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The Effectiveness of a Community College's Grow Your Own (GYO) Leadership Development Program

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**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S
GROW YOUR OWN (GYO) LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM**

by

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**Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

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Doctoral Candidate, **Cynthia Rowan**, has successfully defended and made the required modifications to the text of the doctoral dissertation for the **Ed.D.** during this **Spring Semester 2012**.

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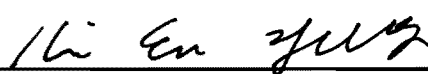
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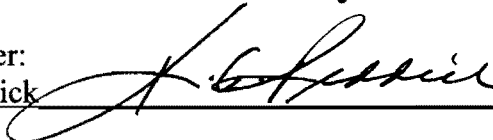
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Abstract

A substantial number of research studies indicate that the community colleges will continue to experience shortages of leadership talent due to excessive retirements and a lack of prepared incumbents. Without appropriate leadership talent, the ability of community colleges to fulfill the ever-increasing demands of their mission and constituents they serve may be compromised. Single-campus, district, and state Grow Your Own (GYO) leadership development programs emerged in the early 2000's as a strategy to develop potential leaders. While significant attention has been focused on the content of such programs, little emphasis has been placed on the effectiveness of these programs beyond participant reaction.

The purpose of this study was to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of a community college's GYO leadership development program in addressing the college's desired outcomes for the program. The study was conducted at a medium, rural-serving college in the Northeast that has been offering an annual GYO program since 2003. This qualitative study was a summative evaluation. The framework for the study was an adaptation of Donald Kirkpatrick's four-level training evaluation model. The study included an examination of participant reactions to the program, what participants learned in the program, how what participants learned in the program was applied in their work, how participants were supported after the program, and the program's impact in meeting the college's established leadership development objectives.

The study included interviews conducted with 41 of the 91 program participants who were still employed at the college, five program planners, the college president, and 11 senior administrators to determine the program's effectiveness. Additionally,

documents such as the college's periodic evaluation surveys, program syllabus, objectives, and participant materials were also examined.

The findings of the study indicate that, while the GYO leadership development program generally met the college's desired objectives, the infrastructure to support continued leadership development was lacking. Further, the findings indicated that, while a programmatic approach to leadership development is commendable, a more comprehensive approach to ongoing leadership development, via support systems and continuous learning initiatives, would maximize effectiveness. The findings support recommendations to heighten overall effectiveness in three areas: 1) future programmatic improvement, 2) strengthening of the college's infrastructure to foster continued leadership development, and 3) key areas that should be more rigorously and regularly evaluated in the future.

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I would like to thank everyone at Choice Community College who participated in my study. Your time and willingness to share your experiences were greatly appreciated. I would like to particularly thank the President, the Executive Director of Human Resources, and LCC Coordinator/Consultant, who spent many hours providing me with information, insights, and support. It was a privilege to conduct my study at your fine institution and an honor to work with all of you.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Jane and Alfred Seiss:

You instilled in me the importance and value of education. I am forever grateful for all of the love, guidance, and support that you provided to me so unconditionally.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

The impact of the aging baby-boom generation on America's labor force has become a major source of public concern. The baby boom, which began in 1946 and continued through 1964, saw approximately 77 million persons born during this time period. As individuals born during this time period, or baby boomers as they are generally termed, begin to retire in the coming years, they will leave a sizeable void in the labor market (Dohm, 2000). Occupations identified that will have some of the greatest replacement needs due to retirements include college and university professors and college administrators (Shults 2001).

While institutions of higher education, in general, will experience the impact of the growing retirements over the next 20 years, researchers have suggested that the nation's more than 1000 community colleges will be affected most greatly by this trend (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2004; Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Ashburn, 2007; Gibson-Harman, Rodriguez & Grant-Haworth, 2002; Shults, 2001). The majority of community colleges were established in the 1960's and early 1970's, and many of the current faculty members, administrators, and presidents of these community colleges have served since their inception.

Research from the AACC indicates that the average age of college presidents, administrators and faculty leaders continues to increase, and projections for retirements is anticipated to be at above-average rates over the next few years. Community college presidents are approaching retirement age at rapid rates. In 1986, the average age of a

community college president was 51. In 1998, it was 57. Estimates indicated that, by the year 2011, 79% of today's college presidents will retire. Similarly, in 1984, the average age of community college senior administrators was under 50; in 2000, the average was 52 (Shults, 2001).

With the indication that community college leaders will retire at above-average rates over the next decade or two, it appears that this will have a serious impact on the continuity of leadership within the community colleges. It has been suggested that impending retirements affect, not only the current leadership, but also those in positions who could possibly be considered incumbents to leadership positions (AACC, 2004; Amey & VanDerLinden 2002; Leubsdorf, 2006). Machanic (2003) estimated that, in the next few years, 700 new community college presidents and 1800 new upper-level administrators will be needed. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the number of students currently pursuing graduate degrees in community college administration may fill only a fraction of the number of openings anticipated (O'Banion, 2007).

As retirements escalate, community colleges will need to be concerned with the experience, quality, and preparation of those who will follow in leading these institutions. Ashburn (2007) stated that "not enough community colleges have done the necessary planning in the 1980's and 1990's to develop leaders and are now paying for it" (p. 2). Since limited institutional planning may have occurred, the shortage of leadership talent presents a serious challenge as to how a specific college will respond to addressing their needs.

Community colleges may now be challenged more than ever to look within their own institutions to identify future leaders and consider how leadership development needs can be addressed. Anderson (1997) indicated that 90% of current community college presidents came from the community college system, and it is further suggested that the next generation of senior community college leaders are already employed in midlevel positions within the community colleges.

As early as 2000, the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) began addressing the impending shortage of leadership expertise, as well as examining the skills leaders would require in the future. In 2003, the AACC received a grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to address the future needs of community college leaders. A summit, entitled "Leading Forward," saw national authorities on community college leadership convene to identify and gain consensus on the most critical competencies and skills needed for community college leaders.

After two years of extensive research in the field, the AACC Board of Directors unanimously approved "Competencies for Community College Leaders," which detailed six competencies that were deemed "very" or "extremely" essential to the optimum performance of a community college leader. These six competencies are: 1) Organizational Strategy, 2) Resource Management, 3) Communication, 4) Collaboration, 5) Community College Advocacy, and 6) Professionalism (Appendix A). It is worthy to note that the identification of these competencies served as a catalyst for leadership development programs to emerge as a strategy for preparing faculty and staff for community college leadership positions (Jeandron, 2006).

Community college leadership development programs are typically offered via two specific avenues: 1) national and/or state-sponsored seminars and institutes, and 2) specific institutional development programs or initiatives (Shults, 2001; Watts & Hammons, 2002). Both of these types of programs emphasize programmatic-type professional development initiatives such as workshops, seminars, and cohort training initiatives at the in-college level (O'Banion, 2007; Rouseff-Baker, 2002; Stolzenberg, 2002; Sydow, 2002). Amey (2006) prepared a report for the AACC, highlighting the practices of six university-based community college leadership development programs that have been created since 2000, suggesting that a trend could be seen where leadership development programs were starting to align their program content to the aforementioned AACC competencies.

While national- and state-sponsored institutes for community college leadership development, such as The Chair Academy, the Future Leaders Institute and the Executive Leadership Institute, are touted as premier programs, they are often costly to attend and most often are designed to complement formal academic training (Eddy, 2008). Since program content may be generic, participants may be left to determine how the content can be applied in their specific institution and position. These factors may limit the accessibility of participants to a program, and could also be limited by an institution's financial constraints.

Leadership development programs internally developed within an institution or state system are commonly referred to as Grow Your Own programs (GYO) (Shults, 2001). These types of programs focus on developing future college leaders from within the existing rank of community college employees, and may be viewed as more

advantageous. The findings of the AACC's 2005 study suggest that GYO programs have emerged as a valuable and effective strategy to address leadership needs. GYO programs typically tend to be more holistic in approach, emphasizing personal growth as well as community college leadership (Jeandron, 2006). Many programs developed by individual colleges are customized to address specific leadership challenges of their institutional environment. Additionally, the content of GYO programs can be easily adjusted to address changing leadership needs of a particular institution (Hull & Keim, 2007). Jeandron (2006) indicated that community colleges that have GYO programs "continue to create a climate of learning and leadership for their communities" (p. 39), which is the essence of leadership in the 21st Century.

Purpose of the Study

Since GYO programs offer many advantages in developing leadership competencies, which in turn may assist in addressing a shortage of available leadership talent, it would be worthwhile to understand how effective these programs really are in meeting the leadership needs of an institution. While a robust body of literature examines the need for, and approaches towards leadership development in community colleges, virtually no research comprehensively examines the effectiveness of internally developed leadership programs (GYO) in community colleges.

Despite the notion that institutions of higher education are greatly concerned about evaluating professional development programs, there is no consistent method used to accomplish this objective (Sears, Cohen & Drope, 2008). Most studies suggest that evaluations are limited to the reactions of participants to programmatic events (Phillips, 2010; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Thackwray, 1997). Specifically, Jeandron (2006) indicated

that “most colleges report having participants evaluate their experience at the end of each session as well as after the conclusion of programs” (p. 31). Reille and Kezar (2010) added that limited empirical research has been conducted on the effectiveness of the curriculum of community college GYO programs. Cota (2006) concurred, noting that researchers have not formally assessed the effectiveness of the content of GYO programs in the community colleges; rather, participant satisfaction, as opposed to learning outcomes or promotions, is the measure of effectiveness.

Since GYO programs generally seem to be more advantageous for community colleges in terms of cost, participant accessibility, and customization of content, it would seem quite beneficial to evaluate their effectiveness beyond the scope of participant satisfaction. Thus, the purpose of this study was to comprehensively examine the effectiveness of a community college’s GYO program in addressing one college’s leadership development objectives.

Research Questions

Main Research Question

How effective is a community college’s Grow You Own (GYO) leadership development program in meeting their defined objectives?

Subsidiary Questions

1. What did participants define as the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the program?
2. What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?
3. Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?
4. How was leadership development supported after the program?

5. How did college administrators and program participants view the effectiveness of the program?
6. What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees?

The Study

The study was conducted at a community college referred to as “Choice Community College,” a medium rural-serving college in the Northeast. The college’s GYO program, referred to as the “Pinnacle Leadership Development Program”, was developed internally by a group of college faculty and administrators after researching leadership development programs in both the public and private sectors. Each year since 2003, cohorts of a total of 15 participants from the faculty, staff, and administrative ranks completed a 12-month program. The program is comprised of a four-day residential, formalized training program, a year-long learning project component, follow-up development training workshops, and mentoring. Choice’s GYO program was cited as an exemplary program by the AACC.

I answered the research questions by conducting a summative evaluation study using qualitative methods. The conceptual framework for the study was an adaptation of Donald Kirkpatrick’s model of training program evaluation. While the model will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, it is important to note that one of the critical reasons why Kirkpatrick’s model (1959, 1976, 1996) was best-suited for this study was that the evaluation criteria extends beyond participant satisfaction. In addition to participant reaction, the four-level model includes evaluation of participant learning, behavior, and results.

To answer the research questions, I interviewed program participants who were still employed at the college and senior administrators of the college, as well as program planners. In addition to the interviews, I reviewed existing evaluation data that the college had collected, as well as program documents and participant materials. All data were coded and analyzed for common themes within each section of the evaluation categories.

The Researcher

The topic of this research study is of keen interest to me for three distinct reasons. First, I served as a senior administrator at three four-year institutions of higher education. I have seen, first-hand, the importance of developing, not only faculty and staff to assume leadership positions, but also leaders at all levels to the vitality of an academic institution. Secondly, as a training and development professional in the private sector for over 25 years, I understand the critical importance and need for more extensive evaluation of program outcomes. It is essential for the continued growth of both the institution and the individual to thoroughly evaluate outcomes. Third, as a researcher of higher education administration, I see the community college sector as an area where leadership development is critically needed to realize the college's mission. Unless GYO leadership programs are thoroughly evaluated for effectiveness, they may be regarded only as events that participants attend – not as effective strategies for individual and institutional growth.

Significance of the Study

This study makes a significant contribution to the extant body of community college research. It offers colleges insight into how effective a GYO program can be in

addressing institutional leadership development objectives. Additionally, it exemplifies how a comprehensive model of evaluation can, not only determine the level of program effectiveness, but also identify potential areas for program improvement and strategies for continued support of leadership development competencies outside the programmatic approach. Since programmatic approaches to development require an investment of time and money on the part of colleges, such an evaluation process will aid in ensuring that such resources yield the most desired outcomes.

The findings of this study will also be used by Choice Community College in enhancing their existing Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. Additionally, the college will use these findings to create additional short- and long-term leadership development strategies geared toward developing the leadership competencies of all faculty, staff, and administrators at the college.

The Organization of the Dissertation

This manuscript is organized into five chapters. Chapter I contains the background of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, descriptions of the study and the researcher, the significance of the study, and the study's organization. Chapter II consists of a review of the relevant literature related to leadership development programs and training program evaluation. Chapter III is the description of the methodology of the study, and includes the study design, research site, participants, data sources and collection, data analysis, and validity of methodology and analysis. Chapter IV contains an analysis of the data in relation to the research questions. Chapter V focuses on the findings of the study, recommendations, limitations, future research recommendations, and concluding remarks.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of a community college's GYO leadership development program. As a foundation for this study, I felt it was important to provide a background on GYO programs and recommended components of leadership development programs, and then an examination of the literature that addresses evaluation. In this review, I am focusing significant emphasis on the importance of training evaluation, the prevailing model of training evaluation along with the pros and cons, and relevant examples of training evaluation in various organizational settings. A summary is provided at the end of the review.

Definitions and Purposes of GYO Leadership Development Programs

GYO leadership development programs are typically defined as short-term programs that focus on leadership development, and are customized to a college's unique goals (Shults, 2001; Watts & Hammons, 2002). Typically, programs are about a year in duration (Cota, 2006). Such programs emerged in the community college in the early 2000's as a strategy to develop leaders internally. This programmatic approach to development was basically a response to the impending shortage of leadership talent within community colleges caused by retirements (Shults, 2001), and was an outgrowth of the "Leading Forward" summit conducted by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation to address the future competencies required of community college leaders. Hull and Keim (2007) found that some 286 community colleges had some type of campus-based leadership development programs.

Numerous studies have indicated that GYO programs are an effective means of developing community college leaders (Amey, 2006; Cooper & Pagatto, 2003; Ebbers, Wild & Friedel, 2003; Vaughn (2001). Hockaday and Puyear (2000) indicated that “Some of the best leadership development for community college leaders takes place within individual institutions. In colleges where presidents and trustees believe that upward mobility of employees is a responsibility of the institution, emerging leaders are considered a valued asset” (p. 8). Stone, 1995 (as cited in Reille & Kezar, 2010) noted that “a campus-based leadership program may even be more effective than an advanced degree or a statewide or nationwide leadership development program because it can be customized to the college’s characteristics, goals, and specific needs” (Reille & Kezar, 2010, p. 60).

Pros and Cons of GYO Programs

While there is overall support for GYO programs as a strategy for leadership development, the literature indicates that there are also pros and cons of such programs. However, there is limited research on this specific aspect of GYO programs. GYO programs offer the ability to customize content, which is an advantage to an institution that wishes to focus on the nuances and individual challenges of their specific college (Jeandron, 2006). Scheduling can be flexible and costs can be contained, as a college can control the number of attendees and budget for such programs. Jeandron (2006) stressed that GYO programs can improve participants’ cultural compatibility within the college. Further, she suggested that this compatibility allows participants, who have completed programs to more appropriately communicate internally and make more insightful decisions. Reille and Kezar (2010) studied 15 GYO programs and found that such

programs were effective in developing management and leadership skills in participants, prepared participants for administrative leadership positions within their colleges, and specifically improved communication and collaboration skills within the college, because program participants were all at the same institution.

Conversely, GYO programs might be too narrowly focused on a specific college's leadership needs, and leadership development, in a broader context, may be limited. Reille and Kezar (2010) indicated that program planners of GYO programs at community colleges often introduce bias in developing curriculum for such program, noting that they may develop programs based on what they think is important or needed, without conducting appropriate needs assessments. Similarly, since program planners may not be familiar with training and development theory, decisions about program pedagogy, program structure, and scheduling are often selected for convenience purposes, rather than effectiveness purposes.

Leadership Development Program Content

While there is some literature that recommends what components might be effective for GYO programs, there is little evidence to substantiate these findings. However, it is prudent to examine literature that generically examines best practices in leadership development in contrast to these recommendations.

Leskiw and Singh (2007) conducted an extensive review of best practices of leadership development in the business sector. They found that there were at least five key factors that are vital for effective leadership development: 1) needs assessment, 2) selection of a suitable audience, 3) design of an appropriate infrastructure to support the

initiative, 4) the design and implementation of an entire learning system, and 5) an effective evaluation system (p. 444).

Needs Assessment

The foundation of any leadership development program begins with assessing needs that link to the objective of the development program with the organizational strategy (Fulmer & Goldsmith, 2000). Additionally, individual organizations need to identify their specific leadership needs and competency gaps of individuals within their ranks (Kesler, 2002). Zenger and Folkman (2003) indicated that, as part of the needs assessment, organizations need to define leadership for their institution and which principles of leadership can be applied. Organizations need to conduct both an internal and external analysis of needs (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Additionally, it is important to identify the elements of effective leaders and any gaps that may exist within an institution (Kesler, 2002). Zenger and Folkman (2003) contended that it is imperative that an organization has a clear definition and understanding of what leadership means in for that particular organization.

Participant Selection

Much of the literature regarding audience (participant) selection in the business sector discusses succession planning and the need to identify high potential employees for leadership position, (Becker & Gerhart, 1996; Day, 2001). Discussion of these topics is not prevalent in the literature on community college leadership development. However, there is literature that supports leadership for employees at all levels in an organization (Goski, 2002, as cited in Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Zenger and Folkman (2003).

GYO programs typically seek diversity in participant selection. This diversity includes groups that combine all levels of employees. Jeandron (2006) indicated that a majority of community colleges she examined made an intentional effort to include a diverse representation of employees in terms of gender, ethnicity, race, age, years of employment, as well as position within the college. Amey and VanDerLinden (2002) contended that successful community colleges will be the ones that encourage the development of new leaders at all levels of the college.

Supporting Infrastructure

There is strong support in the literature for having the right structure and systems in place to support leadership development (Brungardt, 1997; Cacioppe, 1998; Campbell, 2002). Kesler (2002) contended that:

Leaders develop their potential the most when they are allowed to grow and implement their ideas or learning without encumbrances from the organization itself; rather, leadership development is enhanced when social networks within the organization facilitate individual and collective growth and development (p. 34).

Zenger and Folkman (2003) indicated that there needs to be a shared responsibility by employees and managers within organizations to create a culture of accountability in developing leaders. Melum (2002) indicated that organizations need to provide a climate which is conducive to development. Further, opportunities must exist within the workplace for employees to apply leadership concepts to their work. Such accountabilities include ongoing performance discussions, coaching and mentoring relationships, and continuous feedback (Zenger & Folkman, 2003).

In order for an infrastructure that supports leadership development to exist, senior management must first support leadership development as an integral part of the corporate culture (Kesler, 2002). Green (2002) noted that support from senior management can involve input to program curriculum, reinforcement of shared responsibility for leadership development by employees and managers, and regular performance feedback, as part of the leadership development process.

The literature on GYO programs supports the notion that the support of presidents, boards of trustees and senior leaders is critical for leadership development in community colleges (Campbell, 2002; Jeandron 2006; Shults, 2001). This support is deemed critical in promoting continuous leadership development. There is general consensus that leadership development is most effective in colleges where it is integrated into the overall college strategy (Campbell, 2002).

Mentoring, a committed relationship in which a more-seasoned person supports the development of a more-junior person, is considered to be a key element in the leadership development infrastructure (Hernandez-Broom & Hughes, 2004). Mentoring, as a support component of leadership development in GYO programs, is recommended in numerous pieces of literature (Amey & VanderLinden, 2002; Hull & Keim, 2007, Jeandron, 2006; Shults, 2001; Piland & Wolf, 2003). In her survey of GYO programs, Jeandron (2006) found many benefits of mentoring, which includes such components as “exposure to different leadership styles, exposure to different departments on campuses, guidance with individual and group projects, and discussion on leadership issues and challenges” (p. 26). Piland and Wolf (2003) noted the importance of mentors and mentees working closely together and communicating regularly.

Learning System

Best practices in leadership development include developing and implementing an entire learning system comprised of formal training and action-learning activities, followed by opportunities to apply and develop new learning (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Since leadership development is geared toward adults, formal training components such as lectures, presentations, and workshops should subscribe to the tenets of adult learning theory, referred to as “andragogy”. Knowles (2005) contended that andragogy consists of learning strategies that focus on adult learning preferences and include six assumptions related to motivation of adult learning (p. 22):

1. Adults need to know the reason for learning something (Need to Know)
2. Experience (including error) provides the basis for learning activities (Foundation).
3. Adults need to be responsible for their decisions on education, and involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction (Self-concept).
4. Adults are most interested in learning subjects having immediate relevance to their work and/or personal lives (Readiness).
5. Adult learning is problem-centered, rather than content-oriented (Orientation).
6. Adults respond better to internal, versus external, motivators (Motivation).

