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A phenomenological study of leader experiences and reactions to transformational change in a multicampus system

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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2010

Abstract

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M.N.M., Regis University, 2001
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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Education

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Abstract

Research on organizational change theory confirms the importance of leaders' ability to establish a sense of urgency, create institutional support for change, develop a vision, communicate the vision, empower others toward action, generate results, and ultimately create change in the organizational culture. Organizational change in nested systems, in which CEOs of individual units report upward through a state, regional, or corporate hierarchy, has not been extensively studied. To address this gap in the literature, this phenomenological study explored perceptions of college leaders who in 2002-2003 participated in the transformation of seven 2-year technical colleges into a community college system. The study probed leaders' perceptions of organizational change at the campus level in a nested organizational structure. Two research questions addressed (a) how 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences of transformational change; and (b) lessons, if any, that these leaders offer other state-governed, 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change. The study was based on Kotter's change model, which was used to examine the nature and degree of organizational change that occurred in the institutions studied. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed through a transcendental phenomenological process. Results highlighted the importance of communication, leadership, exploiting a sense of urgency, and addressing internal and external concerns chance to participate in the economy. This study will help leaders of multi-campus or nested state systems facilitate transformational change to better achieve those social goals.

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Dedication

To my wife, Victoria, and my son, Isaiah, in appreciation for their encouragement, support, and inspiration.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The changes experienced by community colleges and their leaders over the past 100 years underscore the importance of studying the relationships between the leaders of 2-year institutions and the changes they experience and guide. These relationships are varied and complex, due to the differing structures of independent community colleges, district-wide systems, state-wide systems, and variations on each that have evolved in the last century (Alfred, 1998; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Eddy, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; O'Banion, 1997; Vaughn, 2006). Change research as a whole, and regarding community colleges in particular, has not given full consideration to the differing dynamics and outcomes in varying organizational types (Alfred, 1998; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Eddy, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; O'Banion, 1997; Vaughn, 2006). This study probed one fairly common leadership structure, nested (Eddy, 2006) or multilevel, leadership in a state-governed community college system, by examining the experiences of campus leaders in the Maine Community College System (MCCS). MCCS was created in 2003 from its predecessor, the Maine Technical College System (MTCS).

Historical Context

Community colleges are complex and dynamic organizations that have experienced significant change since 1901, when Joliet Junior College opened as the first continuing public community college in the United States (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; Vaughn, 2006). The contemporary community college evolved from junior colleges, whose formation was greatly influenced by the idea of universities serving to provide alternative educational opportunities for students who were not prepared to enter a university (Ashmore, 1989; Brint & Karabel, 1989). The primary

focus of junior colleges prior to World War II was to facilitate university transfer (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Critics such as Zwerling (1976) have suggested that the real motivation for developing junior colleges was to cement a barrier between the social classes. Dougherty (1994) took a more benign view: that community colleges were designed to meet the ambitions of students who were not prepared to enter college.

The end of World War II brought about a period of great change in America's junior colleges. Their mission began to evolve from serving solely as vehicles to promote university transfer, to a broader scope with a greater focus on workforce preparation and development (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; Vaughn, 2006). As community colleges evolved, they began to look less like a continuation of high schools and began to establish their own identities and gain greater recognition in the academic world. These changes resulted in increased tensions between community colleges and universities (Deegan & Tillery, 1985).

Between 1960 and 1970, enrollments in community colleges increased threefold, from 451,000 in 1960 to 1,630,000 in 1970 (Brint & Karabel, 1989). The dynamic nature of these institutions was perpetuated by further influences at the federal level, most notably the Truman Commission's recommendations, which precipitated the name change from junior to community colleges, along with an expanded role to live up to the new name (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). By the 1980s, community colleges had assumed a more comprehensive mission that included university transfer, workforce development, career and technical education, developmental education, and lifelong learning. By the late 1990s, community colleges accounted for nearly half of all postsecondary students in the United States (Mellow & Heelan, 2008).

Mellow and Heelan (2008) argued that community college leaders have been major agents of transformation and deep change. Alfred (1998) claimed that community college leaders have faced organizational change at unprecedented levels. Whether leaders instigate change or are driven to manage change, the leader's role is critical (Alfred, 1998; Mellow & Heelan, 2008). As the literature review will indicate, however, there are gaps in research about leadership during change in community colleges. For example, studies of leadership often ignore the nuances of systems, such as nested leadership. Nested leadership in 2-year education refers to an organizational structure where campus presidents are part of a branch campus administered by a system president, or are under a large community college district administered by a district president or chancellor, or serve at one of many campuses reporting to a state-governed community college system president or chancellor who reports to a governing board. Although leaders in such systems must respond to and help drive change, they are not the sole change agents.

Understanding Organizational Change

To understand a community college leader's role during change, it is necessary to frame the concept of organizational change. No widely shared definition of organizational change exists (Burnes, 1996; Kezar, 2001; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995), but two views have achieved some currency. Burke (2008) described change as an organization's attempt (possibly a forced reaction) to survive the external forces of its environment. Wheatley (2006) characterized organizational change in less reactive terms, describing it as accommodating or evolving with the environment.

Changes in American community colleges over the past 100 years should be viewed as systemic; that is, changes have affected not only individual institutions but also the perceived role and scope of 2-year education in general. Change has resulted from a complex array of forces: government commissions (e.g., the Truman Commission); the rise of external associations (e.g., the American Association of Community Colleges); industry demands for workforce preparation; societal demands for increased access to education; and changes in student demographics, including age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; Vaughn, 2006).

Burke (2006) argued that change will be more difficult to bring about if leaders of change initiatives do not consider the consequences for all parts of the organization. Most organizational change, then, should be considered systemic. Burke (2008) and Lewin (1958) argued that organizational change should consider group impact. The current study was based on the assumption that organizational change is broad and can neither be caused nor managed solely by an individual (Collins, 2001; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990). But although a leader is not the sole agent of change, he or she is a key player in the process. Leaders frame a situation, providing a basis for followers to respond (Levin, 1998). Leaders' attitudes toward change and suggestions for how to approach a desired change will influence how their followers make sense of the change (Eddy, 2003). Eddy (2006) noted that leaders often engage in "sensemaking" (p. 42) for their followers when presenting a change initiative. The assumption is that a leader's opinions and interpretations can influence followers' assumptions and beliefs.

Organizational Change and Community College Governance

Cohen and Brawer (2003) described community colleges as institutions that are hierarchically organized. Although the first junior colleges were created by universities, many were connected to and administered by local school districts. During the first generation of junior colleges prior to World War II, the local school board assumed the role of coordinating its local junior colleges. The subsequent evolution and growth of junior colleges and their transformation to community colleges led to the establishment of community college boards of trustees, which were either elected or appointed by a governor or governmental agency.

The governance structure of contemporary public 2-year postsecondary colleges, including community and technical colleges, is diverse, depending on the state or district in which a college resides. Tollefson, Garett, and Ingram (1999) conducted a national study of 2-year postsecondary education governance and found five structural models: (a) state board of education (seven states), (b) state board or commission of higher education (12 states), (c) statewide community college coordinating board (12 states), (d) statewide community college governing board (five states), and (e) state board of regents that govern both community colleges and universities (10 states). Their study of public 2-year-college state directors in 1990 found that only South Dakota did not have a statewide 2-year postsecondary college coordinating structure. Cohen and Brawer (2003) described public 2-year-college organizational structures as including "single independent districts; multiunit independent districts; state university systems and branch colleges; and state systems" (p. 106). Most community college governance involves some

form of multicampus structure with varying degrees of centralized individual campus governance (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Community college growth from the time of the Truman Commission Report through the 1990s resulted in the transformation of many community colleges (Conover, 2009). New state community college systems and large districts were common. Both structures included branch campuses, a common response from coordinating boards (Dill, 1997). Bailey (2002) noted that the organizational structure of 2-year community colleges more closely parallels that of secondary schools than that of 4-year colleges and universities. Bailey found that community college governance is marked by strong central leadership, with the campus leader having a scope of authority closer to that of a high school principal working with a board of trustees through a superintendent than to that of a university president.

Conover (2009) suggested that community college nested campus leaders are in the best position to understand the unique mission of their colleges, to understand their campus cultures, and to articulate a vision for their respective campuses. Institutional culture plays a significant role in community college campuses, including serving as a filtering mechanism and a context for implementing change initiatives (Conover, 2009; Eddy, 2006). For state-wide nested systems, Conover's observations have important implications. Change in such a system must mean organizational change at multiple sites, led by local campus leaders, and ideally occurring in tandem with the vision articulated at the system level. This level of complexity appears to be beyond either Burke's (2008) or Wheatley's (2006) analysis of external and internal forces driving change. A nested system creates a change dynamic that may be simultaneously external and internal,

depending on the level from which it is viewed. Additionally, claims by Burke (2008), Burke and Lewin (1958), Kotter (1996), and Levin (1998), all of whom addressed the organization-wide impact of change, must be considered anew when exploring change in the multiple campuses of a nested system.

One of every three community colleges in the United States is part of a multicampus state system or multicollege district with a nested form of leadership, and 16 states and Puerto Rico have either state-governed community college systems or boards of regents that govern both community colleges and public universities (Katsinas & Hardy, 2004; Tollefson et al., 1999). These governance models lend themselves to a nested form of leadership in which a community college president reports to a system or state chancellor or president. Eddy (2006) examined the impact of nested leadership by exploring the role of a system chancellor or president and that position's impact on the campus (nested) leaders. Although Eddy framed the issue, that study did not provide a clear understanding of the role nested campus presidents play in leading change initiatives.

Not only have community colleges experienced major changes over the past 100 years but those changes are projected to increase because community colleges nationwide have predicted a significant increase in presidential retirements over the next decade (American Association of Community Colleges, 2001; O'Banion, 2007). Little is known about how community college campus leaders experience and implement transformative change, but their role will be significant given the large number of campuses that report to state system presidents or large community college districts. Now is a propitious time to explore the contributions nested leaders make to system changes and how such leaders

perceive that process. Economic and demographic shifts will precipitate change initiatives in community colleges, and there is potential for a significant loss of leadership, given the pending retirements of community college leaders (Hall, 2010; O'Banion, 2007; Roueche, Richardson, Neal, & Roueche, 2008).

The Maine Community College System

Between 2002 and 2003, the seven community technical colleges coordinated by the MTCS were transformed into the MCCS (LaBrie, 2004). The MTCS was classified by Tollefson et al. (1999) as part of a statewide community college governing board administered by a board of trustees that oversees a system president. LaBrie's case study documented the creation of the MCCS, an undertaking that was largely led by the MTCS system president, Fitzsimmons. LaBrie did not examine the role of Maine's seven technical college presidents and other senior leaders involved with the transformation. Each of these leaders operated in a nested organizational structure, reporting directly to President Fitzsimmons.

A ProQuest database search for dissertations about organizational change in the community college yielded 44 documents, few of which addressed the role of 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure who participated in a change initiative. A similar search using the Education Research Complete database revealed only one document addressing the role of organizational change and its impact on community college leaders in a nested organizational structure. As noted above, most change theorists analyze the role of leadership in change as if it flows from a primary point; nested systems appear to introduce ambiguities and nuances to these models. Chapter 2 delineates the direction of recent research more fully.

Problem Statement

Research is scarce on the role in transformational change of community college leaders whose reporting relationship is nested, that is, they report directly to either a district or state system president. This gap in the literature is particularly relevant in community colleges because many of them are part of large districts and state-governed systems with presidents or chancellors overseeing branch or system campus leaders (Conover, 2009; Katsinas & Hardy, 2004; Tollefson et al., 1999). Because community colleges have undergone change, it would be helpful to know more about the experiences and roles of leaders in such structures, especially because change promises to continue in 2-year postsecondary education for the foreseeable future.

Studies of postsecondary changes have mostly addressed 4-year institutions and have neglected nested systems. This study was a focused investigation of what can be learned from the perceptions and experiences of 2-year technical college leaders in Maine who were involved in the creation of a new system of community colleges. These leaders reported directly to the president of the MTCS during the transformation process of 2002-2003.

As the literature review will show, much has been written about the transformational change process and theoretical frameworks that organizational leaders can use to move the change process to a successful conclusions. Little research has addressed the experiences and roles of community college leaders whose institutions exist in a nested leadership structure, who typically report to a system president or chancellor who may be guiding the change initiative. Such leaders are directly responsible for communicating the change effort to campus constituents and usually play

an important role in framing the vision for the desired change, creating a guiding coalition, and ultimately cementing the change in the culture of the institution. This study examined how leaders of Maine's seven technical colleges, who reported to the state MTCS president, experienced and contributed to the 2002-2003 transformative change process that led to the creation of the MCCA in 2003.

Nature of the Study

This phenomenological study explored how leaders of Maine's technical colleges, who reported to the state MTCS president, experienced and contributed to the 2003 creation of the MCCS. The study examined leaders in the context of the transformational change initiative led by Fitzsimmons, then-president of MTCS. Each of the seven technical colleges was led by a president who reported to the MTCS system president. The study adopted a transcendental phenomenological approach, as described by Moustakas (1994), who emphasized that meaning is at the core of transcendental phenomenology. The study was designed to collect data that illuminate the meaning of experiences of Maine technical college leaders. Transcendental phenomenology was an appropriate methodology for this study, given a desire to understand the nature and implications of participants' experiences during the transformational change process. An additional reason to choose such a design is that the study focused on participants' experiences and minimized those of the researcher (Creswell, 2005). Transcendental phenomenology includes processes (e.g., epoche and bracketing) intended to help distance a researcher from the data and offset preconceptions. The study's design will be described in detail in chapter 3.

I investigated the experiences of leaders of the seven Maine technical colleges who were involved with a statewide reorganization led by the president of the system, Fitzsimmons, ultimately resulting in the creation of the MCCS in 2003. Through interviews, I learned how the change initiative was communicated to participants and how they experienced the change process. I also examined the driving forces behind the change and how participants navigated the transition. Finally, I looked for common experiential themes, including marker events and lessons for other leaders in a nested hierarchy who are experiencing change.

The primary means of data collection was in-depth, one-on-one interviews with targeted college leaders: presidents of the seven technical colleges, vice presidents or deans serving as chief academic officers, chief student services officers, or chief administrative officers. I interviewed six men who served as a president of one of Maine's seven technical colleges between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003. I also interviewed four vice presidents.

A preliminary conference call was held with Fitzsimmons, president of MCCS, on September 25, 2009, to present the prospectus outlining this research. Fitzsimmons expressed his support for the research and his assurance of assistance gathering names and contact information for potential participants. Fitzsimmons said that most of the original seven MTCS presidents were still in Maine, serving as president of an MCCS college, retired, or serving in a postretirement capacity. At least 15 possible candidates for interviews were still living in Maine (seven original presidents plus at least eight vice presidents). Participant selection criteria are fully explained in chapter 3.

Data analysis was done in accordance with phenomenological methods outlined by Moustakas (1994) and Hatch (2002). Interview data were reviewed, analyzed, and coded to identify patterns and themes. From these patterns and themes, I constructed comprehensive descriptions of participants' experiences in the reorganization of MTCS that was completed in 2003. A complete description of the study's methods, data collection, and data analysis follows in chapter 3.

Research Questions

In this phenomenological study, I sought to understand how 2-year technical college leaders experienced transformational change in a nested organizational structure. I looked for common experiential themes emerging from the forces of change. I sought to learn how college leaders navigated and facilitated the change process, whether coalitions were created to support the change initiative, whether change resulted in cultural shifts in the organization, and what some of the marker events were for each leader. Phenomenology was chosen because that method lends itself to examining and analyzing the essence of subjects' lived experience, as opposed to eliciting theoretical or analytical perspectives. The study was guided by two research questions:

1. How do 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences resulting from the transformational change?
2. What lessons, if any, do these leaders' experiences offer other state-governed 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore how 2-year technical college leaders in Maine between 2002 and 2003 contributed to the transformative process that led to the creation of MCCS. Targeted leaders were part of an organizational structure in which each 2-year technical college president reported to a system president. I sought to determine how campus leaders contributed to the change initiative at their individual campuses. The study will contribute to the body of knowledge about community college leadership and leader reactions to transformative change initiatives, and it will address a gap in the literature regarding the experiences of such leaders in a nested system.

Conceptual Framework

Kotter's (1996) eight-step organizational change model was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Kotter's model is based on the assumption that change is a natural part of any organization's life cycle but that transformational change does not occur easily. Kotter's eight steps are as follows: (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) creating a guiding coalition, (c) developing a vision and strategy, (d) communicating the change vision, (e) empowering employees for broad-based action, (f) generating short-term wins, (g) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (h) anchoring new approaches in the culture.

Kotter (1996) associated each step with a fundamental error: (a) allowing too much complacency, (b) failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition, (c) underestimating the power of vision, (d) undercommunicating the vision by a factor of 10 or greater, (e) permitting obstacles to block the new vision, (f) failing to create short-

term wins, (g) declaring victory too soon, and (h) neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture. Successful change initiatives should align people with the desired organizational vision (Kotter, 1996; Lewin, 1958; Senge, 1990). Change should focus on changing group standards and on organizational culture rather than individuals.

I examined the experiences of leaders of Maine technical colleges and how their reactions to the change initiative resulted in transformed organizational and cultural behaviors. Kotter and Cohen (2002) argued that the primary motivation for change is achieving a shift in organizational culture. Documenting that shift was facilitated by Kotter's (1996) eight-step model, a theoretical framework also adopted by McKenney and Morris (2010) and Eddy (2006).

Community college presidents are key influencers of change in their organizations (Levin, 1998; Malm, 2007). Conover (2009) argued that the influence of a community college president on his or her campus is greater than that of a university president, citing more shared governance at university campuses as a major reason for the difference. Levin (1998) credited community college presidents with significant influence in shepherding changes in their organizations and changing institutional culture. Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model provided an appropriate lens through which to examine the experiences and impact of leaders in the seven Maine technical colleges who were involved in the 2002-2003 transformation process to create the MCCS.

Operational Definitions

Community college: A 2-year postsecondary institution with the primary mission of providing university transfer, workforce development, and community service programs. Community colleges have open-access policies, with some competitive entry

programs. Two-year vocational colleges are often grouped under the community college name. Some community colleges provide 4-year degree opportunities (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Vaughan, 2006).

Evolutionary organizational change: Change that is unplanned and gradual (Burke, 2008).

Maine Community College System: A public system of seven 2-year comprehensive community colleges (Auburn, Bangor, Fairfield, Presque Isle, South Portland, Calais, and Wells) operating under a system president since 2003. Following its creation in 2003, this system provides the full comprehensive community college mission for Maine, including applied degrees and certificates and university-transfer associate degrees (LaBrie, 2004).

Maine Technical College System: A public system of seven 2-year technical colleges (Auburn, Bangor, Fairfield, Presque Isle, South Portland, Calais, and Wells) operating under a system president prior to 2003. These colleges provided primarily 2-year technical certificates and associate of applied science degrees (LaBrie, 2004).

Marker event: A significant event or action that focuses attention on a milestone associated with planned change.

Nested leadership (2-year colleges): Branch 2-year college campuses with presidents reporting to a state-governed system or district president or chancellor who reports directly to a board of trustees (Eddy, 2006).

Organizational culture: The prevailing values, expectations, and conventions in an organization or institution, often unspoken and persistent (Bennis, 1966).

Revolutionary organizational change: A major reorganization resulting in significant changes to an organization's mission, leadership, and culture; also known as transformational change (Burke, 2008).

State coordinating board (2-year colleges): Coordinating boards do not have authority over the governance of an institution but do have authority to approve degree programs, develop master plans, and make recommendations for state appropriations (De los Santos, 1997; Millet, 1984).

State advisory board (2-year colleges): Advisory boards exist to provide advice to 2-year college leaders (De los Santos, 1997; Millet, 1984).

State governing board (2-year colleges): Statewide governing boards appoint and evaluate the system's chief executive officer and can intervene in campus internal affairs. They approve operating and capital budgets for each campus (De los Santos, 1997).

University of Maine System (UMS): Seven universities and nine University College regional outreach centers, including the following campuses: University of Maine, University of Maine at Augusta, University of Maine at Farmington, University of Maine at Fort Kent, University of Maine at Machias, University of Maine at Presque Isle, and University of Southern Maine–Maine Law School.

Assumptions, Scope, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study addressed the human dimensions of change experienced by college leaders involved in restructuring seven Maine technical colleges into a community college system. My goal was to show how community college leaders respond to and participate in change, and to identify the positive and negative effects of changes on college leadership. The study can deepen understanding of how systemic changes affect

2-year college leaders who are structurally nested under a state-governed system president. The study could be useful to political and educational leaders who are contemplating creating a new community college system or changing an existing one.

I assumed that participants would respond to interview questions honestly and that they would be comfortable answering open-ended questions about how MTCS was transformed into MCCS. Although participation in this study was voluntary and anonymity was preserved, it is possible, given the sensitive nature of some questions, that participants may have been less than completely forthcoming in their responses. Safeguards for the ethical protection of participants are fully described in chapter 3.

The scope of this study was defined by the leaders who were employed in the seven 2-year technical colleges comprising MTCS between 2002 and 2003. These colleges are located in Auburn, Bangor, Fairfield, Presque Isle, South Portland, Calais, and Wells. These colleges were chosen because they represent a nested college governance structure, with college presidents who report to a system president. The study involved campus leaders (presidents and vice presidents) who were employed at one of the seven colleges when these colleges experienced transformative change from a technical college system into a new community college system.

One limitation of this study is that 7 years have passed since the reorganization of the technical colleges into a community college system. A preliminary conversation with President Fitzsimmons revealed that most of the original leaders were still living in Maine and were involved with the MCCS, with some still serving as campus presidents. Another limitation was reliance on voluntary participation by the targeted leaders.

The size of the sample population, as with many phenomenological studies, limits the study's generalizability. It is also important to recognize that reflections are subjective and must be verified. Some perceptions may have changed over time. Events perceived as either positive or negative initially may be reconsidered after time has passed and events have unfolded. It was necessary to ask the participants what they think now as opposed to what they remember feeling 7 years ago.

Another potential limitation is my own experience in higher education. It was important for me to employ epoche and bracketing in order to resist the inclination to speak about the topic during interviews. I am an administrator at the Montana College of Technology, a 2-year technical college embedded in the structure of Montana State University–Billings. The board of regents for the Montana University system is currently examining the structure, mission, role, and scope of Montana's higher education system, with particular focus on Montana's colleges of technology. For that reason, it was important for me to bracket experiences and opinions that have been formed as a result of my participation in that process.

Qualitative research by its very nature presents opportunities for research bias (Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 2005; Hatch, 2002; Merriam, 1998; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Rubin and Rubin noted that the central concern of responsive interviewing is a researcher's responsibility to obtain rich data without harming those being interviewed. As I conducted interviews, it was important to bracket any feelings, biases, and knowledge about the topic under study. I needed to be careful to avoid leading or guiding participants in any particular direction.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because of the rapid growth and dynamic nature of contemporary 2-year community colleges. Community colleges and their leaders will likely face even greater changes in coming years, including financial challenges resulting from a weakened economy and reduced state support and increased competition from private for-profit colleges. Also, there is the potential for a significant loss of leadership, given the pending retirements of many community college leaders (Hall, 2010; O'Banion, 2007; Roueche et al., 2008). These social and economic forces will lead to organizational change initiatives in individual colleges and college systems. College leaders may be called upon to implement changes (e.g., restructuring, downsizing, reengineering) directed from the system level. College leaders play a significant role in the outcome of change initiatives (Trahart, Burke, & Koonce, 1997).

The goal of this study was to interpret the experiences of 2-year college leaders who reported to a system president and were thrust into change resulting in the reorganization of their 2-year technical college system. The insights gained from this study could prove helpful to leaders in similar situations undergoing similar events, especially community college leaders who are nested in a state system, a group that has received little academic attention. Researchers agreed that leadership is an important element in the change process. How community college leaders understand and interpret that process can be a critical factor in determining whether change initiatives are successful (Burke, 2008; Collins, 2001; Kotter, 1996; O'Banion, 1997; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). One of every three community colleges in the United States is part of a multicampus or multicollege district or state system with a nested form of leadership

(Katsinas & Hardy, 2004). Tollefson et al. (1999) found that 16 states and Puerto Rico were structured with either community college governing boards or boards of regents governing both community colleges and public universities.

As Wheatley (2006) noted, change is often considered a "feared enemy" (p. 137). Kets de Vries (1995) stated that threatened change can "unleash a multitude of fears of the unknown, loss of freedom, status or position, authority, and responsibility" (p. 26). Baldridge (1971) concluded that resistance to change is more often linked to perceived personal impact than to actual impact on the organization. Given the potential for prospective change to evoke defensiveness and resistance, it is important to understand the dynamics of the change process, and that was one goal of the current study. This study will contribute to the field of community college leadership by expanding research into an area that has been overlooked. By showing how 2-year college leaders experience and lead change efforts as a part of a state community college system, this study can positively influence change initiatives in other 2-year college systems across America.

Summary

A major issue facing community college leaders in the 21st century will be transformational change. One third of all 2-year postsecondary colleges occupy a nested organizational structure where college leaders report to a system president or chancellor. Sixteen states and Puerto Rico have either community college governing boards or boards of regents that govern both community colleges and public universities (Tollefson et al., 1999). Not enough is known about how community college leaders experience transformational change initiated at the system level (Burke, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). This phenomenological study explored how 2-year technical college

leaders in Maine experienced transformative change that led to the creation of the Maine Community College System. This study will help community college system leaders such as system chancellors or presidents better understand how the change process unfolds at the individual college level and the role of other campus leaders in that process. In chapter 2, I will review the literature on organizational change, community college governance, how leaders influence change, theories of change, and a brief history of the Maine Community College System. In chapter 3, I will describe the proposed study's design, sample, data collection and analysis procedures, and steps taken for the ethical protection of participants. In chapter 4, I will present the study's results, and chapter 5 will include conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review investigates the current body of knowledge on change in community college structures, with particular focus on state-governed structures. The review includes a summary of state-governed community college leadership structures; change theory; the role of leaders in the change process; Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model; organizational change in various community college structures, including those where campus leaders report to a system chancellor or president who is responsible to a state-level board or commission; the 2003 reorganization of the MTCS into the MCCS; and the rationale for the research methodology selected.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of 2-year technical college leaders in Maine in 2002-2003, including their contributions to the transformative process in their own colleges that led to the creation of the MCCS. The review begins with an overview of organizational change and the role of leaders in such change. Kotter's (1996) eight-step model for organizational change, which serves as the theoretical framework for this study, is examined in detail. The review covers studies of organizational change in 2-year postsecondary college campuses where leaders are nested, reporting to a community college system president or chancellor. The reorganization of the MTCS into the MCCS was chosen for this study because it is a pertinent example of change occurring in 2-year college campuses administered by campus presidents who report to a state system president. Organizational change in nested systems, whether corporate, nonprofit, or educational, has not been extensively studied, and Maine provided a clear example of change in one type of nested system. The

final section of this chapter summarizes qualitative research methods, including a discussion of transcendental phenomenology.

