

NETWORK TIES AND TWO-YEAR MIDLEVEL
ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT: A NARRATIVE STUDY

By

GREGORY SCOTT NEWMAN

Bachelor of Music Education
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
1995

Master of Music
The University of Oklahoma
Norman, Oklahoma
1997

Master of Studies
University of Oxford
Oxford, United Kingdom
1999

Submitted to the Faculty of the
Graduate College of the
Oklahoma State University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for
the Degree of
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION
December, 2007

NETWORK TIES AND TWO-YEAR MIDLEVEL
ACADEMIC ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT: A NARRATIVE STUDY

Dissertation Approved:

Dr. Kerri Kearney

Dissertation Adviser

Dr. Ed Harris

Dr. Cecil Dugger

Dr. Mary Jo Self

Dr. A. Gordon Emslie

Dean of the Graduate College

DEDICATION

To my wife, Anne, whose limitless understanding and tireless support made this undertaking possible, and our daughter, Abigail Grace, who was the greatest motivator for its completion: I dedicate this work to you both—whom I love dearly.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

So many have directly and/or indirectly contributed to this project it will be impossible to recognize them all. Nevertheless, it would be inappropriate not to acknowledge at least some of them.

For their contributions to my education and this study, I thank my committee members, Drs. Cecil Dugger, Ed Harris, Mary Jo Self and, especially, Kerri Kearney—who set the standard for academic and dissertation advisement.

I would like to recognize the countless individuals I have encountered throughout my professional career who never fulfilled their educational goals, and shared those regrets with me. Those conversations were, without question, more influential than they ever realized.

Next, I thank my cohort mates for their support and encouragement throughout this process and beyond. There is no doubt that many will occupy prominent positions among tomorrow's higher education leaders.

I would be remiss were I not to recognize the participants who generously contributed their time and experiences to this study. Both are noted and appreciated.

I would like to thank Dr. Bob Klabenes for his mentorship, encouragement in pursuing this degree, and, most importantly, for helping me understand the important roles that change and innovation can play in improving the lives of others.

Finally, I want to thank God and my family for reminding me, everyday, what is truly most important.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY	1
Problem Statement	1
Purpose of Study and Research Question	2
Research Methodology	3
Theoretical Framework	3
Definition of Terms	3
Significance of Study	4
Practice	4
Theory	4
Research	5
Research Criteria	5
Credibility	5
Dependability	5
Transferability	6
Confirmability	6
Researcher Biases	6
Structure of Study	7
II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	8
Higher Education Administrators	8
Middle Managers in Industry	9
University Midlevel Academic Administrators	10
University MAA transition	11
University MAA roles	12
University MAA professional development	14
Two-Year Midlevel Academic Administrators	16
Two-year environment	16
Two-year MAA transition	18
Two-year MAA roles	18
Two-year MAA professional development	19
Social Network Theory	21
Strength of weak ties theory	21

Chapter	Page
III. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	24
Theoretical Framework.....	24
Research Participants	24
Participant Solicitation.....	26
Data Collection	27
Interviews.....	27
Artifacts.....	28
Data Analysis	28
IV. FINDINGS.....	30
Participants.....	30
Alan.....	31
Becky	31
Beth.....	31
Bill.....	32
David.....	32
Janet	33
Jeff.....	33
John.....	33
Lori.....	34
Tom.....	34
Summary of Participant Descriptions	35
Skills and Knowledge	36
Interpersonal/networking skills.....	36
Communication skills	37
Resource planning and prioritization skills.....	38
Knowledge of disciplines for which programs prepare students	38
Knowledge of state higher education system.....	39
Curriculum development/management skills	39
General knowledge of higher education processes.....	39
Motivational skills	39
Forecasting/environmental scanning skills	40
Time management skills	40
Basic business skills and knowledge	41
Resource generation skills	41
Ability to empathize with students	41
Marketing skills	41
Knowledge of academic assessment.....	42
Ability to see the big picture.....	42
Knowledge of constituents.....	42
Knowledge of institutional policy and procedures	43
Knowledge of unit's curriculum	43

Chapter	Page
Facilities management skills	43
Ability to make decisions.....	44
Ability to work with computer technologies	44
Analytical skills	44
Professional Development Means.....	44
Previous professional experience outside higher education	45
Trial-and-error.....	46
Informal extrainstitutional networking	47
Previous personal experience.....	48
Informal intrainstitutional networking.....	49
Postsecondary coursework.....	52
Previous professional experience in higher education.....	54
Personality.....	55
Self-study/research.....	55
Observation.....	56
Formal intrainstitutional professional development	56
Formal extrainstitutional professional development.....	57
Mentoring.....	57
Intrainstitutional directed readings	59
Strength of Weak Ties	59
Strong ties	60
Weak ties.....	62
Other Realities	63
MAA transitions.....	63
MAA brain drain.....	64
Politics and MAAs.....	65
Position descriptions	65
MAA areas of responsibility.....	67
Preface for Chapter Five.....	70
V. SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	71
Summary of Core Findings.....	71
Professional development means.....	72
Implications of strong and weak ties	75
Comparison of Findings with the Research Literature	77
MAA career paths and transitions.....	77
MAA areas of responsibility.....	78
MAA burnout.....	78
Formal professional development participation.....	79
Constituents.....	79
MAA scholarly activity.....	80
Limitations of Study	80
Discussion of Findings.....	80

Chapter	Page
MAA recruitment and hiring	81
Educational degrees	82
Knowledge management.....	84
Mentoring.....	88
Recommendations for Future Research	90
Implementation of quantitative study	90
MAA-directed professional development.....	91
Knowledge management.....	92
Mentoring.....	92
Closing	93
REFERENCES	96
APPENDICES	114
Appendix A.....	115
Appendix B.....	117
Appendix C.....	119
Appendix D.....	120
Appendix E.....	122
Appendix F.....	123
Appendix G.....	127

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

According to numerous scholars and postsecondary practitioners, the need for effective leadership represents a major issue facing higher education today (Campbell, 2002; Shults, 2001)—especially at the non-executive leadership levels (Gmelch, 2002). However, unlike many challenges presently facing higher education—such as accountability and affordability—the development of individuals for key, postsecondary administrative roles is an area in which significant, short-term strides can be made. This research project focused on the professional development of a particular segment of postsecondary leaders who fulfill critical roles within the United States (U.S.) higher education system: two-year, midlevel academic administrators (MAAs).

Problem Statement

Most two-year MAAs transition to their administrative positions from the faculty ranks. However, the skills and knowledge required of midlevel academic leaders differ dramatically from the specialized expertise for which faculty are hired (Chiriboga-Hahn, 2003; Filan, 1999). Not surprisingly, the current research literature (e.g., Filan) states that MAAs in two-year colleges require formal professional development opportunities to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their demanding positions.

Interestingly, the literature also reveals that two-year midlevel academic leaders rarely receive the formal professional development opportunities necessary to perform their challenging, leadership positions (McCarthy, 2003; Pettit, 1999; Spangler, 1999).

Scholars (e.g., Piland & Wolf, 2003) have attributed the lack of MAA participation in formal professional development to the unavailability of relevant opportunities, inadequate institutional support, and their demanding schedules.

Studies have revealed that two-year MAAs gain the knowledge and skills necessary to perform their challenging positions during their tenures as midlevel academic leaders (Smith & Stewart, 1999; see also Filan, 1999; McCarthy, 2003; Spangler, 1999). Given that a common attribute of midlevel leaders is the ability to develop and effectively use broad social networks (Huy, 2001), and, as noted above, most MAAs learn to fulfill their positions while serving as MAAs (Smith & Stewart, 1999), one might speculate that MAAs of two-year institutions develop the competence needed to fulfill their positions primarily through informal means—including interpersonal connections with others.

