. Respondents reported that it was important that leaders demonstrate professionalism in their classrooms by showing that they value their students. Participants demonstrated this professionalism through giving instructions, providing activities, establishing one-on-one open relationships, encouraging students to visit with them, and creating openness in every aspect of faculty–student interactions. Many participants expressed that promoting self-worth relating to students in the classrooms, teaching them to feel good about themselves, and teaching independence that helps create autonomy can transform students to have a more rewarding college

experience. Teachers described sharing both personal and professional experiences with students as a means of integrating competencies.

The findings of the study indicated that a logical process of integrating competencies in the college environment was not defined. Recommendations for widespread support for integrating competencies in the college environment were indicated by Hassan et al. (2009) and McNair (2007). When leaders clearly define leadership competencies and agree upon competencies they will support, and how to integrate the competencies they define, this may follow a definitive integration process in the college environment. This process needs to ensure that the changing demographics of the student population is the center point in order to contribute to the success of these students.

### **Theme 7: Leadership Effectiveness**

An *effective leader*, as defined by the AACCC (2010), is a leader who develops and keeps “responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college mission” (p. 6). Overall, participants confirmed that that when they are successful, their students are successful. Many participants reported that effective community college leaders live by what they say, and work hard to help students achieve an education. Some respondents indicated that it was important that effective leaders live by example, establish trust with their students, and ask their students to communicate students’ expectations about professors. The committees leaders serve on relating to student needs, and what they have learned from individuals and people of different

cultures, are significant to being an effective leader according to some participants. Prior literature reviewed indicated that community college leaders continuously seek guidance in learning to advance their leadership skills and effectiveness (Eddy, 2010).

The knowledge that some participants gained from learning a different language, learning to individualize for students, ensuring that students understand concepts before testing, and providing an approachable and comfortable environment for students contributed to participants' effectiveness as leaders. Many participants encouraged students to visit their offices if students had questions. Some participants confirmed that they keep their offices open and listen to students' concerns, give out their phone numbers to students who wish to contact them off campus, and even open their homes to students. Leadership effectiveness may be viewed from the perspective of leaders serving as role models (AACC, 2010).

Findings in the study indicated that faculty members who seek to improve their teaching methods enhance their effectiveness as leaders. Attending a leadership development academy added to one respondent's effectiveness as a leader. Advising students and participating in teacher training significantly helped some participants to be effective teachers and leaders. Cooper's (2009) research indicated that students prefer leaders who are willing to become cultural change agents.

Not all faculty hired in community colleges have taken a teacher training course. Community colleges employ a considerable number of adjunct faculty who possess expertise in a particular subject(s) and may not have attended a teacher training workshop or enrolled in such a course. Teacher training can support full-time and adjunct faculty in

their understanding of how to teach and, more specifically, how to teach to the student diversity in the classroom. Implementing cultural competency training for faculty can increase the awareness of culture differences and help leaders seek to understand these differences when teaching.

### **Theme 8: Funding Challenges**

In this theme, participants described how funding effected their programs at their individual colleges, which in turn had an effect on students. (Cain & Picquet, 2011) indicated that community colleges are encountering a period of limited resources. Participants reported that they had to pursue alternate funding for programs, such as programs that work with unskilled workers who need to have certification before entering the workforce. Participants who received additional funding were able to offset instructors' salaries, purchase needed supplies for students, pay for students' certifications, daycare, and transportation costs. Many respondents reported that they found themselves in a quandary when submitting funding requests for their programs, courses, and student activities. The participants submitted requests with hopes for approval but were doubtful that they would be approved. The findings showed that the lack of funding made it difficult to recruit students with confidence and ensure that these marginalized students would be able to complete a 2-year program. Some additional means for these students to pursue an education were the early college, which allows high school students to get an education tuition free, and the Career and College Promise program which provides for these marginalized students. One concern that was expressed

is for students who cannot get an education through one of these programs, perhaps the college can allow them to receive a certificate for the work they have already completed.