Action learning is an educational process whereby the participant studies his or her own actions and experience in order to improve performance. Learners acquire knowledge through actual actions and repetitions, rather than through traditional instruction (Noe, 2010). Hernez-Broome and Hughes (2004) stated: “Action learning is a set of organizational development practices in which important real-time organizational

problems are tackled” (p. 2). Action learning is a supplement to traditional classroom training. The development of learning systems and the utilization of action learning is grounded in both leadership development and leadership development theories (Leskiw & Singh, 2007). Zenger and Folkman (2003) suggested that challenging projects and job assignments are effective uses of action learning in the leadership development process.

There is a voluminous amount of literature written about the content of GYO programs (Amey & VanDerLinden, 2002; Campbell, 2002; Jeandron, 2006; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Watts & Hammons, 2002). The program content has been surveyed in the literature, but there were no studies that provided evidence of effectiveness or best practices. Generally, there is consensus in the literature that GYO programs typically have a balance of classroom and action learning components, that content is based on the AACC competencies, and that presenters represent a balance of internal and external speakers. Additionally, Jeandron (2006) found, in her survey of GYO programs, that most programs included individual and team projects, readings, individual assessments, case studies, and mentoring. Reille and Kezar (2010) contended that GYO program designers should look to adult learning theory and leadership development theory in order to design programs that are appropriate for the intended audience.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Ready and Conger (2003) stressed the importance of asking the right questions to evaluate the effectiveness of leadership development efforts. They indicated that the right questions focus on how effective the program was in meeting the intended objectives, and that information should come from the various stakeholders. Further,

Leskiw and Singh (2007) found that best-practice organizations are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of their leadership development efforts.

Hannum (2004) indicated that multiple methods of evaluating the effectiveness of leadership development are imperative. He suggested that individual outcomes are best assessed by daily evaluations, end-of-initiative evaluations, learning and change surveys, and behavioral observations. Green (2002) offered the opinion that managers of participants of leadership development programs should provide evaluation of changes in behavior as a result of leadership development initiatives. Leskiw and Singh (2007) noted that Kirkpatrick's four-level training evaluation model "is a prominent method used to evaluate the extent to which learning takes place and it can be very useful in the evaluation of leadership development initiatives" (p. 458).

A survey of GYO programs indicate that there is very limited, if any, evaluation of effectiveness. Most studies suggest that evaluations are limited to the reactions of participants to programmatic events (Phillips, 2010; Reille & Kezar, 2010; Thackwray, 1997). Specifically, Jeandron (2006) indicated that "most colleges report having participants evaluate their experience at the end of each session as well as after the conclusion of programs" (p. 31). There is no reference to other types of GYO program evaluation, and it is further inferred that participant feedback is the sole measure used to develop future programming. Reille and Kezar (2010) added that limited empirical research has been conducted on the effectiveness of the curriculum of community college GYO programs. Cota (2006) concurred, noting that researchers have not formally assessed the effectiveness of the content of GYO programs in the community colleges;

rather, participant satisfaction is the measure of effectiveness as opposed to learning outcomes or promotions.

Because evaluation of a GYO program is the focus of this study, the following represents a detailed review of literature on training evaluation, with significant emphasis on the importance of training evaluation, the prevailing model of training evaluation along with the pros and cons, and relevant examples of training evaluation in various organizational settings. A summary is provided at the end of the review.

Training Evaluation

Training evaluation examines the attainment of learning goals, although some theoretical concepts stress the importance of linking training evaluation to organizational strategic goals (Chimote, 2010; Rajeev, Madan & Jayarajan, 2009). The educational and professional development sectors also aim to interrelate organizational strategy context and training objectives, so that training would be designed to reinforce or improve existing strategies (Perry, Kulik & Field, 2009; Rodriguez, 2009; Rossett, 2010). As a result, training evaluation can also be implemented to improve the capability of educational institutions in enhancing learning and the performance of their students in the academic and professional environments (Leach & Liu, 2003; Othman, 2005).

Importance of Training Evaluation

Most training is most often followed by training evaluation, in order to assess its effectiveness in attaining diverse training and organizational goals (Long, 2005).

Evaluation is generally performed to answer two fundamental questions: whether training objectives were attained (learning issues), and whether achievement of those objectives have enhanced performance (transfer issues) in target learning areas (Yelon, 1974).

While many organizations appear to understand that training evaluation is important, it has been an enduring problem for business and educational sectors to conduct evaluation that validly measures what has been learned and the effect on organizational performance (Griffin, 2010). Jack Phillips observed in 1991 that, “When it comes to measurement and evaluation, there appears to be more talk than action” (as cited in Griffin, 2010, p. 5).

Berge (2008) conducted longitudinal studies, and lamented that there was a pressing need for developing new ways to assess learning because of weaknesses with present frameworks and tools. Thus, there is a need to refine training evaluation tools and expand the systematic application on training evaluation in the educational and professional training sectors (Giangreco, Carugati & Sebastiano, 2010; Ya Hui Lien, Yu Yuan Hung & McLean, 2007).

Training evaluation is the systematic collection of data regarding the success of training programs (Goldstein, 1986, as cited in Kraiger, Ford & Salas, 1993). Noe (2010) described training evaluation as “the process of collecting the outcomes needed to determine whether training has been effective” (p. 560). Constructive evaluation takes place when particular outcome measures are conceptually connected to the targeted learning objectives (Kraiger et al., 1993; Keck & Alper, 2006). In Kirkpatrick’s model, learning was conceptualized as a causal consequence of positive reactions to training and as a causal factor of changes in behavior (Kirkpatrick, 1959). Training evaluation should be concerned with using valid, reliable, and accurate measures of training outcomes, so that training success can be rigorously measured conceptually and operationally (Orlando, 2009; Osigweh, 1986).

Evaluation pursues particular organizational goals. The literature presents several perspectives on the functions of training evaluation. Bramley and Newby (1984) noted four main functions of evaluation:

1. Feedback – Connecting learning outcomes to objectives and providing a sense of quality control. Feedback assesses the capability of the training to attain learning outcomes and to supply future quality control measures (Short, 2009).

2. Control – Providing the connection between organizational activities and to review cost-effectiveness (Murray & Efendioglu, 2007). Control may not be outwardly discussed very much in the education setting at all times because of control's business orientation, but control is also perceived as crucial to attaining a seamless relationship between learning objectives and training tools and approaches.

3. Research – Identifying the relationships among learning, training and transmission of training to the job (as cited in Rajeev et al., 2009). For the education sector, training evaluation provides avenues for research, so that better teaching methods, tools, and content can be devised in the future.

4. Intervention – If the training is unsuccessful, then other intervention measures and curriculum may be more appropriate (as cited in Rajeev et al., 2009).

Training evaluation is important because it measures desired outcomes to change knowledge, skills, and behaviors among learners (Osigweh, 1986; Attia, Honeycutt Jr. & Leach, 2005). Osigweh (1986) affirmed the connection between training goals attainment and training evaluation. He stressed the significance of training evaluation, because it assesses the effectiveness of training programs in attaining target learning outcomes and in measuring the development of learners. He provided the following

reasons for training evaluation: a) recognize the results of the teaching-learning process (aside from the usual course grades); b) build up a system for determining to what extent students essentially benefit from their training experiences; c) present decisive information on the student's growth and development; d) generate graduates who are well-trained, knowledgeable, and competent in their fields, and e) highlight quality, rather than quantity, as an indicator of institutional success (Osigweh, 1986). The main argument is that quality of training refers to the ability of programs to make a constructive difference in the personal and intellectual progress of its participants (Katajavuori, Lindblom-Ylänne & Hirvonen, 2006).

At this juncture, it is also important to connect training objectives to strategic organizational objectives. Feedback and learning should be used to either align with strategic goals, or to refine those goals through an iterative learning loop (Chimote, 2010). “Organizational strategic visions” are presently more centered on learners and the labor market, so that the competitive position of schools can be improved (Attia et al., 2005). Teachers should have the abilities to impart the competencies needed by students to perform their future career or business goals, as well as to attain other personal goals identified as part of the training needs. When the feedback from learning indicates that learning strategies have to be changed, it is possible to also use training evaluation to refine strategic objectives.

Attaining training goals also justifies training costs to the management (Attia et al., 2005). Organizations have become increasingly interested in the return on investment (ROI) of training. Some organizations have already, or are in the process of, creating scorecards that measure the results of learning interventions (Murray & Efendioglu,

2007). It is not enough that training goals are met, but that they are cost-efficient as well. Since educational institutions often experience budget constraints, the justification of training costs becomes essential. The effective utilization of scarce resources has been one of the goals of training evaluation for many institutions, because it optimizes resource allocation and engenders responsibility among trainers in considering cost factors in training evaluation (Leach & Liu, 2003).

Evaluating the effectiveness of a training program also indicates the significance of how well the training purposes have been attained, and whether the best means for achieving those purposes have been employed (Chimote, 2010). The process of training is as important as the outcomes. For example, did the process of traditional lecturing connect to the learning styles of the participants? It is possible that the many participants have achieved the training goals satisfactorily, but the training approach has not been motivating or engaging enough for them to excel? A comprehensive training evaluation would serve to answer these questions.

Furthermore, evaluating training allows trainers and educators to ascertain where the training programs need to be improved (Newcomer & Allen, 2010). Organizations generally seek to produce employees who can work in diverse conditions, have social and communication skills, and can choose relevant information from the vast data they receive everyday (MacLeod, 1996). It is then critical to also examine how training programs contribute to the expertise of learners (Katajavuori et al., 2006). The absence of training evaluation can lead to poor learning and performance in the individual and could have a negative impact at the organizational level (Holton & Nauquin, 2005; Newcomer & Allen, 2010).

Donald Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model of Training Evaluation

Training evaluations are most often based on one of the most widely used and tested frameworks - Donald Kirkpatrick's Hierarchical Model of Training Outcomes (1959, 1976, 1996). Kirkpatrick's four-tier model for evaluating educational outcomes has been the prevailing conceptual model of training evaluation for more than four decades (Newcomer & Allen, 2010). It has been applied to different industries, such as business, government, military, industrial, and education sectors (Watkins, Leigh, Foshay & Kaufman, 1998). Kirkpatrick's model was developed in 1952, when he conducted a study for his dissertation that evaluated a supervisory training program (Kirkpatrick, 1996). He measured the participants' reactions to the program, the level of learning that occurred, and other final outcomes of the training that learners brought to the workplace (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Kirkpatrick observed that it was important to focus on reaction and learning, because they are causally related to results and behavior (Kirkpatrick, 1996). This study formed the four levels of training evaluation. Kirkpatrick actually used the term "four steps" instead of four levels, but the "four levels" are the terms that books and journals primarily use (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Donald Kirkpatrick (1996) stated that there are four levels for training evaluation: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. The model was developed to "clarify the elusive term 'evaluation'" (Brown & Seidner, 1998, as cited in Rowden, 2005, p.31; Kirkpatrick, 1996). Kirkpatrick speculated that these four levels should be tackled in an ascending array, so that the entire beginning-to-end of any training program could be assessed (Holton & Nauquin, 2005). These levels also indicate that one step leads to another;

positive learner reactions produce learning, while learning impacts behavior and changes in behavior affect organizational results (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Kirkpatrick's model measures educational outcomes in four stages. The first level is the reaction level. Reaction can be defined as how trainees "like" a specific training program, and this measures how learners feel about the different aspects of a training program, such as the topic, speaker, schedule, and other factors (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Evaluations at this level also measure interest and motivation in learning: "If training is going to be effective, it is important that trainees react favorably to it. Otherwise, they will not be motivated to learn" (Brown & Seidner, 1998, p. 10, as cited in Rowden, 2005, p.31).

Kirkpatrick (1996) asserted that learning practitioners should assess the reaction levels of 100% of program participants. The common criteria measured at this level are relevance, importance, usefulness, appropriateness, intent to use, and motivation (Phillips & Phillips, 2007). Reaction is normally assessed through a brief survey wherein program participants will rate their perceptions of the program at the conclusion of the program (Long, 2005). This level of evaluation is documented to be the most extensively used by trainers (Van Burn, 2002, as cited in Orlando, 2009). According to the American Society for Training and Development's (ASTD) 2002 report, reaction measures are the most frequently used form of evaluation, with usage levels at about 78% (as cited in Orlando, 2009).

The second level of Kirkpatrick's model is learning evaluation, which answers the question: "What have participants learned as a result of the training?" (Orlando, 2009). Learning evaluation "can be described as the extent to which participants change

attitudes, improve knowledge, and/or increase skill as a result of attending the program" (Brown & Seidner, 1998, p.101, as cited in Rowden, 2005, p.31). In general, a training program seeks to accomplish one or more of these objectives (Kirkpatrick, 1996). For instance, some training courses aim to improve learners' knowledge of concepts, principles, and techniques, while other programs seek to change attitudes (Kirkpatrick, 1996).

Kirkpatrick's framework assumes that behavior cannot be altered until the learning objectives have been attained (Attia et al., 2005). Kirkpatrick argued that the assessment of learning should be considered for 100% of the program participants, and should be done at the conclusion of the training program (Orlando, 2009). The common measures for this level are knowledge, capacity, competencies, confidence, and contact (Phillips & Phillips, 2007). The most widespread method for measuring learning is implementing a pretest and a posttest, where the difference between the two reflects learning (Hutchins & Burke, 2007). Time-interval tests or 'check-in' have also been used to check if there had been knowledge improvements among participants (Green & Skinner, 2005). This kind of evaluation is known to be the second most widely used (Van Burn, 2002, as cited in Orlando, 2009). The ASTD 2002 report noted that measurements of learning are most frequently about 32% of the time (Orlando, 2009).

The third level in Kirkpatrick's framework is behavior. It refers to the extent of behavioral changes (Kirkpatrick, 1996). It is also called the "transfer of learning," wherein it is important to know if students can apply what they have learned from their trainings (Kirkpatrick, 1996; Orlando, 2009). It is assumed that learning occurs only when there had been changes in behavior. Levels 1 (Reaction) and 2 (Learning) are

designed to be evaluated at the end of the training, while behavioral changes or application of the learning (i.e., to their jobs) cannot be evaluated until some time has passed since program delivery (Othman, 2005). Generally, it is suggested that this can be done 60-to-90 days after a training program (Green & Skinner, 2005). Characteristics captured at this level include, but are not limited to, extent of use, task completion, frequency of use, actions completed, success with use, barriers with use, and enablers to use (Phillips & Phillips 2007).

One of the recommended ways of evaluating positive behavior change or application of the learning is the direct observation of the program participant in the workplace, though other measures such as interviews, focus groups, narratives, or checklists can also be effective (Altarawneh, 2009; Sears et al., 2008). These qualitative and quantitative tools can be used by the program participants' supervisors, coworkers' subordinates, or learning specialists (Rajeev et al., 2009). Assessing behavioral changes commonly needs time-consuming observations and interviews, as well as other measures that can lead to multiple feedback sessions (Short, 2009). These are challenges that commonly set back evaluation at this level (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Because of the complexity and cost associated with measuring changes in behavior, the ASTD 2002 report indicated that this level is evaluated only about 9% of the time (Orlando, 2009).

Kirkpatrick's fourth level, results, evaluates the effect of the training intervention on the final outcomes of the training (Kirkpatrick, 1996). It is normally referred to as the return-on-investment (ROI) calculation that demonstrates the value of the training over the cost of the training (Kirkpatrick, 1996). Kirkpatrick is cited for arguing: "It has long been thought important to recognize that the most desirable approaches to delivering

instruction (training) are those that are the most effective in terms of results and the most efficient in terms of cost" (Parry, 1976, as cited in Rowden, 2005, p.31).

Evaluating results should also be done some time after the training has been completed, similar in timing to the assessment of behavioral changes (Green & Skinner, 2005). Pretraining and posttraining measures can be used to analyze the contribution of the training to results (Hutchins & Burke, 2007). Executives commonly ask for evaluation on this level, especially when its success can impact subsequent training program goals and direction of training development (Kirkpatrick, 2006). Some of the common measures are productivity, revenue, quality, time, effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement (Phillips & Phillips, 2007). Evaluation at this level also often leads to differences in opinions among trainers and managers, because of diversities on measuring ROI and range of results to be measured (Giangreco et al., 2010). Kanji (2002) indicated that this level of evaluation is least likely used, most often because it can be complicated to calculate; and Kanji further indicated that financial measures do not always focus on systems and processes to impact effectiveness. It has been suggested that this level is used less than 10% of the time (Noe, 2010).

Pros and Cons of Kirkpatrick's Evaluation Model

Pros of the Kirkpatrick Model.

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model is well-established, and has been the most prevalent theoretical model for evaluation training for different sectors for four decades (Giangreco et al., 2010). According to the ROI Institute, there were more than 40 books published on the assessment of training, and roughly 25 evaluation models and theories to determine the contributions of learning and development. Approximately 80-90% of

these models were based on Kirkpatrick's model (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007). Many evaluators prefer this model, because it is already widely used and has practical applications to different settings (Keck & Alper, 2006; Laughrin, 2005; Orlando, 2009; Rajeev et al., 2009). The model can also be easily expanded to include other measures (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009). The field of organizational psychology has readily accepted and adopted this framework (Alliger & Janak, 1989).

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model is simple; it has only four levels that are easy to understand and implement, compared to other evaluation measures, such as the 360 degree feedback and balanced scorecard (Abernathy, 1999; Orlando, 2009). The model's concepts of reaction, learning, behavior, and results are straightforward and require little discussion, although there are differences in opinions on how to properly measure them (Elkeles & Phillips, 2007).

Kirkpatrick's evaluation model has been assessed by several studies as a very practical measure for training evaluations (Attia et al., 2005; Chimote, 2010; Newcomer & Allen, 2010). Attia et al. (2005), expanding on Kirkpatrick's evaluation model, suggested that this framework is a practical framework for measuring sales force training and development. Chimote (2010) examined the effectiveness of a training program from the perspectives of learners. He used Kirkpatrick's model because he believed that it is a practical framework for measuring tangible and intangible outcomes of the training program. Newcomer and Allen (2010) developed a "Model of Learning Outcomes for Public Service Education." They used Kirkpatrick's model because it can be directly used for public service education training evaluation, especially in assessing the students' observations and assessments of program quality at its finale, the recognized use of

knowledge and skills in the workplace after completing the program, changes in work processes that are the consequence of students' learned skills and knowledge, and general productivity gains in organizations where training program graduates are employed" (Newcomer & Allen, 2010).

The four levels provide a tangible means of measurement for a wide array of organizations and their trainers (Newcomer & Allen, 2010). They directly measure factors that can be tangibly observed and assessed. Kirkpatrick's evaluation model provided the vocabulary and rough criteria for evaluation of trainings (Alliger & Janak, 1989), wherein key measurements were identified from the beginning of the training up to the end (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2009).

Cons of the Kirkpatrick Model. Holton (1996) stressed that Kirkpatrick's evaluation model is more of a taxonomy. Critics of Kirkpatrick's model have contended that the model often produces inconsistent results across the four-level hierarchy. They argue that "the model is too simple" (Tamkin, Yarnall & Kerrin, 2002; Newstrom, 1978), and that its simplicity generates contrasting conclusions about program effectiveness (Newstrom 1978). The claim that the model generates contrasting conclusions is based on criticism of the model's underlying assumptions, specifically that there is a hierarchical relationship among the levels. In the event of nonhierarchical evaluation results, critics argue that this limits the ability to correctly interpret and report on training outcomes. For example, if a program is rated as not favorable at Level 1, but still reports improvements in learning, behavior, and business impact (or the converse, where a program is rated as favorable but reports no change in learning, behavior or business impact), critics claim that trainers/training departments are left on their own to resolve

these disparate training outcomes (Newstrom 1978). The literature supports this criticism of Kirkpatrick's model, in that many evaluation studies have evaluated training on two or more of Kirkpatrick's levels and have reported different effects of training for different levels (e.g., Meyer & Raich, 1983; Russell, Wexley & Hunter, 1984). Bates (2004) suggested that Kirkpatrick's model alone has the inability to effectively address both the summative question (Was training effective?) and the formative question (How can training be modified in ways that increase its potential for effectiveness?).

The final criticism of Kirkpatrick's model focuses on the depth of results provided. For example, some have argued that the model fails to take into account the intervening variables affecting learning and transfer (Tamkin et al., 2002). Critics have also suggested that the failure of Kirkpatrick's four-level evaluation model to include key contextual input variables is a critical evaluative shortcoming (Bates 2005). Contextual factors such as corporate culture, different audience types, etc., can confound program effectiveness. Other critics have asserted that a balanced view is needed to measure hard- and soft-skill performance gauges, tangible and intangible benefits, and long- and short-term results (Abernathy 1999). Absence of explicit attention to contextual factors calls into question the depth of the model to report out valid results. Lack of attention to contextual factors is a reasonable criticism of the Kirkpatrick model. However, perhaps the most significant criticism of the model's depth (in terms of amount of literature written on the topic) is the model's lack of emphasis on conveying business value and not taking Level 4 (results) far enough.