Purpose of Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study was to identify the means through which two-year midlevel academic leaders acquire the minimum skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions, and the role of social network ties in this process. Consequently, this research project will seek to answer the following primary (P) and secondary (S) research questions.

S1. What are the skills and knowledge necessary for MAAs of two-year institutions?

P. How do two-year MAAs acquire those skills and knowledge?

S2. How does tie strength explain this process?

S3. What other realities are revealed by the data?

Research Methodology

This foundational study focuses on the acquisition and analysis of detailed, in-depth data. As a result, a flexible, qualitative research methodology was employed throughout (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory holds that weak social connections facilitate greater access to more novel information and ideas than strong ties. This framework, useful in assessing the diffusion of information through social networks, served as the theoretical lens for this research project.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions apply in this study.

- Professional development: experiences that increase or improve position-related skills and knowledge (Palmer & Miller, 2001). *Formal* professional development activities (e.g., conferences and postsecondary coursework) are generally systematic and marked by predetermined outcomes and learning processes (Mahatanankoon, 2007). *Informal* professional development activities (e.g., intrainstitutional networking and observation), on the other hand, typically do not have predetermined outcomes, are unsystematic, and, often, unintentional and spontaneous (Bascia, 2000).
- Midlevel academic administrator (MAA): a professional, non-executive postsecondary employee who oversees an academic unit and its operations, and reports to an academic affairs executive.

- Two-year college: any state-funded, higher education institution classified as an “associate’s” institution by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (n.d.).

Significance of Study

In light of the critical roles that two-year colleges fulfill within the U.S. higher education system, and the essential contributions that MAAs make within those institutions, studies which contribute to improving the effectiveness of midlevel academic leaders within two-year colleges hold noteworthy importance for postsecondary practice, theory and research. The implications for the current research project are outlined below.

Practice. Information regarding the primary means through which midlevel academic leaders of two-year institutions learn to fulfill their positions will facilitate the development of strategies directed to improving the transition of individuals into MAA positions as well as their performances in those roles. This study provides valuable insight for individuals involved in institutional professional development initiatives at two-year colleges, charged with filling MAA positions, responsible for conducting performance appraisals of midlevel academic leaders, considering pursuit of MAA positions, and/or involved with graduate programs for current and future two-year college leaders.

Theory. This research project serves as a model for the use of particular qualitative methodological techniques (e.g., coding) in professional development studies. Additionally, the current project contributes to the existing literature regarding the application of Granovetter’s strength of weak ties theory (1973, 1983) to professional development within postsecondary contexts.

Research. With respect to research, the current study makes two primary contributions. First, the project expands the literature pertaining to MAA positions within two-year institutions. (The results of the study may also hold relevance for future research projects relating to university midlevel academic leaders as well as nonacademic midlevel administrators—even though these groups are not foci of this project.) Second, the study provides valuable insights regarding the means through which MAAs acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their critical positions—information which may prove highly useful in studies pertaining to the professional development of individuals in these and other higher education positions.

Research Criteria

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proffer four key criteria for evaluating the soundness of qualitative research studies: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Each is addressed separately below.

Credibility. Credibility refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings are accurate from the perspectives of participants. In this study, credibility was established through the use of purposive sampling in the identification of an appropriate participant pool, member checks and peer debriefing by members of the researcher's dissertation committee.

Dependability. Dependability relates to the traceability of data and processes. To enhance the dependability of this study, the researcher maintained a journal—or “audit trail” (Patton, 2002, p. 93)—throughout the data collection and analysis phases of this project, recording key information regarding the research process, important observations and thoughts.

Transferability. Transferability refers to the extent to which qualitative research findings can be generalized to other contexts. Purposive sampling, as well as the collection and presentation of data adequate to facilitate minimal application of this project's findings to other contexts, enhanced the transferability of this study (Patton, 2002). However, it will ultimately be the reader's responsibility to determine the appropriateness of applying the findings from this research project to other contexts.

Confirmability. Confirmability refers to the extent to which research data can be verified. In this study, confirmability was established through retention of a researcher journal, recorded interviews, member-checked interview transcripts, organizational artifacts from which data were collected and utilized, and peer debriefing by the researcher's dissertation committee.

Researcher Biases

The researcher has served as an MAA of a state-funded, "associate's" (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.) higher education institution since 2001. Without question, his experiences as a midlevel academic leader—including professional development challenges similar to those investigated in this study—have been major impetuses for undertaking this research project.

Still, the insights, experiences and contacts—including some of the participants in this project—he has garnered through his current position were valuable to the completion of this study. Through close adherence to the research literature, as well as the use of member checks and peer debriefing, he has made every effort to ensure any biases he may have acquired during his tenure as an MAA and beyond have not inappropriately influenced this research project.

Structure of Study

Chapter Two provides an overview of the literature on higher education administrators, middle managers in industry, university midlevel academic leaders, and, most importantly, their counterparts within two-year colleges. Chapter Three focuses on the research design and methodology of the study. Chapter Four presents the project's findings. The final chapter, Chapter Five, interprets the study's findings, compares them to the research literature, and proffers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The more complex society becomes, the greater the demands placed on higher education institutions and their leaders (Fullan, 2001). Undoubtedly, “the twenty-first century environment will present serious challenges to higher education administrators” (Michael, Schwartz, & Balraj, 2001, p. 345). Given the importance of colleges and universities in the United States (U.S.), postsecondary leaders who can effectively navigate the dynamic challenges and complexities institutions increasingly face will be critical to the future of the nation (Olson-Nikunen, 2004; see also DeHart, 2003; Keller, 2001; Wilson, 1996).

Higher Education Administrators

Major changes in postsecondary economics and calls for greater higher education accountability in recent decades have resulted in diminished interest in academic leadership positions (Strathe & Wilson, 2006). The well-documented need for effective postsecondary leaders represents a major issue facing higher education today (Campbell, 2002; Shults, 2001).

Not surprisingly, postsecondary leadership has gained noteworthy attention from scholars. Particular emphasis has been given to higher education executive leadership positions (e.g., those of presidents, chief academic officers [CAOs] and chief information

officers) (Barone, 1989; Bornstein, 2005; Stevenson, 2001). Unfortunately, non-executive postsecondary leadership roles, such as department heads and division chairs, have not garnered equal interest among researchers—despite the vital functions these positions serve (Rosser, 2004). In many regards, midlevel academic leaders share several commonalities with their industry counterparts: “enormous responsibilities, little positional power, insufficient resources, and limited authority” (Gallos, 2002, p. 174). The following section provides a brief overview of the literature on middle managers in industry.

Middle Managers in Industry

Like their academic counterparts, middle managers are widely considered the “everyday leaders” (Tenhaken, 2004, p. 8) who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of organizations. Though the stereotypical middle manager is often viewed as an “impediment” (Huy, 2001, p. 1) between her or his supervisor and supervisees, middle managers actually fulfill critical roles within their organizations (Clarke, 1998; Henricks, 2007; Hymowitz, 2002; Leavitt, 2004; Scharmer, 2002), including that of: “entrepreneur, communicator, therapist, and stabilizer” (Embertson, 2006, p. 223). Most notably, middle managers are responsible for serving as the “bridge between the visionary ideals of the top and the often chaotic realities of business confronted by front-line workers” (Scharmer, 2002, p. 1).