Leaders face funding challenges because the state of North Carolina sets community colleges budgets. Leaders are committed to putting the success of students first, but leaders do not have any control over the amount of money allocated for the colleges. Ensuring that diverse students will meet their education goals is becoming increasingly difficult for leaders—often frustration ensues. Free tuition for senior citizens was eliminated in curriculum along with continuing education classes, which effects enrollment. Recruiting students has become a process of indecision as to whether a student will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition because of the instability of the amount of tuition students will pay. Leaders bring the tuition uncertainty with them when they recruit students, and this increases their level of anxiety regarding whether what they say is always accurate. Nevarez and Wood's (2010) research indicated that community colleges are the vanguard of an increasing financial crisis because of the reduction in state funding. Cuyjet et al. (2011) reported that many colleges desire to sustain or build supportive environments for all students.

### **Theme 9: Student Initiatives and Activities**

This theme highlighted how student initiatives and activities are hampered because of funding. Many participants indicated that it was difficult to take their classes and clubs on trips, and some previously active clubs have faltered because the colleges did not support student activities. Participants seldom received feedback from requests submitted for field trips, even though students' excitement was elevated because of

anticipation of the activity. Burns' (2010) research reported that leaders must refrain from being selective in supporting students in achieving their goals.

After some colleges completed their accreditation processes, which created mandates for new initiatives, the colleges still did not know how to start a new initiative without money. Some participants reported that college leaders need to make student initiatives a priority and mindsets need to change and view new initiatives as an opportunity to make a lasting difference for students. The findings indicated that it was crucial that leaders do their absolute best, even with tight budgets, so that students did not feel the financial pinch relative student activities. According to the literature, budget limitations can hinder leaders in being innovative in increasing student success (Kocher, 2010). Colleges that offer co-ops for their students provided financial support for paying instructors' mileage to visit students in a co-op. Some participants reported having male mentoring groups, student government associations, unity support groups for students, and a female mentoring group that was supported by a grant. A variety of clubs was offered at one college because they do not offer sports. One college concentrated on meeting the needs of the diverse lifestyles of students and assisting students with their online classes by providing computers for student use until 8 at night.

Leaders agree that implementing new initiatives and doing activities with their students is often predicated by budgets. Seeking additional funding may be a means to help with funding initiatives and activities for their students, but leaders' schedules include their regular duties and responsibilities, and there is little time that can be given for such ventures. Unless budgets increase, and leaders in community colleges



understand the importance of new initiatives and activities in supporting the diversity of the student population, fewer initiatives and activities will occur. The impact this will have on the success of these students will need exploring.

### **Theme 10: Professional Development**

Many participants reported that little funding exists to support leaders to attend professional conferences, and this prevented establishing relationships with other professors in the same discipline from whom they could have learned. A lack of funds prevented participants from professional development, which is often necessary to implement a new program, and this put instructors in a state of apprehension. A faculty member in a particular discipline shared that directions are needed to implement a new student program this fall. This information will be given at a professional conference but because of the budget, attendance is unlikely. Eddy (2010) found that participation of leaders in national leadership programs is low because of cost. Some colleges provide in-house professional development training for their faculty, and some respondents indicated that the in-house training is not as professional as training at a professional conference.

It is important that leaders attend professional conferences, and supporting the learning needs of the students in their classroom may become increasingly difficult without professional training. The low attendance at professional conferences can have an impact on student retention and student completion, which may in turn impact budgets if community colleges begin to receive funding based on graduation rates. The federal grants that the Obama administration was committed to provide to community colleges

are attached with strict standards, which are degree completion, preparing graduates for the workforce, and placing graduates in the workforce (Nevarez & Wood, 2010). If these colleges' graduation rates decline, less money will be available to support the educational goals of a diverse student population. In the United States, a significant number of organizations have adapted a competency-based framework in developing their leaders and prior research has affirmed that this is the fundamental policy (Eddy, 2010).