Search Strategies

The literature reviewed for this study included peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, books, government documents, and reports provided through MCCS. I looked for studies on (a) the history of community colleges, (b) community college leadership, (c) change theory, (d) the role of leaders in transformational change, and (e) qualitative research design with a special focus on transcendental phenomenological studies. Documents were identified through the EBSCO Information Services and ProQuest database portals. I used the following electronic databases: Academic Search Premier, PsycINFO, Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC), Education Research Complete, and SAGE Full-Text Collections. An extensive review of dissertations was conducted through ProQuest Dissertations and Theses (PQDT). Database searches revealed over 300 recent scholarly titles on change theory in business and industry, as well as 360 peer-reviewed articles on organizational change in community colleges. Further search refinement focused on transformational leadership in either multicampus or nested campus community colleges, which yielded fewer than five results each. ProQuest Digital Dissertations listed 787 *documents on leadership and transformational change*; 44 documents on *community colleges, leadership, and transformational change*; and six documents on *community college leadership, transformational change,* and *nested* or *multicampus structures*. The MCCS president provided documents pertaining to the 2002-2003 reorganization of the MTCS and creation of the MCCS: strategic plans, community college vision documents, and other

artifacts. Additional sources were identified through bibliographies and in-text references.

Gap in the Literature

The nature and impact of change in higher education have been much studied, and some of this research has addressed community colleges. Few studies, however, have considered transformational change initiated at the system level and carried out by leaders of constituent campuses (Burke, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Leadership studies frequently assume a level of individual autonomy that is not characteristic of campus leaders in a state-controlled, nested organization reporting to a system president or chancellor. Also, studies of organizational change theory in nested organizations have largely been confined to the corporate sector.

The Changing Community College

Change is a part of the fabric of human society, evident in created structures (governmental organizations, schools, churches, etc.) as well as dynamic, organic developments (population growth, urban sprawl, immigration, etc.). Over the past 200 years, what it means to live in an urban area has changed, people have moved from agrarian communities to cities, and the industrial and information revolutions have precipitated changing expectations regarding education (Adler & Mayer, 1958; Ashmore, 1989; Bennis, 1966; Pascale, Milleman, & Gioja, 2000). Like other institutions, the American community college has experienced dramatic changes, from its inception with the birth of Joliet Junior College in 1901, to over 1,200 community colleges in existence by the turn of the 21st century, enrolling nearly 45% of all postsecondary students (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). What are now called community colleges represent a variety

of organizational types, including single-campus districts reporting to a board of trustees, large multicampus districts reporting to a district president or chancellor, and multicampus systems with individual presidents or CEOs reporting to a state-governed system chancellor or president (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; Tollefson et al., 1999; Vaughn, 2006).

Historically, colleges and universities have been modeled on an educational design hundreds of years old, dating back to early universities such as Oxford University in the United Kingdom (Craig, 2004). Critics of American higher education argued that colleges and universities have been slow to change and have seen change as threatening (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Craig, 2004; Van Wagoner, 2004). Community colleges historically have not shared this reputation for slow responsiveness (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). Over the last 100 years, community colleges have developed a mission that embraces change (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Van Wagoner, 2004). Van Wagoner suggested that one reason for this different behavior is that the community college's direct dependence on local tax levies makes it more accountable to the community and more responsive to change.

In any event, community colleges have grown dramatically, which has occasioned transformational changes in their role, scope, and mission. They have responded to demographic shifts in the student population, greater demands for accountability, a movement toward student-centered learning, economic changes, demands from business and industry, federal and state legislation, national commissions and associations, anticipated retirements of community college leaders, and changes in the relationship

between community colleges and universities (Alfred, 1998; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Eddy, 2003; Mellow & Heelan, 2008; O'Banion, 1997; Vaughn, 2006).

Like other educational institutions, community colleges have faced increasing public scrutiny and review. National accreditation associations are calling for greater accountability, state systems and regents are linking funding to performance, economic changes are driving calls for greater efficiency, and demographic shifts are changing enrollment patterns. In such a climate, community colleges have revised curricula, formed strategic alliances, emphasized lifelong learning, and provided more flexible scheduling (Amey, Jessup-Anger, & Jessup-Anger, 2008; Craig, 2004; Gayle, Bhoendradatt, & White, 2003). The original mission of the community college, to provide 2-year postsecondary education, is being reconsidered in many states as community colleges begin offering baccalaureate degrees (Cook, 2000; Floyd, 2006; McKinney & Morris, 2010). McGinnis (1986) delineated six factors that have forced change in community college: (a) changes in demography, (b) demands for broader education and improved skills, (c) inadequacy of students' preparation for college-level work, (d) growth of remedial programs, (e) declining college participation, and (f) high attrition rates. McGinnis also observed that what is known about effective teaching and learning is frequently not being applied to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population, stressing the importance of finding constructive ways to assess student progress and institutional performance while maintaining the nation's commitment to access and equal opportunity (p. 3).

The number of community colleges has grown from one, in 1901, to over 1,200 by 2008 (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). This growth has multiplied the kinds of structure that

institutions have adopted. But according to Tollefson et al. (199), the proliferation of governance models has been haphazard. Not enough is known about those models because most studies of postsecondary organizational structures have addressed 4-year colleges and universities (De los Santos, 1997).

Community College Governance and Coordination

Millet (1984) described three kinds of community college governance: (a) state coordinating board, (b) state governing board, and (c) an advisory board to the state. Coordinating boards do not directly govern an institution, but they do have authority to approve degree programs, develop master plans, and make recommendations for state appropriation (De los Santos, 1997; Millet, 1984). One difference between a coordinating board and an advisory board is that the coordinating board can act, whereas the advisory board can only review (De los Santos, 1997). Statewide governing boards appoint and evaluate the system's chief executive officer, can intervene in campus internal affairs, and must approve total operating and capital budgets for each campus (De los Santos, 1997). Campbell (1978) and Darnowski (1978) argued that statewide governance diminishes an individual college's autonomy and weakens its ties to the community it purportedly serves.

Tollefson et al. (1999) distinguished among five models of community college governance:

1. State board of education (seven states). State boards generally exercise little control over community colleges, and they usually provide coordination in states with individual college boards of trustees.

2. State higher education board or commission (11 states). These boards or commissions often have degree and program approval, as well as authority to submit budgets.

3. Statewide community college coordinating board (13 states). These boards typically exercise moderate control over individual campuses, primarily regarding budgets and programs.

4. State community college governing board (five states). These governing boards hire and fire presidents, faculty, and staff; hold title to land, buildings, and equipment; and establish all policies for the state system. The MCCS is part of a state governing board.

5. State board of regents (11 states and Puerto Rico). These boards typically are totally responsible for governing state universities and community colleges (p. 26).

Based on the forgoing categories, 16 states and Puerto Rico have either community college governing boards or boards of regents that govern both community colleges and public universities. According to De los Santos (1997), who studied college governance structures in Texas and Illinois, community colleges continue to be fearful of domination by universities through statewide coordination or consolidation. That concern might be shared by leaders who are part of a statewide community college governance structure, even when universities are not part of that structure. De los Santos concluded that "state-level community college coordination is affected by structure, leadership, politics, external state-level community college advocacy agencies, and many other significant influences" (p. 156). Such research demonstrates that strong consideration

should be given to the governance structure of a community college and its system when embarking on a major organizational change initiative.

Branch Campuses

Although the current study addressed leaders' experiences during the transformation of a state-governed 2-year college system led by a system president, that example has much in common with large community college systems that encompass branch campuses. Conover (2009) reviewed the literature on community college branch campuses and found that many of their faculty had a sense of being perceived as second-class citizens. On the other hand, branch campus faculty described feeling pride in distinguishing themselves from their parent organizations by serving their local communities.

Bailey (2002) found greater similarities between community colleges and secondary schools than between community colleges and 4-year universities. Bailey described the branch campus community college president's role as similar to that of a high school principal in its degree of internal control. Both Eddy (2006) and Conover (2009) found that the autonomy branch campus presidents have varies from one system to another. Eddy noted that a campus's institutional culture is important to understand because it provides a context for understanding how change initiatives are received and implemented. Conover observed that the bureaucratic nature of community colleges provides a president with a high concentration of power and control when compared to presidents of 4-year institutions.

Organizational Change

According to Bennis (1966), understanding organizational change requires understanding the dominant form of human organization, that is, bureaucracy. Bureaucracies "organize and direct the activities of the business or firm" (p. 23) and provide a social context for how organizations are structured. Hickman (2010) noted that organizations do not operate in isolation. Instead, they are subject to varied external influences: environment, economy, technology, and demographics. Those forces oblige leaders to form interdependent relationships.

Organizational change affects individuals, groups, and an organization as a whole (Burnes, 1996). To survive unpredictable forces of the external environment and perpetuate themselves, organizations tend to emphasize stability and continuity (Burke, 2008; Burke, Lake, & Paine, 2009; Pascale, Milleman, & Gioja, 2000). That mindset leads to a suspicious and defensive reaction to the prospect of change. But an organization can also be characterized as an "integrated system interacting with its environment" (Demers, 2007, p. 8). Seen in that light, the environment is the community of entities that interact with the organization: suppliers, customers, competitors, government, and regulatory agencies. Organizational engagement with these external entities can be measured in terms of predictability, rhythm of change, complexity, or threat (Burns & Stalker, 1961; Demers, 2007; Khandwalla, 1973; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1969). In Wheatley's (2006) scheme, organizations are analogous to organisms living in nature, where each maintains an individual identity in a larger network of relationships that in turn shape the organization. For both Wheatley and Demers (2007), organizational change is part of an integrated system, unlike Burke's (2008) survival model.

Change Defined

Change can be described as either planned or unplanned (Burke, 2008; Cohen & March, 1974; Kotter, 1996; Pascale, Milleman, & Gioja, 2000; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Planned change can be either revolutionary or evolutionary. Revolutionary change might involve a major restructuring of the organization or the system housing it, including changes to its mission, culture, and overall strategy. Evolutionary changes occur more gradually (Burke, 2008; Kezar, 2001; Morgan, 1986). Although revolutionary change can follow from an unforeseen event or environmental influence, it can also be the result of a planning. Planned revolutionary change requires the involvement of a broad array of organizational members, whereas evolutionary change could involve particular groups and particular parts of the process (Burke, 2008).

Most observers agree that large-scale organizational change is necessarily systemic (Burke, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Organizational change will be at risk if leaders do not consider the consequences of change initiative on the larger system (Burke, 2008). The focus of change should be on the group, not on particular individuals (Burke, 2008; Lewin, 1958). As Lewin noted, individuals tend to resist change as long as group standards remained unchanged, whereas changes to group standards encounter less individual resistance. According to Austin and Claasen (2008), most scholarly research has focused on structural facilitators and barriers to organizational change rather than the human dimension. They distinguished between *administrative* changes, which relate to process, and *technical* changes, which relate to products. Burke (2008) characterized *incremental* change as usually involving internal procedures and *transformative* change as altering the entire structure.

Levels of Change

Burke (2008) noted that organizational change can occur at three levels: individual, group, and system.

Individual change. Organizational change at the individual level is influenced by (a) recruitment, selection, and replacement; (b) the extent to which the organization instills the principles of a learning organization; and (c) coaching and counseling (Burke, 2008; Collins, 2001; McKinney & Morris, 2009; Senge, 1990). For Levinson (1976) and Burke (2008), individual responses to organizational change often parallel the stages of a patient's reaction to receiving a terminal diagnosis: shock and denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance. Bridges (1986) described three different individual reactions to change: surrendering; experiencing ambiguity, despair, or confusion; or embracing a new vision or future. Negative reactions to organizational change could result from poor communication, a belief that change has been arbitrarily imposed, or the perception that change has resulted in a loss of power (Burke, 2008; Piderit, 2000).

Group change. Because any organization is made up of individuals, it makes sense to consider how individuals respond to change. But even in small organizations, individuals are organized, or organize themselves, into groups. For that reason, many students of organizational change have emphasized the importance of considering groups or guiding coalitions when examining the dynamics of change (Burke, 2008; Eddy, 2003; Hickman, 2010; Kotter, 2006; McKinney & Morris, 2010). Kotter and Cohen (2002) noted that successful organizational change depends on teamwork, which in turn depends on having people with appropriate skills for the task, leadership ability, credibility, and networking connections in the organization. Whelan-Berry and Hinings (2003) found

only a few models that described change at the group level. One of those was Goodman's (1982), which delineated four stages of group behavior: introduction, adoption, continuation, and maintenance or termination.

System change. Kimberly and Nelson (1975) described three levels of change in organizational systems. The first is subsystem. In a community college, this level could be an academic a department. The second level is groups of subsystems, for example, a division. In a branch campus system, an individual campus would be a group of subsystems. Kimberly and Nelson's third level of change is the system. For community colleges, the system could be either a self-contained campus or the entire collection of branch campuses. Subsystem or group changes in one part of the system can alter the entire system (Goodman, 1982; Katz & Kahnm 1978; Whelan-Berry, Gordon, & Hinings, 2003; Zaltman, Koitler, & Kaufman, 1972).

The Leader's Role During Change

Researchers on organizational change have attributed substantial influence to leaders (Burke, 2008; Eddy, 2003; Hickman, 2010; Kotter, 2006; McKinney & Morris, 2010). Indeed, leading change efforts is typically considered one of a leader's most important responsibilities (Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). LaClair and Rao (2002) studied 40 change initiatives and concluded that 58% failed because of poor leadership. McKinney and Morris (2009) concluded that effective leadership was essential for effecting transformative change in the community colleges they studied. One important component of leadership, they argued, is developing a shared vision to guide the change process. Leadership involves moving the organization in a new direction, solving a problem, instilling a climate of creativity, developing new programs, creating

new organizational structures, or enhancing the quality of the product or service delivered by the organization (Davis, 2003; Eddy, 2006).

Yukl, Gordon, and Taber (2002) noted that most early scholarship on leadership primarily addressed tasks and behaviors. Only recently have researchers become interested in studying the relationship between leadership and the change process. Eddy (2006) charged that traditional theories of leadership overemphasized individual traits and personality, neglecting the important factor of how leaders relate to subordinates. Other researchers have addressed the leader's role in transformational change (Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; House, 1977; Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). Transformational leaders are able to increase follower awareness of key issues, communicate a vision, and achieve desired outcomes (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) summarized the results of a study by Roueche, Baker, and Rose that examined characteristics of community college leaders:

1. Believing in teamwork and making decisions through shared decision making.
2. Valuing people as members of a team and as individuals.
3. Understanding members' motivation.
4. Having a strong personal value system.
5. Possessing a vision for the college.

Eddy (2006) cited a study by the American Council on Education that found campus members sought reactions from their campus president during times of change or uncertainty. Eddy also noted that in multicampus districts or state-governed systems, it is important to recognize the role that both the campus president and the system or district

president or chancellor play in presenting and implementing change initiatives. The complexities of shared responsibilities for change in such systems have received little study.

Understanding the organizational culture is important for community college members to make sense of a change and create shared meaning (Eddy, 2006; Levin, 1998). Eddy cited Gioia and Thomas, who found that a college's leadership team was critical in helping other members of the college make sense of a change initiative. Community colleges that are part of state-governed systems or large districts typically report to a system president or chancellor. Eddy (2006) used the term *nested leadership* to describe initiatives that emanate from a system president or chancellor's office and must be replicated at individual campuses. Eddy's term is based on Russian matryoshka, or nesting dolls, where each doll is painted uniquely but retains the shape of the other dolls (p. 44).

Kotter's Change Model

Eddy (2003) noted that higher education frequently turns to business models when considering strategic planning and change models. Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model has been used frequently in studies involving transformational change. Although it was designed for the corporate sector, Kotter's model provides a template higher education institutions can use to develop strategies (Eddy, 2003, p. 3). Kotter believed that 70-90% of an organization's success or failure in effecting transformational change can be attributed to the organization's leadership. He characterized the ideal leader as "never letting up until you get the vision of what you wanted—and then

securing it and institutionalizing it enough so it sinks into the culture so the winds of tradition will not blow it back to where it started" (as cited in Newcomb, 2008, p. 6).

Kotter's (1996) eight steps are as follows: (a) establishing a sense of urgency, (b) creating a guiding coalition, (c) developing a vision and strategy, (d) communicating the change vision, (e) empowering employees for broad-based action, (f) generating short-term wins, (g) consolidating gains and producing more change, and (h) anchoring new approaches in the culture. Kotter's model is based on his conclusion that change efforts fail because of common mistakes committed by organizational leaders during the change process: (a) allowing too much complacency, (b) failing to create a sufficiently powerful guiding coalition, (c) underestimating the power of vision, (d) under-communicating the vision by a factor of 10 or greater, (e) permitting obstacles to block the new vision, (f) failing to create short-term wins, (g) declaring victory too soon, and (h) neglecting to anchor changes firmly in the corporate culture.

Community College Change Initiatives Using Kotter's Model

Eddy (2003) used Kotter's (1996) change model to assess a consortium of 2-year technical institutions that were at risk of closure if they did not find ways to increase efficiencies by working together. The guiding coalition these institutions formed had limited effectiveness due to turf battles and lack of consensus. The attempt to create a vision was only marginally successful because the college presidents developed a vision without engaging their own members, which resulted in lack of support. Only two coalition members were able to engender broad-based action in their colleges, which is Kotter's fifth step. Although the system president supported the desired change, the coalition building initiative was not successful.

McKinney and Morris (2010) used Kotter's (1996) change framework to examine the nature and degree of organizational change in community colleges that began offering baccalaureate degrees. They found a strong connection between leadership and the desired change. Each of the six presidents who were interviewed stressed the importance of having effective leadership in place prior to moving forward with a transformative change effort. In particular, they said, leaders must frame institutional traditions and attitudes prior to introducing a change initiative. McKinney and Morris especially emphasized Kotter's first step, establishing a sense of urgency, as well as the second and third steps: developing a vision for the change and establishing a guiding coalition to move the process forward.

Whelan-Berry, Gordon, and Hinings (2003) noted that many organizational change efforts fail during the first step of Kotter's change model. In a college, what is important to the president might not be important to others. Whelen-Berry et al. recommended that executive leaders allow time for groups and individuals to cycle through the change process. One risk is that the executive might be ready to move to the next level of change when the employees are not. Whelen-Berry et al. stressed that group and individual change processes are not separate but must be considered together when effecting organizational change. For example, in multicampus college systems, failure to accept change at one campus will affect the other campuses. Also, although each campus might have a titular leader, that person might not share the goals or timeline of the state- or system-level leader.

Eddy (2006) studied the influence of a system chancellor on change initiatives in a nested leadership system. Although the chancellor under study tried to direct the change

initiative at each campus, it was not clear what kind of interaction occurred between campus presidents and the chancellor. Eddy concluded that institutional culture is an important factor for determining how faculty and staff in a community college interpret a change initiative, but the lack of detail regarding interactions between the leader of a nested organizational system and individual campus leaders points to the need for additional research.

Transforming Maine's Community College System

On March 31, 2003, Maine Governor Baldacci signed legislation that converted Maine's seven technical colleges to community colleges (Fitzsimmons, 2003). The creation of MCCS was the result of a transformative change effort involving the consolidation of all 2-year postsecondary education in the state, which previously had been offered by two different higher education systems: the University of Maine System (UMS) and the Maine Technical College System (MTCS). Prior to 2003, UMS was considered the primary vehicle of the community college mission in Maine (LaBrie, 2004).

A Brief History of the MTCS

Maine's 2-year postsecondary colleges have experienced considerable change since their creation in 1946, beginning with establishment of the Maine Vocational Technical Institute (MVTI) in Augusta as a part of the federal Serviceman's Readjustment Act or G.I. Bill (Maine Technical College System [MTCS], 2002). In 1962, the state Department of Education proposed new VTIs, along with developing Maine's secondary vocational education regions and centers. During the next few years, five new institutions were founded, with a sixth added later. The VTIs in Maine were

based on a mission of preparing students for immediate employment (Fitzsimmons, 2002). They were recognized by the Maine legislature in 1986 as an autonomous system through establishment of the Maine Vocational Technical Institute System. During this same period, the legislature established a board of trustees to serve as the system's sole policy-setting authority. A system office was subsequently created to serve the institutes and the board by providing coordination, technical support, and state-level leadership to the colleges. In 1989, the names of the six VTIs were changed from vocational technical institutes to technical colleges. In 1994, the Maine legislature established the seventh technical college: York County Technical College (Fitzsimmons, 2002).

An Overview of the 2002-2003 Transformation

The transformation of the 2-year technical college system into a new comprehensive community college system in Maine provides an example of revolutionary change that occurred as a result of both evolutionary pressures and a planned transformative process. LaBrie (2004) used the analogy of two ships at sea to describe MTCS and UMS, noting that both ships were on the same course but did not collide. Maine's postsecondary educational structure prior to 2003 included three autonomous public institutions of higher education: UMS, MTCS, and the Maine Maritime Academy. Each was governed by its own board appointed by the governor, but there was no form of central coordination. Both UMS and MTCS provided part of the community college function, but UMS provided the largest percentage of 2-year transferable programs and claimed the title of fulfilling the mission of Maine's comprehensive 2-year colleges (LaBrie, 2004).

MTCS and its seven colleges operated under the direction of a system president who supervised each of the college presidents. This governance structure was more centralized than that of the UMS units. The creation of UMS occurred nearly 20 years after the creation of Maine's original VTI system and was an attempt to bring about better coordination of Maine's 4-year colleges and universities. Although UMS was created for this purpose, each of the units retained significant autonomy, with each unit having its own mission (LaBrie, 2004).

The transformation of MTCS into MCCS is a good example of what can happen when an evolutionary change is triggered by an unforeseen incident, as described by Burke (2008). LaBrie (2004) described how several incidents came together over a 10-year period to influence the changes. First, there was the formation of a visiting committee by the governor in 1986 to examine Maine's higher education. Findings of this committee revealed a gap in community college education in the state. Their recommendations set the stage for both UMS and MTCS to begin engaging (separately) in planning to expand their respective 2-year college missions.

By the mid 1990s, UMS organized its 2-year educational programs in the Education Network of Maine (ENM). The purpose of ENM was to provide the entire state with community college options. As a result of the ENM initiative, Maine's two flagship campuses (University of Maine and University of Southern Maine) divested themselves of 2-year education offerings. ENM was not well received by UMS faculty, who ultimately placed the project in jeopardy. The subsequent resignation of the UMS chancellor in 1997 led to the new chancellor's decision to scale back the UMS community college initiative. A further complication to UMS's efforts came when the

new UMS chancellor also ushered in a new era of decentralization among UMS units, which halted attempts to create a statewide approach to delivering 2-year education. The result was the lack of a clearly defined mission for UMS (LaBrie, 2004).

John Fitzsimmons was hired as the president of MTCS in 1990. LaBrie (2004) described Fitzsimmons's leadership as an important factor in the reorganization of the MTCS. LaBrie's case study chronicled Fitzsimmons's planning for the new MCCS beginning in 1994, when he publicly stated that he believed UMS should not be the agent of the state's community college mission. Fitzsimmons subsequently developed a vision statement and position paper, followed by a tour to each campus. LaBrie's account did not include any reactions Fitzsimmons received. LaBrie noted that systemic changes of comparable magnitude to the MTCS-MCCS transition in other locations resulted from external rather than internal forces. LaBrie suggested that the MTCS case study was different, arguing that the impetus for change came from within the system.

LaBrie (2004) described the UMS system during the period leading up to 2003 as suffering from unstable leadership and public criticism. At the same time, MTCS enjoyed stable and effective leadership in the person of President Fitzsimmons. LaBrie described the role of a system president as a "shock absorber during economically and politically difficult periods" (p. 158) as well as providing "stability and strength" (p. 158) during calm periods. LaBrie's study did not detail the role played by the seven MTCS campus presidents during the change effort. This omission suggests the need for further study of the roles and experiences of campus presidents during the change process, since changes in one part of the system will have an impact on other parts and ultimately the entire system (Goodman, 1982; Katz & Kahnm 1978; Zaltman, Koitler, & Kaufman, 1972).

LaBrie's (2004) case study described how the transformation of MTCS followed Kotter's eight-step change model, including how MTCS leaders were able to define the problem and move forward with benchmarks that demonstrated success. LaBrie concluded by asking three questions: (a) What role and influence do campus presidents play on the larger system? (b) What skills should be emphasized in such a leadership opportunity? (c) Is there room for transformative leaders on a campus level, or is this level better suited for leaders more comfortable with incremental change? (p. 161). As emphasized in Eddy's (2006) study of nested leadership in community college structures, it is important to understand the interplay between the leader of a system and its campus presidents. Kotter's eight-step change model provides a theoretical framework from which to examine the experiences of leaders who participated in the MTCS transformation process.

Research Methods

As noted above, little research has investigated the transformational change experiences of leaders of branch 2-year postsecondary campuses who report to a system president or chancellor in a state-governed 2-year college system. Studies on general change in higher education or in 2-year postsecondary educational institutions have used both qualitative and quantitative methods. Several have been inductive qualitative case studies. Others involved surveys and were deductive in nature. Few of the studies reviewed in this chapter employed the phenomenological research tradition.

A qualitative approach was chosen for this study because it involves describing and explaining the lived experiences of participants (Janesick, 2004). Eisner (1991) described qualitative research as (a) field focused, (b) relying on the self as the research

instrument, (c) interpretive, and (d) using expressive language and the presence of voice in the text. Qualitative studies become believable and instructive, Eisner argued, because of their coherence, insight, and instrumental utility (pp. 32-39). Hatch (2002) noted that qualitative researchers "are part of the world they study; the knower and the known are taken to be inseparable" (p. 10). Hatch emphasized that qualitative researchers be reflexive, monitor their influence on the setting, bracket their biases, and monitor emotional responses. Goodall (2000) described reflexivity as "the process of personally and academically reflecting on lived experiences in ways that reveal deep connections between the writer and his or her subject" (p. 137).

Moustakas (1994) argued that qualitative traditions, including ethnography, grounded research theory, hermeneutics, empirical phenomenology, and heuristics, are different from traditional quantitative research for the following reasons :

1. Recognizing the value of qualitative designs and methodologies: studies of human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches.
2. Focusing on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its subjects or parts.
3. Searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations.
4. Obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts in informal and formal conversations and interviews.
5. Regarding the data of experience as imperative in understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations.

6. Formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher.
7. Viewing experience and behaviors as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and of parts and whole. (p. 21)

Among the various qualitative traditions, a transcendental phenomenological approach was best suited for this study. An important difference between transcendental phenomenology and other qualitative methods is the researcher's goal to set aside prejudgments regarding the phenomenon under investigation (Moustakas, 1994). Giorgi (2005) noted that phenomenology focuses on "human subjectivity in new and important ways" (p. 75).