Philips and Philips (2007) cited other critics of the Kirkpatrick model, who have indicated that the model doesn't take the business impact far enough and that the final

step in any training program should be a fifth level of evaluation, i.e., financial return. Critics have argued that return on investment (ROI) is such a critical issue for trainers and executives that it should receive more emphasis from educators than it has (Berge, 2008), and that many organizations are not satisfied that their methods of evaluating training are rigorous or extensive enough to answer questions of value to them (Tamkin et al., 2002). Several researchers, particularly Jack Phillips and members of his ROI Institute (2007), have advocated that the learning function has experienced a need for increased accountability, and that the value of impact for executives is actually in terms of monetary contributions from the learning function (Phillips & Phillips, 2007). Phillips and Phillips (2007) quoted Jack Phillips, who asserted that, because "Kirkpatrick's model lacks systems, processes and standards, basically not enough 'how-to' information, practitioners are left to make the system work on their own" (p. 91). Furthermore, research from Phillip's ROI Institute suggests that the use of ROI is emerging as an essential part of many measurement and evaluation systems, and that 70-80% of organizations have ROI on their wish lists (Phillips & Phillips, 2007).

The defining question that contrasts Kirkpatrick's model from Phillips ROI model and several others is the question: Did the monetary benefits of the learning program exceed the investment in the program? (Alleles & Phillips, 2007). By calculating in-depth analyses on the ROI of learning, program results are better-aligned to the economic benefits of a program.

Kirkpatrick's four-level model of training evaluation has its strengths and limitations. In fact, its strengths can also be a source of its weaknesses, with its simplicity attacked as a source of flawed conceptualization of relationships (Holton,

2005). Nonetheless, it is possible to reduce the weaknesses by modifying the model according to the business needs and realities of organizations (Giangreco et al., 2010). One might conclude that the educational sector can effectively use the model for its different level needs and applications. However, the model most often would need to be adapted to provide the desired evaluation data.

Applications of Kirkpatrick's Model and Adaptations

Since Kirkpatrick's model is based on the management setting of training evaluation, the bulk of studies that used this model are for professional and business development purposes. Numerous studies, however, adapted the model for their specific research needs, and found the model to be deficient (Hutchins & Burke, 2007; Saks & Belcourt, 2006; Salas, Wildman & Piccolo, 2009). Attia et al. (2005) determined eight assessment areas for sales managers to reflect on when planning and implementing sales training interventions. They combined Kirkpatrick's four-level framework with the Xerox model made by Phillips (1991), the cognitive knowledge structures system developed by Day, Arthur and Gettman (2001), and the economic and value assessments prepared by Phillips (1997). Attia et al. (2005) concluded from their analysis that Kirkpatrick's model needs to be expanded to include other measures important to industries and firms. Thus, these challenges of training evaluation in professional development must also be considered when identifying and planning for the best training evaluation model to use.

There are numerous studies that evaluated professional development using Kirkpatrick's model. Liebermann and Hoffmann (2008) expanded Kirkpatrick's model and added Baldwin and Ford's framework. They evaluated the service quality training

received by 213 German bank employees. Findings showed that the perceived practical relevance of the training was found to greatly impact the reaction of the participants, and had a significant effect on the motivation to transfer and on authentic transfer.

One study highlighted the importance of reaction and learning. Chimote (2010) studied the effectiveness of training programs from the views of trainees. The training program was attended by 108 trainees of a leading private sector bank. Chi-square tests showed that the demographic variables are autonomous of the efficacy gap, while a paired sample t-test noted that the trainees' experience does not surpass their expectations. The factor analysis showed that the factors matched the four levels of Kirkpatrick's model, with some differences. Chimote (2010) noted, nonetheless, that he did not test the validity of Kirkpatrick's four levels.

Crowley and Kulikowich (2009) assessed the pilot training program for nurse child care health consultants, child care directors and members of community teams, and reviewed the results of the training on nurses' and directors' views of the health consultant role, nurses' understanding and practice as health consultants, and child care center policies and practices. Pretraining and posttraining data were obtained about the nurses' health consultation knowledge in 13 content areas and practice activities, and the impact of training on child care program health and safety policies and practices. Findings showed that among the 42 participants, 93.5% noted that the program was excellent, and many health consultants and directors agreed that the training changed their awareness of the health consultant role. There were also positive developments in health consultant knowledge and range of practice, including health and safety policies and practices.

Other studies highlighted the weaknesses of Kirkpatrick's model. Green and Skinner (2005) studied the impact of time management training on learners. Results of a longitudinal and triangulated evaluation of the training showed that this training did not have positive results for learners.

These studies underscore that professional development requires different types of training evaluation methods. They mostly used Kirkpatrick's model as their springboard for developing more comprehensive and relevant training evaluation frameworks (Bober & Bartlett, 2004; Kraiger, McLinden & Casper, 2004; Rossett, 2010). They focused on one, or a few levels, and changed or added a few levels. These changes in Kirkpatrick's model made it more significant for their strategic training and organizational goals (Cheng & Hampson, 2008). The main implications of these studies presented here further support the notion that the educational sector can also make use of Kirkpatrick's model and adapt it accordingly. At the same time, there should also be more emphasis on measures that are conceptually constructed to fit individual learner needs and the organizational context.

Kirkpatrick's Model and the Evaluation of Professional Development in Education

Thomas R. Guskey, Ph.D., is a professor in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky and an expert in research and evaluation. He has authored or edited 12 books on the evaluation of professional development in education. In his works, he discussed the challenges related to evaluating professional development, and how these can be properly handled. He observed that numerous professional development leaders shun systematic evaluations, because they are afraid that the

evaluation will not provide enough “proof” that what they are doing improves the learning levels of students, which can lead to funding being cancelled (Guskey, 2006).

Guskey (2006) emphasized the difference between “proof” and “evidence,” so that this problem can be resolved. He said that collecting proof that professional development directly and uniquely shapes improvements in student learning is difficult, since it needs experimental rigor that is hard and frequently impracticable to achieve in realistic school conditions. In the first place, however, policy makers, legislators, and school administrators are not after “ironclad proof;” instead, they want to see “evidence” in terms of improvements in assessment outcomes or test scores, improved attendance, smaller number discipline problems, or lower dropout rates (Guskey, 2006). Professional development leaders should not be focused on gathering proof, but on realistic evidence (Guskey, 2002). In order to collect evidence, however, educators must go back to what they had planned as the target changes in learners (Guskey, 2002). The training goals must be clear enough to guide the kind of evidence that is needed, and how and when it should be collected (Guskey, 2002).

Historically, however, Guskey (2006) asserted that professional development leaders have not provided enough evidence on these matters. There are problems involved in the timing and validity of gathering evidence, particularly when not all stakeholders value the same kinds of evidence. In one study, Guskey (2006) learned that, when a set of educators were asked to rank 15 various indicators of student learning according to which they believed gave the most valid evidence, administrators and teachers provided “reversed” results. Administrators rated national and state tests extremely, while teachers focused more on their own, more direct sources of evidence

(Guskey, 2006). From the viewpoint of policymaking in professional development, this shows that no solitary source of evidence will be enough, and that stakeholders should consider different kinds of indicators (Guskey, 2006). Guskey magnified the importance of stakeholder involvement in the planning process, so that stakeholders will identify and agree on the sources of evidence that they consider provide the best and most convincing demonstration of success.

Guskey modified Kirkpatrick's four-level model of training evaluation to suit professional development in the education sector. Guskey's idea of a five-level model for evaluating professional development was based on Kirkpatrick's four-level model of training evaluation. He noted that, when he and his colleagues applied Kirkpatrick's model to professional development in education, they found the latter model's deficient (Guskey, 2006). They learned that things were done correctly from a training perspective, but when teachers were sent back to organizations they did not receive the support needed to attain the training results (Guskey, 2006). Guskey added a new level in the middle of the model, called "organizational support and change," to take into account those features of the organization that have decisive influence on the execution of new policies and practices. Guskey contended that this level highlights the importance of organizational change, in order for Levels 4 and 5 to be achieved.

There are three important implications of these adaptations of Kirkpatrick's model. First, each of these five levels is significant. The information gathered at each level can help improve the quality of professional development programs (Guskey, 2002). Furthermore, each level also impacts the next, because they build up on one another. For example, people must have an encouraging reaction to a professional

development experience before we can anticipate their learning anything from it (Guskey, 2006). They must develop specific knowledge and skills before we can identify critical aspects of organizational support or changes (Guskey, 2006). Organizational support is essential in order to attain high-quality accomplishment of new policies and practices (Guskey, 2006). Furthermore, suitable implementation is a precondition to seeing developments in student learning (Guskey, 2006). When there are problems in any of the first stages, results and learning can be negatively affected (Guskey, 2006).

Second, assessing effectiveness at one level does not say anything about impact at the next (Guskey, 2002). Even when success at one level is important to yield positive impacts on the next level, it is not always enough (Guskey, 2002). There could be issues and challenges at any point, and it is crucial to be aware of the difficulties involved in moving from professional development experiences (Level 1) to developments in student learning (Level 5) and to prepare for the time and effort necessary to make the right realizations (Guskey, 2002).

Third, like Kirkpatrick's model, Guskey noted that Levels 4 and 5 are difficult to attain (2006). These levels relate professional development with student outcomes. Guskey (2006) said that "these levels are difficult to attain, primarily because getting information from them is delayed" (p.12). He stressed the importance of "planning backwards," because if educators know what they want to attain and what evidence effectively achieves those goals, it will be easier for them to decide how and when they are going to gather that evidence and what they will do it once they have it (p.13).

Guskey (2002) argued that, in preparing professional development that aims to enhance student learning, it is also advisable to reverse the order of his levels. It starts

with planning backward, wherein professional development leaders begin with where they want to end, and then they work backwards (Guskey, 2002). Through backward planning, the first to be considered is the student learning outcomes that trainers aim to attain, or Level 5 (Guskey, 2002).

Summary and Conclusions

Kirkpatrick's four-level model is a useful training evaluation framework for professional development for business and educational settings. Despite the conceptual and methodological criticisms of the model, it is the most used and time-tested model in existence. It appears that adaptations to the model, based on the context of the desired evaluation, can make the intended evaluation more meaningful. Training evaluations that do not return the knowledge and information deemed most useful to stakeholders will most likely not be used (Patton, 1997).

There is a dearth of literature on the application of Kirkpatrick's four-level level model of training evaluation in higher education. As previously noted, most of the training evaluations that used this model are conducted in the business setting, especially as businesses strive to measure the effectiveness of training programs through return on investment (ROI) measures (Attia et al., 2005; Kirkpatrick, 2006; Leach & Liu, 2003; Rossett, 2010; Rowden, 2005). Business training evaluations have also extensively implemented Kirkpatrick's model and determined its success in measuring training effectiveness in the corporate setting (Attia et al., 2005; Leach & Liu, 2003; Long, Dubois & Faley, 2006).

New models of training or professional development evaluation in education have also evolved from Kirkpatrick's four-level model. Guskey's model, in particular, adds the

third level of “organization support and change,” because Kirkpatrick’s model fails to integrate the importance of organizational context on changing behavior and attaining results. “Organization support and change” is a critical level, because without organizational support, changes in skills and knowledge can be hindered by organizational barriers. Several studies already applied “organization support and change” as part of their training evaluation approach in the professional development setting, and they discovered that these levels are also valid to their training goals and target changes. Other studies added ROI and individual assessment of student characteristics, because these are important to their training objectives.

The overuse of Level 1 evaluation (reaction) is well-documented in the literature. It appears that the use of Level 1 evaluation (reaction) is generally accepted as sufficient evaluation data in evaluating leadership development programs in higher education (American Association of Community Colleges, 2004; Thackwray, 1997). Sadly, reaction evaluation is limited and not focused on what was learned, what was applied and what overall results were gained. It is ironic that institutions of higher education would so casually accept such evaluation as evidence of effectiveness. In contrast, one would be hard-pressed to find a college or university that would accept students’ reactions to their learning experience as solid evidence of learning outcomes.

Clearly, there are challenges in measuring results and behavior, especially when they have to be evaluated months after the training. These evaluations are often treated as costly and time-consuming. Furthermore, they are seldom used because of fear of not acquiring enough proof of training effectiveness, although Guskey already stressed that evidence of effectiveness of training is more than enough.

In summation, the effectiveness of training and professional development initiatives cannot be accurately attained without the use of rigorous training evaluation models. GYO programs need to be more rigorously evaluated as to their true effectiveness. Such programs have significant costs associated with them, and without appropriate evaluation costs are not justified. More importantly, learning is not measured; and the investment to impart knowledge, skills, and desired behaviors are lost if not reinforced. Evaluations will have little merit without a comprehensive approach which includes thorough examination of reaction, learning, behavior and results. It would seem preposterous to think that anything less could be considered credible evidence of evaluation, and even more preposterous that institutions of higher education, dedicated to imparting knowledge, would accept such a notion.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The overall purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of a community college's leadership development program in meeting the desired outcomes established by the college. My study was guided by the following research questions: How effective is a community college's Grow Your Own (GYO) leadership development program in meeting their defined objectives? What did participants define as the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the program? Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work? How was leadership development supported after the program? What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees?

To answer the research questions, I adapted Donald Kirkpatrick's model of training evaluation as the conceptual framework for my study. Kirkpatrick's model focuses on four levels of evaluation: 1) reaction of participants to the program, 2) learning gained by the participants in the program, 3) participant's application of skills and behaviors learned in the program to their work, and 4) return on expectations of stakeholders.

I collected and analyzed two forms of data in this study: interviews and relevant documents. I conducted interviews with 41 program participants, the college's President and 10 senior staff, and five members of the leadership program's planning team. To determine the participants' reactions to the program, I reviewed evaluation surveys that the college had already collected. Additionally, I reviewed the Pinnacle Program

objectives, syllabus, and content of training materials utilized in the four-day leadership development program.

This study produced findings that add to the body of research on the effectiveness of GYO leadership development programs in the community college sector, and also produced an application of a comprehensive, evidenced-based program evaluation model.

Design

This study was a summative evaluation study that included various qualitative methods. I chose a qualitative evaluation model because I believed the philosophical underpinnings of such an approach was best suited to address the research questions germane to my study. Summative evaluation determines the effectiveness of human interventions and actions (i.e., programs). The focus of summative evaluation is on the goals of the intervention (program), and it allows for an outcome-oriented perspective of the program's effect on users (Foxon, 1989; Patton, 1997). The desired outcomes of this type of research are judgments and generalizations about effective types of programs and conditions under which they are effective (Patton, 2002).

Qualitative research is considered appropriate in a situation where there is little research data available on a question or phenomenon. Furthermore, qualitative methods provide descriptions, which are key to the exploration of a given question or phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) noted that qualitative research is a naturalistic, multimethod approach to the subject matter, and that qualitative researchers study in the setting and have the role of interpreting the collected data in terms of the meaning people bring to what is being studied. Merriam (1998) contended that, while quantitative research examines individual parts or variables of a larger whole, qualitative

research attempts to understand the overall phenomenon and how the individual parts work together to form a whole.

My goal in this study was to evaluate the total effectiveness of this GYO program. I wanted to understand how participants reacted and what they reported learning, and then what they applied from their learning experience. Also, I wanted to understand how what they learned from the program further supported their continued growth and development. Through this method of evaluation and study, I gained an understanding of the effectiveness of not only what was accomplished via this program, but also of the changes that occurred in participants (new skills, attitudes, and behaviors) as a result of their experiences in the program.

Through the use of various qualitative methods in this study, I was able to deeply probe and understand the participants' reactions, learning experiences, applications of learning, and support provided for sustainable development. I examined all of these aspects of the program to comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness, based on the defined objectives of the college's program, and in concert with best practices of leadership development as noted in the literature.

The framework I used for evaluating the effectiveness of the program was an adaptation of Donald Kirkpatrick's (1959, 1996, 2006) four-level training evaluation model. The model focuses on four levels of evaluation to determine training effectiveness: Level 1 evaluation, *reaction*, is designed to determine the participants' favorable or unfavorable reactions to the program. Level 2 evaluation, *learning*, is designed to determine the acquisition of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and/or behaviors of the participants. Level 3 evaluation, *behavior*, is designed to determine how what was

learned in the training is used back on the job. Level 4 evaluation, *results*, is designed to determine how effective the program is in meeting the desired results of stakeholders.

I selected Kirkpatrick's model because of its wide use and longevity of acceptance. While the pros and cons of the model have been previously noted in Chapter II, no other model has emerged, in 50 years, which appears to be better or more appropriate for training program evaluation. It also appears that most users of the model have overcome any shortcomings by making adaptations to enhance the quality of the intended evaluation purpose. In this study, I made adaptations to Kirkpatrick's model in order to increase validity, and have noted these adaptations in the data collection section of this chapter.

Research Site

I evaluated the GYO program at Choice Community College. Established in the mid-1960's, Choice is located in a rural setting of the northeast United States. The college's basic Carnegie classification is Assoc/Pub-R-M: Associate's--Public Rural-serving Medium. With more than 4000 students, the college offers 90 career and transfer programs of study. More than half of the college's graduates continue their education at four-year colleges and universities. Choice Community College is fully accredited by the regional accrediting body of the Association of Colleges and Schools.

The primary reason for my selection of Choice Community College as the research site for this study was that the college's leadership development program, which will be referred to as the "Pinnacle Leadership Development Program," was highlighted as an exemplary program model in the national Leading Forward report: Growing Your Own Leaders: Community Colleges Step Up (Jeandron, 2006). Some common themes

that distinguish programs as exemplary are those built on the foundation of the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders, and serve as an integral component in supporting a college's commitment to leadership development. Leadership development for all employees at Choice Community College is highlighted in the college's mission statement and serves as an integral part of the fabric of the college's long-term strategic plan. Additionally, Choice's Pinnacle Leadership Development Program was designed to address the AACC Competencies.

The president and senior staff of the college communicated to me, in conversation, a strong commitment to ongoing professional development for all staff, with particular interest in developing incumbents who may implement the college's strategic plan and, at some point, move into higher levels of leadership within the college. Additionally, the college is very interested in evaluating their leadership development initiatives to insure that desired outcomes are met and continuously enhanced.

While Choice's program has been nationally recognized and supported internally, limited evidenced-based evaluation as to the effectiveness of the program has taken place. The only form of evaluation that has taken place since the program's inception in 2003 is the collection of reaction data in two formats: 1) evaluation forms completed by participants after each topic of training was delivered in the program, and 2) a more formal online survey to participants in 2010. The evaluation form used with participants was a one-page form that asked participants to anonymously respond to two open-ended questions: "What I liked...." and "What could be improved.....". The 2010 survey was distributed by one of the college's program planners to all Pinnacle participants via Survey Monkey. The survey was intended to solicit reaction evaluation on the format of

the program, the facilities, the impact on leadership style, and the personal impact on participants, as well as suggestions for future programming. A few questions were included to gauge what participants felt they learned in the program.

Since 2003, the college's Board of Trustees and senior administration has appropriated support and financial resources to the program, and they view the program as an integral part of the overall strategic mission of the college. The program planners at the College also recognize the need for a more comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. In fact, a program was not scheduled for 2011 so that evidenced-based evaluation could be used for enhancing future programs. It is for all of these reasons that the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program at Choice Community College served as a worthy venue for this study.

Participants

I invited three distinct populations of Choice personnel to participate in this study: 1) all participants of the Pinnacle Leadership Development since its inception in 2003 through 2010 who were still employed at Choice Community College (n =91), 2) Choice's College President and senior staff (n = 13), and 3) members of the Pinnacle Planning Team (n = 12).

Of the total number of participants of the program, approximately 29 participants are no longer employed at the college. I did not include these participants in the study because I wanted to focus on how current employees at Choice Community College applied what they had learned at this college and how this impacted overall leadership development at Choice.

Because the Pinnacle Program participants included all levels of employees from within the college, I categorized participants into four categories: a) *managers*, defined as those having responsibility for direct reports; b) *administrators*, defined as non-faculty professionals with no direct reports; c) *faculty*, defined as faculty members with no direct reports, and d) *staff*, defined as non-faculty, non-professional employees such as administrative support and facilities staff. I created these categories so that I could later identify similarities and/or differences between groups.

Each cohort class for each year had a total of 15 participants. In the end, a sample of 41 participants of the Pinnacle Leadership Program were interviewed in the study. Specifically, 16 managers, 12 administrators, 5 faculty members, and 8 staff members were interviewed and represented that following cohort classes:

Table 1: Participants in the study by program year

Program Year	Number of Program Participants Still Employed at Choice	Participants of the Study
2010	15	14
2009	13	2
2008	13	8
2007	15	5
2006	11	4
2005	8	3
2004	9	1
2003	7	4
TOTAL	91	41

The senior staff of the college is comprised of the college's President, Vice Presidents and Executive Directors (n =13). My purpose in interviewing this group was to gain their perspectives on how well the program met the desired outcomes from a senior level within the college. There were 11 participants of this group who participated in the study.

The Pinnacle Leadership Development Program Planning Team is generally composed of 9 to 12 members of the management, administration, faculty, and staff each year. The committee is charged with the program content, evaluation, and administration of the program. I interviewed the program planners to learn about the content and administrative aspects of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program and gain their perspectives on the effectiveness of the program. All members of the planning team that I interviewed completed the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, and were able to offer viewpoints from both an administrative stance and a participant perspective. There were five participants of the planning team who took part in this study.