### **Answering the Research Questions**

#### **Research Question 1: Lived Experiences Related to Changing Student**

##### **Demographics**

The first research question was: What are the lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the changing demographics of the student population? The four identified themes that the participants experienced were: (a) diversity experiences, (b) educational experiences, (c) personal influences, and (d) diversity work experiences.

The factors that contributed most to diversity experiences were participants' exposure to various cultures and acceptance of the different people in their neighborhoods, communities, schools they attended, and their work environment. Because of these diversity experiences, participants learned to appreciate and welcome rural, low-income people, and different age groups of students in the classroom and on campus. Participants noted that their motivation came from completing both bachelor and master degrees that contributed to their commitment to helping students complete their own educational goals. Participants deepened their desire to help students succeed in sharing their educational experiences with these students, conveying to students how

education changed the participants' lives, and explaining the challenges participants encountered while pursuing their own education.

As shown in the findings, participants' desired to influence diverse students after the experiences they had with their professors, teachers, supervisors, and parents. One participant shared that his love for working with all sorts of people brought him to the community college, which he contributed to the wonderful professors he had. Participants concentrated mainly on the open-door admission policy that community colleges support, which is to provide college opportunities to all students desiring an education. Participants shared that these unique diversity work experiences made them committed and supportive of the mission of community colleges, and it is necessary for students, faculty, and staff work together to achieve the mission.

### **Research Question 2: Lived Experiences Related to Leadership Competencies**

The second research question was: What are the lived experiences of community college leaders in relation to the leadership competencies they value? The leadership competencies participants valued were important to them establishing positive relationships with students, colleagues, others on their individual campuses, and campuses of other community colleges. Participants found it significant to be honest with students in order to earn students' trust. Participants noted that professionalism should be displayed at all times to guide students, which is what students need. Participants also believed that it was important for employees to perform as professionals because they are representing the college.

All participants overwhelmingly supported a communication competency.

Participants found both verbal and nonverbal communication to be significant, which correlated to the AACC's (2010) communication leadership competency. One respondent emphasized the students were given the opportunity to have a voice in achieving their educational goals through *a voice*—advising, value, and opportunities in career and education. Other competencies participants valued included resource management, community college advocacy, and collaboration. Participants agreed that collaborating on individual campuses or with other colleges was significant in supporting students and establishing relationships. In one instance, collaboration led to sharing and receiving online courses with other colleges. This type of collaboration proved to be useful because of limited budgets; it helped students take the courses they needed, and established working relationships with other colleges. The AACC's (2010) collaboration competency encouraged leaders to continue forming open, supportive, reciprocally useful affiliations that foster diversity and encourage overall student success.

Participants believed that advocating for their colleges was a significant recruiting tool, and it showed support in their communities and on their college campuses. The community college advocacy competency the AACC (2010) developed required community college leaders to advocate for their institutions and comprehend, entrust, and support the mission and objectives of the community college. Participants believed that they managed the resources entrusted to them in an optimal manner, given that budgets are tight. Some participants sought additional funding through grants to support their classes and programs. The AACC's (2010) resource management leadership competency

encourages leaders to maintain fiscal resources and be capable of requiring selective funding. Not all participants supported the six leadership competencies the AACCC (2010) developed. Two participants specifically believed that these leadership competencies were not the answer to supporting diversity on community college campuses.

### **Research Question 3: Lived Experiences Related to Integrating Competencies**

The third research question was: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that support them in integrating the competencies they value into the college environment? How participants integrated their valued competencies on their college campuses did not follow a logical process. The participants correlated integrating competencies to their positions, whether as administrator or faculty member.

Administrators emphasized that teamwork, having a constant loop of feedback information, serving on different committees and boards, and mentoring others were ways of integrating competencies into the college environment. Faculty members reported that creating career days, establishing one-on-one student relationships, implementing campuswide student activities, establishing student clubs, and maintaining relationships across campus that will help diverse students feel welcomed and inclusive were ways faculty members' integrated competencies. Some participants expressed that the integration of leadership competencies is a daily occurrence. The integration processes should be structured to ensure that these processes support the diverse student populations.