The tradition of phenomenology owes its creation to the German philosopher Husserl (1859-1938), who created and named the approach. Other important contributors to phenomenology were Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Ricoeur, and Levina (Giorgi, 2005; Husserl, 1970), all of whom agreed that phenomenology explores human consciousness, human existence, and the nature of what it means to be a human (Giorgi, 2005; Richardson, 1999). Husserl's insight that traditional quantitative methods do not capture human perceptions and perceived realities seems pertinent to this study. A goal of the present study was to capture the experiential dimension of the change process rather than merely considering facilitators and barriers, which was a critique of change research leveled by Austin and Claasen (2008). Given that this study was directed toward leaders of 2-year colleges who worked in a nested, state-governed system, phenomenology seemed appropriate for discerning the experiences and opinions of these leaders as they reflect on the change process. A transcendental phenomenological approach enables a

researcher to develop an objective understanding of participants' experiences by aggregating them (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Transcendental phenomenology is appropriate when an experiential phenomenon needs to be understood and individuals are available for interviews (Moustakas, 1994).

An important aspect of phenomenology is the care a researcher takes to separate perception from positing or presuming existence (Welton, 1999). As Giorgi (2009) observed, "Withholding of the positing leaves us with presences, not existences" (p. 91). Creswell (2007) described qualitative research as beginning with "assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 37). The transcendental phenomenological approach used in this study enabled me to collect data in a natural setting, followed by data analysis to establish patterns or themes (Creswell, 2007).

I chose the transcendental phenomenological tradition for this study because this tradition (a) offered an inductive approach to understand how Maine technical college leaders experienced transformative change; (b) permitted me to serve as the primary instrument for data collection; (c) enabled me to find meaning through reflection; and d) facilitated the construction of pertinent research abstractions, concepts, and themes. I conducted in-depth interviews of the former leaders of the seven Maine technical colleges to learn about their experiences during the transformation process. The outcome is a comprehensive picture of their experiences and a better understanding of the change process involving leaders in a nested community college system.

Summary

Two-year postsecondary colleges have experienced significant change since their inception in 1901. Rapid growth has resulted in the creation of over 1,200 2-year colleges reflecting a variety of governance models, including independently controlled districts, multicampus districts, and state-coordinated systems. Organizational change literature emphasizes understanding the role leaders play in the change process, particularly their ability to articulate a vision, form a guiding coalition, develop a strategy, communicate a vision, empower broad-based action, create short-term results, and eventually solidify the change into the culture of the organization. A review of the literature revealed a lack of research on the role of nested campus leaders in system-wide change. This gap is reflected in the broader literature of organizational change, in which leadership is often referenced as pertaining to a single individual.

I examined the transformation of the seven colleges comprising the Maine Technical College System into the Maine Community College System. More specifically, by investigating the experiences of the leaders of those seven campuses, this study addressed a gap in the literature by exploring the complexity of change undertaken in a nested system of leadership. Chapter 3 will consist of a description of the proposed study's design, setting, sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and steps taken for the ethical protection of participants. In chapter 4, I will summarize the study's results, and in chapter 5, I will present conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

This phenomenological study used individual interviews with community college administrators to explore the dynamics of transformational change in a nested organizational structure, an area that has been neglected in academic studies. Addressing that gap in the literature is important because one third of all U.S. community colleges have nested organizational structures (Katsinas & Hardy, 2004). In this chapter, I describe the methods used to explore the experiences of 2-year technical college leaders who participated in transformational change that led to the creation of the MCCS. This description includes the study's design, setting, sample, instrumentation, data collection and analysis procedures, and ethical precautions.

Justification for Qualitative Research Design

Two research questions guided this study:

1. How do 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences resulting from the transformational change?
2. What lessons, if any, do these leaders' experiences offer other state-governed 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change?

The research questions, designed to probe the experiences of 2-year technical college leaders in Maine who experienced the 2003 transformation and reorganization into the MCCS, dictated a qualitative research design. Merriam (1998) described qualitative research as having an "interpretive or naturalistic" (p. 1) approach that focuses on "meaning in context" (p. 1), an approach necessitating the engagement of humans (as

opposed to statistical packages and other software) for collecting and analyzing data. Qualitative research provides a way to understand the meaning gained from an experience through an inductive, theory-building approach rather than a deductive, testing mode of inquiry (Merriam, 1998). Merriam and Creswell (2005) stated that qualitative research (a) is based on individuals interacting with their social worlds; (b) uses the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis; (c) typically involves field work; and (d) is primarily inductive in that it involves constructing research abstractions, concepts, and hypotheses.

A specific form of qualitative research is phenomenology, which is rooted in the work of Husserl, who was critical of researchers who attempted to apply scientific research methods to human issues (Laverty, 2003). Husserl (1970) argued that human beings should be studied differently than either abstract concepts or animals, noting that humans do not simply respond to stimuli but also to their perceptions of what the stimuli mean (Laverty, 2003; Welton, 1999). Moustakas (1994), who acknowledged his debt to Husserl, described phenomenological research as providing an opportunity to examine and create new knowledge regarding "everyday human experiences, human behavior, and human relations" (p. xiv). In evaluating potential methods for this study, I considered five qualitative inquiry traditions: (a) ethnography, (b) grounded theory, (c) hermeneutics, (d) empirical phenomenology, and (e) heuristics.

Ethnography

Ethnography is qualitative study involving extensive field work (Moustakas, 1994) and "writing about groups of people" (Creswell, 2005, p. 435). Both Creswell and Moustakas described ethnographic research as the study of a group's shared patterns of

behavior, values, beliefs, and language over time. Creswell stated that ethnographic research is appropriate when the researcher has long-term access to the research group, noting that observing participants' environments, including where they live and work, is standard, in addition to interviews.

I considered ethnography for this study but rejected it. Some participants, who were leaders in MTCS between 2002 and 2003, no longer work in MCCS, so observing them in their original environment was no longer possible. Ethnography would have been a more realistic approach if this study had been conducted during the time of the reorganization rather than 7 years later. Finally, the goal of this study was to compare leaders' individual experiences rather than to study them as a group.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory attempts to provide a general explanation for a process, social event, or action (Creswell, 2005). Hatch (2002) described grounded theory as developing procedures to collect and analyze data using rigorous and systematic methods that require repeated confirmation of emerging patterns. Moustakas (1994) described it as an unraveling of the "elements of experience" (p. 4) and a study of their interrelationships, out of which a theory emerges that helps a researcher better understand the phenomena being studied. I did not choose grounded theory because the goal of this research was not to generate a theory but to examine the lived experiences of people who participated in a change event.

Hermeneutics

Moustakas (1994) described hermeneutic science as "the art of reading a text so that the intention and meaning behind appearances are fully understood" (p. 9). In the

field of art, a hermeneutical approach would involve viewing and analyzing an art object in light of its history and style. Hermeneutics typically considers historical, literary, or artistic accounts of a phenomenon. As such, it was not considered appropriate for the current study, for which documentation was limited to administrative and legislative records.

Empirical Phenomenology

Empirical phenomenology, which originated at Duquesne University, privileges a researcher's reflection on participants' descriptions of their experiences (Moustakas, 1994). An empirical phenomenological approach would not have been appropriate for this study because I was not involved with the reorganization under study. I needed to bracket my experiences with the Montana University system, which began a review of its 2-year technical college structure in 2009.

Heuristics

Heuristic research involves the pursuit of a personal question or challenge that has social significance (Moustakas, 1994). During the course of an investigation, a researcher achieves a greater understanding of the phenomena as well as personal growth and self-awareness. The life experience of the heuristic researcher is actively portrayed throughout the study (Giorgi, 2009). This method was considered for the study but was rejected. I have a personal interest in the reorganization that led to the transformation of Maine's technical colleges and the creation of the MCCS. I have led a Montana technical college since 2002 and have confronted issues similar to those that Maine technical colleges experienced prior to their reorganization. The purpose of the proposed study, however,

was to identify experiences that are potentially applicable to many 2-year college leaders in similar positions, not to demonstrate the impact on one leader.

Research Design

Given the nature of this study and its emphasis on participants' lived experiences, a transcendental phenomenological method appeared to be the best approach. Moustakas (1994) described phenomenology as "knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses, and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience " (p. 26). Transcendental phenomenology is based on the conviction that empiricism cannot capture many critical aspects of human experience and perception. In examining organizational change, which involves shifting perceptions and relationships, trying to assess the nuances of perceived reality is more appropriate than looking for supposedly objective data.

Moustakas (1994) enumerated seven habits of mind that distinguish human science research from natural science research:

1. Recognizing the value of qualitative designs and methodologies: studies of human experiences that are not approachable through quantitative approaches.
2. Focusing on the wholeness of experience rather than solely on its objects or parts.
3. Searching for meanings and essences of experiences rather than measurements and explanations.
4. Obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts in interviews.

5. Regarding the data of experience as imperative for understanding human behavior and as evidence for scientific investigations.
6. Formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher.
7. Viewing experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object representing parts of the whole. (p. 21)

Transcendental phenomenology provides a systemic approach for analyzing lived experiences. The method allows a researcher to "develop an objective essence through aggregating subjective experiences of a number of individuals" (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 89). It is useful when a phenomenon can be clearly defined and individuals are available for interviews. Transcendental phenomenology enables one to pose both *what* and *how* questions (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004). Data collection draws on stories told in participants' own voices rather than the researcher's (as in the empirical phenomenological tradition) or from textual data or pictures (as in the hermeneutic tradition).

Moustakas (1994) described transcendental phenomenology as a "scientific study of the appearance of things," (p. 49), noting that the "very appearance of something makes it a phenomenon" (p. 49). Husserl (1970) believed that in order to conduct a transcendental phenomenological study, the researcher needs to assume the transcendental attitude, which Giorgi (2009) described as "looking at objects from the perspective of how they are experienced regardless of whether or not they are the way they are being experienced" (p. 88). Giorgi gave an example of observing a child who believes a department store Santa Claus to be real. From a transcendental

phenomenological perspective, the observer's own beliefs about Santa Claus are irrelevant. What matters is what the participant believes.

For Moustakas (1994), transcendental phenomenology "utilizes only data available to consciousness—the appearance of objects" (p. 45) and is transcendental "because it adheres to what can be discovered through reflection on subjective acts and their objective correlates" (p. 45). Transcendental phenomenology emphasizes the whole experience and does not dichotomize into subject and object. This approach requires that a researcher set aside any preconceived notions or judgments through a process that Moustakas described as epoche.

This phenomenological study explored how the leaders of Maine's seven technical colleges, who reported to the state MTCS president, contributed to the 2003 creation of the MCCS. The phenomenon under study was the transformational change initiative led by John Fitzsimmons, president of MTCS. Through individual interviews, I learned how the change initiative was communicated to participants and how they navigated the change process. From the interview data, I looked for common experiential themes, notable marker events, and lessons for other leaders in a nested hierarchy who are experiencing change. Gathering raw data from participants' descriptions was the first part of the process, one requiring intense listening and probing of participants' responses to gather as much detail about the experience as possible. The second part of the process, according to Moustakas (1994), was to describe the experience or phenomenon in terms of group commonalities and seek "general or universal meanings" (p. 13).

I explored how leaders in Maine technical colleges perceived their experiences during organizational change, what were the driving forces behind the change, how

participants navigated the process, and cultural shifts that occurred as a result of the change. I also identified marker events during the change process that either furthered or hampered the desired change. Finally, I hope to provide leaders in other systems some lessons to consider when attempting a large transformative change initiative.

Population and Sample

According to Moustakas (1994), there are no set criteria for selecting participants in a qualitative study (p. 107), but typical considerations include demographic, political, and economic status. In phenomenological studies, it is imperative that participants have experienced the phenomena being studied and be willing to participate in the study, including being willing to have the interview recorded and the results published. Creswell (1998) suggested that phenomenological studies include up to 10 participants.

The population for the current study was 15 administrators who served in Maine's 2-year colleges between 2002 and 2003, including seven presidents and eight vice presidents. Their names were supplied by John Fitzsimmons, president of MTCS during its reorganization and current president of MCCS. Fitzsimmons also pledged his support in introducing the study to potential participants. Based on Creswell's (1998) advice, 10 participants were selected from the 15 available.

Merriam (1998) described two types of sampling procedures in qualitative research: probability and nonprobability. Probability (or random) sampling allows one to generalize results to the population from which the sample was taken. If generalization is not the goal, nonprobabilistic sampling is more typical. One form of nonprobabilistic sampling is purposive, which assumes a desire to discover something specific in the sample population. Purposive sampling is used when "researchers intentionally select

individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2005, p. 204) and can apply both to sites and individuals.

I used purposive sampling to select 10 participants who shared the characteristic of having been leaders in Maine's technical colleges during the period of transformational change leading to the creation of MCCS (January 1, 2002, through December 31, 2003). They served as president, vice president, or dean, with additional specification as chief academic officer, chief student services officer, or chief administrative officer, depending on the particular college's structure. I began by scheduling interviews with people who served as a president of a Maine technical colleges between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003. Participants who meet this criterion and have retired since December 31, 2003, were considered. The remainder of the interviewees were purposefully selected from the list of eight individuals still living in Maine who served as vice president or dean.

Instrumentation

Data were collected through individual interviews using an instrument I created (see Appendix A). The instrument was informed by Kotter's eight-step change model and consists of 15 open-ended questions, along with follow-up probing questions to encourage participants to describe their experiences during the change process. The instrument was used in a pilot study conducted in 2009. Based on results of the pilot study, the instrument was refined from 16 questions to 15.

Role of the Researcher

I served as the principal investigator for the study. Because I am a 2-year technical college administrator in Montana, which is considering structural changes to its

2-year college system, I undertook the phenomenological process of epoche (Moustakas, 1994, p. 116), bracketing my own ideas and philosophies about 2-year colleges in order to become a neutral figure in the research. I currently serve as dean of a Montana college of technology that is part of Montana State University–Billings. The Montana University system's board of regents is currently reviewing the status of the state's technology colleges. As one of seven states selected by the Lumina Foundation's Making Opportunity Affordable grant program, Montana is reviewing the relationship of its technical colleges to the state university system as a whole. Because of my participation in that process, it was necessary for me to bracket my own experiences when collecting and analyzing data for this study.

Data Collection

Data collection consisted of in-depth interviews of 10 participants selected using the criteria described above. Interview questions (see Appendix A) were tested in a pilot study that was conducted in 2009 under circumstances similar to those of the final study. I conducted in-depth interviews with 2-year college leaders who had experienced transformational change in their institutions. The pilot study involved traveling to a college in another state. From that experience I learned that it would be important to have alternate participants available for interviews in case someone cancels at the last minute. During the pilot study, three of the five intended interviewees were unable to participate due to schedule conflicts. Since I had fixed air travel arrangements, there was little flexibility for when the interviews could be conducted.

I used 16 primary questions for the pilot study and later combined two of them, bringing the total number to 15. I learned the importance of asking probing, or follow-up,

questions. I also learned that it is important to focus my attention on the interviewee during the interview, even if this means relying more heavily on the audio recording than on hand-written notes. Finally, I learned that it is important to have time for summarizing impressions and field notes immediately after each interview.

Interviews followed the responsive style, which Rubin and Rubin (2005) described as follows: (a) the interview focuses on interviewees' interpretations of their experiences, (b) the interview depends on the relationship (even if temporary) between interviewee and interviewer, (c) the fact that private information may be divulged creates serious ethical obligations for a researcher, (d) interviewers must be careful to not impose their opinions or perspectives on interviewees, and (e) interviewers must be flexible and be ready to change course during the interview. Data collection for the final study proceeded as follows:

1. Contact MCCS president to introduce project and get referrals for potential participants.
2. Identify potential participant candidates: campus presidents, vice presidents, and deans serving as chief academic officers, chief student services officers, or chief administrative officers who were employed in Maine's seven technical colleges between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003.
3. Send potential respondents information about the study and interview process (see Appendix B).
4. Invite selected individuals for interviews. The first priority was the seven technical college presidents, followed by the pool of vice presidents and deans, who were purposefully selected by region once the available presidents

had been secured. At least two alternate candidates were identified in the event of late cancellations. Before interviews were scheduled, each participant received an informed consent form (see Appendix C) that provided an introduction to the study, purpose, procedures, possible risks, possible benefits, rights to withdraw, overview of privacy of research records, and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for questions about the study, including the Walden IRB officer, the dissertation committee chair, and myself.

5. I traveled to Maine to conduct interviews at the seven technical colleges: Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta, Presque Isle, Casco Bay, St. Croix River in Calais, and Wells.
6. Interviews were conducted over a 10-day period, allowing for travel time to each of the locations (see Appendix D).
7. Interviews were taped and then transcribed. Pseudonyms were used in place of participant names and college names. Participants received transcriptions and had 7 days to respond with any changes or corrections. The transcriptionist signed a confidentiality waiver (see Appendix E).
8. Member checking was conducted through an external consultant who contacted participants to confirm their voluntary participation and response. The member checker signed a confidentiality waiver (see Appendix F).
9. I will send a copy of the completed study to those participants who requested one.

Data Analysis

Following each interview, I summarized my field notes, which served as a reflection of the interview. After returning home from Maine, I sent the digital recordings to the transcriber. Once I received the transcripts, I sent them to participants for review and correction. After receiving transcripts from participants, I loaded them into NVivo for coding.

I began data analysis by engaging in epoche, described by Moustakas (1994) as placing all beliefs, theories, and assumptions in the background of awareness in order to create openness and objectivity and facilitating "the suspension of everything that interferes with fresh vision" (p. 86). For data analysis, I followed these steps, which are adopted from Moustakas:

1. List every expression relevant to the experience (horizontalization).
2. Reduce and eliminate to determine invariant constituents. Test each expression for two requirements: (a) Does it contain a moment of the experience that is a necessary and sufficient constituent for understanding it?, and (b) Is it possible to abstract or label it? If so, it is a horizon experience. Expressions not meeting the above requirements are eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms. The horizons that remain are the invariant constituents of the experience.
3. Cluster the invariant constituents of the experience and assign them a thematic label. The clustered and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

4. Check the invariant constituents and their accompanying theme against the complete record of the research participant. Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcription? Are they compatible, if not explicitly expressed? If they are not explicit or compatible, they are not relevant to the participant's experiences and should be deleted.
5. Using the validated invariant constituent themes, develop textural descriptions of the experience, including verbatim examples from transcripts.
6. Construct an individual textural description and imaginative variation for each participant.
7. Construct a textural-structural description of the meaning and essence of each participant's experiences, incorporating the invariant constituents and core themes. (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 120-121)

The final stage of data analysis involved Moustakas's (1994) imaginative variation process, which has a researcher explore "possible meanings through the use of imagination," which may include changing the frame of reference, using polarities and reversals, and examining the phenomenon from different viewpoints (p. 97). Based on Moustakas's model, the following steps were used to facilitate this process:

1. Create structural descriptions from individual textural descriptions in order to identify structural meanings that underlie the textural meanings.
2. Identify underlying themes that account for the emergence of the phenomena.
3. Consider other structures and factors that may contribute to the phenomenon, including "time, space, bodily concerns, materiality, causality, relation to self, or relation to others" (p. 99).

4. Identify "exemplifications that vividly illustrate the invariant structural themes" and help create a structural description of the phenomenon. (p. 99)

I used the qualitative software package NVivo to identify persistent themes, recurring ideas and experiences, common language, and other examples of shared experiences. I worked inductively to develop a statement about the essence of how participants experienced transformative change based on a composite of their individual descriptions. The final stage of data analysis involved an iterative process of review and continued refinement until I was confident the main conclusions had been determined.

Ethical Protection of Participants

Protecting the anonymity of participants in this study was a primary concern. Given the sensitivity of some interview questions, it was possible that participants would not provide a full account of their experiences if they were not assured of anonymity. Anonymity was accomplished by my assigning pseudonyms to participants. Because it would be difficult not to identify the state where the phenomenon under study took place, I have made no attempt to disguise the fact that it occurred in Maine.

Prior to interviews, participants were given a description of the research project, including benefits and risks, and they signed an informed consent form. Participants were told they could withdraw from the study at any time. Participants were given a copy of their interview transcript and an opportunity to check it for errors and to provide corrections and clarification. In order to protect against coercion to participate, participants were contacted by an external member-checker following the interviews to confirm their voluntary participation. Electronic data, including interview recordings and transcripts, are housed on my personal computer, with backup on a personal hard drive in

my home office, and is available only to me. The computer is kept in a locked cabinet and electronic files are password protected.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is the sample size. It is important not to generalize the results beyond the population under study and to recognize that the observations participants made are subjective and require verification. Because I asked participants to recall their experiences and impressions from 7 years ago, it is possible that selective recall limited the richness of their accounts. Also, some perceptions may have changed over time. Probing questions that asked participants to consider what they think now as opposed to what they remember feeling then were necessary to identify areas of reconsidered experience.

Summary

In this chapter I described the methods for a phenomenological study of leaders in 2-year technical colleges who were part of a statewide system change in 2002-2003 that led to the creation of a new entity: the Community College System of Maine. The study involved purposive sampling to reduce a population of 15 leaders to a cohort of 10, whom I individually interviewed using questions of my own design. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants were able to read their transcripts and offer corrections and clarification. Interview data were coded and analyzed for themes. Participation was voluntary, and participants' anonymity were ensured through the assigning of pseudonyms. In the following chapter, I will present the study's results, and in chapter 5 I will over conclusions and recommendations.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

This study was conducted using the transcendental phenomenology method described in chapter 3. On April 23, 2010, following IRB approval of this dissertation, Maine Community College System President Fitzsimmons sent a letter describing the confidential study to the list of eligible participants (see Appendix G). Fitzsimmons suggested that participants contact me directly if they would like to participate in the study. A total of 19 participants responded and were scheduled for interviews at the locations of their choosing in Maine between June 2 and 8, 2010.

A review of the context of the reorganization process that led to the 2003 transformation of the MTCS into the MCCS provides a framework for understanding the data gathered in interviews. I interviewed MCCS President Fitzsimmons on June 7, 2010, in Augusta, Maine, to learn how the transformational change process unfolded. This interview, along with MCCS documents, served as the foundation for an overview of MTCS's journey to become a system of comprehensive community colleges.

Context for the Study

As described in chapter 2, in 2003 MTCS received legislative approval to become MCCS. System President Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) used the word *deliberate* to describe the organizational transformation process that began in the 1990s and led to the 2003 creation of MCCS. Part of the impetus for developing a full community college system in the state was to address poor college participation rates. Reinforcing the initiative, Maine was one of the few states in the nation without a true community college system (MTCS Community College Proposal, 1999). MTCS colleges

were historically technical colleges, providing mostly non-university-transferable associate of applied science, certificate, and diploma programs. President Fitzsimmons's view was that the 1998 MTCS decision to pursue an associate of arts degree in liberal studies at each of the system's seven colleges represented a significant change in the mission of the MTCS and the possibility for an entire system transformation.

A Change of Mission

In 1996, the MTCS Board of Trustees examined the possibility of adding an associate of arts degree in liberal studies to each of the seven campuses, and in 1998 they officially adopted the university transfer degree as part of the MTCS mission. MTCS began offering the A.A. degree in 1999 (MTCS Expanding Community College Services in Maine, 1996; MTCS Strategic Plan, 2002; MCCS Strategic Plan, 2008). This development affected the system's accreditation status. The New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) oversees four commissions: Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Commission on Public Secondary Schools, Commission on Independent Schools, and Commission on Technical and Career Institutions (NEASE, 2010). MTCS accreditation had always been reviewed and determined by the commission dealing with technical and career institutions.

Following the addition of the A.A. in liberal studies, the MTCS board appointed a committee of faculty and staff from the seven colleges to review the accreditation standards and determine whether MTCS should continue to seek accreditation through the same commission. The committee recommended that MTCS change its NEASC accrediting commission from the Technical to the Higher Education Commission. The committee noted that adding an educational component specifically designed for transfer

to the baccalaureate was not so much a departure from the system's technical mission of employment preparation but rather a recognition that the nature of work was changing and that in the future technicians would need skills previously thought to be managerial (MTCS Expanding Community College Services in Maine, 1996).

The study committee concluded its report to the MTCS Trustees with the following findings and recommendations:

> The addition of transfer programs, then, should not be viewed as a movement away from our technical education mission but should, instead, be viewed as the latest development in an evolutionary process. The committee, therefore, sees the problem not as one of keeping our technical focus but of properly integrating this new approach to technical education into the existing institutions without damaging the quality or reputation of the existing technical programs. (MTCS Expanding Community College Services in Maine, 1996)

The study committee also examined community college transitions in 2-year colleges and systems in other states: Iowa, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Nebraska. The key findings emerging from these reviews highlighted the importance of leadership during a transformational change and the role college presidents play during the process. In addition, the study committee learned that adding university transfer programs to primarily technical colleges should be done only after completing careful planning for a controlled and deliberate implementation. Once implemented, the growth rate should be controlled, with new technical programs implemented along with transfer degrees to create a sense of balance. Another important finding centered on communication with representatives from business and industry to help them see the addition of transfer

programs as opportunities for their workers and managers, and not as threats. The final recommendation concerned the importance of providing reassurance to the legislature and other public stakeholders that adding a transfer program represented a strengthening of the mission and services of the technical colleges and not a completely new direction (MTCS Expanding Community College Service in Maine, 1996).

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) described the political challenges associated with making such a mission shift, noting that garnering the support of the University of Maine System was paramount for the future direction of the system and its ability to serve the people of Maine. He also discussed the need to gain political support from the legislature and the governor throughout the process of system change. Fitzsimmons described the effort to forge a partnership with UMS in 1998 and the subsequent addition of the A.A. degree in 1999 as key events in the system's community college evolution. The collaboration began with the joint creation of the Community College Partnership Agreement, a formal agreement between the two systems acknowledging the MTCS role in offering an associate of arts degree in liberal studies. Fitzsimmons believed that MTCS needed the support of the university system once MTCS received authority to offer associate degrees, if only to ensure transfer opportunities (MCCS Strategic Plan, 2008).

The MTCS decision to begin offering the A.A. in liberal studies in 1999 proved to be a catalyst for the ultimate 2003 reorganization. One of the major tasks following the decision to offer the A.A. was ensuring that each of the seven colleges accepted this expansion of their mission. Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) argued

that “the transition is not that difficult. . . . It mostly has to do with acceptance within the colleges and their fear of abandoning the occupational side.”

Another driver behind the MTCS desire to expand its role into a comprehensive community college system was the low 2-year college enrollment rate among Maine’s high school graduates. Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) stated that in 2002, 7% of Maine’s high school students were enrolling in the MTCS colleges following graduation, compared with 17% of high school students enrolling in community colleges nationally. He also noted that MTCS accounted for 15% of all undergraduate enrollments in 1999, compared with 42% of all undergraduate students in community colleges nationally. Fitzsimmons explained that prior to 2003, MTCS was designed to serve adults returning to college to retool or retrain and was not structured to attract younger students enrolling from high school. This mission was related to the original creation of technical institutes after World War II to provide training opportunities for returning veterans. Fitzsimmons noted that the focus of MTCS had primarily been on adults: “To be honest with you, high school students at that time were an afterthought” (personal communication, June 7, 2010).