The literature reveals that the roles of industry-based middle managers are expanding as markets and enterprises become more complex (James, 2006). As their responsibilities evolve, middle managers face greater challenges in fulfilling the growing demands of their positions (Leavitt, 2004), as well as a heightened need for meaningful

professional development opportunities (Clarke, 1998; Klagge, 1998). Unfortunately, even the limited development opportunities most middle managers receive are largely immaterial to their professional roles (Conger & Fulmer, 2003).

According to Accenture (2006), “the best organizations know that a key element of their foundation is a solid, committed core of middle managers” (n.p.). In fact, the study warns that executives who discount the importance of middle managers risk the “future of their organizations” (Accenture, n.p.). Despite the frequency of such assertions, research (e.g., Huy, 2001) shows that companies consistently undervalue the contributions of their middle managers.

Scholars have delineated a clear trend toward increasing turnover within the middle management ranks (Austin, 2004; Pomeroy, 2006). Recent studies reveal that approximately half of the middle managers in the U.S. are seeking to leave their current positions (Johnson, 2003). However, such findings are not unique to industry-based middle managers. Similar assertions are made about middle managers’ postsecondary counterparts: midlevel academic leaders. The following section focuses on the roles of midlevel academic administrators (MAAs) within four-year institutions.

University Midlevel Academic Administrators

The Progressive Era, circa 1870 to 1925, saw the number and size of academic units within postsecondary organizations grow in response to demands by government and industry for increased emphasis on research and learning within specialized disciplines. It was during this period that the modern midlevel academic leadership position emerged (Vacik, 1997; Vacik & Miller, 1998). Today, the midlevel academic

administrator office is where most institutional business takes place (Davidson & Goldberg, 2005; Raines & Alberg, 2003; see also Dyer & Miller, 1999).

MAA positions are often characterized “as the most important . . . in postsecondary education” (Gmelch & Parkay, 1999, p. 1; see also Lumpkin, 2004), and the “mainstays of organizational effectiveness” (Gallos, 2002, p. 183). Situated on the institutional front lines, midlevel academic leaders are the “firing-line managers” (Rosser, 2004, p. 319) who are frequently the first to encounter problems. However, despite the large numbers and high turnover rates of these “unsung heroes” (Rosser, p. 317), university MAAs have received considerably less consideration in the research literature than individuals holding executive leadership positions. According to Gmelch (2002), the MAA role “is the least studied and most misunderstood management position in America” (p. 2).

University MAA transition. Motivated by financial reward, the desire to help academic units grow and improve, fear, and/or a sense of duty to institutions or units (Carroll, 1991), four-year midlevel academic leaders typically transition to their positions from faculty roles. Though the faculty ranks mark the traditional career path for university MAAs, faculty are hired for their specialized, academic expertise—not their broad administrative skills (Gmelch, 2002; Strathe & Wilson, 2006). Because the responsibilities and challenges of four-year MAA positions differ dramatically from those of faculty, the move from faculty member to midlevel academic leader is rarely a smooth one (Foster, 2006; Strathe & Wilson).

Wilson (2001) describes the transition “like going into a whole different profession” (p. A10). New university MAAs commonly report that their administrative

positions are only marginally related to their previous roles in academia as students and faculty members (Greenberg, 1999), and that the skills and knowledge required by their new positions differ dramatically from those they needed previously (Foster, 2006; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; see also Gmelch & Miskin, 1993).

University MAA roles. Several researchers have looked into the unique duties and responsibilities of four-year MAAs (Leaming, 1998). Pointing to the unique nature of midlevel academic leadership positions, Davidson and Goldberg (2005) write that

unlike most academics, [MAAs] both supervise staff members and have bosses to whom [they] report. . . . [They] write annual evaluations that determine . . . raises[.]. . . . have hiring and firing power[.]. . . . are evaluated every year, sometimes more than once, and can be fired from [their] positions. (p. 1)

Wilson (2001) adds the functions of “psychotherapists, financial advisers, and drug-abuse counselors” (p. A10) to the list.

Through their positions, university MAAs must serve the needs of a wide array of institutional stakeholders, including students, faculty, staff, fellow administrators, alumni, employers and other members of the community (Gallos, 2002; Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Rosser, 2000; Vacik, 1997). However, attempting to meet the demands of such a wide range of constituents places great strain on midlevel academic leaders. Even in the best of circumstances, serving as a four-year MAA “resembles living in a vise” (Gallos, p. 174) or “existing within a dilemma” (Vacik, p. 4).

The challenges and pressures university midlevel academic leaders face are well documented (Dyer & Miller, 1999). Scholars have investigated the stress factors associated with four-year MAA positions (Hogan, Carlson, & Dua, 2002) and the impacts

of stress on midlevel academic leaders and their performance (Wolverton, Gmelch, Wolverton, & Sarros, 1999). According to such studies, individuals who undertake university midlevel academic leadership positions generally experience dramatic reductions in their personal time and numerous negative impacts on their private lives (Gmelch, 1991).

Bragg (1981) rejects the notion that a single definition can adequately encompass the broad responsibilities of four-year MAAs. Tucker (1984) proffers 54 tasks and duties (e.g., supervisee evaluations, fiscal oversight and class scheduling) that midlevel academic leaders commonly perform. Benoit, Graham and Heiman (2002) identify 18 different roles that university MAAs fulfill within their units and institutions. Though little consensus exists regarding the roles that four-year midlevel academic leaders hold, it is widely accepted that their duties are expanding in response to demands placed on higher education institutions and the academic units they oversee (Giles-Gee & McMahon, 1997; see also Filan & Seagren, 2003).

The research literature is clear: university MAAs are not simply required to serve in a wide variety of roles, but, to ensure unit and institutional performance, must perform at a high level in each (Gallos, 2002; Lindholm, 1999). Pressures for greater postsecondary productivity and accountability are undoubtedly felt by executive administrators; however, it is at the MAA level that most initiatives must be implemented (Gallos). Midlevel academic leaders are increasingly at the forefront of advancing innovation within their institutions (Clegg, 2003).

Because they must hold expertise in an academic discipline and be proficient in a wide range of administrative practices, four-year MAAs have been characterized as

master craftspeople of higher education (Jaeger & Pekruhl, 1998). According to Peltason (1984), “an institution can run for a long time with an inept president but not for long with inept [MAAs]” (p. xi).

University MAA professional development. If the performance of midlevel academic leaders is strategically critical to the operations of academic units and institutions, and university MAA positions are significantly different from the roles individuals undertaking those positions have held previously, it would be logical for higher education scholars and practitioners to pay careful attention to the development of individuals who serve in midlevel academic leadership positions. Unfortunately, this is not occurring (Gallos, 2002).

Unlike their common education counterparts (e.g., principals), MAAs are not required by law or for certification purposes to participate in professional development opportunities relevant to their positions. Scholars (e.g., Gmelch & Parkay, 1999) blame inadequate institutional support for low four-year MAA participation in formal professional development opportunities, revealing that MAAs receive little professional development before or after undertaking their midlevel leadership roles. Other researchers (e.g., Filan & Seagren, 2003) assign fault to a lack of relevant development activities for midlevel academic leaders. Though numerous professional development opportunities exist for individuals in non-MAA postsecondary leadership positions (e.g., student affairs managers), “few, if any, opportunities have been available to [MAAs,] even though they outnumber all other types of administrators combined” (p. 22).