Data Sources

The primary data collection consisted of interviews with program participants, senior administrators, and members of the program planning team. Secondly, I analyzed documents that offered additional viewpoints to the evaluation.

Interviews

I conducted all interviews onsite at Choice Community College from April, 2011 through September, 2011. I conducted interviews with three distinct groups of employees who agreed to participate in the study: 1) participants of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program since its inception in 2003 through 2010 who were

still employed at Choice (n =41), 2) Choice's College President and Senior Staff (n = 11), and 3) members of the Pinnacle Program Planning Team (n = 5).

Program Participant Interviews

I interviewed program participants to determine: 1) their reaction to the overall Pinnacle Program experience, 2) what they learned in the program, 3) how concepts learned in the program were applied and supported back on the job, and 4) what additional training and/or support they would find helpful to further develop their leadership skills. They were also asked to provide their recommendations to enhance the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program in the future.

I sent e-mails to all program participants inviting their participation in the study. When participants agreed to be part of the study, I scheduled an interview date and time with them. I sent reminder e-mails to them one day prior to the interview. All of the 45-60 minute interviews were conducted in a private conference room in the University Center at Choice Community College. All participants signed consent forms prior to interviews.

First, I asked the participant to provide some demographic data; specifically, program year, position they held when they were in the program, current position, date of hire, and number of direct reports (if applicable). I coded each interview as follows: M: *manager*, defined as those having responsibility for direct reports; (2) A: *administrator*, defined as non-faculty professionals with no direct reports; 3) F: *faculty*, defined as faculty members with no direct reports, and 4) S: *staff*, defined as non-faculty, non-professional employees, such as administrative support and facilities staff. After each

letter code, I added a number. I did this initial coding to keep notes in order and consistent with the audiotape.

I consistently used a semi structured interview protocol with each participant of the study (Appendix B). The interview process began by my asking the participant to describe his or her overall Pinnacle Program experience, noting what was of most benefit and least benefit. The collection of this Level 1 data was designed to evaluate their reaction to the program.

The interview protocol for obtaining data on what participants learned in the program (Level 2), and how it was applied (Level 3), was much more structured than all other protocols. I wanted to deeply understand what participants actually did learn as a result of attending the program and how those skills and behaviors translated into application on the job.

It was at the Level 2 and Level 3 evaluation levels that I made adaptations to Kirkpatrick's model. Kirkpatrick asserted that the preferred method of evaluation of learning is through a pretest/posttest model (Kirkpatrick, 1976). This could not be accomplished in this study, as the training had already occurred and pretest information was not available. Thus, I designed the interview protocol to obtain data on what participants viewed as new learning, exclusively gained via the Pinnacle Program. As part of the protocol, I asked participants to self-evaluate their knowledge level of the desired program competencies, before and after the program, based on the overall program objectives. This was recommended to me as a viable, evidenced-based alternative to collecting Level 2 data by Dr. James Kirkpatrick, who certifies evaluators

in this model based on his father's research (J. Kirkpatrick, personal conversation, May, 24, 2011).

To gain insight into what was learned and applied from the program, I told participants that I would be asking them about each topic covered in the Pinnacle Program. I informed them that this was not an exercise in challenging their memory, but rather a way of gaining an understanding of what they really believed that they specifically learned in the program. I then asked them to provide responses on what they learned about each topic in this specific program, and then explain how they may have used what was learned in their work at the college. Additionally, I asked all participants to identify learning outcomes from their year-long team project and how that aided their leadership in the workplace. I asked participants to assess their ability on the six overall program objectives, before and after the program, using the following criteria: 1 = little or no understanding of the objective, 2 = basic understanding of the objective, but cannot demonstrate it, 3 = understand the objective and can demonstrate it with assistance, 4 = can demonstrate the objective without assistance, and 5 = can demonstrate the objective and teach others. This was intended to assess if there was learning from the program on a broader scale.

In order to evaluate what participants learned in the program related to the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders, I showed each participant a list of the six AACC competencies with the program topics areas listed next to each as follows:

Table 2: AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders and related Pinnacle Leadership Development Program Topics

AACC Competency	Pinnacle Leadership Development Program Topics
Organizational Strategy	Governance, Choice College History, Strategic Planning
Resource Management	College Budgeting, Goal Setting
Communication	DISC Communication Styles
Collaboration	Team Building, Diversity, Local Knowledge
Community College Advocacy	Issues in Higher Education, Emergences of the Community College
Professionalism	Ethics, Journaling, Leadership Styles

I then asked to identify the one competency area where they felt they learned most in the program, least in the program, and one area they felt they had the most critical need to develop to further grow as a leader. I also asked the participants to indicate the rationale for their choices.

In the Level 3 evaluation, I made an addition to what is generally evaluated at this level. Typically, Level 3 data focuses on what participants have applied from the training. Since there was such an emphasis in the literature (Leskiw & Singh, 2007) on including measures that would foster further development after a formalized program and Guskey's (2002) emphasis on organizational support, I thought it would be a worthwhile venture for me to collect such data at this evaluation level. Thus, I included questions in the interview protocol that would garner such data. Specifically, I asked participants to describe the support they received after the Pinnacle Program, via mentoring, interaction with their immediate supervisor, and through designated Development Days at Choice. The Development Days were full- or half-day programs on a variety of leadership topics that were sporadically offered throughout the year to program participants.

Managers with direct reports were asked to specifically describe how they helped support and reinforce the training objectives with their direct reports who attended the

program. This collection of data was another adaptation to Kirkpatrick's model, as the transfer of what is learned in training to demonstrated skills and behaviors on the job is typically enhanced by support systems (i.e., manager coaching, mentoring, training reinforcement tools) (Noe, 2010). Since the overall program effectiveness could be impacted by these factors on a long-term basis, I deemed it worthy to examine this as part of the evaluation process.

I concluded the interviews by asking participants to provide their recommendations for future programming and/or support initiatives that would aid in their leadership development. I took notes during all interviews on a structured interview note sheet (Appendix B) and audiotaped interviews as permitted by participants.

College President and Senior Staff

I scheduled and met with Choice College's President and senior staff members (n =11) on September 28, 2011 for a 40-minute group interview. The group interview took place on campus prior to a regularly scheduled meeting of the group. All participants were notified of the purpose of the interview and were invited to attend.

The purpose of interviewing this group was for me to gain an understanding of how leadership development is viewed from a senior administration perspective, to ascertain their viewpoints of the effectiveness of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, and to identify their perceptions of future leadership development needs of the college (Appendix C). I took detailed notes during the interview.

Program Planning Team Members

I conducted 30-45 minute individual interviews with five members of the Pinnacle Planning Team from April to September, 2011. The purpose of each interview

was to gain an understanding of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program (Appendix D). These interviews were also designed to obtain their insights on what they felt were the most significant strengths and areas for improvement in the program. Participants were asked to reflect on additional training and/or development initiatives which they felt are needed to further develop the leadership talent at Choice. I took notes during all interviews and audiotaped interviews, as permitted by participants. Additionally, participants in this group regularly offered their assistance to me as part of my research, and provided answers to questions I had about the program outside of the structured interview on an as-needed basis.

Documents

The college has two sets of survey data that I reviewed as part of this study: 1) evaluation surveys collected by the college for each module of training for each program since 2003, and 2) a reaction survey distributed by one of the program planners via Survey Monkey to all Pinnacle program participants who are still employed at Choice Community College. The evaluation survey data that was collected from all participants was reaction data and narrative in nature. At the end of each training module, participants were asked to respond in writing to the following two open-ended statements: “What I liked....”, and “What could be improved.....” This information was collected by the College in order to gain feedback from participants on each topic of training.

Conversely, the survey data collected in 2010 from all program participants was a bit more detailed, but could be labeled overall as more reaction data. Survey participants were asked to rate, via a forced choice (yes/no) or Likert scale, the format of the program,

facilities, quality of leadership development, personal impact, program coordinators/facilitators, involvement of alumni, impact to others, and recommendations for future improvements. Narrative responses were elicited in the survey for additional suggestions and comments. The survey yielded a 62.6% response rate and was tabulated by the program planner at the college.

Additionally, I examined a number of other documents as part of the data collection and analysis process. Specifically, these included the total program syllabus and objectives for each of the topics in the Pinnacle Program and the participant manual, along with supporting program materials (handouts) and all available printed material the college had regarding the program.

Table 3: Summary of Data Collection

Evaluation Level	Research Question(s) to be Addressed	Data Collection Source(s)
Level 1 - Reaction	What did participants define as the most and least beneficial aspects of the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluations previously completed by the participants - Choice's survey data - Interviews with all populations of the study
Level 2- Learning	What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviews with all populations of the study - Review of Pinnacle Leadership Development Training Program objectives, program outlines, and participant materials
Level 3 - Behavior	<p>Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?</p> <p>How was leadership development supported after the program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Choice's survey data - Interviews with all populations of the study
Level 4 - Results	<p>How did college administrators and participants view the effectiveness of the program?</p> <p>What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Established Pinnacle Program Objectives - Interviews with President, Senior Staff, and Program Planning Committee Members.

Data Analysis

Interview Analysis

At the end of each day of interviews, I reviewed the interview audiotape and added additional information to each Interview Note Sheet. Such information that I added to the notes included specific descriptive quotes, any tonal inflections from the interviewees that would add emphasis to comments. I also noted any potential coding categories that emerged during the interview. Additionally, for each program topic, I compared the participant's response data to the learning objective of the topic, and, using a 3-point rating scale, I evaluated the level of learning on each topic for each participant. The 3-point rating scale was as follows: 3 = learning objective fully met, 2 = learning partially met objective, and 1 = learning did not meet objective. I intentionally reviewed each interview recording and note sheet, and assigned ratings of interviews at the end of each day so that conversations were fresh in my mind, and also as a means of analyzing data along the way. Also, at the end of each day of interviews, I would write a few pages of notes, highlighting my general observations and insights from that day's interviews.

At the completion of the total interview process, I sorted all the completed Interview Note Sheets by four employee group levels: 1) Group M: *manager* - defined as those having responsibility for direct reports; (2) Group A: *administrator* - defined as non-faculty professionals with no direct reports; 3) Group F: faculty - defined as faculty members with no direct reports, and 4) Group S: staff - defined as non-faculty, non-professional employees such as administrative support and facilities staff. This categorization was done so that I could compare responses within each employee group and among the various other levels of employees at a later time.

Once I completed this preliminary sorting process by employee levels, I created a chart and listed all of the descriptive data on the Interview Note Sheets using Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation (Level 1 – reaction, Level 2 – learning, Level 3- behavior, and Level 4 – results). Within each of the four levels, I used Interview Note Sheets to sort data for each area of inquiry within the level. Since each area of inquiry was numbered on the Interview Note Sheet, I designated these as sublevels. I then carefully reviewed the data within each sublevel and developed thematic codes and numbered them. On the chart, I coded the level of employee next to the responses, using color-coded dots: red = managers; blue = administrators; yellow = faculty, and green = staff. Inside of the dot, I put the number of the thematic code.

Specifically, for Level 1 reaction evaluation, I developed codes (i.e., collaboration with staff outside my department, senior staff involvement, program content, etc.) based on the themes that emerged regarding the participant's overall experience in the program, what they felt were the most and least beneficial aspects of the program. For the Level 2 learning evaluation, I sorted the responses by program topic, and then by what was learned by each level of employee. Comparing the participant's response to the learning objective of the program topic, I noted the numerical code to evaluate the level of learning for each topic for each participant as follows: 3= learning fully met objective, 2 = learning partially met objective, 1 = learning did not meet objective. I used this number coding system as a way for me to evaluate how effectively objectives were met. Also, I created a chart, by employee level, to evaluate the AACC competencies that participants indicated to have learned most about in the program, least about in the program, and if there was a critical need for further learning.

For Level 3 behavior evaluation, I analyzed what participants applied from the training to their work and put them in thematic categories. I looked for patterns, and also analyzed any trends in the data that indicated barriers to utilizing what was learned in the training. For the data that I collected specifically from managers with direct reports, I looked for emerging patterns related to how they did or did not support their direct reports in enhancing their development after the program. Once this analysis was completed, I reviewed all of the data and looked for items that might be absent from the data, but was supported in the literature for enhancing leadership development (i.e., setting goals, coaching, mentoring etc.).

Focus Group Analysis

After meeting with the President and senior staff, I immediately reviewed my notes. I used a two-pronged approach to analyze the data related this topic. Specifically, I established codes for the established Pinnacle Leadership Development Program's desired outcomes, I noted the frequency of the outcomes and whether they were collectively agreed or disagreed upon during the interview. Additionally, I sorted the data by themes that emerged in conversation regarding future direction for leadership development at Choice Community College and associated outcomes. This data was used as a point of comparison with participant responses in the cross data source analysis.

Evaluation Document Analysis

There are two sets of survey data that I reviewed as part of this study: 1) evaluation surveys for each module of training for each program since 2003; and 2) a reaction survey sent to all participants who are currently employed at Choice Community College, and who attended the program from 2003 to present. This data was collected by

program planners at the college. I reviewed this data after the analysis of the interviews. I wanted to review this data to see if there were any additional insights I could add to what I learned about each level of evaluation from talking with participants. I made notes on the interview analysis charts from the surveys that I reviewed.

The evaluation survey data that the college collected from all participants was reaction data (Level 1) and all narrative in nature. At the end of each training module, participants responded in writing to the following two open-ended statements: “What I liked....”, and “What could be improved.....” The data was provided to me by the college as a continuous list of narrative comments by program topic and year, in no specific order. Since this data was not labeled, it could not be categorized by employee level. I did, however, sort this data by year and by topic and compared it year by year to see if themes emerged and/or if the data indicated significant changes in what participants liked or what could be improved. This data was of little value to this study.

The other survey data I reviewed was collected by the college in 2010. The survey was designed to obtain feedback on participant’s reaction to the program on a number of topics. The survey results were limited, as participants were not identified by employee level and much of the survey focused on the format and logistics of the program. However, participants were categorized by class year. Upon completion of the analysis of the interviews, I examined the survey data regarding leadership development, personal lasting impact, and recommendations for each class. I went back to my interview analysis charts and added some notes to the appropriate levels. Basically, I used this data to identify patterns and themes that supported, refuted, or provided another perspective to the findings of my interviews.

Program Artifact Analysis

I read and reviewed the objectives and syllabus of the Pinnacle Leadership Development four-day program, and also reviewed the participant manual and training handouts that were provided for each of the program topics. I used the information in these documents to better understand what was taught in the program and how the information was delivered in the program. I made notes of key points from each program module and used that information to aid me in discussing what was learned by participants in the program during the interviews. I also used this information to develop questions to ask program planners so that I could better learn about the nuances of the Pinnacle Program. Additionally, I used this information to compare the program's overall content with recommended best practices in leadership development programming.

Cross Data Source Analysis

Upon completion of all sources and levels of data analysis, I developed an overall evaluation of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. I accomplished this by comparing and contrasting findings from the populations that I interviewed, along with supporting findings from the survey data, and relevant documents. In my examination, I looked for patterns, exceptions, and items I deemed to be absent from the findings. I then reviewed the college's desired Pinnacle Leadership Development Program objectives and drew on the previously analyzed data to find support for how effectively these objectives were met. I then used this information to provide recommendations for enhancing the program, drawing on the evidence found in the study along with supporting evidence from the existing body of literature. Table 4 offers a summary of my data analysis to

include what constitutes evidence and what is the product of the analysis of each data source in relation to the research questions.

Table 4: Summary of Analysis

Research Question	Data Sources	What Constitutes Evidence	Product of Analysis
Level 1: Reaction What did participants define as the most and least beneficial aspects of the program?	Interview Questions: - Describe your overall Pinnacle Program Experience - What was of most benefit to you in the program? - What was of least benefit to you in the program? Choice College Survey -What did you remember most about the program? -What did you like most/least about the program? -Likert scale response to evaluation of: Overall content of program Quality of instructors/facilitators/speaker Topic Evaluations provided by the college for each year and module of training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Favorable and unfavorable responses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceived benefits and effectiveness of program by participants, program planning team, and administrators
Level 2: Learning What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?	Interview Questions: - Describe what you learned about each topic - Participant self-evaluation of overall leadership knowledge before and after program - Participant self-evaluation of AACC Competencies most and least learned about in program Choice Survey Questions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correlation between participant's response and learning objective of the module • Overall level of learning by as determined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of learning on each topic • Perceived overall learning gains since attending the program • Level of learning related

Research Question	Data Sources	What Constitutes Evidence	Product of Analysis
	- What skills did you learn in the program? Yearlong Project?	by the researcher	to AACC Competencies
<p>Level 3: Behavior</p> <p>Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?</p> <p>How was leadership development supported after the program?</p>	<p>Interview Questions</p> <p>For each topic in the training program, interviewees were asked to describe how the skills learned in the program were applied back on the job.</p> <p>-Did your manager work with you to reinforce and/or help you further develop the skills that you learned in the program? If so, explain what worked, didn't work?</p> <p>-Do you have a mentor, other than your manager? If so, describe that relationship and how they assisted you in your leadership development."</p> <p>- Describe Development Days, what you learned and the value of them?</p> <p>Question for managers with direct reports: "After your direct report(s) attended the Pinnacle Program, what did you do to reinforce and/or help them further develop the skills they learned in the program?"</p>	<p>What participants reported to use on the job from the training.</p> <p>What others observed participants using back on the job.</p> <p>Level of reinforcement of training content back on the job and how it was perceived to help participants</p>	<p>Level of application of knowledge, skills, behavior learned in program</p> <p>Level of support for developing skills beyond the program</p>

Research Question	Data Sources	What Constitutes Evidence	Product of Analysis
	What worked/didn't work?"		
Level 4 – Results How did college administrators and program participants view the effectiveness of the program? What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees?	- Established Pinnacle Program Objectives - Focus Group with Senior Staff - Interviews with Program Planners	Correlation between responses and supporting data obtained by Level 2 and 3 evaluation Evaluation of outcomes vs. desired results Evaluation of program vs. best practices for leadership development programs	Overall demonstrated level of effectiveness of the training program vs. desired results Identification of areas for improvement of program and supporting initiatives to enhance desired results

Validity of Methodology and Analysis

The collection and analysis of data in this study were consistent with those processes supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), Creswell (2003), and Merriam (1998). All concurred that qualitative research is a complex process with no single model or set of steps to follow. I conducted interviews with three distinct populations (program participants, program planners, and college senior administration), and utilized a variety of methods of data collection (interviews, survey reviews, document reviews, and literature review). Through my use of multiple coding models (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), I categorized the data for meaningful analysis. O'Donoghue and Punch (2003) contended

that triangulation is a “method of cross-checking data from multiple sources to search for regularities in the research data” (p 78). As part of my cross data source analysis, I compared and contrasted various resources to provide evidence-based responses to my research questions. To ensure the highest level of validation, I conducted a member check with two senior administrators at Choice Community College who are key stakeholders in the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program and are intimately familiar with the program design, delivery and evaluation of the program since its inception.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of Choice Community College's Pinnacle Leadership Development Program in meeting the leadership development objectives of the college. This chapter provides an analysis of the data that was collected and reviewed from two sources (interviews and relevant documents). The chapter begins with a description of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, followed by the data analysis.

The data are analyzed by the four levels of Kirkpatrick's evaluation model for analysis to answer some key research questions: 1) reaction: What did participants define as the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the program?; 2) learning: What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?; 3) behavior and transfer: Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?, How was leadership development supported after the program?; and 4) results: How did college administrators and program participants view the effectiveness of the program?, What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees? Through the analysis of each level, the main research question could then be answered: How effective is a community college's (specifically, Choice Community College) Grow Your Own (GYO) leadership development program in meeting the defined objectives?

For each level, I provide an analysis of the findings of each data source I used to answer the specific research questions. Further, within each level, I discuss the themes that emerged from the analysis. The chapter concludes with an analysis of the data in

light of the college's desired outcomes for the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program; drawing on all levels of this evaluation process.

Choice's Pinnacle Leadership Development Program

As part of this study, I interviewed some of the program planners and administrators involved in the program, and reviewed all program documents to understand the nuances of the program. This provided me with a fundamental understanding of the program that I was going to evaluate. Following are my findings on the composition of the program.

Choice Community College first offered its leadership development program, entitled "Pinnacle Leadership Development Program," in the fall of 2003. The program was internally developed as an outgrowth of the college's strategic plan. Development of leaders at all levels within the college was deemed of extreme importance at Choice by all constituencies. To that end, a team of planners from within the college was appointed by the President to explore the development of what would become the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program.

The planning team conducted a detailed study of leadership development program models in both the public and private sectors; which included site visits to such nationally recognized programs at the Disney Institute and Southwest Airlines. According to the program planners I met with, the final program content objectives were aligned with the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders (Interviews PP-3, PP-4). Also, it should be noted that, from the onset of the program's development, the college's administration believed that leadership development was a valuable opportunity for employee growth and possible promotion. Thus, employees at all levels of the college

(management, administrators, faculty, and staff) were annually invited, nominated, or self-nominated to attend the program. There appeared to be no consistent method, or criteria for participant selection.