The System President’s Role in the Transformation

Fitzsimmons described his role in the community college system transformational change process as a “facilitator, champion, and coalition builder” (personal communication, June 7, 2010). He defined the coalition as comprising the campus presidents and the senior leadership teams on each campus. Fitzsimmons described his decision to travel to each of the seven campuses to present the initial vision for the change as “probably one of the best moves I made.” During those visits, Fitzsimmons

met with college faculty, staff, and community members to present the vision and ask for questions and concerns. He followed up on his visits with a white paper specifically focused on the concerns and questions raised during the campus presentations.

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) said the support of his presidents council was critical for the change event to be successful. He said that by 2002, the presidents were all on board and they understood the value of moving forward with the system transformation. Still, following the 1998 partnership agreement with UMS, the transfer from technical colleges to community colleges was a difficult issue at many campuses. Fitzsimmons believed it was important to lose the name "technical" in the transformation process. He described one faculty member's rationale for not changing their name:

> You know, I don't know why we are changing our name. Massachusetts Institute of Technology is proud of using technology in their name. Why don't we just call this college, Spring Point Institute of Technology? And all of a sudden, one of the faculty members yells, "SPIT? You want to call us SPIT? No way."

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) used this example to illustrate his belief in engaging each campus personally and individually. He said, "It was important to engage in meaningful dialogue with the colleges to explain the initiative and ensure that [the faculty and staff] were on board." He said the change initiative would have failed if the faculty and staff of the seven colleges were not on board. He cited the powerful influence of labor unions on each campus as an example, noting that unions have significant influence with the Maine legislature and political systems.

The Role of Campus Presidents

Seeking the consensus and approval of the faculty and staff from each of the seven colleges was a key goal for Fitzsimmons. He described his focus on working with the seven campus presidents to create a shared vision for the change. He recounted the strategies he used to persuade faculty, staff, and presidents during his initial trips to each campus:

> When I visited the colleges, the faculty and staff would raise questions. The presidents were assigned to research the issues and send their findings to me so when we issued the white paper back to the colleges it would reference Dr. So and So's question and provide an answer. This personalized the response and demonstrated to everyone that the presidents were involved. (personal communication, June 7, 2010)

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) said he believed one of the greatest challenges facing the transformational change process was acceptance of the expanded mission by the occupational faculty. He believed campus presidents were in the best position to engage their respective occupational faculties and persuade them to accept the proposed change: "What I really needed was for the presidents to meet with their occupational faculty and put their own credibility on the line why this was important" (personal communication, June 7, 2010). Fitzsimmons said the presidents played a significant role engaging their occupational faculty: "It played and paid huge dividends."

Acknowledging that higher education is traditionally slow to respond and formulate recommendations or decisions, Fitzsimmons praised the process used to create support and acceptance for the change:

> Sometimes the process can slow you down, but the process helped us to get the product. They felt included; they didn't challenge it. There were some people who were skeptical, and today they talk like the change was the greatest thing we ever did. (personal communication, June 7, 2010)

Following this period of dialogue at each campus and responses to questions, Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) put the community college initiative to a vote at each of the seven campuses. He said this was a powerful move that served two critical purposes. First, it demonstrated to the campuses that he was serious in wanting their support for the initiative. Second, it enabled him to present the affirmative votes to the legislature as a powerful sign of cohesion and support from across the system. He said that although the vote was an important move, there were many steps required to reach that point.

One of those steps was gaining support of the business and industry groups engaged with the seven campuses. "They were afraid we were going to abandon the occupations and believed we ultimately wanted to become universities or mini-universities" (Fitzsimmons, personal communication, June 7, 2010). Fitzsimmons believed the campus presidents were the best communicators with their local business communities, just as they had been with the local faculty. He noted that the change proved to be a powerful recruiting tool for the occupational programs, which witnessed significant increases in student enrollment following the 2003 transformation.

Leadership Coalition

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) described his leadership philosophy as centered on a decentralized governance model in which authority rests with campus presidents. He followed this philosophy throughout the transformational process and his belief in it was only reinforced. "When I came in 1990, the campus presidents could not even hire senior staff without the system president's approval" (Fitzsimmons, personal communication, June 7, 2010). Although he implemented a decentralized system, he did retain central control in a few key areas, including all aspects of legislation and collective bargaining.

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) cited the importance of building a guiding coalition for a transformative change process from the inside out. He advocated not engaging external forces in such a change until the internal participants are on board with it. He also emphasized the importance of confidence: "You must know you will win." To build support from within the colleges, Fitzsimmons encouraged sending faculty to visit other locations where the change had already occurred: "They will become your greatest champions" (personal communication, June 7, 2010). As an example, Fitzsimmons asked the chair of the faculty union to serve as one member of the visit team. He said that faculty member became an advocate for the change proposal: "He was a phenomenal communicator about why this was going to be great for us" (personal communication, June 7, 2010)

Fitzsimmons (personal communication, June 7, 2010) highlighted a solid communication plan as a key factor for any transformational change initiative. He stressed the importance of thinking through the "inside-out" communication sequence,

first getting college faculty and staff to understand the proposed change and to take time to address their questions and concerns. Once that has been done, Fitzsimmons described the necessity of working with college advisory boards, foundation boards, area legislators, the business community, chambers of commerce, and other entities to ensure they understand and are committed to supporting the change. Fitzsimmons cautioned about allowing external constituents to be surprised by a proposed change: "You can't have the outside hear about it and then have them implode, and then you are forced to try to salvage the initiative. It simply won't work" (personal communication, June 7, 2010).

The questions this phenomenological study asked centered on how Maine's 2-year technical college leaders contributed to the transformative process that led to the creation of MCCS. Although the primary focus was on internal aspects of the change process, which Fitzsimmons described as being the first area of priority, themes from other interviews will also address the important dimensions of garnering external support for the desired change.

Data Collection

Data collection followed the design and procedures described in chapter 3. Using the criteria for interview participant selection outlined in chapter 3, and to achieve participant selection of at least 10 participants, I worked with MCCS to identify possible participants for this study. To be eligible to participate, participants must have served as president, vice president, or dean, with additional specification as chief academic officer, chief student services officer, or chief administrative officer, depending on the particular college's structure, between 2002 and 2003.

On April 23, 2010, President Fitzsimmons sent a letter (Appendix G) to individuals who met the criteria for the study and still lived in Maine, inviting them to participate in the study and stating that I would be in the state June 1-9, 2010, to conduct interviews in person. Fitzsimmons described the study, acknowledged its confidential nature, and underscored that participation was voluntary. By May 15, nine people had agreed to participate (three vice presidents and six presidents). On June 1, a fourth vice president agreed to participate. This represented a 90% response rate among those invited to be interviewed. Eight of the interview participants agreed to meet at their respective colleges. One participant, who was retired, made arrangements to meet at a nearby college, and the other participant made arrangements to meet at a location that coincided with a conference he was attending.

Prior to each interview, I allotted some quiet time to engage in the epoche process to reflect on how I would bracket my thoughts. At the start of each interview, I checked to be sure participants had signed their informed consent form, and I requested permission to record the interviews using a digital audio recorder. Participants were also asked if they would prefer that interview transcripts mailed to them via postal service or via e-mail; all requested e-mail. Interviewees were assigned pseudonyms, which were used throughout the interview process including taping and transcription. Pseudonyms were also assigned to each of the colleges. Originally, I had prepared a combination of male and female pseudonyms, until one participant noted that there were only two female presidents, so even if a female pseudonym had been used, a reader would have had a 50% chance of knowing who the person was. As a result of this discussion and to protect anonymity, I chose to use all male pseudonyms. At the beginning of each interview, I

explained to participants that I would provide little personal input about the interview questions. Participants received a copy of the interview questions at the time of the interview.

Following each interview, I found a quiet location such as the college library or a nearby coffee shop to summarize my thoughts and observations in a journal. I also uploaded the digital interviews to a password-protected website, where the transcriber, a professional court reporter, retrieved the files. When I received interview transcripts from transcriptionist, I e-mailed them to participants to review, edit, and approve (see Appendix H). After participants returned the approved transcripts, I sent each of them a note thanking them for participation in the study. Finally, each participant was contacted by a member checker, an external consultant, who confirmed their voluntary participation and response.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was based on guiding principles provided by Moustakas (1994). This process began with epoche: bracketing all preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied. This step enabled a clearer understanding of the experience from the participants' point of view. The second step was horizontalization, where each statement or horizon of experience was listed and given an equal value. The third step was imaginative variation: writing a structural description of the experience. This process involved investigating how the phenomenon was experienced and examining all possible alternative meanings and perspectives. Using the imaginative variation process, I considered different frames of reference and different perspectives of the phenomenon. The fourth step involved clustering statements into themes. Repetitive and overlapping

statements were eliminated. The fifth phase of analysis involved using the textural descriptions and structural meanings to reveal what happened, how the phenomenon was experienced, and which aspects of the experience were universal to all participants.

During data collection, I summarized notes from each interview, describing the environment, setting, and mood. After transcripts had been approved by participants, I imported 10 interviews, comprising 96,000 words, into the qualitative software package NVivo 8 as separate cases. Prior to initial coding, I engaged in the epoche process, placing all beliefs, theories, and assumptions in the background of awareness to create openness and objectivity and facilitate "the suspension of everything that interferes with fresh vision" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86).

Following Moustakas's (1994) horizontalizing process, I began my review of the data, where every statement relevant to the research questions was given equal value. This process involved reading the transcripts several times. During that process, I recorded my thoughts and stored the responses in memo notes and annotations using NVivo. During this initial review, I recorded observations I did not notice during the actual interviews. This process was repeated several times. In addition to memos detailing emergent themes, I maintained a project log using Nvivo (see Appendix J).

Next, I began to create early models depicting themes that emerged in the data. Over 2 weeks, I revisited data were several times, discovering new insights with each visit. During this process, the memo and annotation files were updated. The next phase of data analysis involved coding, which enabled me to look at the data differently and begin to confirm themes across. Through this process, I used the transcendental

phenomenological reduction process, reading interviews again several times, identifying prominent statements, and assigning codes, as described by Moustakas (1994).

I then translated horizontalized statements into meaning units, which I clustered into themes to provide a textural description (see Appendix I). This phase involved reflecting on what the different code segments revealed about the category and how they related to the research questions. During this stage, I considered how interview data related to a particular theme or concept. As the process continued, finer categories evolved. Using the NVivo software, the categories were electronically stored as nodes. To enhance reliability of the project coding, I created a test project using NVivo and coded some of the interview raw data a second time. I then compared the two sets of coding (the original versus the test) and found high levels of consistency.

The coding process was an iterative process that involved revisiting the coding multiple times. During each visit, I reviewed the data coded as a category and reflected on the meanings. This process often led to new categories, which were organized through a tree structure of nodes and stored in NVivo. If two categories were deemed similar, they were combined into one category. Patterns and themes were analyzed for relationships between and among them, a process Moustakas (1994) described as the imaginative variation form of analysis, where thought is given to how underlying concepts either permeate the findings or support the themes.

I used the NVivo matrix feature to compare themes between two groups of participants: the six presidents and the four vice presidents. Textural descriptions were developed from the themes discovered through this process. Textural descriptions were also developed for each of the participants. The final phased involved using textural

descriptions to reveal how the phenomenon was experienced and which aspects of the experience were universal to all participants.

Description of Sample and Participant Profiles

Participant descriptions are purposefully vague to protect participants' anonymity. No references are made to a participant's college or geographical location. The title *vice president* is used to describe all chief academic officers, chief fiscal officers, and chief student affairs officers. All pseudonyms are male. I interviewed six presidents and four vice presidents. MCCS President Fitzsimmons gave me permission to use his name.

Kennedy, Vice President

Kennedy's experiences were shaped by his belief that the transition was a positive move. Kennedy described concerns as coming primarily from the community, including the belief that the change would result in eliminating or reducing the college's occupational mission: "There seemed to be from outside sources . . . in the discussion stages, a lot of people who were concerned about that, and we assured them we will continue those programs and we did." Kennedy described some resistance from the college's occupational faculty, but it was not as significant as the resistance from the community.

Kennedy provided several examples of confusion in the community. He said many people were not fully aware of opportunities available through the college, and business and industry leaders were afraid of the college ending its occupational programming once community college status was achieved. "They did not understand what a community college meant," Kennedy said.

Kennedy believed the role of a community college was clearly presented from the system office. He said President Fitzsimmons "absolutely" supported the initiative, both internally and publically. He described receiving periodic communications from his president and from the MTCS office. Kennedy connected the addition of the A.A. in liberal studies with the need to change accrediting commissions and the effect that would have on the college, from review of faculty credentials to undergoing an entirely new accreditation process. Kennedy was positive in reflecting on the change process but acknowledged the impact on the workload of all college employees.

Kennedy described his interactions with faculty and community as providing "quite careful information." He described the initial excitement and enthusiasm from his campus when their name changed from a vocational institute to a technical college. He said that excitement and enthusiasm carried forward with the system goal to become a community college, noting that his college was considered one of the early leaders in the system by adopting the A.A. in liberal studies. He described the transition process as occurring fairly gradually on his campus and believed the 2003 name change was an anti-climax: "It almost seemed like business as usual." The core themes that emerged during Kennedy's interview were careful communication, positive anticipation of change, and the sense of the change as a relatively gradual and organic process.

Parker, Vice President

Parker's experiences during the transformation process at his college were rich and depicted a broad array of concerns from his campus faculty and staff, including fear of losing the technical mission, lack of understanding of what a community college is, and concerns from faculty members about whether they had the academic credentials to

work in a community college. Parker also perceived a sense of urgency related to the impeding switch from the NEASC Commission on Technical and Career Institutions to the Commission on Institutions of Higher Education. The change of accrediting commissions precipitated the technical faculty's anxiety about academic credentialing.

Parker described his enthusiasm and desire to work for a community college: "I believed it was a good thing. I wanted to work for a comprehensive college. And I was very pleased to change [to] community colleges." He described community reactions about the proposed change as including two concerns. First, the name Technical College was a change from Vocational Technical Institute, which had occurred several years prior. Some people asked, "Well, do you folks really know who you are? You're about to change your name for the third time in two decades?" The second concern was that the college would lose its technical mission. Parker frequently met with community members to reassure them.

Parker's belief in the importance of internal communication was forcefully expressed. He described Fitzsimmons's initial campus address as laying out a clear map of the process: "It started out by the president getting the campus together and talking about, this is what we're going to do, and this is why we're going to do it." Parker said his own role in supporting the president to communicate the change message was vital:

> Then when we would have department meetings, and when folks would have concerns and come to me, I would reiterate to them, in meetings, in department chair meetings, in faculty and community meetings, whatever I was involved with, and say, "This is a good idea, folks. No, we're not going to get rid of our . . . ."

For Parker, the transformation of his technical college into a community college was a period of powerful and positive emotion. His interview painted a picture of an engaged vice president who was helping his campus president deal with several issues raised both internally and externally, including fear of losing the technical mission, credentialing, speed of the change, accreditation concerns, and lack of understanding a community college. Parker also described the necessity of garnering support from local legislators and the nearby UMS branch campus.

Ballard, President

Ballard's descriptions were detailed and full of imagery. He described feelings and perceptions at his technical college as a mixture of support and caution about the planned change to a community college. He discussed confusion about the role of a community college, the importance of communication, leadership, faculty concerns about their credentials, and accreditation challenges. He said, "I think that high school counselors, high school teachers, and a chunk of the general public, and obviously not all, but many people in those three, saw technical colleges as a dead end."

Ballard expressed his belief that the campus president should engage the faculty and staff directly to address their concerns about the proposed change:

> I don't know if it was so much just a strategy as it was walking around talking about it and doing it and explaining it not just once, but explaining it, giving people a chance to come up with the objections, and then talking about it again, and then giving them a chance to talk about it again.

Leadership and communication were the elements central to Ballard's experience with the change process. He described the important role the President's Council

(Fitzsimmons's council of campus presidents) played as a guiding coalition. Ballard felt strongly that a change process such as this one should not be rushed and that all constituents should have the opportunity to express their concerns and receive answers to their questions. He believed his college followed those guiding principles.

Although resistance was not as intense at Ballard's college as it was at some of the other colleges, some concerns were raised by both occupational and liberal arts faculty. Ballard said some faculty and staff perceived his college as being the "Harvard of their community," reflecting the college's rigorous application processes for the occupational programs. There was some concern that the open access dimension of a community college would negatively affect student quality. Faculty asked, "What's going to happen to my department? Is this all going to get watered down?" The technical faculty were concerned they might be forgotten once the college became a community college: "You're gonna forget us."

Ballard believed that leadership for the change initiative came mostly from the top, from the system president and the President's Council. He said that during the change, he spent more time on his campus than he had in any of his previous positions. Ballard's most significant experiences during the transformation were all related to his commitment to engaging his campus community through a variety of formal and informal means. He recognized the importance of creating support for the change initiative at all levels, from the internal structures of the campus to the local community to area legislators. Although Ballard emphasized that his technical college was further along than some of the other colleges in accepting the change proposal, he made several statements that suggested there were several concerns from faculty and staff about the change goal.

Addison, President

Addison described his experiences in simple terms. He relied on the power of system and campus level planning to move his college through the transformational change:

> One of the first things was a strategic plan with a vision. I think the strategic planning that we did as a system, involving the colleges and setting those goals of where we needed to be and what we needed to accomplish, were key pieces that positioned us.

Part of the strategic planning process involved examining other community college systems across the nation. Addison encouraged faculty participation in this process and found that those faculty members returned from visits to other systems as advocates. He recounted his excitement when some of his college's faculty members reported to him that "they got excited about it, and when they were on vacation to other states, they would stop and visit the local community college and see what they were doing."

Particularly for Addison, the addition of the A.A. degree was important in to moving the change process forward. He reflected on the impact this decision had on the college's accreditation and the cascading effects that ensued from the decision to change accrediting commissions. He used this change as part of his message to both internal and external audience to argue that he "wanted to make sure that the graduates coming out of these institutions were competitive with graduates from other community colleges from around the country in a similar program in terms of employment capabilities." Addison saw the political necessity of garnering support from the universities. As a result, he

engaged directly with the chief academic officer of his local university to begin the process.

Addison described concerns raised by his occupational faculty, who suggested the addition of the A.A. would "take students away from the occupational programs." To address these concerns, Addison believed all "communication must be clear and that it be uniform across all of our colleges." He credited the strategic planning process with quieting faculty concerns; the plan adopted a goal that occupational programs would account for no less than 80% of the college's programs. He believed the risk of not gaining faculty support could destroy the change process: "The apprehension associated with the occupational concerns would become dominant and overpower the initiative, and that was another reason why the board went on record at 80% occupational."

In addition to appreciating that the support of universities in the area was critical, Addison was also aware of the importance of support from the legislature and the governor in order for the change process to be successful. He credited Fitzsimmons with leading this effort: "He was very supportive, and certainly understood very clearly and was, certainly, I would say, eager to pick up the banner and move it as rapidly as was politically feasible."

Addison's experiences as the president of his college provided insight into the political dimensions of the transformation. He recognized the importance of planning and addressing issues through dialogue and coordination at a system level, and the need to develop partnerships with neighboring universities. Such partnerships helped him resolve several issues, including concerns from some faculty about their credentials. Addison addressed this concern by allocating 2% of the budget to provide professional

development and degree attainment opportunities at partner universities. Addison did not address in great detail his efforts to engage faculty and staff through personal and informal communication. He described those opposing the transformation as reflecting "primarily old ways of thinking."

Harley, President

Harley's descriptions of the change process focused on his belief in communication and practicality: the need to ensure that the idea was feasible and would survive the reality of politics. "You've got to test that politically first, because if it's just an idea that comes out of the dark, it will not survive." Harley also said the vision for change must be a collective one: "I think people have to own. If you can get the faculty to own it, then I think it makes a tremendous difference."

He described concerns from the regional universities: "They would say, they were public about saying, we would be taking students from them, and they were concerned about it." Harley believed changing to a community college model was good for Maine and was seizing an opportunity the university system had failed to grasp.

Harley's convictions about the importance of communicating with the faculty were evident. He described the technical faculty's concerns that the change would be a detriment to their programs, their enrollment, and their students. He said that a large portion of his time was spent helping faculty understand the advantages of moving forward with the change: "So my role was mostly internal, primarily with faculty, although I had some involvement at the state and the local level politically, talking to civic groups." He knew it would be important to persuade the faculty association to support the change because "their representation really was very skeptical." Harley noted

that even after passage of the legislation, for some time the association remained skeptical about the decision. He said securing at least minimal buy-in from unions and employees was critical to the success of the initiative. “Without that, if the unions had said no, or if the employees had really opposed it, I don’t think it would have gone forward.”

Other faculty concerns involved the impact on their workload and the professional development requirements resulting from a change in accrediting commissions. Harley argued that a focus on professional development changed the institution and the curriculum:

> We invested in professional development in the faculty at the time, when we were preparing for this change, and the result was when we made this shift, our associate in arts degree was ready. We were teaching the appropriate level math and science. We didn’t lose faculty.

Harley described his experiences as a member of the President’s Council and his belief that the council’s work was a critical factor in moving the change initiative forward. His perception of the system president’s goal for the campus presidents was that they return to their local campus and advance the change agenda: “The expectation was you are going to deliver your campus.”

Harley concentrated internally, trying to address faculty and staff concerns through open communication. He believed in laying a strong foundation internally first and then engaging external constituents such as advisory board members, politicians, and other community members. He said that community members believed community colleges focused on the liberal arts and did not include occupational programs.

Egan, President

Egan's description of his experiences during the change event centered on what the transformation into a community college would do for the students at his college. He believed the proposed change could help students who dropped out of an occupational program: "

> I think the hardest thing for many of us who were working here, who are very committed to students, was hearing them say, "I wish you had an opportunity for me here, but you don't. And once I drop my technical program, I can't get financial aid."

Egan described a sense of urgency among the presidents to position MTCS for a better future. "It wasn't only coming from the students; it was also coming with regard to the perceived state of confusion in the political arena and with regard to the role of the universities." Egan thought it was time for MTCS colleges to be recognized as colleges, not trade schools: "We were coming to a point in our existence where our identity needed to be clarified, and we felt if we didn't clarify ourselves, if we didn't position ourselves well, we could lose ground." He had positive memories of the change in accrediting commissions: "The accreditation process was one of the most important processes for helping us to move through this process of becoming community colleges."

Egan described concerns from business and industry leaders, especially that the college would give up its occupational mission in lieu of a focus on the liberal arts. Egan and his administrative team encouraged everyone in the college to use the phrase "a good community college also has a strong technical mission." He credited industry's pride in the graduates of his college as the primary reason for their concern. He said another

concern was the misperception some community members had about community colleges, that their main purpose was to serve as feeders to universities. Although he said he worked to allay this fear, he also described a goal of the community college initiative as "to get as many people in the state of Maine [as possible] on the pathway to a college degree."

Egan said his faculty feared the change to a community college would make his college more exclusive, "exclusive in the way of excluding people who would prefer to learn in the way that we like to teach, which is application-based learning." He described his role during this time as focused on internal perceptual issues, for example, engaging in discussions because the faculty and staff did not want to lose the word *technical* from its name. Egan spent considerable time working with concerned faculty and staff in forums, individually, or small groups. In addition, he frequently engaged the college advisory council. He described his role in this period of the transformation as the

> question and answer person. My style is to say, okay, you don't like this. Now let me hear it. Let me hear everything about it. What is it you don't like about it? Okay, now are you willing to listen to this other view?

Egan described careful planning and communications with the system president and the President's Council:

> John Fitzsimmons was always eager to know, "What's going on in your area? What's the lay of the land?" So there was a lot of that kind of work. I think in some ways we were, because of the fear so many employees had, we were watching very carefully to make sure that people understood the benefit to the student from us moving in this direction.

Egan described his efforts to share developments from the President's Council with his college's faculty and staff. He held college forums and met with people informally. He also used his college cabinet and academic senate to discuss issues raised by the President's Council and how they would be communicated to the college's internal constituents and the local community. Egan's local cabinet group also ensured that the college strategic plan was updated to reflect the most recent goals and strategies coming from the system and President's Council.

Egan's preferred style was to move forward with a calm demeanor:

> I tend to not make big shows of things. I tend to work with it. I don't know, more personal level I guess is the word. I tend to work on change as looking at it as a gradual process.

Egan also described the power informal leaders have in an organization. He provided an example of how he was able to engage informal leaders to stop a vicious e-mail string.

Egan's recollections of his experiences were vivid. He described how his college faculty and staff reacted to the community college initiative: "The impact on those people was one of worry." He credited President Fitzsimmons's leadership and vision with playing an important role in helping to bring the MTCS colleges together toward a common vision:

> I think if you were to ask me what is the one important factor in a change like this, it's the visionary at the top of this, helping not only to create the vision but helping to work through the rough roads that result from setting a new direction.

Egan said transformational change must begin with asking what the organization needs, followed by a discussion of how those needs will be addressed. He said leaders

must understand the environment where the change will take place: its culture and political environment. In addition to discussing the nature of change itself, Egan strongly emphasized the ultimate goal of the change: to improve student experiences and success.

Marlow, Vice President

Marlow's perception of the change process was that the decision was made at the system or President's Council level, and his job as a vice president was to ensure that faculty and staff below him were on board with the decision. He said his college demonstrated that it had a transfer mission long before the community college initiative was presented:

> I've been with the system nearly 30 years. We have always incorporated a transfer role, some of us more aggressively than others, but there had always been that mission that we would serve as a college for anyone who was entering . . . any of our programs. The transferability had been somewhat of an issue between the university system, which is where most students transfer to, and the then-technical college system.

Marlow described both internal and external confusion about the goal to change his college's name. It had recently been renamed as a technical college from its former vocational-technical institute title. Besides the problem of rapidly shifting names, the faculty and staff of Marlow's college had additional concerns about a new community college title. Some thought community colleges were "lesser institutions."

Marlow thought the change would have little impact on students other than the college name on their diploma. Employee concerns were mostly personal: "What's it

mean to me?" "Why are we doing this?" Industry members were concerned they would lose a source of trained graduates from the occupational programs.

Although he tended to boil down the transformation process to a name change that reflected what the college had been doing for some time (transfer programs), he acknowledged that the change required considerable time and effort. Marlow emphasized communication. He thought the faculty and staff of his college could have received information sooner. He said that the more inclusive a change process is and the greater involvement stakeholders have, the easier the transition will be. Marlow believed the community college transformation moved too quickly: "I'm sure the discussions were a little bit different at the President's Council. At the board level, it was rather a sudden transition." He said there have been several benefits following the transformation, including significant improvement with transferring credits due to the accrediting commission change and the Advantage U partnership with the Maine University system.