The need for improved opportunities for MAAs to receive ongoing, meaningful, formal professional development directed to the unique roles they fulfill is strongly

supported in the research literature (McCarthy, 2003; see also Gmelch & Parkay, 1999; Greenberg, 2001; Raines & Alberg, 2003; Rosser, Johnsrud, & Heck, 2003). Rosser (2000) reveals that university MAAs are interested in improving their abilities to perform their professional positions. However, for several reasons, formal professional development activities do not appear to represent the best means for addressing this need (Plater, 2006).

With dwindling state support, institutions are increasingly less likely to facilitate the regular participation of four-year MAAs in workshops, symposia and conferences—which represent most of the formal professional development opportunities available to midlevel academic leaders. Even MAAs who receive formal training report that the limited offerings pertain only to a small portion of their overall administrative responsibilities (Yen, Lange, Denton, & Riskin, 2004). Further, formal professional development opportunities are often unpopular among university MAAs given the time constraints of their demanding positions. Besides, midlevel academic leaders cannot learn to fulfill their professional roles through inoculation; it takes several years for MAAs to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the demands of their positions (Gardner, 1987; see also Gibson, 2001; Wilson, 2001).

The research literature patently shows that university midlevel academic leaders are generally unprepared for their challenging yet critical positions (Palmer & Miller, 2001). Additionally, it is clear that these MAAs receive little or no professional development (Holtgreffe, 1996). In general, midlevel academic leaders are expected to “sink or swim” (Gmelch & Parkay, 1999, p. 14). However, four-year institutions are not

alone in underestimating the bottom-line importance of MAA development to unit and institutional performance. The same is true of two-year colleges.

Scholars (e.g., Spaid & Parsons, 1999) have asserted that the issues confronting two-year institutions will necessitate higher levels of leadership than ever before. The following section reviews the research literature on MAAs within two-year institutions, as well as how the unique “problems, challenges and demands” (Piland & Wolf, 2003, p. 95) of two-year colleges impact midlevel academic leadership positions within those organizations.

Two-Year Midlevel Academic Administrators

Whereas university MAA positions have received considerably less attention than executive leadership positions, MAAs within two-year institutions have garnered relatively little consideration in the research literature in comparison to their four-year counterparts (Rosser, 2000). However, in light of the critical roles that two-year colleges fulfill in the U.S. higher education system, and the increasing demands placed on those institutions, greater priority must be given to the preparation of individuals for midlevel academic leadership positions within two-year colleges (Chiriboga-Hahn, 2003). While university and two-year MAAs share many commonalities, their environments and positions are distinct in several ways (Tucker, 1984).

Two-year environment. Two-year institutions have always served key roles in the nation’s higher education system. Today, approximately half of all undergraduate students in the U.S. are enrolled at two-year colleges (American Association of Community Colleges, n.d.). Through their open-door admissions policies, two-year colleges provide access to underserved populations (Olson-Nikunen, 2004), educate

individuals significantly under-prepared for the rigor of postsecondary studies, and assist a wide spectrum of individuals in meeting their educational and vocational goals (McCabe, 2000).

In comparison to their university counterparts, students attending two-year institutions are more likely to be minority, female, older and from lower income families (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Consequently, effective two-year institutions are of critical importance to the U.S. higher education system and, in many regards, “vital to the future of this nation” (Kubala, 1999, p. 183; see also Watts & Hammons, 2002).

In response to record enrollments and inadequate state support, four-year institutions are becoming more selective in admitting students (Gose, 2005), raising tuition and increasing academic standards (Evelyn, 2004). These changes are having a ripple effect on two-year institutions throughout the country. Two-year college enrollments had remained steady between 1990 and 2000. In recent years, however, student enrollments at two-year institutions have experienced significant increases, and are projected to increase by 13 percent between 2004 and 2014 (Evelyn).

As their enrollments grow, two-year colleges must assume greater roles for addressing the educational needs of even larger, more diverse student populations—including increasing numbers of “largely first-generation, non-English speaking” and “low-income” students (Gose, 2005, p. B10). Consequently, two-year institutions are taking dramatic steps to adapt “their policies, procedures and services to accommodate new and growing groups of students” (Andrews, 2003, p. 1). As the demands on two-year institutions increase, so do the demands on the MAAs within these organizations. Given the importance of two-year colleges in the U.S. higher education system and the distinct

roles that two-year MAAs fulfill in them, the development of individuals undertaking midlevel academic leadership positions within two-year colleges must become a top priority among scholars and institutions alike (Chiriboga-Hahn, 2003).

Two-year MAA transition. Like their university counterparts, most two-year MAAs emerge from the faculty ranks. However, whereas MAAs within four-year institutions are frequently selected because of their scholarly productivity, such activities are typically of minimal importance to two-year colleges (Piland & Wolf, 2003). Also in contrast to their university counterparts, most two-year MAAs serve on permanent bases (Seagren & Miller, 1994; Smith & Stewart, 1999).

Research shows that the vast majority of individuals who choose to undertake two-year MAA positions do so without understanding the demands and challenges they will face (Gmelch, 1994). In fact, many two-year college administrators believe that postsecondary administration is something that can be easily learned—a notion which Davis (2003) describes as a “formula for stagnation, isolation, and eventual decline” (p. 240) in the performance of midlevel academic leaders.

Two-year MAA roles. The literature on MAA positions within two-year institutions reveals a clear consensus regarding the importance of midlevel academic leaders to the performance of two-year institutions (Foote, 1999; see also Samuels, 1983; Smith & Stewart, 1999). According to Gmelch (1994), the MAA office is where “nearly 80 percent of all administrative decisions . . . are made” (p. 3).

As with MAAs within universities, two-year MAAs fulfill challenging roles which are crucial to ensuring smooth operation of unit and institutional activities (Gillett-Karam et al., 1999). Also like their four-year counterparts, MAAs within two-year

institutions must contend with a wide range of constituents—constantly responding to the needs and demands of students, faculty, staff, other administrators and members of the community (Seagren & Miller, 1994).

Gillett-Karam et al. (1999) go so far as to refer to MAA positions within two-year colleges as “the world’s most difficult roles” (p. 41). Studies have shown that the excessive demands and time constraints of two-year MAAs have resulted in high burnout rates among this population (Gillett-Karam et al.; Kuhl, 2006), and negatively impacted the number of individuals willing to undertake MAA positions (Piland & Wolf, 2003).

The research literature on four-year MAAs holds numerous perspectives regarding the roles and functions that individuals in those positions fulfill. Though some disagreement also exists among scholars regarding the primary duties of two-year MAAs, many point to Pettitt (1999) and his work on the principal responsibilities of MAAs within two-year institutions. According to Pettitt, the major duties of two-year MAAs can be categorized into seven broad categories: “curriculum and instruction, internal administration, professional development, human relations and personnel administration, budget planning and development, student relations and administration, and external administration” (p. 59).

Two-year MAA professional development. Given the uniqueness of their contexts and positions, two-year MAA positions necessitate skills and knowledge different from those required in other positions within academia (Filan, 1999). The literature patently states that the unique needs of midlevel academic leaders from two-year institutions require professional development opportunities distinct from those of their university counterparts or other two-year, non-MAA administrators (Pettitt, 1999). However, like

their four-year counterparts, few two-year midlevel academic leaders participate in formal professional development activities given the low availability of such opportunities, the time constraints of their demanding positions, as well as a perceived disconnect between such offerings and the performance of their positions (Piland & Wolf, 2003). According to a recent survey, fewer than 25% of two-year MAAs participate in formal professional development opportunities (Kuhl, 2006).