The college-funded program, run annually from 2003 through 2010, has had 120 employees participate in the program. Each cohort class was comprised of 15 employees, representing a mix of management, administrators, faculty, and staff from the college. The four-day residency program was held off-campus and consisted of eight hours each day of presentations, large and small group activities, and time for reflective journaling. Time outside the formal program offered participants opportunities to interact informally with colleagues, senior staff, and the college president.

The desired program outcomes, as defined in the program syllabus, were established by the program planners and approved by the college's senior administration. The desired objectives were to have participants:

- Understand a broader perspective of higher education, in general, with specific emphasis on community college education
- Develop new insights into leadership and motivation
- Build new relationships within the College
- Develop collective problem-solving strategies related to strategic directions of Choice Community College
- Develop awareness of the importance of team building
- Explore self-management techniques

The content of the four-day program usually began with an overview presentation of community colleges within the field of higher education, setting a foundation in

community college models, governance, and challenges. The content of the program then narrowed to focus on Choice's history, governance model, strategic planning and budgeting model, code of ethics, and relationship with the surrounding community that the college serves. Presentation, discussion, small group activities, and individual assessments were used to address these topics, as well as the topics of team building, leadership style, diversity issues, and effective communication. Choice's college president served as the general facilitator of the entire program. In this capacity, he discussed the importance of a particular topic, introduced speakers, and facilitated a summarization of each topic at the conclusion of presentations. Training modules, defined as one to two hours of topical content, were presented by a combination of internal staff and outside speakers. Typically, these speakers included other community college presidents, the President of the State's Oversight Council for Community Colleges, Choice's Board of Trustees President, local community leaders, selected external leadership development consultants, and selected senior staff from within the college.

In addition to the structured residency program, small groups within each cohort were formed by the planning team, and were expected to complete a self-developed team project. This year-long project is intended to allow participants to practically apply the leadership skills learned in the program in a way that would positively impact the college community. Pinnacle Program participants met three times during the academic year to get additional leadership development training on topics selected by the planning team, and were required to present the status of their team projects. Participants were encouraged to select a mentor to assist them in their continued leadership development as

part of the program. However, I found no evidence of a structured mentoring process or program.

Findings of Effectiveness by Evaluation Level

Level 1 Evaluation – Reaction

Research Question: What did participants define as the most and least beneficial aspects of the program?

I evaluated the Level 1 data to determine how participants reacted to the program. Specifically, I designed the collection and analysis of the Level 1 data to evaluate if the participants viewed the program favorably/unfavorably, and what participants deemed to be the most and least beneficial aspects of the program. Data sources for this level of evaluation included interviews with participants, the college's 2010 survey of Pinnacle Program participants, and completed evaluations collected by the college from program participants for each module of training for each year of the program.

There were a number of common themes that emerged from the analysis of the reaction data. Participants clearly viewed their overall experience as favorable, but depending on the level of the employee, some of the participants viewed the program as an orientation to the college, rather than a leadership development initiative. Similarly, many did not always see a connection of the content of the program to their positions. The most favorable reaction themes revolved around participants' interacting with others who were in different areas of the college (with whom they would not normally interact), and the vast exposure and support to participants provided by the senior administrators and President of the college during the four-day program. Themes regarding the length of

the program format, relevancy of topics to position, and lack of follow-through were identified as least beneficial aspects of the program.

Interviews.

Most beneficial aspects.

Every participant interviewed viewed his or her overall Pinnacle Leadership Development Program experience to be favorable. When asked to describe their overall experience, most often participants would smile and generally use such terms as “amazing, awesome, enlightening, rewarding, informative, and positive” to describe their four-day leadership development experience (Interviews S-1; A-7; M-2; M-9). Upon probing further into the constant expression of positive experiences, participants from all levels within the college (managers, administrators, faculty, and staff) indicated that the most beneficial experience in the program was meeting and collaborating with colleagues outside their immediate department.

Many participants commented that they valued meeting other colleagues from different areas of the college because this helped them in gaining different perspectives on the college, and aided them, after the program, in knowing whom to contact about a particular issue, and/or created some type of common bond. In one interview, a participant stated that “it was a great advantage to meet people at all levels at the college and be able to develop relationships with people outside my department” (Interview M-4). Another commented that “I met people that I would not directly work with, and it was great to get to know other people and network” (Interview A-4). Some participants simply imparted that, by being in a program with employees from all levels of the college, they could see how others were dealing with similar issues (i.e., student factors, staffing

issues, limited budgets). The mixing of all levels of employees as participants in the program did not surface as an issue; rather, participants felt that the mixed cohort promoted a sense of camaraderie among participants. As one participant put it, “we all learned together as a team, not as people with titles” (Interview S-1).

Similarly, I frequently noticed how participants appreciated the presence of the President and senior staff in not only the facilitation of the program, but also in interacting informally with participants. Since the program’s inception, the two Choice College presidents who have served during the program’s tenure, have facilitated and attended the entire four-day Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. Many participants were quick to point out how valuable their involvement was in the program. “Having senior people there made me realize how important this program is,” stated one participant (Interview A-4). Another participant noted that “having senior people there leading sessions and showing an interest in us was real good” (Interview S-6). Many participants commented on how valuable it was to hear the President’s viewpoints on the direction of the college, be able to ask questions in small groups, and were appreciative of the opportunity to be a part of such a program. A few participants used the term “investment” to describe a prime benefit of the program (Interviews A - 4; S – 7). As one participant noted, “being there for four days...the college really invested in me to learn” (Interview M-2). Some participants stated that they were pleasantly surprised and grateful to senior staff who took the time to share insights into the formal program, as well as those who randomly visited just to interact with participants informally outside the designated program hours.

The benefits, as described by the participants, focused primarily on bonding and networking with participants who represented diverse areas of the college, exposure to

senior staff, and the opportunity to learn more about the college. I found it interesting that very limited, if any, participant benefit statements focused on the program content and what was learned. Occasionally, participants would reference a topic of interest to them, but rarely was that communicated as a major benefit. Most often, participants described the program, as one stated, “lots of good information about the college” (A-13).

Similarly, some participants commented that the program was a good overview of the college, with one participant specifically suggesting that “this [program] should have been my orientation to Choice College” (Interview M-16). In a different context, some participants noted that, depending on one’s level in the college, much of the content about Choice Community College was covered in college meetings. This comment was particularly prevalent at the manager employee level. Additionally, a few participants indicated that the content specifically focused on the college and surrounding community, could best be categorized as informational in nature.

Least beneficial aspects.

Most participants struggled with identifying the least beneficial aspects of the program. However, a common response was that some of the program topics were not relevant to one’s individual position, or not of interest to some participants. This was most typically found at the manager and administrator levels, where many participants responded that they already had significant exposure to the college’s strategic planning and budgeting process. Conversely, while a few participants in the faculty and staff category found these similar topics of interest, some noted that they were not directly related to their positions at the college. One participant echoed the statements of others, saying: “some topics just didn’t pertain to my job” (Interview S-1). Another participant

said, “...learned more about the college, but all topics didn’t fit to my job or make me a better leader” (Interview A-12). Various comments from all levels of participants made reference to the fact that there was not a lot of continuity or follow-up after the program. One participant noted that “things fell apart [with mentoring] after the program was over” (Interview A-1). Other similar comments were: “after the program, we were on our own with the project, and not everyone contributed and followed up” (Interview S-5); “development days weren’t as good as the program” (Interview A-4).

Survey data.

The college’s 2010 survey of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program participants yielded responses from 50% of program participants who were still employed at the college. The survey results did provide data that was consistent with what I found in the interview protocol for the Level 1 – Reaction data. All data from the survey supported a favorable reaction by participants to the program. While this data did provide support to my interview findings, I did not feel there was any other major significance to the data, with the exception of data on two key areas: program format and impact.

Program format.

Survey participants were asked to evaluate how strongly they agreed or disagreed, using a 5-point Likert scale, on statements regarding the format of the Pinnacle Program. There was strong agreement that the offsite retreat was a valuable component of the program (70.7%), and that spending time informally with other participants was an important component for creating a cohesive group dynamic (74.1%). These responses would confirm the importance of meeting off campus, and having a residency component where participants can get to know one another outside of the workplace and classroom.

There was also strong support (63.2%) for having employees from all levels within the college enrolled together in the program, rather than separated with individual programs. Respondents felt that the topics selected for modules were appropriate and productive (75%). Approximately 64% indicated that the group projects were important components of the program. There was also fairly strong agreement that the time provided for each topic, the overall time commitment for the program, and the small and large group work components were appropriate.

Respondents were less certain about the use of mentors, the overall length of the program, the amount of time spent on personal leadership. These questions elicited responses that were split fairly evenly among all of the response categories

Participants indicated clearly that follow-up after the four-day program, and the incorporation of a book and meetings, needs to be improved. These responses correlated to similar responses noted from the interviews.

Respondents were satisfied with the performance of program facilitators, presenters and coordinators of the program. All questions reflected an 85% or higher positive rating. They also felt the program received support by the President and senior staff of the college (73%).

Program impact.

To evaluate the program's impact on participants, survey participants were asked to reflect on their leadership development, how their leadership competency improved as a result of the program, and if the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program met their expectations.

Survey respondents were asked to evaluate whether they agreed or disagreed on how the program impacted their own leadership styles and understanding in general. The responses in this section indicated that the program does a good job of increasing awareness of higher education and college operations (88%), but respondents gave the lowest ratings to the program's aiding them in understanding their own leadership style (71%) and increasing their confidence in their own leadership abilities.

Similarly, participants were asked to evaluate the level of improvement of their leadership competencies as a result of attending the Pinnacle Program. Using a five-point Likert scale, respondents were asked to evaluate their progress as greatly improved to unimproved on what could be described as 18 general leadership competencies. It is interesting to note here that the competencies presented in the survey differ from the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders. According to the responses, the program had its strongest impact on participants in the following areas: understanding community college issues and challenges (93%), understanding yourself and others (88.1%), personal interaction with others (84.2%), understanding of other college departments (84.2%), and professional interaction with others (80.7%). The lowest impact was reported on the discussions of involvement in civic life and/or volunteer activity, helping your department promote/accept change, and resolving conflict.

In terms of the overall impact of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, participants were asked to rate how they viewed various personal and professional people/groups being positively impacted by what was learned in the program. The highest positive responses in this category came in the form of impact on coworkers (79%), students (67.2%), and direct report staff (65.4%). The general community and

family were rated as those least impacted. Approximately 70% of the respondents agreed that the overall program experience met their expectations.

Program topic evaluation data.

A voluminous amount of narrative program evaluation was collected by the college. I deemed this to be more Level 1 – reaction data. There were evaluations from each program topic for each year of the program. Specifically, the data collected were forms that participants were asked to complete at the conclusion of each program topic. Participants were simply asked to complete a form which was comprised of two open-ended statements: “What I liked....”, and “What should be improved...”.

In reviewing the data, participants most often made reference to how they liked the presenter, the atmosphere of the session (i.e., casual and comfortable), and used positive adjectives to describe the topic. However, there was little reference, if any, to the content of the program. Similarly, with the responses to “What Should be Improved...”, respondents most often referenced the climate conditions of the room, the need for more time on the topic, or simply a response of “nothing” to indicate no improvement was necessary.

From year to year, the responses were consistent, as previously mentioned. I did not find this information to be of any notable value as part of this study. It should also be noted that there were no overall evaluations at the conclusion of the four-day program during any given year. While the 2010 survey conducted by the college did provide an avenue for participants to share and, in some instances, evaluate their overall program experience, participants may not have clearly remembered their experience, since the information was collected a year or more after their participation in the program. This

implies that the appropriate type of evaluation necessary to thoroughly evaluate the effectiveness of the program has not been collected as part of the college's program evaluation.

Level 2 Evaluation – Learning

Research Question: What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?

The Level 2 evaluation of the learning outcomes was to determine what participants actually learned in the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. I used a structured interview protocol to determine exactly what participants learned in each topical area of the program as well as its tie to the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders, what they learned via the year-long leadership project, and their overall learning outcomes from the program.

There were some common themes that emerged in what participants reported to have learned in the program. Overall, participants spoke at great length, and with enthusiasm, about what they learned related to communication styles. Participants often referred to communication skills while discussing other topical areas, with particular emphasis on teamwork. Development of teamwork skills, as noted quite frequently by participants, was learned through a variety of experiential components of the program. Participants reported significant learning about community colleges in general, as well as the specific governance and administrative processes of Choice Community College. While participants reported gaining knowledge about Choice Community College and acquiring new insights into interpersonal skills (communication, collaboration, and

teamwork), little mention was made of how participants viewed what they learned as true leadership development.

The following is an analysis of the interview data regarding what participants reported to have learned in the program. The analysis is arranged beginning with the topic where the most learning occurred to the topic with the lowest level of reported learning.

Communication style.

As part of the program, participants completed the DISC communication assessment to identify their style preference and how to effectively work with other styles. (Note: DISC is a personal assessment tool used to improve communication, teamwork, and work productivity. The assessment produces a behavioral style preference with specific characteristics that can be helpful to a person in understanding his or her style and become more effective in interacting with others.) With the exception of a few participants who had difficulty in recalling their styles, most participants were able to, not only identify their primary style, but in many cases, their secondary style also. Participants at all employee levels commented on the value of communication for leaders. As one staff member noted, “Learning about my style will help me in developing as a good leader and manager because it is about how others perceive me” (Interview S-1). Another agreed, and said that this “helped me learn about myself and what kind of leader I want to be” (Interview S-8). While an administrator asserted that [DISC] “helped me understand myself better and confirmed my wanting to be a leader” (Interview A-7), some participants indicated that they need to use this information with caution. I did not view this sense of caution as something negative; rather, I viewed this

as an awareness of differences. Specifically, one participant commented, “I was not sure about categorizing people...everyone is different (Interview A-5), and another added, “it [DISC] should not be used to label others” (Interview S-3).

Overall, this topic elicited the most engaging dialogue with all levels of participants of the study. There was a curiosity and enthusiasm expressed by participants about learning this understanding of their communication preferences. As one participant noted, “I understand better how to adjust my style with other people in my life and be more direct” (Interview M-5). All employee levels expressed a desire to delve deeper into the topic and use this information to improve communication, not only with colleagues, but also with other acquaintances. Clearly, I felt the participants’ level of learning met the desired objectives.

Teamwork.

A number of participants made some reference to the stages of team development in their interviews, but few could actually identify or define them. However, participants seemed to draw on their experiences of working in teams throughout the program, rather than the specific training module, to describe what they learned about the topic.

A common theme that emerged at all employee levels was the notion that teamwork is not easy for leaders or followers. Key learning outcomes included: awareness of dealing with various personalities on a team, individual preferences for working with team members, and the value of people on a team working toward a common goal. One insightful comment focused on the dislike of teamwork: “I don’t like to work with a team; I prefer to do things on my own, but know that I have to make others more inclusive and step out my comfort zone to work more with others” (Interview

S-3). Similarly, one participant said, “you have to find out the strengths and weaknesses of team members if you’re going to be a good leader. It’s hard because not everyone has the same commitment to working as a team” (Interview M-2). It was interesting to note that faculty participants expressed more challenges in working as a team than some other levels of employees. However, I concluded that this may simply be related to the nature of their position.

Within each level of employees, reference was again made to the DISC communication assessment. Participants indicated that, by knowing their communication style preferences and those of others, teamwork can be less stressful due to diversity of styles. One participant stated, “It’s hard working in a team sometimes. You need to respect others’ styles if you want to be a good team member and leader” (Interview M-7). Another indicated that “I’m a high C style [DISC – conscientious style], and I tend to be very analytical. I might have to step back and let others take the lead or I might be seen as too critical” (Interview M-3).

It was difficult to pinpoint what was exactly learned in this actual module, as well as the module on Leadership Styles, which I will discuss later. However, the majority of participants could describe learning outcomes related to the use of team activities as part of the training methodologies in other modules. Overall, participants expressed an understanding and awareness of the value of teamwork, so I would conclude that the learning objective was met. However, the tie to leadership development was not always mentioned.

Community college purpose and issues.

Most participants were intrigued by this topic, with the greatest level of learning at the administrator, staff, and faculty levels. Managers frequently commented that they had been exposed to this topic in their work at the college, and, generally, while they found the information to be interesting, they did not express that they learned anything new. However, one manager commented that “The presentation made me think more broadly about my work here” (Interview M-8).

A pervasive theme that emerged on the topic was that of student success. Participants often made statements that demonstrated their ability to tie the concept of student success to their individual jobs. One participant talked about the constant need to remember who the college serves, stating that “She [the presenter] made a good point that we need to stay focused on who our students are [in terms of student readiness] and teach the ones [students] we have, not the ones we wish we had” (Interview M-15). Another participant said, “We need to build on what we do to ensure student success, not just look at numbers” (Interview A-9).

For some participants who had either worked at other educational institutions outside the community college sector or in the private business sector, there was an awareness gained in this module on the uniqueness of the community college as an academic institution. This insight, as shared by one participant, indicated that “It was helpful to learn about how unique the community college is, compared to regular colleges. I now realize what an impact it [community college] makes on higher education” (Interview A-11). “It’s important to learn about the business that you’re in...that’s what I learned” (Interview F-3). For other participants, there was a sense of

renewed awareness of the community college structure: "...reinforced my beliefs in the purpose of the community college and the commitment to, not only the students, but involvement in the community the college is in" (Interview F-2); "Community college has become a college of choice" (Interview A-12).

The learning objective for this topic was achieved, which was exemplified by participants, at all levels, communicating a broader understanding of the purpose and role of community colleges and the challenges that are present. It was, however, at this point, that I realized how little emphasis had been put on discussing the college student as part of the program. Some participants made that connection in their interview comments, but, while I indicated that the objective was met, I think it would have had more impact and been a richer learning experience for participants if there had been dialogue on the community college student and student success.

College governance and Choice Community College history.

The greatest learning outcomes from this topic module, as reported by participants, was actually understanding how the Board of Trustees works with the on-campus administration and learning about the growth of the college since its inception. "I learned a lot about the decision-making processes of the Board. It was not what I thought" (Interview S-4), stated one participant. Another concurred, stating, "Understanding the Board's role and vision was enlightening" (Interview A-5), and yet another added, "I learned how all the pieces fit together and the checks and balances required in the running of the college" (Interview M-7).

While a number of participants with less longevity at the college seemed to have reported more about what they learned about the history of the college; those with more

longevity at Choice occasionally reported to have learned something new. However, a few participants appeared dismissive when asked what they learned on the topic, noting, “not sure this is the place for it (the topic)...maybe in an orientation” (Interview M-15); and “It was informational and presented in an entertaining way, but not sure it developed me as a leader” (Interview A-14).

It was striking, however, to note how a number of participants moved beyond the mere content of the chronological history of the college and articulated a deeper understanding of the college’s present state. As one participant stated, “Through the history, I think differently about what our mission is and who we serve” (Interview S-1). Overall, the participants demonstrated a fundamental understanding of the topic; thus, the learning objective was met.

Strategic planning and budgeting.

Clearly, those participants with direct budgeting responsibility and active involvement in the college’s strategic planning process indicated that there really was no new learning in the module, and that they felt that a good deal of it was a repeat of what had been presented at various previous meetings during the year. This was found particularly at the manager level, and occasionally at the administrator level. However, a general statement by one participant really echoed the sentiments of many others: “I already know a lot about this, but it inspired me to accomplish my goals, which in turn will help the college achieve more strategic goals” (Interview A-7). Conversely, a number of participants seemed to be just learning about this topic or hearing this message for the first time. Some of the comments were: “I didn’t realize that the strategic plan was so big” (Interview S-3); “very interesting how this is planned out” (Interview A-2);

and “I learned things about the budget at the program that I wouldn’t have known about otherwise” (Interview S-1).

In terms of strategic planning, participants stated that they gained a better understanding of the entire process from a macro level, and how all the components of the plan work together to achieve the larger goals of the college. “I felt that understanding the process helped make sense in terms of how issues are addressed at the college” (Interview S-4). Others noted that, by learning how the plan is developed and monitored, they see how their job and/or department contributes to the overall goals of the college. “It helped me see how what I do with students fits into the bigger picture of what the college wants for student success (Interview F-5).

A pervasive theme was related to the budgeting process and the way in which the funds are appropriated from the state and local governing agencies to the college and how the college manages funds internally. In some cases, participants presented an angry demeanor when communicating how this newly acquired knowledge of state funding was calculated. “Now I know why some things can’t be funded” (Interview M-15); “Doesn’t seem right that financial promises are not kept by the government. Doesn’t appear that state and local government work as partners with financial input” (Interview F-4); “I see why students are required to contribute more [money]. It’s good to understand maybe their frustrations with tuition and fees” (Interview M-4). This could possibly be interpreted as a passion for what was learned on the subject matter. Additionally, a number of participants shared that they learned how the budget is managed internally, and as one participant stated, “it was good that someone took the mystery out of the

[budget] process for us” (Interview A-16). Overall, significant learning was demonstrated by participants on the topics, and the objectives were met.

Leadership styles.