**Research Question 4: Lived Experiences Related to Leadership Effectiveness**

The fourth research question was: What meaning do leaders give to their lived experiences that contribute to leadership effectiveness? The four identified themes were (a) leadership effectiveness, (b) funding challenges, (c) student initiatives and activities, and (d) professional development. Participants correlated their leadership effectiveness as being synonymous with the success of their students. If students are successful, then leaders are successful and effective. Participants believed that if they helped their students obtain their educational goals, then these students would achieve them, and in turn, this achievement would support leaders' effectiveness. The life skills participants learned while interacting with different cultures contributed to their effectiveness as leaders. Learning a different language, individualizing instructions for students, ensuring that students understand the information given before testing, and making sure that all students feel comfortable in the classrooms demonstrate leadership effectiveness. Including the outside community at-large in activities on college campuses that promote the college as an integral part of the community supports the significance of leadership effectiveness.

Community college leaders are up against great odds to perform effectively because of their funding challenges. Insufficient funding affects student programs, which forces community college leaders to seek additional funding through grants for students' supplies, day care costs, and transportation costs. Being able to tell students precisely whether they will pay in-state or out-of-state tuition, because of funding challenges the state of North Carolina imposed on community colleges, presents another situation that

leaders face from one semester to the next. The early college program, Career College Promise Pathways, and the DREAM Act represent programs that help some students pursue a 2-year degree, even with funding challenges. The students in these programs do not pay tuition, so it does not matter whether they are in-state or out-of-state.

Colleges that denied these participants' requests to implement new student initiatives and activities hampered the support community college leaders would like to give to their students by taking them on field trips and implementing activities that correlate with their classroom learning. The lack of funding also affects leaders' ability to attend professional development conferences, which are significant to develop leaders' current professional abilities, and this again affects the support community college leaders can give to students. Even though some colleges provided in-house professional development training, participants reported that this training did not equate to professional development conferences. Attendance at professional conferences would give participants information about new initiatives that will affect the courses they teach and programs they support, but funding is not always available. Anxiety exists as to what will happen with students who are affected by these new initiatives.

### **Limitations of the Study**

For this study, I employed a qualitative, phenomenological study. The first limitation was the number of colleges in the study. An additional college may or may not have added more themes that may or may not be generalizable to the population. The second limitation was the integrity of the information. The study included personal data that allowed the participants to share their experiences in their words. I considered that all

of the responses of the participants were truthful and unbiased. The third limitation was the nature of the study, which was phenomenological. The number of participants involved was 10, which was lower than in other types of research; a sample size of 10 is small for generalizations to a larger population. The fourth limitation was the region in which the colleges were selected. The study included colleges in southeastern North Carolina. Selecting colleges located in a different region, or using more than one region, may have produced different or more themes in relation to leaders' lived experiences in adapting to the increased student diversity. The fifth limitation was the selection criteria used to select participants for the study. The criteria may have been expanded to include leaders who had worked in a community college less than two years, or to include more administrative positions.

### **Recommendations for Action**

Recommendations contain steps to useful action and indicate how to disseminate the results. Community colleges are undergoing an enhanced paradigm shift and leaders must confirm that the mission of these institutions is germane to the present needs of the growing diverse student population. It is necessary for community college leaders to expand upon their cultural knowledge and accept the responsibility of serving the changing student population.

### **Support Professional Development**

My findings clearly indicated that leaders have had varied experiences that contribute to them supporting the diverse student population. Even with this diversity of experiences, leaders indicated if they were able to attend professional development



conferences or receive more professional training, it would help them perform their jobs better and expand their support of the increasingly diverse student population. The findings indicated that some colleges conduct in-house professional development, but leaders reported that the in-house professional development did not equate to attending professional development conferences. Professional conferences would give leaders firsthand information about activities and initiatives pertaining to students, as well as an opportunity to learn and receive information about new initiatives pertaining to current courses and programs and newly developed courses and programs. The findings clearly indicated that community college budgets are tight, and there is an issue regarding how administrators can pay leaders to attend professional development conferences. Another issue is how leaders can continue to provide needed support to the diversity of the student population, improve their position, and remain current with new initiatives that affect their students without attending professional development conferences, trainings, seminars, or workshops. The researcher recommends that community college administrators provide support—administrative and financial—for leaders to attend professional development conferences, trainings, seminars, and workshops to help support leaders and in turn help leaders support the needs of their students.