As with universities, two-year institutions are described as “missing in action” (Piland & Wolf, 2003, p.95) with respect to addressing the professional development needs of their midlevel academic leaders (see also Spangler, 1999). A limited number of two-year colleges have implemented intra-institutional mechanisms to provide basic development opportunities for new MAAs. However, most organization-based initiatives receive few or no resources, are poorly organized, and do not represent institutional priorities (Piland & Wolf).

Unfortunately, the development of two-year MAAs has not garnered adequate attention from postsecondary scholars either. Even though a substantive body of literature exists on professional development within two-year institutions, the vast majority of research has focused on faculty (Wallin, 2006).

Scholars have reported that midlevel academic leaders of two-year colleges, like their university counterparts, acquire the skills and knowledge to fulfill the responsibilities of their challenging positions while serving as MAAs (Smith & Stewart, 1999; see also Filan, 1999; Gibson, 2001; McCarthy, 2003; Spangler, 1999; Wilson, 2001). Huy (2001) asserts that a common attribute of midlevel leaders is the ability to build and effectively use webs of informal, interpersonal relationships. However, little

progress has been made by scholars or institutions in determining the extent to which MAA use of social networks represents a primary means through which two-year midlevel academic leaders develop professionally. Overall, greater attention must be given to identifying the means through which midlevel academic leaders learn to perform their demanding positions—as such studies will serve as springboards for future research projects focused on the design and implementation of mechanisms targeted to the professional development needs of two-year MAAs.

Social Network Theory

Developed primarily in the sociological and anthropological arenas—though widely utilized in the fields of education, psychology, health and engineering—social network theory has been used by countless researchers to depict the nature and effect of interpersonal networks (i.e., connections between individuals and clusters of individuals). The theory has been utilized in elucidating and explaining numerous phenomena, including decision making (e.g., Laumann, Marsden, & Galaskiewicz, 1977), innovation diffusion and adoption (e.g., Ross, 2007), occupational mobility (e.g., Breiger, 1990), the transmission of diseases (e.g., Wylie, Cabral, & Jolly, 2005), the diffusion of gossip (e.g., Foster, 2004), and the development of software tools for use in the evaluation of virtual communities (e.g., Wang & Chen, 2004).

Strength of weak ties theory. According to Marsden and Campbell (1984), one of the most important developments in social network theory has been the notion of strong and weak ties (i.e., connections). In early writings, Granovetter (1973, 1982, 1983), a social network theorist, investigated strong and weak ties, their formation of social networks, and roles in the diffusion of information and ideas. According to his findings,

the strength or weakness of ties between individuals and groups of individuals directly influences the nature and level of information available through interpersonal connections.

Conventional wisdom holds that individuals gain access to more and higher-quality information through their strong interpersonal connections. However, Granovetter (1973, 1983) found that while strong ties often play important roles in the diffusion of information by facilitating access to more reliable and detailed information—as well as fostering greater motivation to provide assistance—they also tend to grant access to redundant information.

In contrast, weak ties link individuals and groups who are less homogeneous. As a result, weak ties—which can be maintained more easily than strong ties—play important roles in facilitating access to wider, more diverse (i.e., less redundant) information and ideas (e.g., technical expertise and innovative leadership practices) in comparison to those available through strong connections.

Like social network analysis, Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory has been utilized in a wide variety of studies, including those focused on the diffusion of information regarding employment opportunities (e.g., Lin, Dayton, & Greenwald, 1977), culture (e.g., Fine & Kleinman, 1979), and innovation (e.g., Genius, 2005). Overall, subsequent research applications have confirmed Granovetter's strength of weak ties theory (Krackhardt, 1992). However, in practice, scholars have varied widely in their approaches to measuring tie strength. Not surprisingly, criticisms have arisen as a result of the assorted methods researchers have employed in operationalizing Granovetter's theory (Jack, 2005). Recency of contact (e.g., Lin, Dayton, & Greenwald,

1978), intimacy (e.g., Lin, Ensel, & Vaughn, 1981), frequency of interaction (McEvily & Zaheer, 1999) and reciprocity (Friedkin, 1980) have served as common benchmarks for determining tie strength. In the current study, intimacy and frequency of interaction were used in determining the strength or weakness of MAAs' social connections—an approach which is consistent with Granovetter's (1973, 1983) application of the strength of weak ties theory.

Most postsecondary scholars and practitioners agree that effective leadership is—and will continue to be—a major factor in the ability of colleges and universities to contend with the evolving needs and demands of higher education's constituents (Campbell, 2002; Shults, 2001). This is especially true of two-year colleges and their MAAs, who fulfill crucial leadership roles within those institutions (Chiriboga-Hahn, 2003).

However, two-year college leadership is expected to undergo unprecedented turnover as current leaders retire over the next decade (Wallin, 2006). With the number of individuals interested in MAA positions dwindling and the demands on two-year institutions increasing, postsecondary organizations and scholars must give greater priority to the development of individuals holding these key leadership positions (Piland & Wolf, 2003)—before it is too late. It is hoped that the findings of this study mark an important stride toward this goal.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

While qualitative and quantitative methodologies are commonly employed in leadership research studies, the primary objective of the current project was to garner and analyze information regarding the means through which midlevel academic administrators (MAAs) of two-year colleges acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. Because high levels of openness and flexibility were necessary to facilitate in-depth exploration of new threads of inquiry as they emerged, a flexible, qualitative methodology was employed throughout this foundational study (Creswell, 2002; Patton, 2002).

Theoretical Framework

Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory was employed in this project to gain insights into the relationships between two-year midlevel academic leaders and other individuals within the postsecondary context. This theoretical framework was also used to assess the impact of strong and weak interpersonal connections on two-year MAA development. Finally, use of Granovetter's strength of weak ties theory yielded important insights regarding the applicability of this theoretical lens to postsecondary leadership professional development.

Research Participants

Purposive sampling was used to identify twelve prospective participants who

currently serve as the MAAs of two, two-year campuses of a state-funded, university system in the south central United States (U.S.). They were identified through the use of publicly available (e.g., Internet-based) directory information. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants and organizations. The university system's two-year campuses are referred to as South Central University (SCU)-West and SCU-East throughout the study.

Though SCU-West and SCU-East share the same system chief executive officer and board of trustees, and both offer transfer- and workforce-oriented academic programs tailored to the needs of their respective constituencies, they are distinct institutions with markedly unique characteristics. SCU-East has an enrollment of approximately 3,000 mostly full-time students and is rurally situated. SCU-West, in contrast, is located in a major metropolitan area and boasts a total enrollment of approximately 6,000 students—the vast majority of whom attend classes part-time (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, n.d.). While the comparison of data from distinct contexts is not typically a major objective of qualitative studies, this purposive sample facilitated a certain level of intra- and inter-institutional comparisons and useful insights (Patton, 2002).

The researcher sought to contact all twelve of the prospective participants regarding their participation in this project. One of the SCU-East MAAs could not be reached during the data collection phase, and another midlevel academic leadership position was vacant. As a result, ten MAAs were interviewed for this study.

Participant Solicitation

As a courtesy, each of the Chief Academic Officer's (CAOs) on SCU's two-year campuses were contacted via telephone to discuss the current study. The researcher discussed the study independently with the CAOs of the SCU-West and SCU-East campuses before contacting any prospective participants (i.e., midlevel academic leaders) from their respective campuses. A personalized, signed thank you note was sent to each of the CAOs following the researcher's discussions with them.

Once the research project was discussed with the CAOs, the researcher contacted each of the midlevel academic leaders employed by the two-year SCU campuses by telephone to request her or his participation in the study. The MAA not reached by telephone was sent a signed, personalized letter (see Appendix A) requesting his participation in the proposed research project. The letter, which was sealed in an envelope marked "CONFIDENTIAL," also contained basic information regarding the study. The researcher unsuccessfully attempted to contact the prospective participant via telephone five business days after the letter was posted.