During the interviews on this topic, participants from all employee levels, more often than not, referred back to the DISC communication style assessment, when discussing their learning outcomes on leadership styles. Upon significant probing, it appeared that participants did not seem to recall much of what was learned in this module, per se, but in most cases participants could share some reflective insights about their own perceptions of their leadership style. Additionally, another theme that emerged was that participants gained an understanding of the definition of leadership.

The majority of participants made rather insightful correlations to their leadership style via their assessed communication style. Some participants made reference to the awareness of their style and how that could impact their leadership abilities. One participant said, “By knowing my DISC, I can work better with others, and sometimes I have to adjust my style with others to get things done” (Interview S-2). Another indicated, “I learned that my [DISC] style is too direct...by maybe being aware of it and how I interact with others, I can be a better leader” (Interview S-1). Similarly, one participant said, “Awareness of your style and the styles of other people is very important to leadership” (Interview A-5).

Many participants paused to reflect when responding to what they learned about leadership style. There were some who indicated that they have more of an awareness of how they may interact with others, and there were some who provided suggestions regarding how they could further develop their style of leadership. “I need to be more

open and speak up...look at the big picture and not be afraid of failure” (Interview M-3). “I need to have more confidence in making decisions” (Interview M-12). Additionally, some participants were quick to make a differentiation between managing and leading in responding. “Leaders influence others and managers get the task done,” replied one participant (Interview M -16).

The quality of the reflective thoughts on leadership styles by participants indicated that they had done some introspection on the topic; however, it was difficult to pinpoint the actual learning that occurred here as a result of participation in this module. Thus, I would believe that the objective for this topic was only partially met, since I did not feel there was enough evidence from the interviews and program content to conclude that it fully met the objective.

Diversity and ethics.

The key learning outcomes that participants at all levels clearly communicated was their heightened awareness of diversity, and often a new understanding of ethic responsibility as a leadership trait. One participant stated, “I came with my own beliefs, but now realize that diversity is way beyond race and gender” (Interview S-4). Another participant concurred about gaining a greater appreciation for diversity: “I never thought about diversity as it relates to a student’s ability. I must look at things differently to address those who have diverse needs” (Interview A-7). Another participant shared learning about diversity on a larger scale, stating, “I was unaware how the college promotes and embraces diversity through policies with students and faculty” (Interview F-2). “I learned that diversity is an important fabric of CCC” (Interview A-6). One

participant paused for reflection, and then stated, “never thought about generational differences as a diversity issue...something to think about” (Interview M-14).

Most participants mentioned having a heightened awareness of appropriate ethical behaviors. Similarly to the responses regarding diversity, participants seemed to express a deeper learning and/or understanding of the topic. “It questioned my responsibility to challenge curriculum and brought out my responsibility to students” (Interview M-15). One participant commented on the value of the ethical dilemma exercise program activity as a means of learning about ethical responsibility. “The exercise really made me think about situations we face every day on campus. I struggled with answering some of the situations (in the exercise). It’s something you need to think about. Yeah, it’s not right to make photocopies at work for personal business!” (Interview S-5).

Conversely, I did not get the sense that some participants saw this topic as relevant to their leadership development. Often, by the nonverbal gestures of some participants (i.e., eye rolling, sighing), they noted that they did not learn anything new from this topic. When I probed further, I learned that a few did not feel comfortable discussing diversity issues in a large forum. One participant even said, “...would have been more helpful to learn about dealing with conflict” (Interview M-6).

Generally, the learning objectives were met for those participants who appeared to have embraced the content and saw value in its application. It is interesting to note that very few participants whom I interviewed specifically mentioned how these topics actually did tie into their leadership development.

Goal setting and planning.

Managers, administrators, and faculty typically did not indicate that they learned anything new about goal setting and planning in the program. One manager commented that "...it reinforced what I already knew and made me be more intentional about setting professional goals" (Interview M-5). While yet another stated that "it [goal setting] reminded me of things I learned in graduate school" (Interview M-15). Perhaps the most profound learning on the topic came from the administrator level, where participants tied the concept of goal setting to another subtopic in the program - leadership by failure. One administrator reflectively commented, "We should set goals without fear of failure and we might stretch higher...achieve more" (Interview M-5). The greatest learning took place among the staff level, as they indicated that they learned the importance and process for effective goal setting, both personally and professionally. As one participant indicated, "I learned that goal setting is not a list, but it's a process that needs to be monitored or else you don't meet them" (Interview S-3). Based on the objectives for this topic and the learning that occurred, the learning objective was partially met by all employee groups.

Journaling.

Of all topics discussed in the interview with participants, this topic evoked the most polarity of responses. While most participants indicated that they learned that journaling could be a valuable tool in their leadership development, many were unable to identify what they had exactly learned on the topic itself. It appeared that most participants did not see the actual value in it for themselves, which may have deterred the learning or the retention of learning. "I didn't connect with it...not my thing" (Interview

M-15), “may have value for self-discovery, but not for me” (Interview M-2), and “seems time consuming, not sure of the value for me” (Interview S-5), were some of the typical responses from those who did not learn, perhaps because of the perceived lack of value.

It is also interesting to note that this training module typically ran from 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm. Based on a number of unfavorable responses, learning could have been impaired by the timing of the module. One participant indicated that “I wasn’t really into it. It was after dinner” (Interview M-2). Similarly, another participant added that “I was tired at that point...don’t remember much” (Interview S-3).

Conversely, those who expressed seeing value in the content were readily able to share their learning outcomes. A number of participants felt that writing their thoughts on a regular basis could aid in understanding more about their leadership style, while others mentioned that the process of writing daily could aid in their decision-making, and even relieve stresses associated with work. As one participant said, “It could be a creative outlet and very valuable to reflect on how I interact with people. [I] guess leaders need to do that” (Interview M-4). Overall, significant learning on this topic for most participants, for a variety of reasons, was not achieved on the topic in the program.

AACC Competencies and the Pinnacle Program.

As part of the interview protocol, I asked participants to review a list of the Pinnacle Program topics as they related to the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders. I then asked them to reflect on their program experience and indicate which areas they learned the most about and which they learned the least about.

All levels of employees indicated that the most learning occurred under the Collaboration competency. This is consistent with what participants reported as one of the

most beneficial aspects of the program via interviews. Again, participants repeatedly cited the mixed cohort groups, which included all levels of employees, as a valuable learning experience. Many often reported that they felt the interactions with other colleagues from the college gave them a different perspective on their work, or realized that employees in other departments shared similar challenges. Additionally, participants often noted that outside presenters; i.e., local community leaders and leaders of other college; aided them in understanding leadership challenges that impact the community college.

The competency areas that participants reported learning the least about in the program varied among employee levels, as follows: Faculty – Organizational Strategy competency, Administrators – Resource Management competency, Staff - Community College Advocacy competency, and Managers – Resource Management competency. These responses also seem consistent with what was reported in the interviews. Managers and administrators often reported that the topical content in those areas were often redundant, as they had had exposure to these topics in their positions. Also, a number of staff members occasionally reported that they could not see the relationship of the larger community college picture to their positions at the college.

Year-long team project.

A year-long leadership project was the culminating learning experience of the formal, four-day program, and was an integral part of the program. The goal of the project was for program participants to work collaboratively to utilize leadership skills learned in the program, and practically apply the skills in developing and implementing an initiative that would further the mission of Choice Community College.

Participants of each year's cohort group were typically divided into three, five-person groups. All participants viewed the project as both a rewarding and, at times, a frustrating learning experience. Such self-developed projects included: development of a cocurricular transcript, a recruitment DVD, kiosks throughout the campus that would assist individuals in locating buildings/offices, creation of a college flag, a campus beautification and "go green" campus environmental project, a copy machine program for students, LED signage at campus entry ways, development of a webpage for students and community to explore career options, flashing pagers for students (similar to what are used in restaurants) so that students would not have to waste time in lines at registration and financial aid, bus shelter for students, and a comedy/tragedy sculpture outside the performing arts building.

Two common learning themes that resonated with participants was a deeper understanding of the dynamics of teamwork in working towards a common goal and some introspection into leadership styles. Participants at all employee levels were readily able to cite their learning outcomes from this project. The most insightful learning outcomes came from the manager level. What is interesting to note is that, while participants at the staff and faculty levels indicated learning about teamwork and leadership as an outgrowth of the project, they were more often focused on the process and outcome of the project itself than the skills learned via the project.

Participants often tied the concept of teamwork, either working or not working, back to the interaction of communication styles. One participant said, "You could see the different styles of people in the group, and that sometimes created conflict in us working together" (Interview A-4). Another participant indicated, "I could see sometimes how I

needed to hold back on my “D” [DISC] style so that I didn’t take over...even when I wanted to” (Interview M-1). Another concept often noted as a key learning was the importance of team roles and planning in executing a project. “Team members have to hold other people accountable when there is no assigned leader” (Interview S-1). “In spite of individual efforts, group dynamics play a large part in getting a job done” (Interview M-13). One participant commented on what was learned about teamwork in a project that failed to be realized, stating, “When the communication fell apart and people expected another person to deal with the bureaucracy...so did the team” (Interview S-7).

The leadership insights gained in the program ranged from how leaders may emerge in a leaderless team to personal insights on leadership from a participant’s direct experience with the project. “Realizing when to take the lead and when to let others lead was a huge thing for me. I had to step back sometimes. That was hard” (Interview M-2). A number of participants shared that they learned that accountability is important for leadership. One participant said, “Leaders need to hold people accountable, but that doesn’t mean that the leader is in charge; it’s just a leadership trait” (Interview M-5). Another participant echoed the statements of others by saying, “I learned more about the college and my leadership strengths and weaknesses by working on this project” (Interview M-4).

The year-long project yielded significant learning outcomes on leadership, as well as teamwork. Clearly, the project objective of participants practically applying their learning from the program was realized.

Overall Pinnacle Program objectives.

As part of the interview protocol, I asked participants to self-evaluate their ability to demonstrate the six overarching program objectives before and after the program, using a five-point scale. These objectives were: 1) understanding a broader perspective of higher education with specific emphasis on community college education, 2) insights into leadership and motivation, 3) relationships with others within the college, 4) collective problem-solving strategies related to the strategic direction of Choice Community College, 5) awareness of the dynamics of teambuilding, and 6) self-management techniques.

Participants at all employee levels increased their ability on all objectives, as a result of attending the program. Consistent with the interview outcomes, participants at all levels reported significant gains in building new relationships, with managers reporting the lowest increase in that objective. The greatest increase in ability was reported at the staff level. Significant gains were made in all areas, with their broader understanding of community colleges rated as the most developed. Managers indicated that their ability significantly increased in the areas of developing new insights into leadership and motivation and teambuilding.

Level 3 Evaluation – Behavior

Research Question: Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?

Research Question: How was the training supported after the program?

The Level 3 evaluation of the behaviors was two-fold, to determine: 1) how participants demonstrated what they actually learned in the program, and 2) how what

was learned in the program was supported and further developed after the program. The data I collected and analyzed came from interviews with program participants and their managers, and through survey data.

Transfer of training.

Participants at all employee levels indicated that they had utilized what they learned in the program in one way or another back on the job. This transfer of training, which is defined as “trainees applying to their jobs the learned capabilities gained in training” (Noe, 2010, p.510), was more prevalent with the administrator level of employees. Overall, the most transfer took place around the themes of communication skills, teamwork, the community college mission, and nuances of Choice Community College.

Participants most often spoke of their application of the learning outcomes from the communication module of the training program. This also was the area where the highest level of learning was reported to be gained from the program. Participants frequently spoke about how the understanding of their communication style was helpful in adjusting their style to lead others. One participant said, “I went back and made sure that I learned about the styles of my staff members. I’m getting through better to them now that I know their styles and talk with them in different ways” (Interview M-12). “It’s actually helped me communicate better with my supervisor!” (Interview M-6). “It’s taken a while, but I can appreciate the differences in others who are different [in communication styles] than me. I also noticed this in working with my students” (Interview F-1). Overall, participants indicated a strong awareness of the importance of

effective communication as a leadership skill and have seemingly demonstrated their application of that knowledge in the workplace.

Participants, at all employee levels, but particularly at the administrator and manager levels, indicated that what they learned about the community college system in general, and Choice Community College specifically, was applied in their work after the program. Application of this knowledge was reported as being applied in one or more areas: 1) direct application to participant's own job, 2) application in working with others, most often on college committees, and 3) application in working with students. "Knowing the bigger picture (of the college) helped me when I was developing goals for my area and preparing my budget" (Interview M-16). "I think having the information on the college really helped me better understand the accreditation process we are going through. A lot of the information fit together" (Interview A-8). "I can give better answers to students about the college because of what I learned in Pinnacle" (Interview A-6).

Most participants made reference to the applicability of the teamwork concepts. Many expressed this applicability of teamwork as bringing their staff together collectively. "I tried to get people on my staff to work together more on projects so they could see how their jobs fit together" (Interview A-4). Others took teamwork to a broader context by indicating, "I could see how important it was to give up my own agenda to get to the goal as a team" (Interview A-12). Another participant, similarly, noted, "I think I'm more intentional, I think, in engaging others to participate on the team than I did before" (Interview A-7).

Similarly to what was reported in the learning outcomes, a great number of participants tied their application of teamwork, back in the workplace, to effective communication. One participant stated, “I talked to my staff about what a team is and we have to understand how we communicate with each other first” (Interview S -4). “I see the different styles within our department and I think we understand how all these styles can make or break us” (Interview A-9).

As part of the interview protocol, I asked managers with direct reports to share what they observed their direct reports applying from the program. Their responses, for the most part, concurred with what the other employee levels (faculty, staff, and administrators) stated. They too observed a heightened awareness of effective communication with staff, a concerted effort to foster teamwork, and a deeper correlation of strategic planning and budgeting as it relates to their current positions. One manager even noted an intangible byproduct of what was learned and applied from the Pinnacle Program: “my [named the position of employee] came back and was excited to share what he learned with his staff and I could see him have more confidence as he talked in meetings” (Interview M-11).

It would appear that the analysis of what was applied from the topical content would be incomplete if some of those byproducts, as previously noted, were not referenced. The majority of managers were quick to point out what they observed when participants came back from the training. The participants worked with renewed energy to contribute and, in some cases, apply new skills. The words “increased confidence” (Interview M-7), and “more positive approach” (Interview M-16), were terms that many

managers used to describe what could be considered to be transfers from the training that extended beyond the specific program content.

While the data from the 2010 survey did not specifically elicit any learning outcomes directly related to the program content, participants did self-evaluate how others were positively impacted by what they learned in the program. Overall, participants at all levels indicated that they perceived the highest positive impact to coworkers and their supervisors, while impact to students was the rated third. This might possibly suggest that participants may not have fully realized the impact of their leadership development as it relates to students. The data from this survey does, however, support the notion that participants actually did apply concepts from the program; otherwise, it would be questionable if they could rate their impact on others.

Overall, I did not get the impression that participants viewed what was applied from the program as “leadership development” in a specific context; I interpreted these findings to indicate that participants gained information that helped them to better understand and, in some cases, perform their jobs.

Learning support and training follow-up.

There were three key areas that I evaluated and analyzed to determine how the learning from the program was supported and enhanced after the conclusion of the formal classroom training program. These areas were the development days (sporadic training programs provided by the college to the cohorts throughout the year), mentoring, and direct manager support.

Development Days.

Participants at all levels generally did not view the use of development days as an effective means to enhance their learning from the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. The majority of participants often did not recall the topics or the program, and those who did, did not see a connection to the program or in some cases, leadership development. One participant said, “Fun program, but not really a leadership development topic” (Interview A-8). Some participants described the day’s outcomes as “weak” (Interview M-8) or “no meat” (Interview M-1). One participant echoed the sentiment of others by saying, “can’t remember the purpose except for us to get together and talk about our project” (Interview S-9).

Some indicated that the programming often was an information session about what was going on at the college. However, most seemed unable to communicate the benefit of this to reinforce what was learned in the program or to further development.

Mentoring.

Pinnacle Program participants were encouraged to select mentors from within the college to assist in their continued leadership development. There was no established mentoring program as part of the overall Pinnacle Leadership Development Program; rather, participants were told to select someone at the college who could help them in their leadership journey. The impact of mentoring on those participants I interviewed in the study was polarized. Almost all participants started out with identifying and, in most cases, having an initial meeting with their mentor. For most, the relationship did not continue for long after the initial meeting, while a small number of participants reported gaining value in their leadership development from some type of mentoring relationship.

In most cases, participants said that the mentoring relationship revolved around discussing work challenges or career issues.

The participants who did not have a meaningful mentoring relationship most often spoke of the lack of structure and definition of what constitutes a mentoring relationship. Some indicated that limited information was provided to participants on the topic when it was discussed within the Pinnacle Program. “It [mentoring] lacked organization and planning. I didn’t know what I was supposed to do” (Interview S-7). “There was no follow-through from the mentor. Guess it wasn’t too defined” (Interview M-15). Other participants felt that, since they had to seek out their own mentors, they didn’t know who to ask for this commitment and how to start the process. One participant even noted, “I didn’t have confidence in pitching it to someone higher up” (Interview A-9).

Conversely, those who had meaningful mentoring experiences most often attributed that to the structured relationship that was created jointly with their mentor. “We set up informal meetings quarterly to discuss my issues” (Interview F-4). “We’d set up a date to meet at the end of our meeting to talk and set goals for what I’d do between then and next time (Interview S-3). Participants who had a meaningful mentoring relationship indicated that the nature of the relationship revolved around career advice, advice on handling situations in the workplace, college politics, and professional development. “He [mentor] helped me to mature in my career” (Interview A-4). It is interesting to note that most of the positive mentoring relationships were at the faculty and administrative levels, with all faculty participants reporting a positive experience. Even though those participants reported having a positive experience, most indicated that the mentoring component of the program needed much more structure.

Manager support.

When I asked participants to describe how their managers worked with them after the program to reinforce and/or assist in further developing their leadership skills, I, more often than not, elicited a negative reaction. This was obvious, not only in participants' verbal responses, but also in their body language (frowning, eye rolling, head shaking, etc.). Clearly, the majority of participants indicated that, while most often their managers asked them how they liked the program, few did anything to foster continued development. One participant went as far as to say, "He [manager] really didn't want me to go because of the work I wouldn't get done while I'd be at Pinnacle" (Interview A-8).

When I probed participants further, I noted that discussions regarding employees, or specifically, leadership development, is not the norm. Many participants indicated that discussion about development either does not exist or is most often discussed only at performance review time. "Most talking with my manager is about my day-to-day work, never about my development or what I want to do with my career" (Interview S-6). Another concurred, saying, "I was discouraged that there was no follow-up with my manager [about the program]" (Interview F-3). There was very little evidence to indicate that managers fostered development of their employees after the program.

In the few instances where participants stated that they had support for development from their managers, they described their experiences as including regular feedback on their work, coupled with discussions on career progression. A few indicated that their managers got them involved in college committees. Participants viewed that as a positive development opportunity. One participant, who had a favorable development experience with the manager, said, "We talked about what I learned in the program and

she had me write up some things I could do to use it in my job” (Interview A-11). It is worthy to note that the majority of discussions about further development came from the administrator employee levels, while few were reported at the faculty and staff levels.

When I asked participants at the manager level to describe what they did with their direct reports to foster development, their responses affirmed what I found with the program participants that I interviewed. Most managers did say that they asked their direct reports about their program experience, but few could describe what they did to build on what was learned in the program, encourage utilization of the skills and behaviors on the job, and foster continued leadership development. It is interesting to note that many managers looked puzzled when I asked them this question.

Level 4 – Evaluation - Results: Return on Expectations

Research Questions: How did college administrators and program participants view the effectiveness of the program?

What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college’s employees?

This level of evaluation focused on evaluating the overall program outcomes to ascertain whether the expectations for the program, as initially developed, were realized from the perspectives of senior administration and program participants. Additionally, I used the data I had collected and analyzed from all participants of the study (focus group with Choice’s president and senior staff, interviews with program participants and program planners, and survey) to identify areas for enhancement to, not only the program, but also to continued leadership development.

Key outcomes.

The President and senior staff of the college identified three key outcomes of the program which they believed made a positive impact on the college as a whole and can be attributed, in their estimation, to the success of the program. These outcomes were identified as 1) collaboration among college employees, 2) a more knowledgeable workforce, and 3) a tangible contribution of employee's efforts to the mission of the college.

Many members of the group felt that the mix of employee levels in each cohort aided participants in, not only meeting other college employees, but also in learning about areas of the college that they would probably never be exposed to, and gaining perspectives from different levels. One focus group member indicated, "I could see, when some of my people came back from Pinnacle, that they had developed relationships outside the department and that often helped them in getting things done on campus...they knew who to go to." Another agreed, saying, "They learned about parts of the college from people they wouldn't normally interact with." The President and staff felt that this aided in creating a cohesive and congenial workforce on campus. They saw this program outcome as instrumental in making people feel more comfortable with sharing ideas in committees, and in interacting with people at all levels in the institution.