Marcus, President

Marcus described faculty concerns and unrest about the change, most of which involved the perceived loss of their technical mission. He described misperceptions and misunderstandings among faculty and staff about the mission of a community college. His main focus was on developing trust as a leader and communicating with all constituents in an open and honest way.

Marcus described himself as one of a small group of MTCS campus presidents who had previous experience with other systems, particularly community college systems. Upon his hire, he was told by the system president he would likely encounter some serious concerns from his college faculty and staff about the proposed change.

Those concerns turned out to be three-fold. First, faculty and staff believed community colleges were liberal arts colleges that did not include occupational programs, so they feared the proposed change would result in a shift from the college's historical technical mission. Second, they were afraid that occupational programs would be eliminated to fund the new community college. Third, they feared that a mission change to include open enrollment would increase faculty and staff workload.

Marcus's college had waiting lists for many of its technical programs. Faculty thought that changing to an open enrollment mission would ultimately lower the quality of students entering the occupational programs. Faculty were also resistant to replacing nontransferable general education courses with transferable ones. Marcus met with resistance but worked with informal leaders to simplify the college's application form, creating one similar to application forms found at community colleges elsewhere. He also encountered resistance from a nearby university whose chancellor and faculty feared that the college's mission change would mean fewer students for their university. Marcus met with the chancellor and assured him that "our job is not to compete with you but to bring you more students."

Marcus stressed that communication was central to changing the culture of his technical college. He described a college culture still linked to its vocational technical institute days, one that "more closely resembled a high school than a college," adding that "there was a tendency among the faculty to resist change and hold onto what they had." He described this mindset as not only an internal challenge but also at the root of external perceptions, particularly those of the state legislature, which he believed saw Maine's technical colleges as "an afterthought" in the funding process. Marcus attempted to use

the importance of changing legislative perceptions of the technical colleges as leverage for the community college initiative, suggesting it could result in greater funding and respect.

Marcus described the effort of the President's Council to address the question, "How are we going to tell the state of Maine what a community college is?" He said President Fitzsimmons was able to persuade the governor to consider the community college initiative idea positively and to "own it." He described Fitzsimmons's role as "critical to the process."

Marcus's descriptions of the change event included many references to his own communication and leadership style. He summarized his experience as a president during this process by saying, "Presidents don't have any real power; they have influence. The most critical thing a president can do is to keep his word and build trust."

Eric, Vice President

Eric described his outlook during the transformational process as focused on changing misperceptions, understanding how best to deal with the anticipated growth as a result of the change, and having a positive attitude and engaging in meaningful communication. He described a campus engaged in many levels of communication:

> I think we had a lot of meetings so that people would be less ambivalent about it and understand what it meant for them. But in my department there wasn't a lot of unrest about it, just excitement. They were excited to be part of a changing institution, knowing that we'd be looking at some tremendous growth rates over the next decade.

Eric spoke of misperceptions in the community about community colleges, noting that people expected they would be "able to turn on a dime," not realizing that the college was part of a larger system.

The success of transformational change initiatives, according to Eric, is contingent on communication: "Communicate, communicate, communicate, and manage expectations and develop resources to make it happen." One example of communication is the need to address public misperceptions, such as "the misconception that we were the Kmart of higher education." He said personal face-to-face communication is more effective when dealing with transformational change than is e-mail or other electronic media. He emphasized that during the change and after, he has made a point to keep his door open and see anyone who wants to talk at any time. His recollections of experiences surrounding the change were primarily positive:

> I think [excitement] was just part of the whole environment. It almost felt like the 60s, that kind of excitement. And I think as a result of the positive attitude, the communication that was going on, the clear direction everybody knew we were on, there wasn't the kind of resistance you might expect would be there. A lot of cooperation.

Eric said a change event of this magnitude required someone at the top who was "politically astute and visionary." He described the political challenges facing this change initiative as complex and involving a number of players, including the Maine University System as a main competitor. "He [Fitzsimmons] structured it in such a way that the university had to support it rather than oppose it. And that was very well done from a political point of view."

Brice, President

Brice described his experiences as positive and focused on the transformation: "Let's do this." He said his technical college had fewer occupational programs than other colleges did, which may have accounted for lower resistance among its faculty and staff. Brice's college had also been one of the early adapters in launching the A.A. degree.

Despite a largely optimistic tone, Brice's recollections included opposition and concern from local business and industry, whose members believed the move to a community college mission would mean the loss of technical and health programs. He described "a lot of concern" from the college's board of visitors, which comprised mostly industry people. Although faculty opposition was not significant, "there were a few faculty members who were up in arms" over the change.

One concern of some faculty was that the open enrollment policy of a community college would adversely affect the quality of the college's health programs, which were based on competitive enrollment. Additional uneasiness came from the UMS branch near Brice's college. The UMS branch viewed itself as the local community college, and its chancellor expressed concern about what would happen to the university's large number of 2-year programs. Brice recognized this concern as a potential risk for the MTCS proposed change, given the powerful lobby the university had with the legislature.

Brice, like most of his colleagues, stressed communication as central to successful change. He emphasized obtaining and providing as much information as possible for campus constituencies. He arranged his schedule to be available for questions and concerns. "The busier you get, the harder it is to communicate. We need to take the time to communicate." His perception of the communication needed to facilitate change

involved both formal and informal exchanges. He tried to make time to meet with faculty leaders and provide them with any information he received. At one point, a faculty leader said they were receiving too much information. Brice continued to provide it to anyway, saying that "if you don't, they will make it up."

Brice's experiences on the President's Council gave him an opportunity to reflect on the strong leadership of the system president and the other campus presidents. "Heaven help the next president of this college, because this is an empowered campus which began with the philosophy of President Fitzsimmons." He said the leadership provided by Fitzsimmons and the President's Council was necessary for the transformational change initiative to pass. He also reflected on the alignment of political structures, with a supportive UMS chancellor and a new governor who adopted the mission as his own.

Interviews Summary

These interviews with campus leaders covered a wide array of issues, concerns, and perceptions related to the transformational change process, and the full transcripts of their comments totaled 96,000 words. In order to offer useful insights from this material, I used NVivo software to help isolate themes that were perceived as important by at least 70% of participants. The interviews revealed a remarkable consistency in perceptions and opinions. Although some individual opinions diverged from the group, what is remarkable is that 10 academic leaders shared a significant core of perceptions about the transformation they underwent.

Research Question 1 Themes

The first research question asked, "How do 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences resulting from the transformational change?" Data analysis revealed four major themes: urgency and opportunity, challenges, leadership, and communication. All 10 participants shared similar perceptions related to each of these themes. Additionally, 11 subthemes emerged related to the transformative change experience (see Table 1).

Table 1

Themes, Subthemes, and Defining Characteristics

Themes and Subthemes	**Defining Characteristics**
Urgency and Opportunity Subthemes: 1. University system window of opportunity. 2. State political window.	Refers to an overall sense of urgency and opportunity to engage in the transformative change initiative.
Challenges and Concerns Subthemes: 1. Loss of technical mission: faculty and community concerns. 2. University of Maine System concerns.. 3. Accreditation concerns	Refers to various internal and external challenges participants perceived to have affected the MTCS community college transformational experience.
Leadership Subthemes: 1. System level. 2. Campus level.	Refers to experiences of participants related to their own leadership styles and leadership they experienced at the system level.
Communication Subthemes: 1. Communication: system level. 2. Communication: campus level 3. Communication: external constituencies. 4. Informal communication.	Refers to experiences in which the participants felt informed or connected to the change process, and to perceptions that information and connection to the process drove the change forward.

Urgency and Opportunity

The first theme, urgency and opportunity, describes the overall sense that two windows of opportunity were open, perhaps briefly, for MTCS to move forward with its goal of becoming a comprehensive community college system. Participants identified two subthemes: university system window of opportunity, and opportunity for state political support.

University system window of opportunity. All the participants perceived a connection between the MTCS community college initiative and the partnership or opposition of the University of Maine System (UMS). The discussion with UMS was triggered by the MTCS decision in 1998 to begin offering an associate of arts degree in liberal studies. According to Marcus, "If we were to increase the number of people with college degrees, technical colleges should offer the liberal arts degree." Several participants described the importance of the Community College Partnership Agreement between UMS and MTCS. Brice noted the window of opportunity that developed when UMS Chancellor Terrence J. MacTaggart agreed to sign the agreement:

> And we had been pushing to do this for, a couple of years. It came together because we had a chancellor who was amenable at the time. And had he not headed the University of Maine System, and I think John Fitzsimmons heading ours at that moment, the stars would never have aligned.

Brice described the agreement as built on the premise that UMS and MTCS were not going to "take business away from each other."

Marcus said UMS had unsuccessfully tried to establish community colleges through branch campuses in rural areas: "The university attempted to do that, but every

time they tried , it just didn't work. And it has to do with the mentality of people within the university system that want to be university." Brice hinted at continuing animosity on the part of UMS toward MTCS: "There are people who've not forgiven the university system and wonder, 'Why did Terry [the chancellor] do that?'"

The creation of the Community College Partnership Agreement, which Parker characterized as "symbolic in nature," led to increased legislative support for the change. According to Brice, "Legislators commended the decision because it allowed for the sifting out of higher ed missions and eliminated a lot of replication of effort or duplication of effort." Parker said another factor in the UMS-MTCS partnership was the governor's advocacy for the two systems to work together: "[The governor said], 'You folks in the technical college system and you folks in university are going to work together.'" Angus King's term as governor of Maine ended in 2003; he was replaced by John Elias Baldacci.

State political window. All of the presidents and two of the vice presidents interviewed said the support of incoming governor Baldacci and subsequent support of the Maine legislature created significant opportunities for the change initiative to move forward politically. Participants credited Fitzsimmons with being the architect of a supportive legislative coalition. "John [Fitzsimmons] is the one who had the initial contact with Baldacci" (Parker). "There was an opportunity politically for the governor and legislators to look like they're doing something creative" (Harley). "One of the candidates for governor, the current governor [Baldacci], basically adopted the community college concept as one of his major platforms" (Marlow). "We were lucky enough to get the right governor at the right time for the name change" (Ballard).

Legislative support proved important for internal buy-in. As Marcus noted, "So the legislature got in place and the president of the faculty union went forward to the legislature and said this is a great idea." Harley said they were told to "work with our legislators to get the support you need." Parker said they wondered, "Why don't we just go and ask the legislature to do it." According to Kennedy, Fitzsimmons "worked with the legislature really to make it happen."

Discussions about urgency reveal the perception that there was an element of luck ("the stars aligned," for example) but also that opportunities that presented themselves were deftly and quickly seized by the system president and backed up by campus leaders. In examining the conditions necessary to effect transformational change in nested systems, the most useful observations relate to the impact of taking quick action when political opportunities present themselves. As the following section shows, there were numerous challenges and opponents to the change; swift action, effective communication, and coalition building were perceived to forestall some of that opposition.

Challenges and Concerns

The second theme describes participant perceptions of internal and external challenges and concerns. Discussions of these concerns often overlap with other themes because participants emphasized that concerns were successfully addressed through communication and leadership. Three subthemes related to challenges and concerns were identified: loss of technical mission concerns, UMS concerns, and accreditation concerns.

Loss of technical mission (faculty concerns). Most interviewees mentioned technical and occupational faculty members' fear that becoming part of a community college system would lead to abandonment of their programs: "There were a couple of

colleges that faculty were just up in arms [about] abandoning the technical mission . . . our very purpose" (Brice). "Two groups that we worried about from the beginning: the technical faculty and some people in business and industry" (Ballard). "There was concern in the faculty, particularly the technical faculty, that this would be a detriment to their program and their enrollment" (Harley). "The faculty were thinking that this was a way of wiping out all the technical programs" (Marcus). The most common response used to address faculty concerns was to engage them directly: "If a faculty member was really angry, then I made sure that I personally was talking with them" (Egan). Direct communication to address concerns was viewed by most participants as essential to gaining support for the initiative: "It was important to get those folks into a position where they could support it" (Harley). As seen in these comments, communication recurs as an overarching theme throughout every part of the change process.

Participants described early concerns from faculty and staff that the change would result in "losing sight of the mission" (Harley) and result in academic institutions whose primary focus was on providing students to feeder universities: "Are we going to just become a miniuniversity offshoot?" (Egan). Although some participants assured faculty this was not the reason behind the change, they nevertheless noted that adding a primary role as a pathway to 4-year degrees was a major outcome of the change.

Loss of technical mission (community concerns). Most participants provided detailed descriptions of dealing with concerns from outside bodies: "I would say there was apprehension by various individuals spanning all segments of the community that we would abandon the occupational education aspect, and that was a key point of our mission" (Addison). "Are you still going to have your occupational programs? That

seemed to be a concern from the outside" (Kennedy). "We also had donors who questioned the direction we were going" (Egan). "There was certainly a segment of our population that didn't buy it" (Parker). "One company went on record as being absolutely opposed, and then it got into some interesting dynamics. They were nonunion, then we had the union" (Brice).

Loss of technical mission (UMS concerns). UMS added its concerns to those voiced by the community about MTCS changing its mission to reflect the broader role of a comprehensive community college system. UMS was mostly worried about competition since they viewed themselves as solely responsible for the community college mission. President Fitzsimmons worked closely with UMS to craft a Community College Partnership Agreement in 1998, which led the way for MTCS to adopt the A.A. in liberal studies transfer degree. Still, interviewees described lingering fears and misperceptions on the part of branch university campuses.

Many statements reflected an ambiguous or even adversarial relationship between participants and their local university counterparts: "Fortunately for us, they were doing more bickering among themselves" (Brice). "They view us as their major competition" (Marlow). "I'm not sure the universities were supportive" (Ballard). Discord centered on the perceived shift in mission of MTCS and the perception that the effect on the university system mission and enrollment would be negative.

Accreditation concerns. After the MTCS decision to begin offering the A.A. in liberal studies in 1999, a concern surfaced regarding accreditation. For many years MTCS was accredited by the Technical College Commission of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC). With the addition of the A.A. in liberal

studies degree at each of the seven technical colleges, which was a central component of the community college initiative, MTCS determined it would need to switch to the NEASC Commission on Colleges, the same commission that accredits universities in Maine. The proposed change of accrediting commissions became a concern for some MTCS faculty who feared their academic credentials would not meet the accrediting standards of the new NEASC commission.

All but one participant mentioned accreditation-related fears. Parker said there was a sense of urgency, "and I think it had to do with our accreditation." According to Ballard, the commission said, "That's a substantive change; we now need a visit." And Egan described an atmosphere where "there were so many forces where there was information coming to employees [about] accreditation." Harley said his college had been working for some time to address minimum faculty qualifications, and when the decision was made to change accrediting commissions, "that kind of solidified that for us." Other participants described similar experiences: "We're already in arrears a little bit as a technical college because we've got some folks who are supposed to have bachelor's degree and only have associates degrees" (Parker). "We also began to strengthen the knowledge of the faculty with regard to professional development" (Addison).

The pressure applied by NEASC cut both ways. It was clear that after adding the initial A.A. degree, there was an external impetus for colleges to change accreditation commissions, which meant making many additional changes in a relative hurry. On the other hand, that same impetus toward change made faculty and others wary of the possible impact and fearful of their position in a new system, and it created a movement against change that brought the themes of leadership and communication back into play.

Leadership

Leadership refers both to system-level leadership and to actions participants (the nested leaders) took to inspire and motivate their campus faculty and staff to accept the change initiative. Participants who were presidents reflected on their experiences with the President's Council, and those who were vice presidents described their experiences working at the campus level. The leadership theme is closely linked with the communication theme because in this phenomenological study, leadership was most often revealed in a leader's communication style. Two subthemes emerged in participants' descriptions of leadership: system level and campus level.

System-level leadership. The leadership of the system president was routinely cited as influential in the success of the change initiative. Participants discussed at length Fitzsimmons's inclusive and decentralized leadership style: "He led it. . . . It took a leader to make it happen" (Eric). "I think from where John Fitzsimmons was sitting, it was more challenging. . . . As a campus, we were pretty excited" (Brice). "This was his baby, the way I looked at it. He embraced the change" (Marlow). "He saw it coming and took the opportunity, and it worked" (Harley). "He's in many ways the perfect system head" (Ballard).

Each of the presidents and one of the vice presidents spoke of the importance of the President's Council in helping ensure the success of the change initiative at the system level. The President's Council was the primary communication and policy body reporting to the system president. Fitzsimmons discussed the important role the President's Council played during the change process, given the level of influence the presidents had at their campuses. The campus presidents confirmed that impression: "We

were part of the formulating of the goals" (Brice). "The college presidents felt we had to position ourselves better for the future" (Egan). "The leadership of this, in the final analysis, came more from us than from any place else" (Ballard).

One component of interaction on the council had to do with previous community college experience: "Another dynamic that occurred involved the presidents that were from community college states. So those who were local had a different vision, and so we kind of had a little bit of splintering along those lines" (Brice). "He [another president] came to us from a different system, and his idea about moving community college of Maine forward I think played a huge role. He'll never admit that" (Harley).

Campus-level leadership. Most participants also discussed the role of leadership beyond the positions of president and vice president. Brice described the importance of interactions among faculty:

> I think that it happened at the campus level, and I also think it had to do with leadership at the faculty level. [The most progress happened] where you had strong leadership and reasonable leadership, individuals who were really, really evaluating and taking in all the arguments.

Other responses confirmed Brice's perception: "I think leaders have had to step up and make more decisions" (Eric). "Change requires very astute leadership to make sure it happens without a lot of turmoil. I saw my role as answering questions and steering the direction" (Egan). "There was certainly a segment of our population that didn't buy it, so we constantly communicated" (Parker). Harley described faculty linkages in his college that began to create support for the change:

> The faculty teaching English composition and technical communications met with

> the trade faculty and said, "We're going to develop this course in literature. What about your area should we include in this course?" So the engagement of the trade faculty, specifically in the development of courses that expanded the arts and sciences, initially was really important.

As noted above, participants saw leadership and communication as so closely linked that they were nearly one concept. A consistent emphasis was the importance of the relationship driving the communication. Success depended on central leader who encouraged cabinet- or council-level discussion, followed by consistent delivery of the message at individual campuses by nested leaders. Leadership and initiative in local communication were evident; so was central coordination of vision and message. The leadership structure shaped and determined the content and the delivery of communications statewide.

Communication

Communication at all levels refers to initial delivery of a message and to internal and external feedback that clarify and reinforce the change. Four subthemes emerged in participants' discussion of communication: communication at the system level, communication at the campus level, communication with external constituents, and informal communication.

System-level communication. Participants were unanimous that communication from the system office to the presidents and individual campuses was important. Participants highlighted Fitzsimmons's personal visits to each of the seven campuses as an important element in the change process: "This is not something that we would have been able to read in a memo" (Brice). "John [Fitzsimmons] got out to each campus, he

met with faculty, he asked the employees to vote on it" (Harley). "John Fitzsimmons made several swings across the state. . . . That is a big deal because [he] does not go to the colleges often . . . unless there's an invitation issued to him" (Ballard). These personal visits were followed by regular updates: "There were regular forms of communication coming down from the system office" (Parker). "It was good communication" (Kennedy). Communication involving Fitzsimmons was broader than the initial campus meetings and memo updates. Participants referenced his continuing contact with campus presidents, both individually and through the President's Council: "John Fitzsimmons was always eager to know "What's going on in your area? What's the lay of the land?" (Egan). Another form of system-level communication was a regional meeting in Fairfield:

> We took faculty members with us, and had the accrediting agency come—the commission, the higher ed commission—and talk to people. They said it is a process and we're not going to come right down on you [faculty] for your credentials. . . . The faculty heard that and they brought it back, which was a shrewd move. (Parker)

Campus-level communication. Fitzsimmons charged campus presidents with ensuring that their faculty and staff understood the change initiative; he also asked the presidents to respond to questions and concerns. He urged campus leaders to begin inside of organization and then expand, "once they [internal constituencies] were on board, then going out to the college community and having a lot of discussions" (Marcus). Harley talked about the important role presidents had in addressing questions following Fitzsimmons's campus visit: "Once President Fitzsimmons left the campus, that's when

the work began, and that's face to face. 'What's in it for me?' That's a question from faculty: 'What's in it for me? Is it going to hurt me?'"

Eric, a vice president, acknowledged the frequency of internal campus communications: "I think we had a lot of meetings so that people would be less ambivalent about it and understand what it meant for them." Egan, a president, said, "I found myself playing a very strong role internally at the college." Marlow, a vice president, said his role was to help facilitate change: "The decisions had been made. We were the go-to persons, where the questions went to with respect to: 'What's happening?' and 'Why are we doing this?'"

Communication with external constituents. Following Fitzsimmons's advice to address the inside of the organization first and then expand, campus leaders began to address concerns raised by their respective communities, advisory boards, boards of visitors, and business and industry representatives. The most frequent concern from these groups was that colleges would drop their vocational and occupational programs: "There was a lot of concern by people on the board of visitors" (Brice). "The program advisory councils [were confused by the impact] also, so I found myself explaining what it meant" (Egan). "[We spent time] making it clear to business and industry that we weren't going to forget them" (Ballard). "[There was significant] involvement at the state and the local level politically, talking to civic groups about the change we were proposing, why we want to do it" (Harley). Marcus described importance of ensuring his internal stakeholders were addressed prior to engaging the external stakeholders, and "once they were on board, then going out to the college community and having a lot of discussions." Parker said that after going out to engage the community, "we actually had some events

on campus—public events, where we brought in community members, city managers, and what have you and showed them what we wanted to do and got them on the bandwagon with us."

Informal communication. Marcus said, "One of the first things I did that every president, I think, would do is to identify the informal structure, informal power structure." The result of informal meetings with those groups was dramatic: "All of a sudden we created a community of trust." Harley talked about the importance of developing relationships with labor unions:

> Faculty in the trade groups, the traditional vocational programs, are politically very active within this faculty association. That's where that group gets its leadership from, so they really had to be worked with to be brought along, and I think they're very happy with it now.

Parker emphasized the importance of honesty: "We absolutely tell the truth, [and] folks get a chance to voice their opinions." Egan stated his preference for direct communication: "I would also make a point of going to see the person and hearing them out."

Just as President Fitzsimmons's initial round of individual visits was viewed as critical, so was continuing that communication effort by each campus president. That process was challenging: "The busier we get, the harder it is to communicate and to take time to do that" (Brice). "We had a lot of meetings so that people would be less ambivalent about it and understand what it meant for them" (Eric).

Of the four themes that emerged in interviews, communication was clearly predominant and overlapped the other three. The 10 nested campus leaders faced

challenges from many directions, both internally and externally. What led to success in addressing these challenges was decisive leadership and continual communication. The role of leadership at all levels is clear: Communication and problem resolution depended not only on the message from the system president but also on the continuation and support of that message in a manner tailored to each campus environment. Brice, for example, faced union versus nonunion communication challenges. Harley faced less faculty alarm regarding qualifications and credentialing because of prior work in that area on his campus. Each nested leader presented locally appropriate responses consistent with the central mission.

Research Question 2 Themes

The second research question asked, "What lessons, if any, do these leaders' experiences offer other state-governed 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change?" Data analysis revealed four themes, described here as "lessons learned." These lessons are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2

Lessons and their Defining Characteristics

Lessons Learned from Change Process	**Defining Characteristics**
1. Urgency and opportunity for change should be created and seized. Subthemes: 1. Link the urgency to the desired change. 2. Does a window of opportunity exist? 3. Awareness of political issues.	Need to create a sense of urgency among key influencers and look for opportunity to engage in the transformative change initiative.
2. A guiding coalition is needed to support change. Subthemes: 1. Role of the guiding coalition. 2. Role of the system president. 3. Coalition members need to lead at home.	System-level coalition of campus leaders led by system president guided and supported the change initiative.
3. Transformative change requires a clearly defined vision. Subthemes: 1. Vision needs to occur early in the process. 2. Vision execution requires strong leadership. 3. Gain buy-in from possible adversaries.	Once the need for the change has been established, the guiding coalition should create a clearly defined vision to describe and define the desired change initiative.
4. The essence of communication defines the process. Subthemes: 1. Communication system wide. 2. Meeting people where they are. 3. External communication. 4. Trust.	Refers to experiences participants believe are necessary to inform or connect all constituents to the change process in order to address perceptions and misperceptions.

Lesson #1

A common thread among participants was that planning for the MTCS transformation to the MCCS began long before the transition year of 2002-2003. They concurred that the idea emerged following the appointment of Fitzsimmons as MTCS president in 1990. The change process began to accelerate with the 1998 Community College Partnership Agreement with UMS. Most participants said the need for a change existed long before 1998, but the partnership agreement created an opportunity and sense of urgency for change whereby either rapid change or rapid retreat was necessary (due in part to accreditation requirements), and there was an opportunity to capitalize swiftly on partnerships.

Link the urgency to the desired change. In order for a change initiative to be considered, there must "be a linkage to [a] need" (Parker). Egan emphasized that the MTCS change occurred because of a "stated need by the people of the state of Maine." Addison said another factor was the argument made to the Maine legislature that "Maine [was] one of a handful of states, maybe four or five, that still had technical colleges." Marcus said interest in the community college movement began with a realization that "the states that had done well economically all had community colleges."

Does a window of opportunity exist? Two opportunities facilitated the change initiative in Maine: (a) UMS's willingness to enter into a Community College Partnership Agreement, which was triggered by the MTCS decision to begin offering an associate of arts degree in liberal studies, and (b) growing levels of political support at the legislative and gubernatorial levels. The findings demonstrate the need for system leaders to consider beginning the change process with an environmental audit. Several participants

talked about reviewing the current environment first, including political issues, possible challenges, and similar change initiatives in other states: “Don’t rush. Get the groundwork laid” (Ballard). “Know your environment. Make sure you have defined the issues accurately, based in data. [Think about] what do the people need, and how we are going to address those needs” (Egan).

Awareness of political issues. Eric described the political finesse the MTCS system president exercised when negotiating the Community College Partnership Agreement:

> I think it was difficult politically, with the university watching our every step because they viewed us as a competitor. I think he structured it in such a way that the university had to support it rather than oppose it. And that was very well done from a political point of view.

According to Marlow, “There may have been a political urgency, which is what I believe drove the decision making.” An awareness of political dynamics related to the desired change initiative involved not only the system president but also the campus presidents (or nested leaders). In Harley’s words, “Everyone saw the advantage. There was an opportunity politically for the governor and legislators to look like they’re doing something creative, they’re doing something new.”

Lesson #2

In the view of study participants, the success of the MTCS community college change initiative depended on a strong guiding coalition. The President’s Council served that function.