During all initial conversations with prospective participants, the researcher followed a script (see Appendix B)—approved for use in the research project by the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix C)—to ensure each received detailed information regarding the study and was notified of his or her rights should s/he choose to participate. Informed consent forms (see Appendix D)—also approved for use in this project by the OSU IRB—were reviewed and completed by all participants prior to any involvement in the current research project.

Personalized, signed thank you notes were mailed to all participants at the conclusion of the data collection phase.

Data Collection

Data used in this research study were generated through audio-recorded interviews and review of basic institutional media. Both audio recordings and transcribed interview data collected for this project were stored in a locked file cabinet in the home office of the researcher.

With the exception of audio recordings, all raw data acquired during this study will be destroyed after two years. All audio recordings were destroyed as soon as they were transcribed. Though data have been (and will be) reported and/or published in this and other academic documents, the identity of the sites and participants will be continuously protected.

Interviews. The primary research data were garnered chiefly through face-to-face, semi-structured interviews lasting approximately one hour. A semi-structured interview format allowed for the investigation of specific topics, as well as the exploration of subjects and/or themes which emerged throughout the interview process (Patton, 2002). Member checks were requested of all interview transcripts (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002).

Open-ended questions were employed during the semi-structured interviews to encourage unfettered participant responses (Patton, 2002). The interview questions used in this study were developed from information available in the research literature and designed specifically to address this study's research questions. The principal

introductory and interview questions developed for use in the current research project are provided in Appendix E.

These questions were piloted in interviews with two veteran, two-year MAAs as part of an effort to assure quality within the current study. Feedback regarding the interview questions was solicited and used in their refinement. Note: the results of the pilot interviews were not included in the study.

Artifacts. Publicly available institutional documentation (e.g., catalogs and websites) were used in the collection of basic descriptive information regarding the respective campuses, units and roles of participants (e.g., nature of academic programs). All documentation utilized in this study was identified through purposive sampling.

Data Analysis

In keeping with the spirit of qualitative research methodology, a flexible, analytical (qualitative) framework was employed throughout this investigation. Such an approach facilitated receptiveness to new themes and lines of inquiry which emerged during the data collection and analysis phases of the project (Patton, 2002).

The data generated through the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using an approach in which common or recurring themes were identified and reduced to a finite set of categories (Creswell, 2003; Patton, 2002). The first step in this process was to review the interview transcripts to identify key phrases and/or words. Next, the key phrases and/or words identified in the transcripts were compared to determine whether common themes exist. The recurring or common themes were segmented into major categories (e.g., skills and professional development means) (Patton). (Granovetter's [1973, 1983] strength of weak ties theory was utilized in an a priori manner in

formulating and categorizing these themes.) Finally, the accuracy of the coding process was audited by an individual purposely selected for her expertise in working with qualitative methodologies (Creswell).

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

The overarching objective of the current research project was to identify the primary means through which midlevel academic leaders acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their administrative positions. However, throughout this investigation, data has been generated on the individuals participating in this study, as well as several key aspects of their two-year midlevel academic administrator (MAA) roles.

Following profiles of each of the participating MAAs, this chapter will present the study's findings vis-à-vis the structure of the project's research questions. First, the skills and knowledge identified by the midlevel academic leaders will be presented. The next sections will explore the means through which these skills were acquired, and apply these findings to the project's theoretical framework: Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory. Finally, other noteworthy realities revealed through this research project will be reviewed.

Participants

Ten midlevel academic leaders participated in this study—four from SCU-East, six from SCU-West. The academic and professional backgrounds of the study's participants vary widely. Below, profiles are provided for each.

Alan. Alan has served as a midlevel academic leader of an SCU-East academic unit for the past four years. The outgoing MAA holds bachelor and master's degrees in Animal Science, a master's in Business Administration and a doctorate in Agriculture Education. Though Alan has worked outside of higher education, he has spent the vast majority of his professional career in postsecondary environments.

Prior to undertaking his current role at SCU-East, in which he oversees a majority of the institution's transfer programs and general education offerings, Alan held a wide range of positions in higher education—including both faculty and academic administrative positions at associate and baccalaureate degree granting institutions. He is the only MAA participating in this study that had experience as a midlevel academic leader prior to undertaking his current role.

Becky. Becky is a quiet, introspective individual who has fulfilled an MAA role at SCU-West for the past six years. She holds bachelor degrees in Chemistry/Biology and Geology, a master's in Computer Science, and a doctorate in Adult Education. Becky worked in the oil industry for several years prior to being employed at SCU-West as an adjunct faculty member involved with the delivery of continuing education offerings. During the ensuing 10-year period, Becky advanced through the SCU-West organizational structure via full-time faculty and lower-level administrative roles to her current midlevel academic leadership position.

Beth. Beth, the newest MAA at SCU-East, has served as the midlevel academic leader of one of the institution's academic units for the past 10-and-a-half months. She holds a bachelor degree in Fine Arts, a master's in Trade and Industrial Education, and has earned approximately 20 credit hours toward a doctorate in Adult Education—though

the timeframe during which these could be applied to a plan of study has expired. Beth's professional experiences include owning and operating a small business, and management positions in retail. Prior to her current post, the self-described extrovert served as a faculty member for 18 years in the SCU-East academic unit she now oversees.

Bill. Bill has served in an MAA role at SCU-East for the past 13 years. He holds a bachelor degree in Construction Science. Immediately following college, Bill, an easy-going, light-hearted individual, worked for a major construction company where he filled a wide range of management functions for approximately seven years. During this period, Bill gained valuable exposure to the construction industry. Even though he was originally hired at SCU-East into a lower-level academic administrative role, Bill was promoted into his current midlevel leadership position shortly thereafter. He is American Indian (self-disclosed).

David. David has served as the midlevel academic leader of an SCU-West academic unit for the past nine months. The soft-spoken MAA holds bachelor and master's degrees in Biology, and a doctorate in Food Science. Early in his career, David served in the military and held a wide range of non-postsecondary positions, which included building fences and the construction of mobile home chassis. Much of David's postsecondary education was supported by G.I. Bill benefits he received as a result of his military service. Prior to undertaking his current post, David served as a faculty member at a public, baccalaureate degree granting institution, worked as a scientific researcher for a federal agency, and held full-time faculty and lower-level administrative positions at SCU-West.

Janet. Janet has fulfilled an MAA role at SCU-West for the past five years. She holds an associate degree in Nursing from SCU-West, bachelor and master's degrees in Nursing, and is currently working toward a doctorate in Higher Education. Through her 20-plus years of experience in the clinical nursing setting—which includes several key, management roles—the polite and agreeable Janet garnered valuable exposure to numerous facets of the healthcare industry. Since coming to SCU-West, Janet, the only black (self-disclosed) who participated in this study, held part-time faculty, full-time faculty and lower-level administrative positions before applying for and being hired into her current MAA position.

Jeff. Jeff has served as the midlevel academic leader of an SCU-West academic unit for the past seven years. He holds a transfer-oriented associate's degree, a baccalaureate in Public Service, a master's degree in Public Administration, as well as master's and doctoral degrees in Education. Most of the professional work experiences Jeff garnered before beginning at SCU-West were in the state government and non-profit sectors, and included multiple executive positions. During much of this period, Jeff also worked for SCU-West as a part-time faculty member. Prior to his current MAA role, the outgoing, contemplative MAA served as a full-time faculty member and held a lower-level administrative position in the academic unit he administers.