The attendance of leaders at professional development conferences, trainings, seminars, or workshops will allow leaders to develop their professional and personal skills. Their participation can enhance their job performance, improving upon the knowledge of the cultural diversity of their students. Leaders should have the opportunity to choose a professional conference, training, seminar, or workshop to attend based on

what activity or event being offered that will provide for and contribute to their personal and professional improvement. It is significant that leaders are given the opportunity to attend professional conferences and meetings where they can communicate with leaders from other community colleges in the same or similar positions to receive and share helpful information about students, their position, and the institution. Leaders sharing experiences can lead to creativity in the college environment relating to their position and students.

The findings did not indicate that the community colleges in the study have established professional development committees. I, therefore, recommend that the institutions organize professional development committees to advise administration on professional development needs of the colleges' leaders. The leaders can communicate to the professional development committee the effects of the professional development activity in relation to the course, program, or their job position. Advancing in technology and state-of-the-art knowledge requires leaders to upgrade their skills and remain current with their job requirements. It is important that leaders have professionally trained trainers to learn the skills needed to implement whatever technology leaders need to be effective.

### **Develop and Integrate Strategic Leadership Competencies**

Participants' responses about what leadership competencies they value were not succinct enough to confirm that the colleges have developed strategic leadership competencies for leaders on these campuses. The researcher recommends that community colleges leaders define leadership competencies that are distinctive to their college

environment and explore how they can utilize these competencies better to understand the changing demographics of students on their campuses. The leadership competencies leaders value may differ, but it is crucial to recognize that leadership competencies are necessary and must not go unnoticed. A competency is essential knowledge, aptitude or proficiency in specific areas of expertise or skills (Eddy, 2010). Most organizations are using a competency-based approach to leadership, which provides for leaders performing effectively according to required work standards (Eddy, 2010). Leadership competencies will change as institutions grow, dictated by the needs of students, communities the colleges serve, and new industries, et cetera, but there are competencies that are essential to the growth of community colleges and it is imperative that colleges establish a competency-based approach to leadership. Further, after developing and establishing leadership competencies for leaders, it is necessary that leaders define a logical process to integrate these competencies more concisely into their campus environment. The integration process must sustain and build supportive environments for all students.

### **Prioritize Diversity/Cultural Competency Training**

The study findings indicate that some leaders did employ some specific teaching strategies in their classrooms for diverse students, and some are planning to take a Spanish course. Some participants did not make it explicit that they performed their jobs differently because of the increased diversity of their students. The findings indicated that the leaders in the study recognize the increasing student diversity on their campuses and the significance of developing strategies to reach these students, whether teaching differently because of the student diversity or taking a foreign language course to help

these students achieve their educational goals. The leaders shared that it was important that the success of these students should involve the entire college. The findings did not indicate that there was any diversity training for all leaders to improve upon what is currently being done. The population of students is increasing and becoming more diverse at community colleges. The focal point should be ensuring that the diversity of students is recognized by all leaders, and leaders interact positively with these students in the classrooms and on their campuses. The researcher recommends that these leaders recommend to their college administration that all leaders on their campus are or become culturally competent through promoting cultural competency training. It is necessary that cultural competence be taught on college campuses because many students come to college from different cultures and are not proficient in the English language. Leaders learning to become culturally competent can help in guiding these students on how to succeed in culturally diverse classrooms and colleges. Cultural competency training can also reveal the institution's readiness to support different cultures.

The AACC (2010) has developed six leadership competencies for community college leaders, and according to Eddy (2010), cultural competency and the AACC competencies are connected. Further, Eddy reported that cultural competence permeates each of the six competencies, but the emphasis of this phenomenon is outlined only vaguely in these six leadership competencies.