Role of a guiding coalition. The MTCS President's Council provided the foundation for "formulating the goals" (Brice) of the change and "developing the strategic plan" (Addison) for accomplishing it. Fitzsimmons set high expectations for President's Council members. According to Harley, the message was, "You are going to deliver your campus." The council worked to achieve consensus before moving forward, but Fitzsimmons did not always "hold out for perfect consensus" (Brice). The presidents said there were never surprises at council meetings. They felt engaged and connected. Ballard said the council was empowered to make decisions and drive the change: "In the final analysis, [leadership for the change] came more from us than any place else."

Role of the system president. Besides leadership, other words participants used to describe the system president were "collegiality" (Eric); "political" (Harley); "calculated" (Ballard); "action, humility, astute" (Harley); "strategic" (Egan); "innovative" (Harley); "open" (Brice); "forthright" (Parker); "influence" (Marcus); "honest and open" (Marlow); and "student-focused" (Kennedy). But the influence of communication as a catalyst, a method of reassurance and a means both to discover problems and to solve them, was a theme that recurred over and over in all the interviews.

Coalition members need to lead at home. The President's Council comprised the presidents of Maine's seven technical colleges. The success of this guiding coalition was enhance by members' strong links with their local communities throughout the state. Participants identified leadership at all levels as crucial to the success of the MCTS community college change initiative. One challenge for leaders is eliciting honest feedback. As Ballard described it, "Not everybody is going to stand up in the back of the

room and tell the president he's full of it. Or worse yet, tell an assistant president he's full of it. Give them time. Seek them out."

Members of the guiding coalition viewed their role as important in expanding and solidifying the initial message from the system president and in addressing local issues with which the system president might not be completely familiar. This perception offers an instructive model for both system leaders and nested leaders in systems. The coalition was perceived as critical to accomplishing goals, and the flow of communication, both from the system president down and from the coalition up, was essential.

Lesson #3

A third lesson was that change leaders need to establish a clearly defined vision.

Vision needs to occur early in the process. Participants commented on the importance of defining a vision early in the change process: "I really think the vision for this occurred long before the change did" (Harley). "It started with the President's Council and, even higher than that, with John Fitzsimmons talking to the board of trustees" (Egan). Establishing a vision means accommodating differences: "So those who were local had a different vision, and so we kind of had a little bit of splintering along those lines" (Brice). "Not all the presidents were in favor of [open enrollment] at first, but I think people began to see [it], as we loosened things up" (Ballard). A belief in the importance of maintaining a public face of unity is suggested by Parker's statement: "I'm not aware of any differences among the presidents."

Vision execution requires strong leadership. Participants consistently attributed the success of realizing a vision to effective leadership: "The person who leads this charge has to absolutely, absolutely believe this has to happen and make it happen"

(Parker). "[Fitzsimmons] embraced the change, understood, shared his vision of why it was important for us, and I think there was no question that he was committed to making the change. It was pretty unwavering" (Marlow). "Fitzsimmons and the trustees were very clear of the goal they wanted. They wanted to become a community college system" (Marcus). Marlow described the political process that created unstoppable momentum for the vision: "Once we went down that road and the governor was elected and we were going there, it was 'These things need to be in order.'"

Gain buy-in from possible adversaries. Participants perceived the importance of engaging broad participation in and support for the vision. One strategy was to engage possible adversaries early in the process: "[UMS chancellor] Terry was committed up front and he got his board committed up front" (Brice). "[Because the universities were involved in developing the vision], I think they had to support it rather than oppose it" (Eric). Despite their ability to win over some potential adversaries, opposition to the vision remained. Participants believed the change was good for the universities. In Marcus's words, "Creating the community colleges, which they resisted . . . has given them the opportunity of expanding their university role." That sentiment aptly characterizes sentiment in the technical college system, but in the university system there is some evidence that the change has yet to be accepted. Marcus's comment suggests that although developing and refining a vision at an early stage is necessary, it is not sufficient to create acceptance of change. The nature and duration of communication were central to every aspect of the change effort.

Lesson #4

Participants talked about the importance of effective communication at several levels: system-wide, within individual campuses, and with external constituents. Communication can take several forms: memos and other written communiqués, meetings, individual conversations. The effectiveness of any form of communication depends on establishing trust.

System-wide communication. Communication among the seven MTCS campuses included "lots and lots of forums for people to express themselves" (Eric) and special efforts involving "unhappy people" (Brice). Communication helped build "trust" (Marcus) and provide opportunities for people to ask "any questions which they may have on their minds" (Marlow). Participants described holding meetings with "departments" (Harley), "labor management committees" (Brice), "academic senates" (Egan), and "campus advisory boards" (Parker). Not all exchanges were pleasant: "You might get a lot of grandstanding" (Ballard). "[Faculty will ask] 'Why are we doing this?'" (Marlow).

Meeting people where they are. Findings from this study indicate the need for campus leaders to engage both groups and individuals, both formal and informal leaders. Marcus met with his technical faculty in a department meeting to discuss the change and discovered "a different perspective." Egan described the importance of taking time to "meet with people one on one, small groups, or just walk around and talk to folks." That effort takes time: "We spent a lot of time on the campus" (Ballard). "[We needed to communicate the change] so we spent a lot of time" (Harley).

External communication. External challenges came from a variety of sources: boards of visitors, business and industry leaders, community members. Harley talked about the need to explain to local business and industry "why we were going to provide more math and science" to occupational students. Ballard said he had to assure external constituents that "we were not going to forget them," Parker and noted that "there was certainly a segment of our population that did not buy into [the community college initiative]."

Trust. Participants consistently identified trust as an important part of communication. Marcus described building "a community of trust," and Parker linked building trust with telling the truth and giving people an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Lessons Summary

Communication emerged as the most pervasive theme of this study. One could say of this transformative change that leaders talked their way through it. This finding has significant implications for other nested organizations. Because communication played such a large role in the successful change examined in this study, it may be instructive to explore whether communication has played a similar role in comparable change efforts. Although the importance of communication seems obvious, especially in an academic environment, it may not be applied with the care, attention, and consistency as this study's participants described.

Discrepant Findings

In any study, some data may not make sense or may contradict other data. Reporting discrepant findings is an important measure of accuracy and quality. In this study, several discrepant findings emerged.

One discrepancy was apparently contradictory statements by Ballard. At one point he said, "The two groups that we worried about from the beginning [were] the technical faculty and some people in business and industry." Elsewhere he said, "We ended up having more opposition from the arts and sciences faculty." He made one other statement about the technical faculty: "The basic concern was 'You're going to forget us' . . . the people on the technical side." Two explanations seem possible: (a) Ballard anticipated that technical faculty would be his biggest challenge and later discovered the arts and sciences faculty were, or (b) both were a concern and he attached more significance to the concerns expressed by arts and sciences faculty. This finding does not affect the overall import of the study (perceptions of how change was accomplished) but merely makes it unclear what, in Ballard's case, was one of the barriers to that change.

Another discrepancy involved perceptions about the speed of the MTCS community college change process. Half of the participants (Brice, Marcus, Harley, Ballard, and Addison) described the change as gradual, and half (Parker, Kennedy, Egan, Marlow, and Eric) thought it was rapid. Egan was the only president in the group who described the change as swift, joining all the vice presidents. Egan's explanation for the speed of the initiative was a sense of urgency coming from "students, confusion in the political arena, and the public." Marlow, Eric, and Kennedy voiced opinions similar to

Egan's, whereas Eric believed the sense of urgency was due to demands for reaccreditation.

This discrepancy reveals an interesting dynamic in communication at different levels of leadership. As noted above, creating a sense of urgency and seizing opportunities for change were viewed as important components of the change effort. A triangulation of data that included analysis of an MCCS working paper, "Expanding Community College Services in Maine" (MCTS Working Paper, 1996), revealed extensive internal discussions about the community college initiative within MTCS beginning in 1995. That effort involved the creation of four study teams led by members of the President's Council: (a) educational needs and impact, (b) accreditation, (c) staff support services and facilities capacity, and (d) constituent reaction (MTCS Working Paper, 1996). The President's Council had been working toward creating a sense of urgency and clarifying the vision prior to any public announcements. These interviews reveal that not all these steps were evident to vice presidents, for whom the process appeared more rapid and the urgency more sudden.

The final discrepant finding concerned external perceptions of the seven colleges once community college legislation was approved by the Maine legislature in 2003. Most participants thought this development created a more positive perception: "We are [perceived] as being a more valuable entry point into higher ed" (Eric). "I think that [public perception following the change] has been very positive" (Marlow). "It communicated far better with high school students" (Harley). Kennedy was the lone participant who did not described the change to a community college as having the hoped-for positive impact on public relations: "I think the guidance people, at the high

school, for whatever reason still think . . . 'If you can't get yourself admitted into the 4-year institutions, you can go here.'" Kenney's president, Brice, presented a different perspective about the results of the transformation at his college: "Now, virtually everything, everybody [views us] as a pathway, and we're in a different place."

If this study focused primarily on outcomes of the change process, I would want to probe Kennedy's perception further, perhaps through interviews with representatives from the school district, to test whether his was an idiosyncratic view of higher education or represented a truth unrecognized by other interviewees. But because the purpose of this study was to explore how change was accomplished and the role of nested leaders in a change process, this discrepant finding does not challenge the overall results. It is worth noting, however, should other students of change wish to pursue the topic in more depth.

Unexpected Findings

Perhaps the most significant unexpected finding was that each participant described serious misunderstandings at their campuses about what a comprehensive community college is. Examples of these areas of confusion are many: "That in itself was a big change for us, to become a community college. We really never had a conversation of the details of the community college; it was just a process of changing our work" (Marcus). "Maine had no history of a community college system" (Marlow). "[We were asked] 'Are you just becoming a mini university?'" (Egan). Concerns from occupational faculty that occupational programs would be eliminated revealed a lack of knowledge about the mission of a comprehensive community college. External advisory boards and business and industry leaders were also confused by the definition of a community college, evidenced by their fear that occupational programs would be eliminated.

President Fitzsimmons emphasized the importance of planning and communication strategies prior to implementing a change initiative (MCTS Working Paper, 1996). It was surprising and unexpected to me that it required so much time, effort, and communication simply to define the nature of the system being proposed, for example, that in the late 1990s community colleges were seen as primarily transfer institutions with mostly a liberal arts focus and little or no emphasis on technical and trades programs.

When embarking on this study, I expected to learn that the MTCS transformation to MCCS affected enrollment in university transferable programs. Although the data showed dramatic enrollment increases in the A.A. in liberal studies since 2003, participants also reported dramatic increases in enrollments of their occupational programs. They attributed these occupational enrollment increases to the A.A. in liberal studies program. Upon probing, I found that A.A. students were networking with occupational students and discovering programs they did not know about (e.g., welding). Harley said that technical programs "increased in enrollment as a result of the A.A. degree," and Ballard declared that "the enrollment in our technical programs is now higher than when we were technical colleges."

Interviewees were surprisingly consistent in their descriptions of the system president and his leadership coalition. I categorized this finding as unexpected given the diversity of the seven colleges. I anticipated finding greater disagreement and competition among the units, but the data revealed significant disagreement only between two presidents regarding emphasis on the mission's technical dimension. That difference

appears to have been worked out, and the group moved forward in overseeing the transformation process on the seven campuses.

The final unexpected finding concerns continued resistance from some university branches following the 1998 Community College Partnership Agreement signed by MTCS President Fitzsimmons and UMS Chancellor MacTaggart. Although the partnership agreement was described as mostly "symbolic" (Parker), it did serve as a good-faith effort between two systems to support a community college initiative for the state of Maine. Continued resistance within UMS following the agreement suggests a possible area for future research: why the change could overcome significant resistance in one system (MTCS) but not in the other (UMS).

Evidence of Quality of Data

Throughout this study, it was important that I set aside my beliefs about the organization of state 2-year postsecondary educational systems to ensure that my own preconceptions did not skew the data. I worked to counteract this possibility by bracketing: allowing for quiet reflection time before and after each interview, collecting my thoughts in a notebook during each interview, and using NVivo software to record my thoughts through journal entries and a project log (see Appendix J).

I used several safeguards to ensure the quality of data in this study, including advance approval from the MCCS president (see Appendix G). The study was not sponsored by an external group, and no one from MCCS or the Montana University System (where I work) was involved in collecting, analyzing, or interpreting the data. All participation in the study was voluntary, and respondents were free to withdraw at any time.

Participants signed informed consent forms (see Appendix C), were told they could withdraw from the study at any time, and were asked to provide permission for me to record the session. Names were masked through pseudonyms, which were all masculine to conceal participant gender, and no revealing reference was made to specific colleges. Before submitting the full dissertation for approval, I replaced the original pseudonyms with new ones to provide a further guarantee of anonymity. Digital recordings of interviews were uploaded to a secure password-protected server, to which only a transcriptionist and myself had access. Participants had the opportunity to review their interview transcripts and suggest changes. All 10 participants reviewed their transcripts; three submitted edited changes, which I made.

Participants were called by an external consultant to determine if they felt any coercion to participate in the study or to respond to any question in a certain manner (see Appendix K). This measure resulted in the accidental revelation of some participant e-mail addresses when the member checker sent an e-mail following attempts to reach participants by telephone. An adverse event form was filed with the Walden University IRB detailing the accidental revelation of some participants' e-mail addresses. The board concluded that this exposure resulted in minimal harm, considering that participants' identities as community college leaders were public anyway. The IRB also concluded that my communication informing participants of the event was sufficient, there had been no breach in confidentiality of data, and no further action was needed. Two additional methods to establish credibility were peer debriefing through regular contact with my dissertation committee, and analysis of public historical documents (e.g., strategic plans,

white papers, and other system documents from 1998-2003) provided by the MCCS office.

Group Textural-Structural Synthesis

This section consists of a synthesis of participants' perspectives on the 2003 transformation of MTCS into MCCS. Collectively, participants saw this development as a unique example of transformative change at a system level. They described the importance of a window of political opportunity, a politically astute system president, a guiding coalition to manage the change, and internal and external communication. There was remarkable unanimity among respondents on all these issues.

To appreciate a change process, an observer needs a comprehensive understanding of its meaning, the vision or framework of the change, and how it was communicated and executed. The 10 participants in this study experienced a wide range of challenges, perceptions, and misperceptions from their campuses and external constituents. To capture the essence of this transformative change, participants' experiences can be distilled to two key themes: communication and leadership.

Participants consistently highlighted their role as a communicator: "I found myself playing a very strong role internally at the college" (Egan). "It becomes important how we communicated" (Addison). "If you don't have credibility in doing that, you can't sell the idea" (Harley). "So we proceeded and I survived. . . . Okay, we trust you" (Marcus). "Folks get a chance to voice their opinions" (Parker). They had to quell dissent: "Faculty were just up in arms" (Brice). "Faculty and staff of the technical system would resist becoming a community college" (Marcus). "I think there was some apprehension" (Marlow).

Participants attributed their success to consistency and commitment to the vision: "No, you never lower your standards. In fact, what you do is you increase your standards" (Marcus). "We drafted a resolution that [college programming would retain] at least 89% of our programs in the occupational arena (Harley). But despite their efforts, not everyone was won over: "And you know, there's a few folks that we didn't convince" (Parker).

Participants consistently described the leadership of the MTCS system president as a powerful force for change. Eric said, "It took a leader to make it happen." Marcus asserted that "the role of John Fitzsimmons has been critical." Brice described Fitzsimmons's role in leading the guiding coalition and engaging the campuses:

> He put together the task force and he engaged the board of trustees, and he went around from campus to campus and held the discussion groups. We had a lot of proposed language that was reacted to at the campus level and forwarded.

Clearly, the MTCS change initiative would not have occurred as easily without the convergence of two political opportunities: the agreement by UMS to sign a partnership agreement, and support from the outgoing governor, the governor-elect, and the Maine legislature. Fitzsimmons and his guiding coalition of leaders were able to create and then capitalize on these opportunities. As Eric observed, "I think [Fitzsimmons] structured it in such a way that the university had to support it rather than oppose it. And that was very well done from a political point of view." For Brice, "The magic was going on behind the scenes with Chancellor MacTaggart and President Fitzsimmons." Marcus noted that "John [Fitzsimmons] was able to get the people who were running for governor to accept the idea [that] this would be a nice thing."

Central to all the themes identified in this study is the importance of communication. Leadership and communication are directly linked. Political opportunities to move a change initiative forward are the result of effective communication and strategic relationships. Likewise, a strong vision is not worth anything unless it can be communicated and understood by all involved.

Summary

In this chapter, I summarized the results of a qualitative study of how 2-year college leaders undertook transformational change in a multicampus system. I conducted 10 interviews over 8 days (June 1-9, 2010) in Maine. Data analysis, which followed guiding principles provided by Moustakas (1994), began with epoche, or bracketing all preconceived notions about the phenomenon being studied. It continued with horizontalization: assigning every statement equal value. The next step was imaginative variation: writing a structural description of each experience. These descriptions were then examined from different frames of reference. Statements were grouped in meaning clusters or themes, and repetitive and overlapping statements were removed. I used representation quotations from participants to reveal what happened and how the phenomenon was experienced.

Findings from this study show that transformational change in nested leadership multicampus systems occurs as a result of dynamic relationships involving the system head or president, campus presidents, and faculty and the staff at individual campuses. Specifically, four themes emerged from the data: urgency and opportunity, challenges and concerns, leadership, and communication. Communication was an overarching theme

that encompassed the other categories. Effective communication was evident at both system and campus levels.

The transformative reorganization of the MTCS system required stakeholders at each campuses to face challenges, concerns, perceptions, and misperceptions about the mission change. The most pervasive concern was the perceived loss of the colleges' technical and occupational mission. Misperceptions were driven by inaccurate and insufficient knowledge of what a community college is. The change initiative had an important political dimension. The participants described the importance of forging alliances with possible foes, such as the university system, and with political leaders.

The study revealed the importance of leadership at all levels, from the system office to campus presidents to faculty and staff at individual colleges. A particularly important component was the guiding coalition via the President's Council. The study provided clear evidence that change occurs at all levels and requires effective leadership at each level.

Results also revealed that transformative change efforts can trigger other changes. For example, the planned MCTS change prompted a change in the review expectations of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. The decision to add an A.A. in liberal studies required the MTCS to switch accrediting commissions, which resulted in a cascading series of events propelling the change forward. Agreements with the UMS and gubernatorial support helped create public and legislative awareness of and pressure for the proposed change.

From the results of this study, I extrapolated four lessons that could be appropriated by other state-governed, 2-year college systems attempting transformative

change: (a) urgency and opportunity for change should be created and seized, (b) a guiding coalition is needed to support change, (c) transformative change requires a clearly defined vision, and (c) communication defines and facilitates the process. Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that a transformative change effort should begin with a clear vision that is carefully and clearly communicated. Creating a sense of urgency for the change requires understanding the environment where the change will take place. This understanding includes taking into consideration political and economic factors, demographics, and other environmental issues related to the desired change. A guiding coalition can focus on communicating the vision.

Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this research was to investigate how 2-year technical college leaders who report to a system president perceived the transformative process that led to the 2003 creation of the MCCS from its predecessor, the MTCS. I sought to determine how campus leaders saw the change process, both at a system level and at their individual campuses. The study was based on two research questions:

1. How do 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences resulting from the transformational change

2. What lessons, if any, do these leaders' experiences offer other state-governed 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change?

Numerous researchers have addressed transformative change in higher education, but few have considered transformative change initiated at the system level and carried out by leaders of constituent campuses. Leadership studies often downplay the role of nested leadership systems and focus solely on the system president or leader. In contrast, this study focused on the role of the nested campus leaders and their perceptions of the change process.

I employed a transcendental phenomenological method to explore the experiential dimension of how campus leaders engage in transformative change. An important part of the phenomenological process is a researcher's conscious effort to distance himself or herself from the object of study. That distancing was necessary because I am currently

employed as the leader of a 2-year technical college in Montana whose board of regents is considering a community college structure for Montana's five colleges of technology.

The theoretical framework for this study was Kotter's (1996) organizational change model, which is based on the assumption that transformational change does not easily occur in an organization's life cycle. I used purposive sampling to identify 10 participants from whom I collected data: six presidents and four vice presidents who served in their positions during the time frame under study: 2002-2003. Data analysis followed the guiding principles provided by Moustakas (1994): (a) bracketing all preconceived notions about the phenomenon; (b) horizontalizing: giving each statement about an experience equal value; (c) imaginative variation, in which a structural description of the experience is written and analyzed, envisioning all possible alternative meanings and perspectives; (d) clustering meanings: grouping statements into themes, with repetitive and overlapping statements removed; and (e) using textural descriptions and structural meanings to reveal how the phenomenon was experienced by participants.

Data analysis revealed four themes in regard to the first research question and four lessons learned in regard to the second research question. The four themes were urgency and opportunity, challenges and concerns, leadership, and communication. *Communication* emerged as an overarching theme that encompassed the other three categories. *Leadership* surfaced as another dominant theme that was closely linked with communication. The study revealed the importance of leadership, often nearly synonymous with communication, at all levels, from the system office and campus presidents to faculty and staff at individual colleges. *Challenges and concerns* included misperceptions from both internal and external stakeholders. *Urgency* was created by

windows of opportunity to move forward with the change and internal pressures resulting from the planned change, such as the need to change accreditation status. Lessons from this study that could be useful to other state-governed, 2-year college systems attempting transformative change are that (a) urgency and opportunity for change should be created and seized, (b) a guiding coalition is needed to support change, (c) transformative change requires a clearly defined vision, and (d) the essence of communication defines the process. Findings from this study show that transformational change in multicampus systems with nested leadership occurs as a result of dynamic relationships involving the system head, campus presidents, and faculty and the staff at each of the affected campuses.

Interpretation of Findings

These findings lead to several conclusions, which are discussed here in relation to the themes identified.

Conclusions Supporting Research Question 1

The first research question asked how 2-year college leaders in a nested leadership structure reporting to a system president perceive and describe their experiences resulting from the transformative change. Four major themes emerged from the data: (a) urgency and opportunity, (b) challenges and concerns (c) leadership, and (d) communication. Each of these themes was central to the transformative change event resulting in the creation of the MCCA in 2003.

Urgency and opportunity. The 2003 transformation of MTCS into MCCS was the result of an extended planning process that began in the mid 1990s. This change initiative serves as an example of Burke's (2008) planned revolutionary change, which

requires broad levels of involvement by organizational members from across the system. Findings from the current study underscore the necessity to asssess the environment for strategic links to the desired change. For example, participants in the current study described challenges that MTCS encountered with the University of Maine System (UMS) because the two systems were competing for the community college mission in Maine. Participants related how the MTCS system president forged a strategic partnership with UMS through a Community College Partnership Agreement in 1998. This agreement enabled MTCS to proceed with its planned addition of an associate of arts degree in liberal studies, which set in motion the subsequent evolution of the community college initiative.

Establishing this partnership agreement was an important catalyst for the change initiative and increased its urgency. Approval of the A.A. degree triggered a review of accreditation requirements of the seven MTCS colleges. This review resulted in a decision to switch accrediting commissions (from the technical to the higher education commission), which created a sense of urgency throughout the system and forced the colleges to address the change. The momentum caused by these actions focused political attention on the change, including that of the governor-elect, who included the MTCS community college initiative as part of his campaign platform.

Kotter (1996) suggested that creating a sense of internal urgency is a necessary initial step in achieving change. In the Maine change process, both internal and external urgency were created, giving participants the sense that quick action was needed. It is ironic that building a sense that quick action is needed may be the work of years of planning. Kotter warned about not engaging in transformative change unless a sense of

urgency exists, describing complacency as the death of a change initiative. Findings from the present study revealed a clear picture of urgency accompanying the desired change. The agreement of the UMS chancellor to support the MTCS A.A. degree, coupled with the political recognition of the MTCS community college initiative, created a sense of immediate urgency that propelled the change forward.

Challenges and concerns. All 10 participants described some form of opposition to the change, from both internal and external groups. The role that campus presidents played in addressing these concerns emerged as an important finding. Participants described a range of concerns that erupted at their campuses and in their communities concerning the proposed change. Although it was recognized the MTCS system president played an important role by traveling to each campus to announce the change, the campus presidents and their underlings bore the brunt of explaining the change, clarifying challenges, and allaying concerns. A particular concern, which surfaced both internally and externally, involved misperceptions about the nature of a community college and the fear that becoming a community college would lead to losing the traditional technical and occupational mission of the colleges.

The accreditation commission changes resulting from the addition of the A.A. degree added to occupational and technical faculty concerns because they feared they would not meet minimum credential requirements. It was campus leaders who engaged in communication with internal and external constituents to correct misperceptions and alleviate concerns. These findings support studies identified in the literature review that linked follower awareness and understanding key change issues with communication from transformational leaders (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

Leadership. Kotter (1996) noted that leadership plays an important role in organizational transformational change, arguing that 70-90% of the success or failure of an organizational change initiative can be attributed to leaders. Chief among Kotter's ideal leadership characteristics is persistence in working toward achievement of a change. The findings of this study clearly link the success of the MTCS transformation with the leadership skill and persistence of the system president and campus leaders who carried out the change process.

Communication. Communication and leadership were central among the four themes and frequently were not independent of each other. The transformative change process, which culminated in 2003 when MTCS became MCCS, could be described as a planned revolutionary change, which Burke (2008) defined as a combination of revolutionary and evolutionary change. Burke argued that this type of change requires participation from a broad array of an organization's members, for which effective communication is vital. This study showed that the MCCS transformation featured participation at all levels: system president, campus presidents, and faculty and staff at individual campuses. Participation was most often described in terms of dialogue and discussions, expressions of concern, clarification, and establishing trust.

Conclusions Supporting Research Question 2

The second research question asked what lessons, if any, these leaders' experiences offer other state-governed, 2-year college systems attempting similar levels of transformative change. Four such lessons emerged: (a) urgency and opportunity for the change should be created and seized, (b) a guiding coalition is needed to support change, (c) transformative change requires a clearly defined vision, and (d) the essence of

communication defines the process. These lessons are the foundation for the recommendations section below. Each lesson will be discussed in relation to Kotter's (1996) eight-step change model.

Urgency and opportunity should be created and seized. The first step in Kotter's (1996) change model is to create a sense of urgency in the organization. The Maine community college transformation involved creating urgency both externally and internally: externally through political and university partnerships that applied pressure for change, and internally through Fitzsimmons's announcement of the change initiative at each MTCS campus. Kotter described the establishment of urgency as critical to gaining cooperation and support from constituents.

McKinney and Morris (2010), who studied community colleges that began offering baccalaureate degrees, cited establishing a sense of urgency as a key step in the change efforts they examined. Whelan-Berry, Gordon, and Hinnings (2003) found that many organizational change efforts fail because they do not establish a sense of urgency or allow time for employees affected by the change to process the proposed changes. Eddy (2003) used Kotter's change model to assess a transformational change effort involving a consortium of 2-year colleges with a nested leadership structure. In Eddy's study, an attempt to increase efficiencies failed because the system president did not gain the support of his campus presidents for the desired change.