John. John has filled an SCU-West MAA role for the past nine years. He holds a bachelor degree in Horticulture and a master's in Landscape Design—the latter of which was completed 15 years after the former. Prior to undertaking his current post, John accumulated considerable industry experience in sales and client relations while holding a range of professional positions—which include owning and operating a landscape

architecture firm, as well as serving as the campus Landscape Architect and part-time faculty member for a major research institution in the region. Prior to undertaking his current role, John held full-time faculty and administrative positions in the SCU-West unit he currently oversees.

Lori. Lori has served as the midlevel academic leader of an SCU-West academic unit for the past three-and-a-half years. She holds a bachelor degree in Psychology, master's degree in Community Counseling, and is a licensed professional counselor. Lori initially worked full-time in academic assessment and student advisement in SCU-West's student services area while teaching for the institution part-time. Before undertaking her current MAA position, Lori, an extroverted, energetic midlevel academic leader, held full-time faculty and lower-level administrative positions at SCU-West for the previous 13 years.

Tom. Tom has held an MAA role at SCU-East for the past 20 years. He holds an associate's degree in Automotive Technology, a bachelor degree in Industrial Education, and is two or three courses short of a master's in Trade and Industrial Education—though the timeframe during which this degree program may be completed has passed. Tom, who tends to be more introverted, acquired considerable management experience outside of higher education prior to undertaking his current midlevel academic leadership role. These experiences include the facilitation of industry technical training, sales and oversight of a large distribution facility with over 100 employees. Tom entered his current MAA position directly from industry.

Summary of Participant Descriptions

Of the participants, three hold associate degrees—similar to ones they now administer. Ten have earned baccalaureates, eight hold master's degrees, four have completed doctorates, and one is currently pursuing a doctoral degree.

All but two of the MAAs gained noteworthy experience in non-MAA roles in postsecondary education prior to undertaking their midlevel academic leadership posts—ranging from adjunct faculty to lower-level administrative positions. Though the MAAs described these earlier posts as dramatically different from their roles as midlevel academic leaders—and therefore characterized these experiences as only minimally relevant to their development as MAAs—their previous positions provided them with exposure to an array of postsecondary processes and activities which has been helpful in their midlevel academic leadership roles.

At the time of their interviews, the tenures of the MAAs participating in the study ranged from nine months to 20 years, with two of the MAAs holding tenures lasting longer than 10 years, and two less than 12 months experience in their present roles. The remaining six midlevel academic leaders had spent between three-and-a-half and nine years in their current MAA positions. Four of the 10 midlevel academic leaders who participated in this study are women—one of whom is black. One of the six male MAAs is American Indian.

The participants were initially contacted via telephone regarding their participation in this study. Each MAA reached willingly accepted the invitation to participate. None indicated reservations regarding his or her participation in this research

project. The interviews took place in the participants' offices or conference rooms located nearby.

Skills and Knowledge

The first objective of the study was to identify the skills and knowledge necessary for MAAs of two-year institutions to fulfill their positions. Information regarding the skills and knowledge was generated by asking each of the project's participants, based on her or his own perceptions, to describe what they do in a typical, two-week period, and then requesting them to identify which skills and/or knowledge are important to those activities. The following section presents the 23 knowledge and skill sets identified, independently, by at least two midlevel academic leaders, as well as the area(s) of responsibility most impacted by each. (While this information does not serve a specific purpose in the current study, a mapping of the 23 primary skill and knowledge sets to Pettitt's [1999] areas of responsibility for MAAs is provided in Appendix F.)

Interpersonal/networking skills. MAAs identified the ability to develop and make use of interpersonal connections as essential to fulfilling their roles. All of the study's participants (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) identified interpersonal/networking skills as among the most important to their positions—a perspective reflected in the following statement by Jeff.

There's been a time in my life where I was just so focused on what *I* thought should happen, or what we needed to be successful, that I burned bridges and relationships. And what I've come to understand, in the last three or four years, is that if you preserve and build those relationships, when it really comes down to

your needing somebody else or needing their support on a particular issue, those relationships will deliver those results.

According to John, interpersonal/networking skills are not only “important, . . . they’re imperative”—an assertion echoed by Lori.

I think the crux of the role is building relationships, all the way around. I mean, philosophically, if [MAAs] don’t have that working relationship with staff, with the community, with . . . administration—the whole bit—then none of it’s going to work. So, it’s the relationships.

The project’s participants identified effective interpersonal/networking skills as critical to internal administration, directing professional development of personnel, human relations and personnel administration, student relations and administration, and external administration.

Communication skills. Each of the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) assigned a high level of importance to effective communication skills and their significance to all areas of their leadership positions. Janet reflected the sentiments of several of the study’s participants in stating: “It doesn’t matter what skills you have. . . . [In this position,] if you aren’t able to communicate with other individuals on a personal level—none of that makes any difference.” Five of the 10, two-year midlevel academic leaders (Becky, Beth, Bill, Janet, and Lori) highlighted the critical role that strong listening skills play in their positions. Two of the MAAs (Jeff and Tom) stressed the importance of presentation skills.

I think you have to be, uh, a pretty good presenter, because it's all salesmanship as far as I'm concerned. . . . You have to be able to give presentations. You have to be able to talk, basically, extemporaneously, most of the time. (Tom)

Jeff characterized presentation as “a completely different kind of communication.” David emphasized the importance of “both verbal and written” communication skills.

Resource planning and prioritization skills. All 10 of the MAAs participating in this study (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) identified the ability to effectively manage and deploy resources as among their most critical skills. Because they must, by virtue of their positions, constantly balance competing demands for limited resources, the midlevel academic leaders stated that ensuring effective use of the resources under their management is essential. As Alan stated,

To me, budgeting is always about “What can we afford to do?” and “What are the priorities? . . . I mean, we'd like to do more than what we do, but you just have to prioritize. I mean, we can afford to buy what we can afford to buy.

Resource planning and prioritization skills were identified as important to internal administration and budget planning and development.

Knowledge of disciplines for which programs prepare students. Eight of the participants (Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, John, Lori and Tom) stated that possessing knowledge of the professions the programs they oversee prepare students for is necessary to fulfilling their roles. According to these MAAs, such knowledge is essential in administering professional development for personnel and overseeing curriculum and instruction initiatives within their units.

Knowledge of state higher education system. State postsecondary policy and procedures appear to factor heavily in the roles of a majority of the MAAs who participated in the research project, with seven (Alan, Becky, Bill, Janet, John, Jeff and Lori) identifying it as a knowledge set central to their positions. These two-year MAAs reported that knowledge of state higher education policy is important in overseeing curriculum and instruction, budget planning and development, student relations and administration, and external administration.

Curriculum development/management skills. Seven of the MAAs who participated in the study (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, Janet, John and Lori) indicated that the ability to develop and manage curricula is critical to their positions. According to Alan, “curriculum is one of the most important things schools do.” Beth stated that curriculum is “always on my mind.” Such skills were identified as essential to overseeing curriculum and instruction—a core component of the two-year midlevel academic leadership role, as revealed in this study and the research literature.

General knowledge of higher education processes. Interestingly, six of the participating midlevel academic leaders (Alan, Becky, Janet, Jeff, John and Lori) identified a broad familiarity with postsecondary education (e.g., degrees and degree areas [Alan]) and related processes (e.g., registration [Lori]) as important to fulfilling their positions. Such a frame of reference was reported as being particularly critical to student relations and administration.