Cultural competence effectively teaches students coming from a culture or cultures different from the teacher (Eddy, 2010). Teaching cultural competence to all leaders can allow them to cultivate personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities,

create an understanding of certain forms of cultural knowledge, and encourage effective multicultural education and culturally responsive teaching. Culture shapes a person's sense of who they are as an individual, and where they fit in the family, community, and society (Eddy, 2010). Leaders must have some fundamental knowledge of their students' cultures in order to understand students' behaviors. Once leaders become culturally competent, according to Bhui et al. (2007), they can "acknowledge, accept, and value the cultural differences of others" (p. 4). A culturally competent person has acquired the knowledge and skills to appreciate the value within, between, and among different cultures of people and will embrace and celebrate differences and similarities (Bhui et al., 2007). Leaders who are trained in cultural competency should be able to move forward in defining the importance of cultural knowledge on their campuses that can help others adapt to diversity and serve a diverse student population with diligence.

### **Summary**

The results of this study illuminate the diversity experiences of community college leaders in their attempts to adapt to the diverse student populations on their college campuses. Leaders' lived experiences contributed to their desire to identify with diverse students in facing challenges to obtain a degree. Leaders can positively use their various experiences to welcome students, encourage students, and help them succeed. This study adds to the existing body of literature by bringing awareness to lived experiences of community college leaders attempting to adapt to the increasingly diverse student population.

The results of this study indicated that not only do leaders face challenges in educating these students with limited budgets and tuition uncertainties, but also technological and socioeconomic disadvantages exist with which these students often need help from leaders to overcome in achieving an education.

The researcher may disseminate and publish the results of this study in an appropriate journal representing lived experiences of community college leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the diverse student population. Additional dissemination could occur in presentations at various conferences. The researcher may also publicize the results of this study in conferences and journals popular among community college administrators and faculty.

### **Researcher Reflections**

In reflecting on what has been learned about leaders' diversity experiences and how these experiences contribute to them adapting to the increasing student diversity, the researcher found that these leaders are committed to helping these students succeed. While interviewing each of the participants and hearing their stories, each participant's response confirmed the researcher's choice to conduct a phenomenological examination.

This study involved examining and describing the lived experiences of 10 participants, including 4 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 1 faculty/administrator. During this process, the researcher bracketed any personal interest and made every effort to put aside all presumptions and biases to capture the full richness of the participants' lived experiences. The researcher recorded and cautiously reviewed the participants' beliefs and perceptions so as not to revise any of the collected data, and conducted all

interviews in a professional manner. The researcher believed that listening to the participants' individual stories was important to understand the essence of the experience.

The researcher made every effort to review the transcriptions of the interviews for clearness and completeness without influencing the answer or outcome. The researcher attempted to follow the research protocol as closely as possible and viewed each participant as a valuable source of information to be included in the recommendations for change. The depth of the information the participants provided was significant to the researcher. The major themes produced were an opportunity for the researcher to probe intensely into the effectiveness of the participants' diversity experiences that supported students' success. Many of the results revealed that participants had encountered diverse experiences that contributed to providing positive influences for their students, because the participants pursued whatever means possible to help these students achieve their goals. A larger participant population for the research study may have allowed for more varying diversity experiences. However, the diverse experiences that these 10 leaders had do not provide a straightforward solution to the problem community college leaders face when adapting to the changing student demographics.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Lived experiences of community college leaders may vary based on such factors as diversity experiences of leaders; the location of the college; the student population; the number of years leaders were employed in higher education; and educational, personal, or work experiences. The current study involved examining lived experiences of community college leaders in their attempt to adapt to the changing demographics of the student

population. A phenomenological method was useful in analyzing rich qualitative data from 10 participants to understand the meanings and experiences they gave that helped them in adapting to diverse students and how their stories related. Through the phenomenological approach, I examined and formed recommendations without authoritative directives.