Kotter (1996) argued that a "viable crisis" (p. 45) can draw attention to a change initiative and increase urgency among employees. Findings from this study suggest that such a crisis was created in MTCS by the recommendation that the seven colleges in the system change accrediting commissions, from the technical commission to the

commission on colleges. This change created several areas of concern, including a need to augment faculty credentials and address the transferability of degrees and courses. The 1998 MTCS decision to begin offering an A.A. in liberal studies served as a trigger for accreditation discussions and ultimately the creation of a Community College Partnership Agreement with UMS. This partnership between the two systems also created a political window of opportunity to advance the change, thus raising the level of urgency even further.

A guiding coalition is needed to support change. Results of this study showed an important connection between the system president and the President's Council, which included the seven campus presidents. Together, the president and the council served as a guiding coalition to lead the desired change. Kotter (1996) stated that major transformations based on a single highly visible leader will fail and recommended that a guiding coalition comprise members with four key characteristics: position power, expertise, credibility, and leadership (p. 57). Members of the President's Council referenced these characteristics in their interviews. Eddy's (2003) change study involving nested leaders of 2-year colleges reporting to a system president depicted an initiative that failed because the guiding coalition was only partially effective, due to turf battles and lack of consensus. In comparison, the MTCS President's Council was described by participants as a highly functional team that worked to resolve differences and reach consensus or near consensus. The coalition fits Kotter's (1996) description: Participants' positions implied power, and their behavior reflected trust, leadership, and expertise.

Kotter (1996) argued for the importance of empowering guiding coalition members rather than attempting to control them. Participants in this study described

Fitzsimmons's willingness to empower the President's Council to advocate for the change at their respective campuses. Fitzsimmons set clear expectations that council members share what they learned and what the issues were.

Transformative change requires a clearly defined vision. The study revealed the importance of creating a vision for the desired change early in the process and communicating it to leaders at all levels. Communicating a vision includes anticipating opposition. Creating a shared vision for an organizational change initiative has been emphasized in numerous studies (Davis, 2003; Eddy, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). Kotter described vision as the "central component of all great leadership" (p. 68) and asserted that a vision must achieve three purposes: (a) clarify the general direction of the desired change, (b) provide motivation for action, and (c) serve as a tool to coordinate action (pp. 68-69). As the findings showed, the MTCS community college vision provided the basis for the system president and President's Council to lead the change initiative. The findings show broad levels of engagement among council members in the early development of the vision. Although MTCS campuses were persuaded by the vision, parts of UMS were not.

The essence of communication defines the process. By continually referencing communication as a defining part of the change process, participants indicated the centrality of communication to the other lessons (urgency and opportunity, guiding coalition, and vision). Kotter (1996) cited failure to communicate the vision as one of the most common mistakes made by leaders in transformational change processes.

Eddy (2003) described a consortium of 2-year leaders reporting to a system president that did not achieve a desired change. Eddy linked that failure to the inability of

campus presidents to communicate with their members, which resulted in a lack of support for the change. Findings from the current paint an entirely different picture. Members of the President's Council effectively engaged their respective campuses and external constituents, both formally and informally; several respondents commented on the time and attention this required.

According to Kotter (1996), one reason communication about a change vision is difficult for leaders is that members of the guiding coalition either do not have answers to questions about the change or they do not take time to engage their constituents. As the findings of this study showed, communication began at each of the individual campuses with initial visits from the system president. Following those visits, campus leaders strategically engaged their respective communities from the inside to the outside. They began with faculty and staff meetings, then engaged department chairs, academic senates, and unions. Finally, leaders extended beyond their campuses to engage advisory boards, boards of visitors, and business and industry leaders.

Kotter (1996) advocated for using many forms of communication, repeating the change message, walking the talk, explicitly addressing inconsistencies, listening, and removing any structural barriers (pp. 93-100). In the current study, both the system resident and campus leaders fulfilled most of Kotter's recommendations. Initially, employees did not understand the change or what a community college was. In addition, the need to change accrediting commissions created uncertainties and concern among faculty. These uncertainties were addressed in several ways, including reallocation of some budgets to support faculty professional development for degree attainment and a group meeting with the NEASC accrediting commission to assure faculty they would not

lose their jobs if they did not meet minimum qualifications required by the new accrediting commission.

A strength of the MTCS community college change initiative was the leadership of the system's president and the commitment and teamwork of campus leaders. In contrast, Eddy's (2006) study involving a consortium of 2-year colleges led by a system chancellor, which involved an attempted change of the campuses' administrative structure, revealed that the change initiative failed in large part because the chancellor attempted to direct the change initiative without the enthusiastic engagement of campus presidents. Eddy's study underscores Kotter's (1996) assertion that top-down change initiatives do not work. The present study suggests that more distributed leadership models do work.

Implications for Social Change

The transformation of Maine's technical college system into a community college system has significant implications for social change. Community colleges account for nearly half of all postsecondary enrollment in the United States and number over 1,200 institutions (Mellow & Heelan, 2008). According to Tollefson et al. (1999), 16 states and Puerto Rico have either community college governing boards or boards of regents that govern both community colleges and universities. Since the primary focus of this study was the role of leaders of 2-year campuses in state-governed systems, the findings have potential to effect social change to a significant degree.

Community colleges have changed more rapidly than any other sector of higher education in the last century (Mellow & Heelan, 1998; O'Banion, 1997) and affect a broad socioeconomic demographic (Mellow & Heelan, 1998). This study will be useful

to political and educational leaders who are contemplating significant changes in 2-year educational systems. Much research has been conducted on organizational change in corporate and university structures, but few studies have addressed transformative change in a multicampus system with nested leadership structures overseen by a system president. This study shows that the campus leaders under study played a significant role in guiding the change process at their respective campuses. As a group, they hold strong feelings about their roles as communicators, change agents, and problem solvers. They are also clear about the importance of effective communication and leadership from the system leader. Their experience demonstrates the importance of engaging political leaders and system partners; nested leaders in their own system structures; and faculty, staff, and community leaders, both formal and informal, in effecting successful change.

The economic downturn that began near the close of the first decade of the 21st century has heightened national interest in 2-year colleges, their role in preparing and retooling the workforce, and their impact on society and the economy. This interest is evidenced by President Obama's request for Jill Biden to convene a national summit on community colleges in the fall of 2010. Over the next several years, many states will be considering changes in their community college systems. Recognizing the lessons emerging from Maine's community college system transformation, such as the critical role of communication at all levels and the role and involvement of campus leaders within a nested organization structure, is particularly valuable at this time in American history. Two-year colleges are being asked to respond to economic and social changes. Statewide community college systems or large multicampus community college districts will benefit from a better understanding of how transformational change can occur within

their systems. These findings can help leaders in similar systems to think more clearly and broadly about how best to pursue transformative change. This study will help 2-year college system leaders move toward planning and engaging in a system-level transformative change process.

Recommendations for Action

Recommendations for action are embedded in the four lessons described above:

1. Create a sense of urgency and opportunity for change.

Based on the literature review and the results of this study, leaders of state-governed 2-year college systems who are considering similar transformative change need to understand both the political and internal environments of the desired change initiative (Eddy, 2003, 2006; Kotter, 1996; Levin, 1998). Specifically, leaders should anticipate and respond to (a) political ramifications and opportunities, (b) internal threats and barriers, and (c) opportunities to introduce the change and begin increasing awareness and garnering support. This study confirmed Hickman's (2010) assertion that organizations do not operate in isolation. Concerns from UMS obliged system leaders to form interdependent relationships.

2. Build a guiding coalition to support the change.

Findings from this study and the literature review underscore the importance of having strong leaders in place prior to initiating a transformative change effort (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eddy & VanDerlinden, 2006; Kotter, 1996). Leadership can include a guiding coalition. Kotter (1996) argued that failure to create a coalition is one of the primary reasons change efforts fail. The current study demonstrates that 2-year state-governed system leaders planning a transformative change initiative succeeded in part

because of guiding coalition comprising campus leaders, formalized through meetings of a President's Council. The coalition's leader needs to demonstrate political acumen and versatile communication skills. A coalition whose members can question a proposed change among themselves, work with the system leader to develop a communication plan, and develop strategies for rolling out the change to various constituencies stands a good chance of success.

Based on the literature review and results of the current study, 2-year system leaders should be aware of the important role communication plays in the operation and function of a guiding coalition. They must understanding the importance of communication at all levels: system, coalition, and campus. Organizational change is systemic, and change at one level of the organization affects other levels (Burke, 2008; Kotter, 1996; Senge, 1990; Yukl, 2006). This study's findings support Burke's contention that a change initiative is at risk if leaders do not consider the consequences that campus-level change can have on the larger system.

Participants believed the guiding coalition served as an important vehicle to formulate goals for the change, develop a strategic plan, and guide communication at both the system level and at individual campuses. The role of the system president in leading the coalition was a critical element in its success, but campus presidents served as key leaders of the change initiative at their respective campuses and in their communities. This finding supports previous research about transformational leaders' ability to increase follower awareness and support through communication (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978; Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006). The dynamic interplay between members of a guiding coalition and the system leader is important. According to Eddy (2006), the roles that both the

campus president and system leader play in the change process has not been sufficiently studied.

3. Ensure a clearly defined vision.

The findings from the study and the literature review connect leadership with creation of a shared vision. Key among the findings was the need to define the vision early in the process. The guiding coalition served as the body where issues were debated prior to public announcement of the vision. Leaders need to anticipate reactions to a change initiative, work together to address differences, and come together to form a common vision for the initiative (Kotter, 1996).

A vision should not be developed in isolation. Participants in the current study described the importance of taking the vision to their campuses, a process that began with a series of meetings conducted by the system president, followed by intensive group and individual communication with campus presidents. Eddy's (2003) study of a failed transformative change attempt involving a consortium of 2-year technical institutions led by a system president found that one reason for the failure was that campus presidents did not engage their constituents during the vision-building process. The community college vision and strategy for the Maine transformation was developed as an iterative process taking into consideration feedback from each of the campuses. Participants in the current study described their efforts to instill a climate of acceptance, problem solving, and creativity.

4. *Understand the essence of communication*.

Communication emerged as the most pervasive theme of this study. The importance of communication is included in each of the four recommendations for

system leaders contemplating similar transformative change. System leaders should carefully consider how communication will be guided, promoted, and encouraged during the change event. The role of the guiding coalition and the decentralized authority given to campus leaders by the system president in this study illustrated the importance of empowering campus leaders to engage all constituents both formally and informally. The current study emphasized the importance of beginning communication internally and then extending to include external constituents. There was remarkable consistency among participants regarding the importance of developing trust through openness, transparency, and honesty.

This study's results confirm the importance of engaging in communication at individual, group, and system levels. System leaders should consider communication strategies that recognize subsystems such as campuses, divisions and programs, and departments. This finding supports research by Burke, 2008; Eddy, 2003; Hickman, 2010; Kotter, 2006; Kotter and Cohen, 2002; and McKinney and Morris, 2010. The findings of this study strongly support Kotter's (1996) eight-step model for organizational change, especially the first five steps: establishing a sense of urgency, creating a guiding coalition, developing a vision and strategy, communicating the vision, and empowering broad-based action.

Recommendations for Further Study

Transformational change has received considerable attention in recent years, both at the corporate and university level, but few researchers have addressed the impact of transformative change on community college leaders nested in a state system (Burke, 2008; Eddy, 2003, 2006; Kotter, 1996; McKinney & Morris, 2010; Senge, 1990; Whelan-

Berry, Gordon, & Hinings, 2003; Yukl, 2006). This study opens up numerous opportunities for further research on transformational change in state-governed community college systems or large community college districts with multiple campuses. For example, it would be useful to conduct a comparative case study examining the roles of campus leaders and their system or district presidents in other states where leaders or legislators have made similar systemic changes. Such a study might consider whether the guiding coalition for other change initiatives was empowered in the same way as in the Maine. Was the vision for the proposed change developed early in the process and communicated to all constituents, thus allowing time to refine the vision, as was done in Maine? The overarching finding of the Maine study was the importance of communication at all levels of the system. It would be interesting to compare communication patterns in other change events.

Another potential research venture is a comparative case study of University of Maine Chancellor MacTaggart and Maine Community College System President Fitzsimmons. This case study could examine the dynamics of the Community College Partnership Agreement signed by both men. This agreement was a defining moment for the MTCS community college change initiative, and illuminating the process that produced it could help leaders considering similar changes define the parameters of successful partnerships.

A grounded theory study about UMS campus leaders' reactions to the partnership agreement would also be of interest. Findings of the current study hint at continuing lack of acceptance of the MTCS transformation by UMS. It would be useful to learn why

negative feelings persist. Such a study might prove valuable to leaders considering similar changes and help them determine possible pitfalls to avoid.

Another phenomenological study following the MCCS change from 2003 to the present would be of interest. Such a study could focus on faculty and staff perceptions of the change since the 2003 transformation. How did the MTCS transformation into a community college system affect faculty and staff attitudes? What has been the impact on student achievement? Such a study would provide valuable lessons for other 2-year college systems interested in the long term effects of such a transformational change.

Personal Reflections

I entered into this project using the epoche process to bracket my own thoughts and opinions about the transformation of technical college systems into community college systems. My role as a campus leader at one of Montana's 2-year technical colleges would not necessarily lead to bias, but there was potential to look at the transformational change of MTCS into a community college system as a model for Montana's board of regents to consider as they contemplate the future of Montana's technical colleges. During the past 3 years, the Montana University System and its board of regents have been analyzing the role of Montana's 2-year colleges in providing greater access to higher education. Like Maine in 2002, Montana is one of the last states in the nation to lack a true community college system. The state's 2-year colleges include five colleges of technology and three community colleges. Each of the seven public 2-year colleges is ultimately governed by the Montana board of regents.

As I progressed through my doctoral studies, I found myself seeking a greater understanding of the role of public 2-year colleges in different states, perceptions of

2-year colleges, the interplay between 2-year colleges and universities, and how different organizational structures operate. The transformation of Maine's Technical College System attracted my attention, given several parallels with Montana's higher education landscape. I further explored the Maine transformation through Internet searches. As I researched this transformation process, I found myself becoming more interested and wanting to know more.

Because of the personal and professional nature of my interest, I worked hard to bracket my thoughts and perspectives through the use of marginal notes, journaling, and a project log using NVivo software. Throughout the process, I was also mindful not to let my own thoughts and assumptions guide the interview process or in any way bias the results. Given my awareness of this risk at the beginning of the study, I made every effort to prevent bias from affecting my data analysis.

Conclusions

This study demonstrates that the transformative change of 2-year state-governed college systems whose campus reporting relationship is nested, reporting to a system president or chancellor, is a complex and dynamic process involving broad levels of communication among all constituents. The change process requires strong leadership at the system level as well as at individual campuses. Communication is central to all aspects of the change process, beginning during the initial planning process and carrying throughout the entire change process. A change initiative must be carefully orchestrated through analysis of political opportunities and creation of a guiding coalition comprising campus leaders reporting to the system president. The guiding coalition, in concert with the system president, creates a vision and strategies to implement the change. The vision

should be open to suggestions and revisions based on feedback from internal and external constituents.

As obvious as this process sounds, findings from this study indicate that it was challenging and required careful communication at all levels to address misperceptions and problems. As Eddy's (2003, 2006) work illustrates, that process is not always followed. This study also confirmed the importance of teamwork. Transformational change in large organizations is not easy. It requires a defined need for the change, leadership, a clear vision, political support, a cohesive guiding coalition whose members feel empowered to engage their respective constituents, and hard work and persistence in all these areas. As in Maine's case, however, the rewards can be a successful initiative that expands student opportunities and access. In an increasingly challenging economy and during times of shifting global and social priorities, understanding effective methods of accomplishing change is a critical both for 2-year colleges and for the communities and society they serve.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Script for interviewer:
You have been identified as one of the Maine technical college leaders involved with the 2002-2003 transformation process which led to the creation of the 2003 Maine Community College System.

Review consent form and present for signatures.
Invite interviewee to say something about him/herself including: education, main roles/responsibilities, and length of service.

Questions:

1. How would you describe the organizational change/transition process that led to the creation of the Community College System of Maine?

   Probe: How was the vision created and articulated for this change?

Probe: Why do you think Maine's technical colleges adopted the full 2-year mission which led to the creation of the Maine Community College System?

Probe: Was a sense of urgency established prior to the 2003 change event?

2. What was your role in this organizational change/transition change period between 2002 and 2003?
   Probe: What strategies did you employ in order to create institutional support for the change?

   Probe: What strategies did the system office employ?

3. How clearly were the goals communicated when you learned about the change/transition process?

Probe: What forms of communication were used by the MTCS system president to inform you about the change/transition plan? How would you assess the effectiveness of the forms of communication which were used?

Probe: What was your understanding of the goal/intent of this change/transition plan?

4. How did you introduce the change/reorganization plan to the college faculty and staff you supervised between 2002 and 2003?

   Probe: How did you continue to communicate the vision?

5. Did you employ any specific actions/behaviors/strategies to get your faculty and staff to buy in, commit to, or support this change initiative? If so, what strategies did you use?

   Probe: To what extent were those strategies effective or not effective?

   Probe: What strategies did you use to empower your employees to further the desired change initiative?

6. What were some key marker events during this change process that were most memorable to you?

Probe: How did these events help to solidify the change effort?

7. What do you believe were the impact/s of the change/transition process upon your faculty, staff, students, and the regional community during the transition period between 2002 and 2003?

8. What were the three most important advantages of the change?

9. What were the three most important disadvantages of the change?

10. Please describe how the change/transition process impacted your philosophy of leadership?

Probe: What personal options, approaches, styles, or behaviors did you have to alter during this time of change/transformation?

What have you learned about change/transition processes as a result of your experience?

11. To what extent did the MTCS system president support or commit to this change initiative?

Probe: If there was any opposition to the transformation of Maine's technical colleges into a community college system, what was the source of the opposition?

12. Do you think the hoped-for results of this reorganization were achieved? If not, why?

    Probe: What if any impact do you believe this change initiative had on the organizational culture of your college?

13. Is there anything particularly significant about the change experience that I failed to ask and that you are willing to share?

14. What advice would you give to the leaders in another state planning to make system-wide changes similar to those made here in Maine?

15. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B: Participant Invitation Letter

Dear Former Maine Community and Technical College System Leader:

I am John E. Cech, a doctoral student at Walden University and also dean of the Montana State University Billings College of Technology. I am preparing to conduct my dissertation research, and I need your help. I am interested in learning about the change process that occurred between the period of 2002 and 2003 leading to the creation of the Maine Community College System.

In order for me to learn about this, I am inviting you to participate in a one-on-one interview session with me that will be conducted in Maine, at a location of your choosing. I have attached an informed consent form for your review and signature.

All responses and information you provide will be kept strictly confidential, and no one except me will know whether you participate or not. Of course, this is voluntary, and you are not in any way obligated to participate in this study.

Your participation would be helpful, and I would be most appreciative of your consideration to participate.

I am looking forward to learning more about the change process that occurred with the creation of the Maine Community College System in 2003. If you have any questions, you may call me at my office at 406-247-3009 or on my private cell phone at 406-670-0848.

Sincerely,

John E. Cech
Walden University PhD Student in Community College Leadership
& Dean, Montana State University Billings College of Technology

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

You are invited to take part in a dissertation study investigating common experiential themes for 2-year technical college leaders who were employed in the Maine Technical College System (MTCS) between January 1, 2002 and December 31, 2003. Before you decide to be a part of this study, you need to understand its risks and benefits. This consent form provides further information about the pilot project. I will be available to answer any questions you may have about the study. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign this consent form. This process is known as informed consent. Your decision to take part in the study is voluntary. You may choose to not participate in this study.

This study is being conducted by John E. Cech, a doctoral candidate at Walden University and Dean of the Montana State University Billings College of Technology.

Background Information:

The purpose of this qualitative study will be to explore how the experiences of 2-year technical college leaders in Maine between 2002-2003, contributed to the transformative process in their own colleges, which led to the creation of the Maine Community College System.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to do the following things:

1. Participate in a private 1-1 in-depth interview with the researcher to gather more details about your experiences. This interview will be completed in Maine, should take approximately 1-2 hours to complete, and can be completed at your convenience either before or after work hours, or during work hours with your supervisor's approval.

2. You will have an opportunity to review your responses and a transcript of your interview prior to its inclusion in the study. At that time, you may make corrections or provide further explanation to your answers if you wish.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with either Maine Community College system or with the researcher. If you initially decide to participate, you are still free to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

The things you will be doing in this study have no more risk than what you would be doing in the course of everyday life. There are no individual short- or long-term benefits to you for participating in this study. The overall benefits to participation are that you will be helping community college and state system leaders better understand the impact of the change process on college leaders.

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time. Your withdrawal from the project will not be reported to anyone and will have no negative consequences. You may refuse to answer any questions you consider invasive or stressful.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for your participation in this study.

Costs:

There are no costs to you for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept in a confidential location by the researcher. The interview audio tapes and all data collected in this research will be kept confidential by the researcher and stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home for five years, at which time they will be destroyed. The responses and participant identities will be coded so that individuals cannot be identified. All verbal or written reports will use only coded information. The names of both the participants and the college where the participant served as a leader will be kept confidential. Pseudonyms will be assigned to both the participant and the college before the interview begins and actual names of the participant and the college will not be used in the pilot study summary and in any report of this study that might be published. To further increase confidentiality, the researcher will perform a global search and replace once the findings have been summarized and provide each participant and their college with a new pseudonym which only the researcher will know. The researcher will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is John E. Cech. The researcher's faculty advisor is Dr. Terry O'Banion. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact either of them via phone or email at:

John E. Cech (406-670-0848 or john.cech@waldenu.edu)
Dr. Terry O'Banion (760-202-2820 or obanion@league.org)

The Research Participant at Walden University **Leilani Endicott**, you may contact her via email **irb@waldenu.edu or (1-800-925-3368, extension *1210),** if you have questions about your participation in this study.

You may print a copy of this form if you wish, or the researcher will mail one to you at your request.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. If I had any questions, I have asked them and received answers.

I consent to participate in the study.

I will sign this document and return to John E. Cech, 2609 Emerson Pl., Billings, MT 59102 or email to john.cech@waldenu.edu indicating my consent to participate.

Name
(Printed)_____

Signature_____

Date_____

Appendix D: Interview Confirmation Letter

Dear Dr. [Participant]:

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me at 9 am on June 7 in your office on the XX campus in the YY building. I am looking forward to meeting you.

I will be leaving for Maine on May 31 and will return to Montana on June 9. I am looking forward to seeing your beautiful state and community college campuses!

Thank you and I hope you have a great holiday weekend!

Sincerely,

John E. Cech
Walden University PhD Student in Community College Leadership
& Dean, Montana State University Billings College of Technology

Appendix E: Confidentiality Agreement Transcription Services

I, _____, transcriptionist, agree to maintain full confidentiality in regards to any and all audiotapes and documentation received from John Cech related to his doctoral study on "Creating the Maine community college system: A phenomenological study of leader experiences and reactions to transformational change in a multi-campus system." Furthermore, I agree:

1. To hold in strictest confidence the identification of any individual that may be inadvertently revealed during the transcription of audio-taped interviews or in any associated documents;

2. To not make copies of any audiotapes or computerized files of the transcribed interview texts, unless specifically requested to do so by John Cech;

3. To store all study-related audiotapes and materials in a safe, secure location as long as they are in my possession;

4. To return all audiotapes and study-related documents to John Cech in a complete and timely manner;

5. To delete all electronic files containing study-related documents from my computer hard drive and any backup devices.

I am aware that I can be held legally liable for any breach of this confidentiality agreement and for any harm incurred by individuals if I disclose identifiable information contained in the audiotapes and/or files to which I will have access.

Transcriber's name (printed) _____

Transcriber's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

During the course of my activity in contacting participants to check for bias and coercion for this research, "Creating the Maine community college system: A phenomenological study of leader experiences and reactions to transformational change in a multi-campus system," I, _____, will have access to information that is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement, I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.

2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.

3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.

4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification, or purging of confidential information.

5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job I will perform.

6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.

7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

By signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all terms and conditions stated above.

Member Checking Member's Name (printed) _____

Member Checking Member's signature _____

Date _____

Appendix G: MCCS Permission Letter

Maine Community College System

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
323 State Street, Augusta, Maine 04330-7131
207.629.4000 • Fax: 207.629.4048
www.mccs.me.edu

April 7, 2010

Mr. John E. Cech
Walden University PhD Candidate
2609 Emerson Place
Billings, MT 59102

Dear Mr. Cech:

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled, "A Phenomenological Study of Leader Experiences and Reactions to Transformational Change in a Multicampus System" within Maine Community College System. As part of this study, I authorize you to engage in the following data collection activities in the Maine Community College System:

1. Identify potential participant candidates: campus presidents, vice presidents, and deans serving as chief academic officers, chief student services officers, or chief administrative officers who were employed in Maine's seven technical colleges between January 1, 2002, and December 31, 2003. The MCCS Office will provide contact information to you (as to the best of its ability) for the potential research participant contacts. The MCCS president will provide a letter of introduction to the prospective study participants.

2. Send potential respondents information about the study and interview process.

3. Invite selected individuals for interviews. The first priority will be the seven technical college presidents, followed by the pool of vice presidents and deans, who will be purposefully selected by region once the available presidents have been secured. At least two alternate candidates will be identified in the event of late cancellations. Before interviews are scheduled, each participant will receive an informed consent form that will provide an introduction to the study, purpose, procedures, possible risks, possible benefits, rights to withdraw, overview of privacy of research records, and e-mail addresses and telephone numbers for questions about the study, including the Walden IRB officer, the dissertation committee chair, and the researcher.

4. Travel to Maine to conduct interviews at the seven technical colleges: Lewiston, Bangor, Augusta, Presque Isle, Casco Bay, St. Croix River in Calais, and Wells.

5. Travel to Maine in early June (pending approval of IRB and agreement from research participants) to conduct the interviews over a 10-day period, allowing for travel time to each of the locations.

Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the research team without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely yours,

John Fitzsimmons, Ed.D.
President

JF/ejc

Appendix H: Transcript Approval Letter

Dear Dr. [Participant]:

Thank you for taking the time and agreeing to be interviewed by me as a part of my research. Attached, is an exact transcript of the interview. Please feel free to edit or change your response in any way that accurately reflects your thoughts and opinions. Please use Microsoft Track changes and send the revised document back to me at John.Cech@waldenu.edu.

No one other than the two of us (and the transcriptionist who signed a confidentiality statement) will see this transcript. It will be examined along with the other transcripts to identify persistent themes, recurring ideas and experiences, common language, and other examples of shared experiences. The identities of all research participants will be kept confidential throughout the research process.

Once again, thank you for your willingness to be interviewed. I very much enjoyed meeting with you in person and appreciate your time and support. If you have any questions, please feel free to email me or call me 406-670-0848. I will email you a full copy of my dissertation once it has been approved.