The focus group specifically felt that a major outcome of the program was the increased knowledge base that participants gained regarding the community college sector in general, and an understanding of Choice Community College from a more strategic viewpoint. Focus group participants spoke of how they saw an increase in employees' understanding of the college budgeting and strategic planning process, as a

result of their attendance in the program. Comments on this by a few members in the focus group generated examples from other members: “They seemed more confident as they talked about the challenges of the college, not just in their area.” “There’s still a lot of work to be done on this, but they [employees] are moving to see beyond their position and how what they do is tied to something bigger.” Another concurred, saying, “Yeah, work to be done on understanding how to do more with less, but understanding where that (concept) comes from, in terms of what is happening with college funding, is a first step.” Some of the group members seemed to think that a better-informed staff translates into student success, and even student retention. While that may be their feeling, I found no other evidence in this study to support that claim.

The group felt an integral part of the leadership development was exemplified by the year-long team projects. Because the cohort groups were required to make presentations on their progress with their projects and their final learning outcomes to some members of this group, as well as the planning team, they provided detailed insights on what outcomes came from the projects. Most members concurred that all of the projects made a vital contribution to the mission of the college. They also stressed the “emergence of leader traits” in participants as team members moved in and out of leadership roles throughout the projects and learned how to get things done (“navigate the college”). In a sense, they alluded to the fact that the year-long project was a microcosm for communication and other associated leadership styles to be experienced on a broader level within the college.

It is worthy to note that all groups that I interviewed in the study made reference to a number of behavioral outcomes of the program itself. Focus group participants

agreed that most participants returned to their jobs from the program with renewed energy and, in many cases, a clearer sense of purpose. This was also communicated by a vast majority of the managers who were interviewed in the study, as noted in the Level 3 analysis. As one noted “[I] saw some of my employees blossom as a result of the attending the program. They were enthusiastic about sharing their experiences” (Interview M-15). Members of the program planning team also noted that employees left the program with new skills to develop and a confidence to try new behaviors back in the workplace: “I think one of the biggest things people gained [from the program] was confidence to try new things” (Focus Group participant).

Participants of the program who were interviewed stated that meeting and interacting with a variety of coworkers, gaining a better overall understanding of the workings of the college and an awareness of their leadership styles, were the key outcomes of the program. Also, in the college’s 2010 survey of Pinnacle participants, 75% or the respondents indicated that the program met their expectations for professional development at Choice Community College.

The focus group participants often spoke of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program as an avenue for developing future leaders, at higher administrative levels, within the college. Specific reference was made by most of the group to the fact that the program is designed to “develop the talent” of employees within the college, with the ultimate goal of creating more leadership development opportunities to, in part, aid in potential succession planning within the institution.

Program participants who were interviewed were asked to provide information on the position they held when attending the Pinnacle Program and their current position. A

total of 46% of the participants indicated upward career progression at Choice Community College since attending the Pinnacle Program. It should be noted that all but one participant who moved up in position at the college felt that in some way that their participation in the program aided in their development and upward mobility. In discussing this with one of the program planners, I learned that no data had been collected to track promotions of participants attending Pinnacle. She attested that “the positive standout behavior of some who attended the program made decision makers [for promotion] take notice, and likely increased their chances of achieving promotional appointments” (PP-1). However, I found no clear evidence to support a direct correlation between participation in the program and promotion.

Areas for enhancement.

All participants of the study provided recommendations for enhancements to the Pinnacle Program and the need for continued leadership development. In terms of the Pinnacle Program, all participants of the study believed that an offsite venue best serves what is to be accomplished and keeps program participants focused on learning. The President, senior staff, and program planners all concurred that this was a preferable option for future programs because of the learning environment that it created.

Many participants thought that there was a huge amount of information to be provided in the time frame allotted, with some noting that “it would be good to stop at some point and write down what to do with the information when I go back on Monday” (Interview A-6). “So much information, wish there was some way we learned how to use the information at work” (Interview M-3). A large number of program participants repeatedly referenced the program as an orientation to Choice or informational in nature.

Many participants noted that they would have liked to have more content on specific leadership skills (i.e., time management, dealing with difficult people, more depth in communication skills, and change in management). When I discussed this with members of the program planning team, this is what they told me they had envisioned as a follow-up to the Pinnacle Program as it currently exists. In the 2010 college survey to program participants, 90% of respondents indicated that they would like to see more time spent on personal leadership development. This would support the findings in the interviews.

While all levels of employees highly touted the teamwork component as a key learning factor in the program, many participants with direct reports indicated that they wanted to learn *how* to more effectively build a team with their existing employees. This sentiment was particularly prevalent with managers. Again, this might indicate that participants learned a lot about the topic, but for whatever reasons had difficulty practically applying it back on the job. Similarly to the comments on teamwork, program participants most often indicated that they wanted more “how-to” (which I interpreted as “implementation strategies”) for applying program content.

In terms of continued leadership development, two common themes emerged: 1) more leadership development programming, and 2) more support from direct managers in the development process. All participants of the study indicated that more leadership development of a programmatic nature is needed and desired. Senior management of the college felt that more topical programming was needed with learning projects. Specifically, they collectively commented on the value of service learning projects in the community where the college is located as part of the leadership development process.

Program participants and the program planning members identified what I deemed to be “management skill topics” as next steps, with specific emphasis on change management, more intense communication skill training (i.e., listening, feedback, speaking, more on DISC styles), conflict management, and time management/delegation. Program participants frequently cautioned that, if there will be more programs in the future, they need to be more organized and tied to practical application than what they experienced in the college’s Development Days. Respondents to the 2010 college survey indicated that 97% of the respondents wanted additional training on selected management/leadership topics.

While participants reported that they liked the mixed levels of cohort groups in the program, some suggested that the next phase of programming might be more effective if homogeneous levels of employees were grouped to discuss issues germane to their needs. This was also suggested in the focus group with senior staff. One focus group member even commented that, going forward, “maybe one size does not fit all.” The program planning members had mixed feelings on the topic, and wanted to explore the topic more before selecting a course of action. Also, the college’s 2010 survey showed that 59% of the respondents believed that it would not improve the program. However, I could not presume from that data that they would not be receptive to homogeneous cohorts moving forward.

The biggest need that surfaced for continued leadership development, as reported by all levels of program participants, was the need for their managers to play an active role in their development. Most reported little, if any, development discussions with their managers; little feedback on their work, except at performance review periods; and

nonexistent development planning. [Note: some participants indicated that they did not regularly receive performance reviews]. The majority of program participants echoed the statement of one, who said, “I need direction and feedback if I’m going to develop my leadership skills. I’m not getting it and I’m not sure what to do” (Interview A-2).

Overall Analysis of the Desired Outcomes of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program vs. Actual Outcomes

In summary, Choice Community College’s Pinnacle Program had six desired outcomes, and following is a summary evaluation of the effectiveness of the desired outcomes based on the data analysis:

Understand a broader perspective of higher education, in general, with specific emphasis on community college education.

All stakeholders (program planners, participants, senior administrators) indicated highly favorable reactions, significant learning outcomes, and application of skills related to their understanding of community colleges in general, and Choice specifically, from their participation in the program. This was evidenced by responses in interviews, through analyzed survey data, and program participant document reviews.

Specifically, participants learned about the purpose and mission of community colleges and Choice’s governance, history, strategic planning process, and budgeting process as part of the program. Participants indicated, via interviews and surveys, that these topics were helpful to them in better understanding their jobs and the environment that they worked in. Managers of participants and senior administrators concurred that, in many cases, they felt participants had a better understanding of Choice as a result of their participation in the program. However, there was no evidence to indicate, via

program content, that there was any specific discussion or material on the community college education. Additionally, there was no mention in the interviews or surveys that indicated that there was a direct relationship of this objective to leadership development.

Develop new insights into leadership and motivation.

Participants, program planners, and administrators concurred that new insights into motivation was gained through the program. Specifically, all participants of the study mentioned that program participants returned from the program with an excitement about their roles at the college and enthusiasm for contributions they could make in their jobs and to the college via the year-long program project.

The survey data that I reviewed as part of the study indicated that respondents felt that the program had limited impact in aiding them in understanding their own leadership style and increasing their confidence in their own leadership abilities. However, administrators and program planners did not share in the same viewpoint. During interviews, participants communicated new learning about their leadership styles which were most often associated with their communication style.

Build new relationships within the College.

Based on all data sources, this was the objective that was most effectively accomplished through the program. All participants of the program shared their enthusiasm in meeting colleagues from a variety of areas and levels at the college as part of their program experience. Also, all noted, in some context, how important it was to interact with senior administrators in, not only learning more about the college, but also in building collegial relationships which many believed fostered good working

experiences back on the job and aided in their leadership development in some way.

This objective was highly rated in the college's survey as well.

Develop collective problem-solving strategies related to strategic directions of Choice Community College.

Again, when I discussed this objective with the program planners, I got the impression that this objective was tied to teamwork and strategic planning. Clearly, collective problem-solving was part of the year-long project that all participants were involved in. There was significant learning reported to me by participants regarding their experiences in working with others to accomplish a common goal. Additionally, participants were forced to work with other departments of the college to realize their project. I feel that this might contribute to improving their problem-solving strategies.

Participants reported gaining very useful knowledge and insight into Choice's strategic planning process. Through that experience, participants may have learned about the process, but I am not convinced, based on the lack of evidence to support it, that participants gained enough knowledge in the program alone to have fully met this objective.

Develop awareness of the importance of team building.

This was the second most effectively accomplished objective of the program, as evidenced by the data I analyzed from all participants and data sources. The program content addressed teamwork as a topic, but also, many of the activities in the program (i.e., small group projects, year-long project, and specific teambuilding activities) were designed to have participants experience working as a team to accomplish specific

goals/tasks. The program planners indicated that participants were made aware of the importance of working in teams in fostering leadership development skill.

Explore self-management techniques.

Through my interviews with the program planners, I learned that the objectives of the self-management techniques were addressed in the program through the topics of individual goal setting, journaling, and communication skill awareness. Most participants did not respond favorably, in discussion, about journaling, but those who took the time to do so found it to be a reflective exercise to develop their skills. Goal setting was universally learned and applied by participants. However, participants stressed the need for more direction and support from their manager and/or mentor to create plans to both set and achieve their desired goals.

Participants of the program generally reacted very favorably and indicated key learning in the area of communication style awareness. Managers and senior administrators regularly spoke of this as a key learning objective from the program and observed the application of participant's communication awareness to their job after the program.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of Choice Community College's Grow Your Own (GYO) Pinnacle Leadership Development Program in meeting its desired leadership development objectives. Through qualitative methodology, I examined four levels of evaluation utilizing an adaptation of Donald Kirkpatrick's evaluation model. Through the application of this model, I can provide evidence-based responses to the main research question and the subsidiary questions:

1. What did participants define as the most beneficial and least beneficial aspects of the program?
2. What did participants report learning as a result of attending the program?
3. Based on what participants learned in the program, what did participants apply in their work?
4. How was leadership development supported after the program?
5. How did college administrators and program participants view the effectiveness of the program?
6. What can be done to enhance the quality of the program and further develop the leadership skills of the college's employees?

Through this study, I found that the program generally met the college's desired outcomes for participants to:

- Understand a broader perspective of higher education, in general, with specific emphasis on community college education
- Develop new insights into leadership and motivation

- Build new relationships within the College
- Develop collective problem-solving strategies related to strategic directions of Choice Community College
- Develop awareness of the importance of team building
- Explore self-management techniques

Clearly, some objectives were achieved at a much higher level than others, as noted in the Findings section. Although the four-day formal program provided participants with some leadership development in concert with the AACC competencies and the desired outcomes were generally met, the infrastructure to support the learning outcomes from the program and foster continued development was lacking. I believe that greater effectiveness could have been realized if such measures were in place.

In this chapter, I review the key findings regarding the effectiveness of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, recommendations for further leadership development initiatives at Choice Community College, limitations to this study, recommendations for future research on the topic, and concluding remarks.

Overall Findings

The overall findings of this study indicated that participants responded favorably to the program; learned both about themselves as leaders and the environment they work in (community college sector in general, and Choice Community College specifically); implemented a number of behaviors from the program in their daily work; and that, generally, all stakeholders believed that their overall expectations for the program were met.

All data sources confirmed that participants, at all employee levels, viewed the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program as generally favorable in many regards. Overall, participants found meeting and networking with colleagues from various areas of the college, as well as interactions with the President and senior staff, to be extremely beneficial, and, further, believed that this collaboration contributed to their overall leadership development in some way. While it is clear that participants viewed the program as having an impact on their understanding of the community college sector, the operations of the college, and institutional leadership, there appeared to be less impact on individual leadership development.

Based on the evaluation of learning, participants gained the most knowledge in two key areas: 1) communication skills, and 2) community college information - specifically an understanding of the overall mission and challenges of community colleges and Choice's history, governance model, strategic planning process, and budget.

The learning outcomes gained by identification of communication styles transcended into other areas of learning (i.e., teamwork and collaboration), as participants were clearly able to articulate how the awareness of communication style was a key attribute of leaders. Participants provided specific examples of how this awareness enabled them to better interact with others in the college, aid in effectively working toward team goals, and influencing others in the process. Although significant learning was accomplished in this area, the results were not convincing enough to me to conclude that participants had a depth of understanding of their own leadership style. Often, participants equated communication style with leadership style.

There was evidence from the evaluation that participants gained a broad perspective of the community college, its role in higher education, and its importance within the state and local community. Participants demonstrated a new understanding of the nuances of Choice Community College, with significant knowledge gained in the areas of governance, strategic planning, and budgeting. While much of the content was sometimes viewed as a refresher for managers, the other participant levels (faculty, staff, and administrators) demonstrated significant new learning in this area. All learning appeared to be at a basic level, with participants gaining a considerable amount of process-type information.

The four-day Pinnacle Leadership Development Program, overall, was solid in terms of learning content and methodologies consistent with adult learning theory. The venue was reported by all stakeholders to be conducive to learning, and they also indicated that the format of the program offered balance for classroom learning, action learning activities, and collaboration via social interaction. While the program was reported to be designed on the tenants of the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders, how balanced the content of the program was in addressing the competencies in depth is questionable. There was often disconnection in the program content when additional models of leadership traits/competencies were introduced. In some cases, it appeared to be a digression from the AACC model. Also, there was no conceptual framework of leadership theory espoused in the program, which would have provided a meaningful way to clearly differentiate leadership and management from the competencies of a leader and manager. It is also interesting to note that two topic areas which were often made reference to, but were not formally addressed in the program,

were the community college student - and specifically, the Choice Community College student - and educational experience.

In terms of transfer of learning, participants could articulate how they applied numerous skills and behaviors learned in the program. Managers and senior administration concurred that they observed this as well. Most notably were some behaviors that were gained as byproducts of the program, as both participants and their managers repeatedly noted participants demonstrating more confidence in their abilities, more enthusiasm in their approach to work, and a broader understanding of the participant's job duties contributing to the larger mission of the college.

In mirroring what was learned most in the program, participants demonstrated their new learning outcomes in communication style by seeking to learn the preferences of others and displaying an intentionality to understand diverse approaches and viewpoints. Participants and their managers indicated, in many cases, a better working relationship among staff members and greater teamwork through this application of knowledge.

Application of learning about the college was exemplified by participants' presenting a more strategic insight when interacting with students, other departments within the college, and in committee work. Again, while this was information learned and applied, how this aided in one's individual leadership development was not always evident.

The components outside the actual four-day program, designed to support and enhance the learning from the program (development days, mentoring, and manager support), were largely ineffective. Development days were reported by all stakeholders

to be well intended, but not well executed. This was often exemplified by programs that were cancelled and/or program topics that did not complement or build on what was previously learned. The mentoring program lacked significant structure and, in those instances where mentoring did take place, the relationship was, most often, not sustainable. While participants' managers often expressed interest in the experience their direct reports had in the Pinnacle Program, rarely did managers discuss plans to implement what was learned in the program back on the job, provide feedback, or plan initiatives that would foster and/or support continued leadership development.

Overall, the expectations developed by the senior administration, implemented by the planning team and set by the participants, were met. All groups felt that the program made a positive impact on individual development, and collectively, the institution benefited from greater collaboration among employees, a more knowledgeable workforce, and evidence of tangible contributions to the mission of Choice Community College.

While it is not possible to assess the specific degree to which the program directly aided in developing promotable leaders to higher positions within the college, it is important to note that almost half of the participants of the study did experience upward mobility at the college after attending the program. Additionally, all populations of the study generally agreed that the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program provided a foundation for leadership development which they attributed to their career growth.

The Pinnacle Leadership Development Program has significant strengths. The program has, and continues to have, strong support from the senior administration and Board of Trustees. There is evidence that there is an investment in leadership

development of all employees at all levels at Choice Community College. This is exemplified through continued programming, funding, and the expressed desire to enhance leadership development efforts. There is active participation by senior administration and college staff in conducting training in the program and engaging with participants. The program content had structured learning experiences that accomplished the desired objectives. The administration of the program was well organized and support initiatives, albeit not highly effective, were in place to promote continued development.

While the program has many strengths, there are areas that, if addressed, would heighten the level of effectiveness and sustainability of leadership development. There are three main areas that I think are worthy of addressing by the college: 1) enhancements to the formal program, 2) creation of a solid infrastructure to support ongoing leadership development, and 3) implementation of continuous evaluation at a more rigorous level. The following are my recommendations for improvement in each of these areas.

Recommendations for Improvement

Enhancements to the Formal Program

Define “Leadership” at Choice Community College and Select a Leadership Model as the Cornerstone of Choice’s Leadership Development Foundation. While the AACCC Competencies for Community College Leaders provide good illustrations of exemplary community college *leaders*, the senior staff and Pinnacle Program planners would be best served by defining what is meant by *leadership* at Choice Community College. Throughout the study, I found that the term *leadership* was most often

randomly used to describe the skills of a leader, used interchangeably with the term *management*, or *manager*, and was occasionally used to reference an employee level (i.e., leadership of the college).

By defining leadership, all employees at the college will gain a clear understanding that leadership is not an employee level, and the distinction, at Choice, of what is management vs. leadership. It would then be a worthwhile enterprise for the program's planners, or another appropriate group, to codify each of the AACC competencies to reflect exemplary leadership competencies for all employees at the college. This is important so that employees understand the desired skills, behaviors, and overall expectations of what it means to be a leader at Choice Community College.

An understanding of leadership theory is recommended as an integral component of any leadership development initiative (Allio, 2005; Cacioppe, 1998; Russon & Reinelt, 2004). There was no evidence of a theoretical basis for the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. I would recommend that the college choose an academic model of leadership as the foundation for the recommended competencies. The incorporation of a conceptual framework for leadership would, again, help to better define the difference between managing and leading and would take leadership to a more personal, self-leadership level. I would recommend the following theoretical models: trait theory, transformational leadership, situational leadership, action-centered leadership, or servant leadership. These particular theories of leadership might be best-suited in an academic environment. Also, any model chosen should support the definition, philosophies, and desired outcomes germane to Choice Community College.

Develop stronger ties to the AACC Competencies for Community College

Leaders. While there is tangible evidence that the program content is aligned with the AACC Competencies for Community College Leaders, the emphasis on the competencies is not balanced. For instance, significant topical content is illuminated for Organizational Strategy and Community College Advocacy, but the depth of content in competency areas of Collaboration and Communication is lacking.

As previously noted, no topical content in the Pinnacle Program addresses the community college student or the Choice Community College student population. This appears to be a blatant omission in content, as more than one AACC competency alludes to the importance of the leader's role in student outcomes and success. It seems difficult to imagine leaders', in an academic environment, not having a firm understanding of the person who is ultimately the purpose of their work. This could be achieved by sharing some national and college-specific data on community college students, interaction with a student panel, and/or small group work, with a variety of levels of employees, identifying how they contribute to student success and how they could lead improvement. Programming should include content that focuses on how effective Choice Community College is in meeting the prescribed indicators for student success via its unique academic programs and services. Also, there should be a tie to how individual leadership development impacts student outcomes.

Similarly, the topics of resource management and communication could be bolstered to provide more depth in content, with particular emphasis on skill development in the areas of listening, presentation, conflict management, time management and delegation. Also, if the college seeks to continue with annual Development Days,

programming should be tied to the AACC competencies for reinforcement. In a more overarching strategy, the college's performance evaluation and development planning criteria should relate to the illustrated AACC competencies as well.

Re-evaluate the purpose of the existing Pinnacle Leadership Development Program. Some participants used the word "orientation" to describe the program. Going forward, the existing program might be considered as an onboarding option for new employees or a foundation course in community college leadership development. The one-year program, while having significant merit, is not (like any other singular, exemplary, stand-alone program) a comprehensive approach to address leadership development.

Consider Continuous Leadership Development Programming. Using the existing Pinnacle Leadership Development Program as a foundation, conduct a needs assessment which is validated at many levels within the college, to determine areas for future growth. Goldstein and Ford (2002) espoused the notion that existing program evaluation can be viewed as the first step in future needs assessment. As part of this study, all stakeholders expressed perceived needs and desires for such topical content typically considered as management development topics. Again, there should be a clear differentiation within the college as to what is considered management development, as opposed to leadership development. These terms were often used interchangeably in discussions with stakeholders. This could possibly be a deterrent to achieving desired outcomes if not clarified. However, if a conceptual framework of leadership theory is adopted as the foundation for development, as previously noted, there may be more clarity of definition.