The study contributes in various ways to the professional literature on lived experiences of community college leaders and how leaders are adapting to the increasing student diversity in community colleges. However, little to no research has examined lived experiences of community college leaders adapting to the changing demographics of the student population. Based on the findings, I recommend that other researchers may use this phenomenological study to examine how leaders' diversity, diversity education, and diversity work experiences compare to those leaders without diversity experiences in relation to supporting an increasingly diverse student population. Future researchers could examine the advantages of community colleges hiring leaders with experience in teaching or working with different cultures. A comparison of leaders with diversity experiences, diversity education, and diversity work experiences and leaders without such diversity experiences and the effect those experiences might have in educating and supporting the increasing diversity of the student population would be appropriate. The findings indicated that leaders' levels of education and the challenges they faced in achieving their education were significant in identifying the challenges their students face in obtaining an education.



Future researchers could explore how leadership effectiveness can improve student success. Future researchers might explore whether creating positive relationships through establishing campus and community events or programs can contribute to being an effective leader. Implementing educational diversity programs presented by a multicultural diversity facilitator and planning campuswide cultural activities are examples of events to consider. All participants agreed that when their students are successful they are effective leaders. The research indicated that student success might attribute to graduation rates and completion, which may affect community college budgets.

Another area to explore could center on how the leadership competencies leaders' value compare to the six leadership competencies developed by the AACCC. Such a study could determine whether leaders support the AACCC's leadership competencies and how the AACCC competencies support student diversity. The study findings indicated that there was not overwhelming support of the AACCC leadership competencies by the participants. How the AACCC's leadership competencies support reaching the increasingly diverse students is a further topic to explore.

This study can also lead to future research on implementing cultural competency training on community college campuses and how such training can support colleges in sustaining or building supportive environments for all students. Future researchers can use the results of this study to gain further knowledge of how leaders develop and implement a logical process of integrating their valued leadership competencies into the college environment, in turn contributing to student success.

### **Implications for Social Change**

The results of the study might help administrators, faculty, staff, and college trustee boards continue valuing and promoting an environment of inclusion by assessing and improving their policies and practices relating to student diversity and student success. Assessing current policies and procedures including an increasingly diverse student population can create a better community of care and fairness while supporting students from different cultures, races, and ethnicities. Continuing to build on the environment of inclusion can provide an opportunity for all groups within a caring community to feel valued and to recognize the value of others.

Another goal for social change is to implement cultural competence training for all leaders in the community colleges. Cultural competence will enhance the knowledge leaders have about their culture and their students' cultures. Cultural competence is critical to students not only surviving in culturally diverse classrooms and college campuses, but is equally important in them being able to succeed in these environments. Cultural competence training can teach leaders the importance of valuing diversity, which entails accepting and respecting differences, and being culturally self-aware which emphasizes various experiences, knowledge, skills, and beliefs.

If leaders learn cultural competence, practice it, and apply it as an essential component of the classroom and campus environment, this could enrich the services they give these diverse students, their families, and their communities. Cultural competence training can assist these leaders in developing definite personal and interpersonal awareness and sensitivities. Leaders can become proficient in particular skill sets such as

knowledge and valuing diversity, which can help them in achieving cross-cultural education and culturally responsive teaching and may enhance their effectiveness in the organization. Cultural competence training also allows leaders to consider their overall experiences, beliefs, values, interests, and recognize that these characterize who they are and where they fit in their college, community, and society.

A third goal for social change is to use this research as a basis for future research. Researchers can study each of the aforementioned areas which may prove to be useful in realizing multicultural mentoring programs and cultural competence training to reach the increasingly diverse student population. College administrators can implement these programs by offering professional and financial support through professional development training, diversity committees, a multicultural diversity facilitator who executes educational programming, and campuswide cultural activities such as sharing foods from different cultures. Such programs can raise awareness and understanding of culture diversity among and between employees, students, communities, boards of trustees, and stakeholders.