Sincerely,

John E. Cech
Walden University PhD Student in Community College Leadership
& Dean, Montana State University Billings College of Technology

Appendix I: Sample Coding for Generalization

Level I	**Level II**	**Level III**
Communication		
	Bridging Tech and Lib Arts	
	Com Individually	
	Com with External	
	Connecting with campus Constituents	
	Creating a Sense of Understanding	
	Developing Trust	
	Informal Power Group	
Urgency and Opportunity for Change		
	Financial Urgency	
	Desire to Expand Mission	
	Need for Faculty Prof Devel.	
	Not a Sense of Urgency	
	Window of Opportunity Opens	
	Awareness of Political Issues	
Campus Leaders Guiding Coalition		
	Campus Level Leadership	
	Campus Level Leadership Qualities	
		Shared Vision
		Looking at Other Models
		Preserving Tech Mission
	System Leadership	
		Board of Trustee Engagement
		Expand University Transfer
		Expect Leaders Will Deliver
		Presenting Initial Vision

Appendix J: Excerpt from Project Log

NOTE: In order to assure participant identity protection, I altered the memo text and removed the actual participant pseudonym and replaced it with "participant."
6/1/2010 8 AM

In preparation for my first interviews, I spent two hours revisiting the MCTS strategic planning and other documents which pertain to the transformation of the MTCS into the MCCS. My goal was to immerse myself into the transformation process and release any thoughts or notions I had about my own system. During the interview process, I removed myself from my work environment by turning off my blackberry and not checking my email. My goal was to completely focus on the transformation process which would be examined during the course of the interviews.

6/5/2010 1:24 PM

[Participant] interview notes:

[Participant] discussed the transformation of the technical college to a community college. He described how the college emerged from its vocational technical roots to become a community college. One aspect of this transformation included the physical transformation of the campus which previous to the community college naming, it looked industrial. He credited president Fitzsimmons with providing resources or access to resources to help transform the physical appearance of the college.

[Participant] noted several times throughout the course of his interview the concerns which were raised by industry members -- their concerns centered around a fear that once their technical college became a comprehensive community college, the trade and industry programs would suffer.

Following the interview with [participant], walked around the campus in order to get a better feel for the campus transition from a vocational technical institute to a technical college and ultimately to a community college. I noticed older industrial looking buildings which had been redesigned and converted to more of a modern contemporary look. While the impact was noticeable, I could not help but notice the remaining images of the campus' previous incarnation.

6/6/2010 11:05 AM

[Participant] Interview Notes:

[Participant] demonstrated significant pride in his college. He insinuated several times the idea that he played a role with the system wide transformation. He did credit Fitzsimmons many times but made it clear he was actively involved with the process.

After the interview, he noted that funds were made available for a new building on campus which he described as the "crowning achievement" of the community college initiative. He also referenced the physical change of his campus since the name change as taking on a stronger college feel versus its previous technical feel.

Another interesting observation included his description of the previous president (pre 1997). He stated the president had his office near the front entry of the College with a half door which could be closed. This allowed the president to sit behind his desk and observe who was leaving early. [the Participant] felt this was a ruminant of the authoritarian era when the colleges were governed by their school district.

6/12/2010 11:25 AM

I have read the transcripts received thus far three times. With each time, I used a pencil to highlight some themes which appeared to emerge. I also, made comments in the margins of the transcripts in order to bracket my own thoughts.
The campus presidents appeared to have played a significant role (at least with the three transcripts I have reviewed so far.
The system president has emerged very clearly thus far as a strong player with this reorganization.
Also, I am seeing the emergence of a pattern concerning the loss of the technical mission and some resistance among the faculty.

6/15/2010 08:15 AM

I have read a total of ten transcripts at least five times. The themes which I referenced in my June 12 log are remaining. Another theme which is emerging involves communication – within the campuses and at the President's Council level.
Some of the transcripts suggest differences in the level of understanding of what a community college is. Some believe a community college is more of a liberal arts institution while others see it as including both the technical and liberal arts mission.
I am also picking up on the role accreditation played in the process. The AA degree in Liberal Studies triggered a change in accreditation.
Another interesting observation, some of the participants view the change as major while some of the others see it as more of a name change to solidify the path the technical colleges were already pursuing.

6/19/2010 08:00 AM

I have spent the last four days "free coding" the transcripts from the interviews. Throughout this iterative process, patterns began to immerge and I began the process of creating tree nodes. I would revisit the coding multiple times and attempt to look at it from different angles and perspectives while reflecting on the meanings. Similar categories were merged during this process. For the first time, I began to see several patterns and themes emerging very clearly.
6/21/2010 09:00 AM

Over the course of the past two days, I created textural descriptions for each of the participants interviewed. While doing this, I found it helpful to pause and re-read the transcripts of each participant yet again.

6/23/2010 07:00 AM

I began the process of writing textural descriptions for the themes discovered. This was a challenging process and it followed extensive text and query searches using the NVivo software.

Appendix K: External Consultant Survey

Dean Cech Dissertation
Quality Control
July 8, 2010

Questionnaire & Interview Participant Number	Question 1: Coercion to participate?	Question 2: Coercion to respond certain way	Question 3: Expect any impact on your job	Question 4: Option to receive a copy of responses or interview transcript?	Comments or Questions
1	N	N	N	Y	NONE
2	N	N	N	Y	NONE
3	N	N	A	A	A
4	N	N	N	Y	B
5	N	N	N	Y	NONE
6	N	N	N	Y	NONE
7	N	N	N	Y	C
8	E	E	E	E	E
9	N	N	N	Y	D
10	F	F	F	F	F
11	N	N	N	Y	NONE

A. Concern over the clearness of her/his comments. Wanted to discuss the comments in the draft with Dean Cech. Was not concerned over current job but more about the public perception of how the comments were represented. Dean Cech contacted the participant and he clarified the participant could send an updated transcript.
B. Indicated Dean Cech had a good grasp of the transition and was quite knowledgeable on the subject matter. She/he said they actually gained several insights from him…
C. Indicated he/she had been retired for several years and hoped they had recalled the transition accurately.
D. Indicated it was a pleasure to talk with Dean Cech.
E. While this participant sent an email indicating he/she was happy to respond by either email or telephone, at the time of this report, he/she had not responded to my telephone or email messages.
F. At conclusion of this report submission, participant appears to be out of the office and has not responded to either telephone or email messages.

Curriculum Vitae

John Edward Cech

Business Address:
College of Technology
3803 Central Ave.
Billings, MT 59102
jcech@msubillings.edu

Home Address:
2609 Emerson Place
Billings, MT 59102

Education

Ph.D. candidate, Community College Leadership, Walden University, Minneapolis, Minnesota; mid-dissertation – complete by July 1, 2010 and defend Summer 2010 (funded by MetLife Foundation)

Dissertation Title: Creating the Maine community college system: A phenomenological study of leader experiences and reactions to transformational change in a multi-campus system

Master of Nonprofit Management, Regis University, Denver, Colorado (*with Graduate Honors*), 2001

Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Computer Information Systems, Montana State University-Billings (Eastern Montana College), Billings, Montana, 1985

Professional Experience

June, 2002 – present: Dean (campus CEO) College of Technology, Montana State University Billings

College of Technology, MSU Billings: The State's fourth-largest comprehensive two-year college serving a community college role located on a separate 35-acre campus. The College of Technology (COT) offers Associate of Science (AS), Associate of Arts (AA), Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees, and a Certificate of Applied Science (CAS), as well as numerous certificates, developmental education, and GED adult education programming. The Fall 2009 enrollment is 1406, with an FTE of 988. These students are served by 40 full-time faculty, 55 part-time faculty, and 41 staff, operating with a budget of $4,280,331 in addition to services such as IT, Registrar, Purchasing, and Facility Maintenance, supplied and budgeted by the MSU Billings campus. Billings, Montana is a regional hub for medical care, energy production and management, finance, communications, and retail.

Title and position description: The Dean of the College of Technology serves as the campus CEO, overseeing campus master planning; academic programming and

assessment; facilities management; budgeting; community outreach, relations, and fundraising; student services, in collaboration with the University's Vice Chancellor for student services; and relations with the College's 25-member National Advisory Board.

Responsibilities

- **External Leadership:** Create a shared comprehensive community college vision for the College and communicate it to key external partners and constituencies.

- **Internal Leadership:** Provide leadership that strives for excellence in human resource management, budget management, professional growth of the faculty and staff, and facilitation of student learning.

- **Academic Leadership:** Ensure all academic programs meet regional and specialized accreditation requirements. Support faculty growth, curriculum, and pedagogical knowledge through professional development, mentorship, and continuous quality improvement.

- **Campus Facilities:** Ensure college-wide participation in developing and implementing long-term campus capital projects for the College. Planning must consider how facilities and state-of-the-art technology will enhance student learning.

- **Partnerships:** Provide leadership and enhance the positive relationships the College maintains with local and regional business, industry, Montana legislature, government, nonprofits, P-20 educational institutions, and other higher education institutions in the region.

- **Resource Development:** Provide leadership supporting all fundraising and development activities for the College, including grants development, donor cultivation, capital campaigns, and federal and state appropriations in collaboration with the MSU Billings Foundation.

- **Public Relations:** Provide direction and support for all College external relations, including community relations, government relations, and marketing.

- **Community Development:** Ensure the College is integrally woven into the fabric of the local and regional community.

- **Student Services:** Provide leadership in developing strategies to stabilize enrollment trends and increase full-time student enrollment. Work closely with the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs to create a student-centered culture that ensures access, sustains educational excellence, fosters student learning, and supports high levels of student achievement.

Accomplishments

- Implemented a community college vision for the COT resulting in dramatic student growth: headcount growth of 127%, from 620 students in 2002 to 1406 in 2009; FTE growth of 79%, from 553 in 2002 to 988 in 2009-10.

- Created a learner-centered culture and clear faculty understanding of the connection between learning experiences and the collective responsibility for assessment (standards) and student success.

- Led the transformation of the COT from a vocational-technical institution to the comprehensive community college arm of the University, resulting in the addition of 11 new academic university-transfer and applied technical programs since 2002, with two additional programs planned for approval in Spring 2010, acquisition of 14 acres, construction of a 50,000 sq. ft. health sciences building, and infusion of $21,760,244 of grant and appropriation funds into the College since 2002, including:

    - Eight federal grants totaling $7,301,704

    - Nine state grants totaling $1,728,540

    - Six private industry and foundation grants/gifts totaling $1,530,000

    - Testified on 14 occasions before the 2005 Montana Legislature to advocate for $11 million in new building and equipment bonds to build a 50,000 sq. ft. COT Health Sciences Building. Facilitated student and faculty involvement with building design. The building was funded in 2005.

- In collaboration with faculty and staff, designed a new "one-stop" student services center concept, with construction scheduled to begin May 2010.

- In 2009, traveled to China with MSU-Billings' Executive Director of International studies, resulting in eight separate agreements with Chinese institutions (Dalian Jiaotong University, Nanjing Yingtian College, Wenli College of Bohai University, Liaoning Petrol Professional Technical College, Bohai Shipbuilding Vocational College, Shenyang Sport University, College of Engineering of Shenyang University of Technology, and Quangxi Medical University) to send students to the COT. Projecting 40 international students to begin at COT by AY12.

- Initiated a partnership with Billings School District #2 in 2008 to create a COT branch of the Billings Public Schools Adult Basic Education GED preparation center creating a new pathway for student learning.

- Created over 30 new COT-community partnerships since 2002, including local and regional industry, local and regional community colleges, tribal colleges, secondary schools, federal and state agencies, and city, county, nonprofit, foundation, and agricultural employers.

- Established the COT as a regional leader in energy workforce training with the development of process plant technology, power plant technology, and alternative energy technology programs (including a $250,000 mobile energy training lab, a wind technology AAS degree, and an alternative energy CAS scheduled to begin fall 2010).

- Led growth in developing allied health training, including approval of Billings' first 3-year AS-RN degree, Radiologic Technology Program, Medical Coding and Insurance Billing, and a Surgical Technology partnership with the University of Montana.

- Created 2+2 associate degree transfer partnerships with MSU-Northern, Salish Kootenai College, University of Wyoming, Montana State University, University of Montana, and the MSU Billings Colleges of Business, Allied Health Profession, and Arts and Sciences.

- Facilitated a system of statewide secondary-to-postsecondary pathways opportunities through a partnership between the Montana Career Information System and the Montana Tech Prep programs.

- Led successful reaccreditation efforts including NWCCU 10-year review, NATEF-Automotive, NATEF-Diesel, NATEF-Auto Collision, Repair and Paint, Montana State Board of Nursing, CAAHEP-Paramedic, and CAAHEP-Medical Assistant.

- Negotiated the first articulation agreement between the Montana State Apprenticeship Program and a Montana public two-year postsecondary institution in the state's history.

- Led faculty through a comprehensive review of outcomes assessment for each of the College's 35 academic programs, including review of all program outcomes and revision of each individual program assessment plan.

- Represented the COT on the statewide MEA/MFT Labor Vocational Technical Educators of Montana labor negotiation team since 2002. Results include successful negotiation of three two-year labor contract agreements.

- Reorganized college leadership structure from a "flat" structure with no department or division chairs to a four-division structure with faculty chairs, shared governance, and a focus on student learning.
- Promoted new faculty and staff through professional development initiatives funded through grants and private corporate donations; established a faculty leadership award to recognize and promote faculty excellence.

- Encouraged faculty pursuit of continuing education: Since 2002, eight have enrolled in advanced degree or doctoral programs.

- Fostered innovation through creation of new distance delivery, blended learning, and remote classroom labs supported by a National Science Foundation ATE grant.

- Established a 25-member National Advisory Board for the College of Technology with membership including senior level executives from Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, California, Oregon, Kentucky, and the District of Columbia.

- Successfully balanced the COT's budget each year since hire in 2002.

- Represented the COT on key boards at the local, regional, and state levels including Billings Chamber of Commerce and State Workforce Investment Board, and through leadership positions on numerous commissions and boards as appointed by the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Governor.

1989 – 2002: Dean of Community Services, Continuing Education, and Summer Sessions, Rocky Mountain College (1989-1995 title was Director)

Rocky Mountain College, Billings, Montana: Rocky Mountain College is a private, four-year institution created by the 1946 merger of the Billings Polytechnic Institute and Intermountain Union College. It enrolls about 800 students annually, with 70 faculty in 45 programs of study including many applied academic programs. The College is governed by a Board of Trustees.

Title and Position Description: As Dean of Community Services, Continuing Education, and Outreach, I was a member of President's Cabinet and participated in monthly Board of Trustee meetings. The position's scope included development, coordination, scheduling, and direction of the following: Summer Session; OutReach: Continuing Education Program; Fortin Health Education Center, including direction of the College's physical education/athletic facilities, community health and recreation club, and aquatics program; youth enrichment programs and athletic camps; Elderhostel Program (one campus and four off-campus sites; program attained Supersite status); Computer Applications AA Program; contract training and community small business

development; teacher recertification courses; and scheduling and coordination of all conferences.

Responsibilities:

- **Administration:** Responsible for over $1.5 million dollar budget including all continuing education, summer session, and auxiliary enterprises.

- **Summer Session:** Planned and administered campus summer session in collaboration with Academic Vice President and College Division Chairs.

- **Outreach and Continuing Education:** Led development of all credit and noncredit outreach certificates, courses, and workshops for the College.

- **Administration of AA Degrees:** Administered two-year Associate of Science and Associate of Arts degrees and supervised program faculty.

- **Community Relations and Marketing:** Led community relations and marketing for college continuing education programs, summer session, summer camps, and associate degree programs.

- **Conferences:** Charged with developing professional and community conferences focused on secondary educators, business and industry leaders, and general community.

- **Elderhostel Program:** Charged with growing RMC's Elderhostel Program, which initially consisted of two sessions on the RMC campus annually.

- **Fortin Education Athletic Center:** Supervised the operations and budgeting of the Fortin Education Athletic Center including community health club and aquatics program.

- **Summer Camps:** Led the development of over 20 summer camps annually including academic enrichment, technology, and athletics.

Accomplishments:

- Partnered with Montana State University Extension Office, Montana Cattleman's Association, Montana Stockgrower's Association, and Montana Farm Bureau to establish the annual "January Thaw: Farm and Ranch Conference," which attracted over 800 regional participants annually, resulting in a Distinguished Service Award from the MSU Bozeman Extension Service.

- Developed a studies abroad summer travel program series at Rocky Mountain College including study programs in Israel, Greece, and South Africa (1995-2002).

- Grew College Summer Session program enrollment by over 300% from 1989-2002.

- Expanded summer camp programs to an annual enrollment of over 2,000 campers each year including a wide variety of sports and academic enrichment camps.

- Increased Elderhostel program from two sessions annually to Supersite status, offering twenty-four programs both on campus and at sites in Red Lodge, MT, and Cody, WY.

- Expanded overall outreach and conference program enrollment to over 10,000 unduplicated enrollments.

- Offered regional Professional Development Conferences, including the Wyncom "Lessons in Leadership" series and the People Institute for business executives.

- In 1989, established the College's first student computer lab, including instructional software for computer programming, D-Base, Auto-CAD, Excel Spreadsheets and Microsoft applications, with the help of grant funding.

- Participated in "To the Summit" Capital Campaign for Rocky Mountain College, which raised in excess of $21,000,000 for capital and endowment projects.

- Raised over $700,000 in grant funds for specific project support, including grants from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, the American Honda Foundation, Harvest States Foundation, the Fortin Foundation, the C.M. Bair Memorial Trust, and several gifts from the First Interstate Bancsystem Foundation in support of conferences for the Rocky Mountain College Institute for Peace Studies, in partnership with James Scott.

- In conjunction with the RMC President, worked with Dr. Chikara Higashi of the Japanese House of Representatives on developing a Japan/Montana international partnership and student exchange program, resulting in enrollments of over 50 Japanese students per year during the 1990s.

- In 2001, led effort at RMC to serve as one of three sites officially approved by the Pearl Harbor Survivors Association for a series of four major Pearl Harbor 60th Anniversary Memorial events, attracting over 1,000 attendees from around the region.

1985-1989: Faculty Member, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT
Instructor in Computer Information Technology and founder and director of the College's first AA degree in Computer Applications.

Faculty/Teaching Experience

1985-89, Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT, 1985-1989. Instructor in Computer Technology; program director, AA degree in Computer Applications.

1984-85, Eastern Montana College School for Extended Studies, Billings, MT. Adjunct Instructor, Computer Technology.

Selected Community Activities

- Member, Montana Public Television Board of Directors, 2009-present.
- Member, United Way of Yellowstone County, Board of Directors, 2007-present.
- Member, Billings Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, 2006-present.
- Member, ExxonMobil Community Advisory Board, 2006-present.
- Billings Rotary Club, Member,1989-present; Co-Chair, Program Committee, 1997-present; Board Member, 1999-2001.
- Member, Billings Town and Gown Society Board, 2009-present.
- Co-chair of Education Committee, Celebrate Billings, a collaborative venture of MSU-Billings, the *Billings Gazette*, Saint Vincent Healthcare, Billings Clinic, the Big Sky Economic Development Corporation, City of Billings, the Billings Chamber of Commerce, and Yellowstone County, 2001-2008.
- Secretary of the Board, Zoo Montana, Board of Trustees, 2002-2007.
- Member, Yellowstone Lewis and Clark Bicentennial Commission. Appointed by Yellowstone County Commissioners in 2000, term through 2006.
- Co-Chair, Western Heritage Center (an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution), National Advisory Council member, 2004-2009.
- Advisory Board Member, Saint Vincent Healthcare Bio-Terrorism Preparation Task Force, 2003-2008.
- Member, Community Seven Television Board of Directors, 2002-2004.
- Institute for Peace Studies at Rocky Mountain College, Program Committee Chairman, 1991-2001.

- Yellowstone Art Museum (a regional museum of the fine arts), Billings, MT, Marketing Advisory Committee, 1996-2000.

Awards

Inducted into Kappa Delta Pi, International Academic Honor Society, 2009.

Regis University, Denver, CO, 2007 Distinguished Alumni Award for Community Service.

Rocky Mountain College, Billings, MT 2001 Distinguished Service Award.

Montana State University, Bozeman, MT 2000 Agricultural Extension Service Director's Distinguished Service Award (Recognition for Agricultural Leadership in Montana).

North American Association of Summer Session, Providence, RI, 1999 Innovative and Creative Award for Summer Session. NASS represents over 500 colleges and universities from the United States, Canada, Caribbean, United Kingdom, and Australia.

Fundraising Accomplishments as Dean of the College of Technology

Federal		
U.S. Dept. of Labor Community-Based Job Training (CBJT) Competitive grant	Creation of Alternative Energy/Wind Technology degree; partnership with MSU Great Falls COT (funded 2009)	$500,000
U.S. Dept. of Labor (CBJT) competitive grant	Creation of an Energy Workforce Training Center (funded 2006)	$1,999,000
U.S. Department of Labor (CBJT) competitive grant	Creation of the Montana BILT (Building Labor Industry Training) center, with partner sites around the state (funded 2005)	$1,980,042
National Science Foundation A.T.E.	Conversion of the Process Plant Technology Program to remote access and delivery (funded 2005)	$546,439
U.S. Department of Education, congressionally directed grant	Creation of a Nursing Pathways project (funded 2004)	$396,800
U.S. Department of Education, congressionally directed grant	Creation of a power plant degree (funded 2004)	$745,575
U.S. Department of Education, congressionally directed grant	Expansion of computer technology and training (funded 2003)	$695,450
U.S. Department of Education, congressionally directed grant	Creation of new healthcare training programs (funded 2003)	$438,398
State		
2007 Montana Legislature, budget appropriation	Redesign of COT Tech building to create "One-Stop" Student Center (construction	$2,000,000

	begins May 2010)	
Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, competitive award	Enable participation in the State of Montana WIRED bio-product (e.g. bio-fuels) initiative (funded 2005)	$285,199
2005 Montana Legislature, budget appropriation (made 14 trips to Helena for presentations to legislative committees)	Design and construction of a new 50,000 square foot health science building (bond issue approved 2005)	$9,000,000
Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) competitive grant	Equipment upgrades in welding, heating, ventilation and air conditioning, and drafting and design (funded 2005)	$272,531
OCHE competitive grant	Equipment upgrades in automotive technology (funded 2005)	$401,473
OCHE competitive grant	Equipment upgrades in nursing, health and safety programs (funded 2005)	$349,462
OCHE competitive grant	Equipment upgrades in computer technology programs (funded 2005)	$113,131
OCHE nursing grant	Nursing equipment (funded, 2005)	$13,000
Montana Legislature designated competitive grant fund	New workforce program development support (funded 2005)	$200,000
Montana Department of Commerce, competitive grant	Creation of certified nurse assistant training in partnership with St. John's Lutheran Home (funded 2005)	$18,744
OCHE, competitive grant	Creation of healthcare pathways project (funded 2005)	$75,000
Private Foundations and Donations		
Tractor and Equipment Corporation	Equipment donation: road grader for heavy equipment program (funded, 2009)	$450,000
M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust	Equipment and establishment of new Chemistry, Life Sciences, and Anatomy and Physiology Labs (funded 2008)	$250,000
Haar Construction & Langlas Construction Student Scholarships	Student scholarships for COT construction technology program (funded 2007)	$200,000
DaimlerChrysler Motors	New automobiles for the automotive technology lab (funded 2006)	$180,000
Several individual private donors	Funds for the acquisition of 6.125 acres of land next to the College (funded 2006)	$625,000
Roscoe Steel	Funds for the College Welding and Drafting and Design programs (funded	$10,000

	2006)	
Pierce Flooring	Creation of floor installation training (funded 2005)	$15,000
Total external funds secured:		**$21,760,244**

Selected Professional Activities

- American Association of Community Colleges, member 2002-present.
- League for Innovation in the Community College, member 2007-present.
- Co-chair, Office of the Montana Commissioner of Higher Education, Workforce Responsiveness Committee, 2010-present.
- Workforce Development Committee, Montana Board of Regents, member, 2002-present.
- Montana Two Year Education Council, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, member, 2002-present.
- Steering Committee Member, Lumina Foundation-funded "Making Opportunity Affordable Implementation Committee, " Montana Board of Regents, 2009-present.
- Governor's Workforce Development Grant Committee, member 2005 – present. Reappointed by Governor Schweitzer in 2009.
- State Workforce Investment Board (SWIB) Apprenticeship Committee, member 2006-present.
- Montana University System Advisor, Montana Shared Leadership Initiative for State Board of Regents and Montana Department of Education, 2004-2005.
- Rocky Mountain College National Advisory Board, member 2002-2004.
- Elderhostel Western United States Advisory Board to the Area Director (Alaska, Hawaii, California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Montana, and Wyoming), member 1999-2002.

Selected Workshops/Convention Presentations

March 2009, co-presenter with Terry O'Banion, "Is a Doctorate Right for You?" Innovations Conference 2009, Reno, NV.

March 2008, presenter, "In Re-Mission: Rethinking the Mission and Scope of a Community College," Innovations Conference 2008, Denver, CO.

March 2008, co-presenter, "Learning-Centered Innovations that Help Students Succeed," Innovations Conference 2008, Denver, CO.

January, 2007, presenter, "The Gathering Clouds of a Perfect Storm: A Looming Workforce Crisis," a presentation to the 2007 Montana Legislature.

January, 2006, keynote presenter, "Montana's Two Year Colleges: Supporting Our Future Industry," a presentation to the Montana Aerospace Association, Bozeman, MT.

October, 2005, keynote presenter, "Montana's Two Year Education: An Undiscovered Resource," a presentation to the Montana Economic Development Authority Annual Meeting, Billings, MT.

October, 2004, keynote presenter, "Strategic Alliances," National Career and Technical Education State Directors Conference, Whitefish, MT.

August 2002-December 2004, Presentation to 12 service clubs and organizations including Kiwanis, Optimists Club, Rotary, and Chamber of Commerce.

April 1997, Elderhostel, Boston, MA, keynote presenter, "Elderhostel International Marketing Plan," presentation to the Elderhostel Supersite Annual Conference.

January 1997, Elderhostel, San Diego, CA., keynote presenter, "Understanding and Using the Elderhostel International Web Site," presentation to the Elderhostel International Marketing Committee.

August 1996, "Elderhostel Marketing Plan," Montana State Elderhostel Coordinating Committee.

Publications

Cech, J., & Wendt, B. (2009). "Dual Enrollment, Multiple Paths and Diverse Students: A Look at Options for Enhancing Entry into Postsecondary Education," *The Montana Professor, (19)*1, 15-23.

Cech, J. (2008). "The Gathering Clouds of a Perfect Storm," *The Montana Petroleum Association Magazine.*

Cech, J. (1987). *Understanding the VMS (Virtual Memory System) Operating System*, written for the United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Reclamation Missouri Basin Region.