The college should consider homogeneous cohort options in creating leadership at all levels. Again, a more detailed needs assessment would be recommended for achieving desired outcomes. However, this would take leadership development to a more focused level and would pinpoint development initiatives that would serve specific needs of a given group. There is already some receptivity to this concept, as this was suggested for consideration by some participants, program planners, and members of senior administration.

Add individual diagnostic assessments to training and development initiatives.

The use of individual assessments in leadership development is deemed to be an integral part of the leadership development process (Day, 2001; McCauley & Van Velsor, 2004; Watts & Hammons, 2003). While the Pinnacle Program provided participants the opportunity to assess their communication styles, there was little emphasis on any other individual assessment. Assessing leadership styles and skills, before and after programs/initiatives, would aid participants in their understanding of their unique talents and styles to be developed. Additional growth assessments could be used to monitor progress on development on a continuum. Assessments have little value if not integrated with other initiatives. Thus, the use of any assessments should be integrated into a structured training objective or development initiative. Assessments can also be used by program planners as evaluation tools; measuring leadership development growth from one point in time to another.

Select complementary projects to enhance individual leadership competency development. Leadership projects could be created as part of individual development plans for employees. This could be tied, perhaps, to an employee's interest, as well as to

development need. Senior management of the college indicated an interest in exploring service learning projects in the community surrounding Choice Community College. While it is a potential initiative to explore, any project should have a clear tie to the AACC competencies and learning from such projects should also have a tie to one's individual leadership development.

Maximize transfer of training. Throughout the program, participants should be given time to reflect on what they learned about a particular topic, and identify how they intend to apply these skills/behaviors in their work and how that applies to their leadership development. Through the creation of implementation plans, participants would have something to reference after the training, and would also have something tangible to discuss with mentors or managers who may aid in their growth and development. Since the study produced evidence that there was limited emphasis on reinforcing skills and behaviors after the formal training, defined strategies, as previously noted, and accountability measures should be put in place to insure that plans are indeed implemented.

Supporting Infrastructure

The literature on leadership development stresses the importance of having support systems in place to foster continued leadership development. (Brungardt, 1997; Jeandron, 2006; Leskiw & Singh, 2007; Noe, 2010). A programmatic approach to leadership development is only one component of such an initiative. Based on the evaluation in this study, Choice is significantly lacking in this respect. A number of strategies follow that are recommended to address this deficiency:

Further emphasize leadership development as an integral part of Choice's culture. Clearly, there is tremendous support for leadership development by the President, senior administration, and Board of Trustees at Choice Community College. This is evidenced by their investment in the program and their expressed desire to make a long-term commitment to leadership development for all employees.

In order for that to be realized, leadership development needs to be more deeply integrated into Choice's strategic mission through even more specific actions. It is highly commendable that leadership training is noted as a strategic initiative at Choice, and that the Pinnacle Program is grounded in the college's mission. However, a programmatic approach to leadership development, while commendable, is not sufficient for ongoing leadership development. I would conclude that any form of development is dynamic, not static.

As previously noted, researchers tie the sustainability of programmatic learning to a variety of support systems and cultures that nurture continued development. To this end, leadership development needs to be woven more deeply into the fabric of the college, reflecting practices that support meaningful professional development, individual development planning, special assignments, coaching, and frequent dialogue on demonstrated performance in the job tied to leadership. In this study, rarely did I find these practices at Choice. Additionally, I recommend that the college's Human Resources Department's methods of performance evaluation, succession planning, and promotion be examined and aligned to supporting such a culture as well.

Increase manager support for development. Without manager support to program participants/direct reports, and leadership development, learning will not be

enhanced to the highest level possible. As part of the culture to support leadership development, expectations for the manager's role in this effort must first be defined and communicated. Secondly, assessment of managers may need to be conducted to determine their abilities to perform such functions as coaching, providing feedback, assisting in creating employee development plans, and structuring practical leadership development opportunities. This may require some development interventions on the aforementioned topics for managers who have direct reports. Accountability measures need to be established to ensure that such support measures are consistently and effectively implemented. Conversely, the employee's role in leadership development must also be delineated, as employees need to take an active role in their own development for it to be fully realized. This could be accomplished through such on-going initiatives as employee self-evaluation and goal setting.

Mentorship. The existing role of mentors in the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program is not well-structured, and was viewed as having limited effectiveness by participants. Based on the findings of the study, the few participants who reported having positive mentoring experiences described it as one where there was some structure of time, content, and outcomes of the relationship. Since mentoring has been highlighted as an integral part of leadership development (Collins & Holton, 2004; Hernez-Broome & Hughes, 2004), this area needs major definition in terms of purpose and outcomes. While there are many models of mentoring that can be duplicated, Choice needs to select a model that will support its philosophy of leadership development. This could be accomplished by, not only reviewing best practices, but also by conducting a mentoring needs assessment with participants from all employee levels. Ultimately, this

effort needs structure, commitment, and accountability to succeed as a viable strategy to support continued leadership development at Choice.

Effective Evaluation

Implement continuous evaluation at a more rigorous level – use a comprehensive, evidence-based evaluation model to evaluate effectiveness. The majority of evaluation data of the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program is primarily reaction data (Level 1). Unfortunately, this is the norm for programmatic evaluation. Thackwray (1997) stated, “As a sector, higher education favours the reaction sheet above all other forms of evaluation” (p. 133). Going forward, if Choice truly wants to monitor the effectiveness of the continued Pinnacle Program, or any other leadership development initiatives, a more rigorous evaluation process will need to be developed and implemented.

I recommend that, if any formal training programming continues, participants should evaluate each module of the program, as well as the overall program content, experience, learning outcomes, and satisfaction with expectations as soon as the program is completed. This will insure that the reaction data is from recent experience. The preferable option for Level 2 - learning evaluation is pretest and posttest to determine what participants actually knew about the subject matter before the program and what actually was learned in the program (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). Going forward, the college should collect and evaluate for programming that extends by one-half day or more. In all cases, ask participants to journal what they have learned as a result of the program, and note how they will use this as part of their leadership development.

To determine at what level transfer of training was accomplished, members of the program planning should conduct focus groups with participants to gauge not only what

was applied from training and/or development initiatives, but also what level of support they encountered from managers and mentors, and through college policies. Continued review of return on expectations needs to be evaluated on a prescribed timetable to ensure that modifications are made to insure desired outcomes. This would best be accomplished by establishing milestone points throughout the program, and then having the appropriate stakeholders evaluate regularly, rather than stakeholders just completing summative evaluation at the very end of the program.

Collect appropriate data to correlate promotion as a direct result of Choice Leadership Development Initiatives. Initially, Choice had indicated that it saw the Pinnacle Leadership Development Program as a means to prepare participants for career growth and mobility. However, there was no data collected by the college to substantiate this. More rigorous tracking of participants, via career development plans, which include profiles of formal education, Choice leadership development initiatives, work/committee assignments, and performance evaluation, might lend better insight into how the college's development efforts and career growth and mobility intersect at Choice.

Limitations

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the effectiveness of all GYO programs, because each program is unique to the individual institution. Clearly, there are components of leadership development programs that are generically recommended for the highest levels of learning and sustainable development. However, the precise level of effectiveness must be determined by an individual college's desired outcomes and expectations.

I chose not to include participants of the Pinnacle Program that are no longer at Choice Community College, because I wanted to focus on what specifically transpired at Choice. It is possible that, by including those participants in the study, I might have gained added findings related to how the Pinnacle Program affected their overall leadership development and potential career progression.

Since the population of the study included participants from the program's inception in 2003 to present, participants who attended the program early on may not have recalled the details of their program experience as readily as those who more recently attended the program. Similarly, participants who attended the program less recently would have had more experiences to develop their leadership skills, and may have viewed the program more favorably at this time than those who more recently attended.

As previously noted, the optimal approach to evaluating learning (Level 2) is pretest and posttest. Since no pretest was implemented, the evaluation of learning prior to the program was often based on participants' recall and perceptions of prior knowledge by managers.

Future Research

Clearly, there is significant need for more evidence-based evaluation studies of GYO programs to truly determine their effectiveness beyond the Level 1 reaction data. Formative evaluation studies of community colleges whose leadership development programs are in the early stages of development would be useful for program designers. This would be of particular value, since it appears that the majority of training initiatives in the community college sector are most often developed by faculty and/or

administrators who may have limited theoretical background in designing and delivering leadership development initiatives.

Additionally, studies at a number of community colleges that comprehensively evaluate the effectiveness of various leadership development support initiatives would be helpful in producing best practices that could be replicated. More studies, of a longitudinal nature, that can produce evidence of a direct correlation between GYO programs and the actual number of employees who moved into positions that fill the void created by retirements in the community colleges, would lend more support to building talent internally through GYO programs.

Concluding Remarks

As I began this study, I was primarily concerned with providing a more comprehensive approach to understanding and evaluating the effectiveness of a Grow Your Own (GYO) community college leadership development program. My interest stemmed from the fact that little research existed on the subject, and my initial focus was largely on the college's formal, four-day program.

Through the review of relevant literature and through conducting this study, I came to keenly understand the importance of the necessary infrastructure that must be in place for a leadership development initiative, not a program, to achieve the highest level of effectiveness possible. While community colleges may have good intentions and reasonable expectations in developing GYO programs to address leadership development, too much focus on formalized programmatic approaches without equal focus on an ongoing process, with appropriate support components, may not produce optimum outcomes. Even when such components as mentoring, additional development seminars

and project assignments are included as continued development initiatives, they need to be well-developed, implemented, and connected to the overarching goals of the community college's entire leadership development initiative. The need for support from program participants' immediate supervisors/managers cannot be overemphasized in fostering continued learning, growth, and development. However, this can only be accomplished effectively in a college environment that tangibly embraces leadership development for employees as part of its overall mission and practices.

There were two significant findings in this study. A key finding was the effectiveness of this college's GYO program in meeting their initial desired goals. However, equally significant was the process used to determine its effectiveness. The adaptation of Donald Kirkpatrick's model of evaluation produced comprehensive evidence-based findings to determine the program's *level* of effectiveness. Thus, the process not only produced evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of a program that has already been implemented, it also produced findings that could serve as a preliminary needs assessment of what initiatives might follow in the future to sustain leadership development at the college. Recommendations, based on the findings of the study, can now be considered to enhance the existing Pinnacle Program and provide a starting point for exploration of new and supporting leadership development initiatives at Choice.

Hopefully, those seeking to develop GYO programs will see value in the findings of this study, consider moving beyond so much emphasis on programmatic approaches to developing community college leaders, and address the need for the totality of all components (program, support systems, culture) necessary to optimize the effectiveness of a college's desired outcomes. I think it might be appropriate to determine what will be

evaluated and how evaluation will be conducted, early on in the design of GYO programs, to ensure that effectiveness of outcomes is comprehensively measured.

Based on my findings, I believe that, if community colleges truly want to maximize their effectiveness in developing leaders through GYO programs, leadership development must be developed and implemented as an ongoing, long-term process grounded in continuous learning and support, not solely through short-term events. [Note: even one year seems like a short-term event.] Similarly, multifaceted evaluation must exist and take into consideration all initiatives of the process; not evaluation solely based on reaction data or what was taught in a program.

In conclusion, an integral part of the mission of the community college is dedicated to imparting knowledge to a unique student population and rigorously assessing the outcome of their efforts to do so. Hopefully, colleges with GYO programs will internally apply that same philosophy to the leadership development of faculty, staff and administrators, and then comprehensively evaluate those efforts. Moreover, without these two critical components, such programs may eventually be deemed an expense to a college, rather than an investment in the individuals who may fill the much-documented shortage of talent needed to lead the community colleges of the future.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

AACC COMPETENCIES FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERS

Based upon the research study titled *Competencies for Community College Leaders*, American Association of Community Colleges, www.aacc.nche.edu, Washington, DC, 2007.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGY

An effective community college leader strategically improves the quality of the institution, protects the long-term health of the organization, promotes the success of all students, and sustains the community college mission, based on knowledge of the organization, its environment, and future trends.

Illustrations:

- Assess, develop, implement, and evaluate strategies regularly to monitor and improve the quality of education and the long-term health of the organization.
- Use data-driven evidence and proven practices from internal and external stakeholders to solve problems, make decisions, and plan strategically.
- Use a systems perspective to assess and respond to the culture of the organization; to changing demographics; and to the economic, political, and public health needs of students and the community.
- Develop a positive environment that supports innovation, teamwork, and successful outcomes.
- Maintain and grow college personnel and fiscal resources and assets.
- Align organizational mission, structures, and resources with the college master plan.

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

An effective community college leader equitably and ethically sustains people, processes, and information as well as physical and financial assets to fulfill the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.

Illustrations:

- Ensure accountability in reporting.
- Support operational decisions by managing information resources and ensuring the integrity and integration of reporting systems and databases.
- Develop and manage resource assessment, planning, budgeting, acquisition, and allocation processes consistent with the college master plan and local, state, and national policies.
- Take an entrepreneurial stance in seeking ethical alternative funding sources.
- Implement financial strategies to support programs, services, staff, and facilities.
- Implement a human resources system that includes recruitment, hiring, reward, and performance management systems and that fosters the professional development and advancement of all staff.
- Employ organizational, time management, planning, and delegation skills.
- Manage conflict and change in ways that contribute to the long-term viability of the organization.

COMMUNICATION

An effective community college leader uses clear listening, speaking, and writing skills to engage in honest, open dialogue at all levels of the college and its surrounding community, to promote the success of all students, and to sustain the community college mission.

Illustrations:

- Articulate and champion shared mission, vision, and values to internal and external audiences, appropriately matching message to audience.
- Disseminate and support policies and strategies.
- Create and maintain open communications regarding resources, priorities, and expectations.

- Convey ideas and information succinctly, frequently, and inclusively through media and verbal and nonverbal means to the board and other constituencies and stakeholders.
- Listen actively to understand, comprehend, analyze, engage, and act.
- Project confidence and respond responsibly and tactfully.

COLLABORATION

An effective community college leader develops and maintains responsive, cooperative, mutually beneficial, and ethical internal and external relationships that nurture diversity, promote the success of all students, and sustain the community college mission.

Illustrations:

- Embrace and employ the diversity of individuals, cultures, values, ideas, and communication styles.
- Demonstrate cultural competence relative to a global society.
- Catalyze involvement and commitment of students, faculty, staff, and community members to work for the common good.
- Build and leverage networks and partnerships to advance the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.
- Work effectively and diplomatically with unique constituent groups such as legislators, board members, business leaders, accreditation organizations, and others.
- Manage conflict and change by building and maintaining productive relationships.
- Develop, enhance, and sustain teamwork and cooperation.
- Facilitate shared problem-solving and decision-making.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADVOCACY

An effective community college leader understands, commits to, and advocates for the mission, vision, and goals of the community college.

Illustrations:

- Value and promote diversity, inclusion, equity, and academic excellence.
- Demonstrate a passion for and commitment to the mission of community colleges and student success through the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- Promote equity, open access, teaching, learning, and innovation as primary goals for the college, seeking to understand how these change over time and facilitating discussion with all stakeholders.
- Advocate the community college mission to all constituents and empower them to do the same.
- Advance life-long learning and support a learner-centered and learning-centered environment.
- Represent the community college in the local community, in the broader educational community, at various levels of government, and as a model of higher education that can be replicated in international settings.

PROFESSIONALISM

An effective community college leader works ethically to set high standards for self and others, continuously improve self and surroundings, demonstrate accountability to and for the institution, and ensure the long-term viability of the college and community.

Illustrations:

- Demonstrate transformational leadership through authenticity, creativity, and vision.
- Understand and endorse the history, philosophy, and culture of the community college.
- Self-assess performance regularly using feedback, reflection, goal-setting, and evaluation.

- Support lifelong learning for self and others.
- Manage stress through self-care, balance, adaptability, flexibility, and humor.
- Demonstrate the courage to take risks, make difficult decisions, and accept responsibility.
- Understand the impact of perceptions, world views, and emotions on self and others.
- Promote and maintain high standards for personal and organizational integrity, honesty, and respect for people.
- Use influence and power wisely in facilitating the teaching-learning process and the exchange of knowledge.
- Weigh short-term and long-term goals in decision-making.
- Contribute to the profession through professional development programs, professional organizational leadership, and research/publication.

APPENDIX B
Program Participant Interview Protocol and Interview Note Sheet

Number _____ **M/F** **Interview Date** _____ **Program Year** _____

Level _____ **Date of Hire:** _____

Current Position _____ **Position when in Program** _____

Direct Reports? _____

Level 1

1. Tell me about your overall program experience:
2. What was of most value to you in the program?
3. Least value?

Level 2 & 3 (Topic/Application)

1. Program Topic: Goals: Program and Personal
 In the program, you were asked to develop some personal and professional goals.
 - A. What did you learn about goal setting?
 - B. How have you applied this back on the job and in your personal life?
2. Program Topic: DISC Personal Profile System
 As part of the program, you learned about your individual behavioral style through the DISC assessment.
 - A. Do you know what your DISC style is?
 - B. What did you learn, in the program, about DISC and its applications?
 - C. How have you applied this knowledge?
3. Program Topic: Issues in Higher Education/Emergence of Community Colleges
 In the program, you learned about pressing issues in the community college sector.
 - A. What did you learn about the community college system in general and in the state?
 - B. How has learning about the community college system been of value to you in your job and how have you applied any of that knowledge?
4. Program Topic: Journaling Session
 In the program, you were asked to engage in reflective journaling.

- A. Describe this experience based on what you learned and how it has been of value to you in your job.
- B. Are you presently journaling? (Why/Why Not?)

5. Program Topics: College Governance, and Choice College History.

A significant portion of the program dealt with understanding the community college governance, and Choice Community College's history and mission in the community.

- A. What did you learn and what was the value of this information in performing your job?
- B. How did you apply this information?

6. Topics: Diversity and Ethics

During the program, you were exposed to concepts that would help you create an environment that supports a diverse workforce and one in which all employees need to be ethically responsible.

- A. What did you learn about these topics?
- B. How did you apply this in your job?

7. Topics: Strategic Planning and Budgeting

- A. What did you learn in the program about the College's strategic planning and budgeting process?
- B. How was this information of benefit to you in your job and what did you apply in your work?

8. Topic: Leadership Styles

During the program, you had an opportunity to assess you own leadership style.

- A. What did you learn about your leadership style?
- B. How have you used this information in leading others and/or enhancing your own personal leadership?

9. Topic Teamwork

A significant portion of the program and follow up dealt with working in a teams.

- A. What did you learn about working in a team?
- B. Describe how this experience has helped you in your job and how you applied concepts from the training.

10. Can you tell me more about your year-long project and what you learned from that experience? What did you learn from your involvement in that project that helped develop your leadership skills? How did you apply skills learned in the project to your work?
11. AACC Competencies (Learned most and least about in program, area to develop)
 Most _____ Least _____
 Area to develop _____

LEVEL 3 (Support)

1. Tell me about any programs the College provided after the 4 day program that you attended (i.e. Development Days) Describe what you learned and the value of the programs?
2. Did your manager work with you to reinforce and/or help you further develop the skills that you learned in the program?
 If so, explain what worked, didn't work?
3. If you had a mentor, other than your manager, describe that relationship and how they assisted you in your leadership development.

FOR MANAGERS WITH DIRECT REPORTS ONLY (Level 3)

1. After your direct report(s) attended the program, what did you do to reinforce and/or help them further develop the skills that learned in the program and/or support their leadership development?
2. If so, explain what worked, didn't work?

LEVEL 4 (Return on Expectation)

1. Overall Program Objectives

Before the Program 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	After the Program
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2. What recommendations do you have regarding the actual 4-day program?
 Anything you would add, emphasize more, and/or delete? Why?
3. What additional training or support do you think would be helpful to further develop your leadership skills?

OTHER NOTES:

APPENDIX C
Senior Staff Focus Group Interview Protocol

1. How did the need for leadership development arise at Choice Community College?
2. Describe how developing the leadership skills of employees ties into the college's strategic plan.
3. From a senior perspective, what would you define as key successes of the program? Areas that could be improved? What changes would make the program more effective?
4. What changes did you see in participants after they attended Pinnacle?
5. What specific contributions to the advancement of the college did you see from participants after the program?
6. Do you feel the program met the defined expectations? How so?
7. What future training and/or development initiatives do you think should now be offered as a follow up to the Pinnacle program to enhance the skills learned? Why?
8. What do you see as the ultimate goal for leadership development at Choice?
9. How has the program aided in developing a pipeline of future leaders at Choice?

APPENDIX D
Program Planning Team Interview Protocol

1. How did the need for leadership development arise at Choice Community College?
2. Describe how developing the leadership skills of employees tied into the college's strategic plan.
3. What is the purpose and goals of the planning team?
4. Describe the process the team used for planning the Pinnacle Program.
5. Describe how the American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) Competencies for Community College Leaders are incorporated into the design of the program.
6. How does the team determine the final content and methodology for the program?
7. How was the program evaluated? Changes made to the program over the years?
8. Describe what happens in the 4 day program?
9. Tell me about the development days and mentoring after the program?
10. Looking back on the program, what would you define as the key successes of the program? Areas that could be improved? What changes would make the program more effective?
11. What future training and/or development initiatives do you think should now be offered as a follow up to the program to enhance the skills learned? Why?
12. How has the program aided in developing a pipeline of future leaders at Choice? Data?