### **Conclusion**

The current qualitative, phenomenological study involved examining the perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of community college leaders in their attempt to adapt to the increasingly diverse student population. I utilized Moustakas' (1994) seven-step modified plan that allowed for a comprehensive awareness of the participants' experiences. I analyzed the data using NVivo 10 software, which augmented the qualified data so that I could gain greater insights from the participants' responses. Ten themes

emerged from the responses to the interview questions. Leaders adapting to the changing demographics of student populations must give attention to the diversity of their students in relation to culture, age, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, and socioeconomic status. Uncertainty about the amount of tuition these students will pay from one semester to the next is a challenge that leaders face because the state of North Carolina sets the colleges' budgets.

From the results of this study, I conclude that leaders' diversity of experiences enhances both the awareness and significance of adapting to the changing, diverse student populations. Implementing a multicultural mentoring program and cultural competency training can only encourage leaders to continue to support, understand, and help these students to succeed. The results of this study indicated that leaders support and welcome diverse students, but have concerns that more can be done to help the success of these students with adequate budgets. Additionally, some leaders indicated that if more financial resources were available, more could be done to ensure that these students are given every opportunity possible to achieve an education. These leaders actively seek alternative funding to support diverse students in their programs and classes. Thus results of this study may be valuable to community college administrators, faculty members, and boards of trustees. Future researchers may also use this phenomenological study as a basis to explore how leaders' lived experiences support cultural competency as a leadership competency.

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## Appendix A: Approval for Use of Interview Protocol

### Customer Information


**Customer:** Joyce Hewatt  
**Account Number:** 3000620443  
**Organization:** Joyce Hewatt  
**Email:** jphew@atmc.net  
**Phone:** +1 (910)2535882  
**Payment Method:** Invoice

Order Details

### Research design : qualitative & quantitative approaches

Billing Status:

**Invoiced: 1283596**

- **Order detail ID:** 63430104
- **ISBN:** 978-0-8039-5255-3
- **Publication year:** 2009
- **Publication Type:** Book
- **Publisher:** SAGE PUBLICATIONS, INCORPORATED
- **Rightsholder:** SAGE PUBLICATIONS INC BOOKS
- **Author/Editor:** John W. Creswell
- **Your reference:** CAOMS
- **Permission Status:**  **Granted**
- **Permission type:** Republish or display content
- **Type of use:** Republish in a dissertation
- **Requested use:** Dissertation
- **Republishing organization:** Walden University
- **Organization status:** Non-profit 501(c)(3)
- **Republication date:** 12/01/2013
- **Circulation/ Distribution:** 5
- **Type of content:** Selected pages
- **Description of requested content:** outlines to be used in interviews
- **Page range(s):** 183
- **Number of pages:** 1
- **Translating to:** No Translation

**Requested content's publication date:**

## Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Appropriate Time to Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Inappropriate Time to Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

**YOU WILL BE GIVEN A COPY OF THIS TO KEEP TOGETHER WITH A  
COPY OF YOUR CONSENT FORM**

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Curriculum Vitae

## Education:

Masters of Arts – 1983 Webster University

Bachelors of Science – 1971 Rust College

## Employment History

1987 – 2004 Brunswick Community College

Director of Business Programs

Hired and supervised full-time and part-time instructors.

Completed course development, curriculum development, program reviews, departmental budgets, Tech Prep coordination, and all departmental administrative work.

1982 – 1987 Brunswick Community College

Business Instructor

Instructed in secretarial science and business administration departments.

- Provided academic advising

1978-1981 Brunswick Community Hospital

Accounts Manager/Supervisor

Maintained accounts payable and cash disbursement ledgers.

- Processed payroll for medical and non-medical personnel and all other aspects of personnel
- Conducted orientation and training sessions for new employees

1975 – 1977 American Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc.

Financial Assistant

Maintained financial accounting for Saudi Arabian students.

- Prepared quarterly financial reports on State grants

1971-1973 Institute of Modern Procedures

Administrative Assistant

Enrolled students in courses and maintained accounts payable and receivable ledgers.

Instructor

Taught remedial reading, writing, and math courses.