The challenges of the community college presidency in the new millennium: Pathways, preparation, competencies, and leadership programs needed to survive

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Degree Type
Dissertation

Date of Award
2007

Degree Name
Doctor of Philosophy

Department
Educational Leadership and Policy Studies

First Advisor
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Abstract
Many of the community college presidents, upper-level administrators, and faculty, who began their careers during the advent of the community colleges in the 1960's and 1970's, are nearing the end of their careers. In a survey conducted by the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) in 2001, community college presidents responded that 45% planned to retire by 2007 (Shults, 2001). In a similar study, Weisman and Vaughan (2002) found that 79% of the presidents surveyed intended to retire by 2012. The amount of history, experience and expertise that will be lost with their retirement is immeasurable.

In April of 2005, the AACC Board of Directors approved a document specifying a newly revised set of six competencies to be used as a framework for community college leadership development (AACC, 2005). These six Competencies for Community College Leaders became manifest from the results of a survey administered to participants of a series of leadership summits and members of the Leading Forward National Advisory Panel. Although one hundred percent of the respondents rated each of the six competencies as “very” or “extremely” essential to effectively performing in the various roles expected of community college leaders, responses to questions about how well their formal training prepared them to meet these competencies was not encouraging. In short, survey participants indicated a crucial need to establish this framework in contemporary leadership development programs.

The purpose of this study was to examine how current community college presidents’ demographics, backgrounds, career pathways, leadership programs, and educational preparation develop the transformational leadership skills embedded in the AACC’s Competencies for Community College Leaders; and, inform educational leaders of ways that leadership development programs might be improved to better prepare future leaders for their first presidency. Four hundred fifteen current community college presidents responded to The Community College Presidency: Demographics and Leadership Preparation Factors Survey. Findings reveal that: (1) the top five challenges facing current community college leaders are: fundraising, student enrollment and retention, legislative advocacy, economic and workforce development, and faculty relations; (2) overall, current community college presidents rated themselves prepared or well-prepared in the AACC's Competencies for Community College Leaders; (3) current community college leaders were less likely to be prepared in the skill sets embedded in the organizational strategy and resource management domains; and (4) formal leadership programs and educational preparation in the highest degree earned play significant role in how presidents perceived their level of preparation prior to assuming their first chief executive officer position job. This study provides new knowledge to the literature about the preparation and development of community college presidents in the competencies recently recommended by the AACC. Findings should be used to inform current presidents, aspiring leaders, and educators who have oversight of formal and informal leadership development and educational programs about specific areas that can be targeted to better prepare tomorrow’s leaders.
The Challenges of the Community College Presidency in the New Millennium: Pathways, Preparation, Competencies, and Leadership Programs Needed to Survive

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2007

Recommended Citation


https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/15612

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Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Iowa State University, Ames Iowa. Google Scholar. Eddy, Pamela L. (2005). Framing the role of leader: How community college presidents construct their leadership. A New Perspective on Community College Presidents: Results of a National Study. Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 25(6), 793–804. Google Scholar. Moore, Kathryn, Martorana, S. V., & Twombly, Susan (1985). Today’s Academic Leaders: A National Study of Administrators in Two-Year Colleges. Center for the Study of Higher Education: University Park, PA. Google Scholar. Parents need to ask their adolescent how they are doing without prying too much – while also being accessible and open. 4. The school may not live up to the expectations set by the brochures and admissions counselors. Rarely does an admissions pamphlet tell all about the ins and outs, and the limits and shortcomings of a place. Adjusting to College: A Guide for New Students & Their Parents. Barkin, C. (1999). When Your Kid Goes to College: A Parent’s Survival Guide. New York: Avon Books. The College of the Overwhelmed: The Campus Mental Health Crisis and What To Do About It. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Boss. (The chapter for parents is excellent for suggestions on staying in touch, problem solving and Mental Health symptom checklists.) When are the challenges of leadership most obvious? What are some of the specific challenges that many leaders face, and how can you cope with them? Leadership constantly presents challenges to a leader and their abilities. The leadership challenges of leadership are ongoing and occur daily. Knowing when the greatest challenges are likely to arise, however, can prepare you to meet them successfully. As is stated often in the Community Tool Box, it’s important that any collaboration you enter into be consistent with your mission and philosophy. Being part of a community coalition that includes organizations and groups with very different goals and philosophies is usually not a problem. Manager competencies can improve management skills and influence the behavior of others – which can result in a positive impact on the bottom line. Competency is defined as “the quality of being competent; adequacy; possession of required skill, knowledge, qualification, or capacity.” Organizations should have defined competency requirements for their leadership team. This allows the organization to be managed with a consistent competency model. Learning how to navigate this sensitive situation can help the new supervisor be successful. 2. Conflict Resolution. Conflict in the workplace is an inevitable reality. The secret is preparation. If you need to hire a new employee, spend time preparing for the interview so you can hire the best person for the job. 7. Team Building. Table 4.11. AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders - Perceptions of Preparation for First Presidency and Current Level of Importance. Table 4.12. Overall Ratings of Preparation for First Presidency and Job Satisfaction in Current Positions. viii. 56. Educational preparation develop the transformational leadership skills embedded in the AACC’s Competencies for Community College Leaders; and, inform educational leaders of ways that leadership development programs might be improved to better prepare future leaders for their first presidency. Four hundred fifteen current community college presidents responded to The Community College Presidency: Demographics and Leadership Preparation Factors Survey.