Motivational skills. Six of the MAAs (Alan, Becky, Bill, David, John and Tom) identified the ability to motivate others as a skill set essential to fulfilling their roles. During his interview, Bill characterized motivating others as being about “encouraging

people—giving them the encouragement that they need and ideas about what they can do to make their situations better.” According to these midlevel academic leaders, motivational skills are essential to overseeing personnel professional development and managing curriculum and instruction within their units—though the study’s participants also identified them as being important to human relations and personnel administration.

Forecasting/environmental scanning skills. Six of the 10 participants (Alan, Becky, Beth, David, Janet and Lori) stated that the ability to track and predict trends is important to fulfilling their administrative positions. These midlevel academic leaders reported that such skills are important in overseeing curriculum and instruction, the professional development of personnel, and internal administration.

Time management skills. Several of the two-year MAAs who participated in the study affirmed that, given the sheer demands of their roles, the ability to effectively manage their time is especially important in fulfilling their positions. Five midlevel academic leaders (Alan, Becky, Beth, Jeff and Lori) identified these skills as indispensable.

[An MAA] has to have . . . the ability to jump from pillar to post at a moment’s notice. And just try to keep it all organized—because it’s a *heck* of a lot. . . . I think I struggle with [time management], even though I think I’m fairly decent at it, because there’s so *much* to keep going. . . . No matter how organized you are, things still come undone sometimes—because there’s just not enough time in a day. (Lori)

According to these participants, time management skills are essential to all areas of their leadership positions.

Basic business skills and knowledge. Core business skills and knowledge—including the ability to negotiate, salesmanship and a fundamental understanding of business concepts and terminology—were identified by five of the study’s participants (Beth, Bill, Janet, John and Tom) as important to fulfilling their MAA roles. These skills and knowledge were recognized as central to budget planning and development and external administration.

Resource generation skills. Four of the study’s participants (Alan, Beth, John and Tom) stated that the ability to acquire resources to support their academic programs is critical to fulfilling their leadership positions. According to John,

Some people are very comfortable with going out and soliciting support and others aren’t. But it’s a necessity for all of us, and we may not all be good at it, but we all work at it. . . . We do what we have to do.

Resource generation skills were identified as essential to external administration—particularly in working with external constituents on fundraising initiatives and in generating in-kind donations.

Ability to empathize with students. Of the 10 MAAs participating in the study, four (Becky, Beth, David and Tom) stated that the capacity to view situations from the perspective of students is critical to fulfilling their roles. These midlevel academic leaders identified the ability to empathize with students as critical to student relations and administration (e.g., advising students).

Marketing skills. Three of the 10 MAAs who participated in this study (Becky, Lori and Tom) stated that the ability to promote their academic units and programs is

essential to the fulfillment of their roles. Marketing skills were identified as important to external administration.

Knowledge of academic assessment. Three of the 10 MAAs who participated in this study (Alan, John and Lori) indicated that an understanding of academic assessment strategies and processes is important to the fulfillment of their roles. A knowledge of academic assessment—a topical educational issue (Miller, 2006) which remains nebulous yet increasingly critical for many of the study’s participants—was identified as important to managing curriculum and instruction within the units they oversee.

Ability to see the big picture. Three of the MAAs participating in this study (Becky, Jeff and Lori) indicated that an ability to effectively synthesize information from a variety of sources into a coherent whole is critical to performing their positions.

It’s important to possess . . . an ability to *see* how [things] are integrated.

Understand the big picture. . . . Since becoming [an MAA] I’ve had experiences that *forced* me to back up and *see* the larger picture. And it forced me to see how things come together. . . . And I had no *clue* how complicated it was or could be.

(Jeff)

According to these MAAs, an ability to see the big picture is critical to overseeing human relations and personnel administration, as well as budget planning and development.

Knowledge of constituents. Three of the 10 MAAs who participated in this study (Alan, Bill and Janet) indicated that an understanding of their institution’s and unit’s primary stakeholders is important to the fulfillment of their roles. Such knowledge was identified as particularly important to external administration.

Knowledge of institutional policy and procedures. Of the 10 MAAs participating in the study, three (Bill, Jeff and John) stated that familiarity with their respective institution's policy and procedures is critical to fulfilling their roles. According to these midlevel academic leaders, such knowledge is essential to overseeing student relations and administration, and budget planning and development.

Obviously, [the institution's policies and procedures are] in place for a reason, and they're not intended to make people's lives difficult. They're intended to protect everyone, make things in the classroom, make things in the department, make things on the campus run as they should. Some things are a challenge—because they seem somewhat dated or they don't apply to what we're doing. But everything is in place for a reason. And you work with it. (John)

Knowledge of unit's curriculum. Two of the study's participants (Beth and Janet) indicated that a thorough understanding of the scope and sequence of the curricula they oversee is critical to performing their positions. Janet stated that MAAs

need to understand the curriculum. . . . because, if you change *anything* in the . . . curriculum you're going to affect the entire curriculum. . . . It's kind of like the domino effect: if you change one thing, it can affect other areas. . . . and, so, you have to be very careful in making curriculum changes.

According to these MAAs, such knowledge is essential to overseeing curriculum and instruction.

Facilities management skills. Two of the study's participants (Beth and David) indicated that skills relating to managing and renovating facilities is important to performing their positions. As Beth stated,

It *does* help to know how things go together and know how things are built. We're redoing a facility over here. . . . There are certain things and a certain look and aesthetic that we want to have. And, that way you're not having to rely on someone else coming in to design it.

According to these midlevel academic leaders, such skills are critical to internal administration—particularly in upgrading learning environments within their academic units.

Ability to make decisions. Two of the 10 midlevel academic leaders who participated in this study (Beth and Jeff) indicated that the ability to determine a course of action is essential to the fulfillment of their roles. The ability to make decisions was identified as particularly important to internal administration, human relations and personnel administration, as well as student relations and administration.

Ability to work with computer technologies. Of the 10 MAAs participating in the current study, two (Bill and Lori) stated that the ability to work with a range of information technologies is critical to fulfilling their midlevel academic leadership roles. According to these MAAs, such skills are essential to budget planning and development.

Analytical skills. Two of the study's participants (Becky and David) indicated that the ability to effectively apply deductive reasoning skills is critical to performing their positions. According to these midlevel academic leaders, such skills are essential to internal administration.

Professional Development Means

The second—and primary—objective of the current study was to identify the means through which two-year midlevel academic leaders acquire the skills and

knowledge necessary to fulfill their challenging administrative positions. Because these means are the principal foci of this research project, all 14 identified by the MAAs participating in this study are presented below. (See Appendix G for a mapping of the primary skill and knowledge sets to the MAA professional development means identified through this investigation.)

Previous professional experience outside higher education. All 10 of the study's participants (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) stated that non-postsecondary work experiences they acquired prior to undertaking their MAAs positions contributed to their abilities to fulfill their midlevel academic leadership roles—as described in the following statement by Tom. “Well, *fortunately*, I had to run some other entities before I came here. And so, I probably learned more [about resource planning and prioritization] *outside* of this job than *inside* this job.” As noted previously, these non-postsecondary experiences ranged from military service to owning and operating small businesses. Interpersonal/networking skills (Beth, Becky, Jeff, John and Tom), communication skills (Alan, Janet, John and Tom), resource planning and prioritization skills (Becky, Bill, Janet, John and Tom), a knowledge of the disciplines for which the programs they oversee prepare students (Bill, Janet, John and Lori), basic business skills and knowledge (Beth, Bill, John and Tom), motivational skills (Bill, John and Tom), forecasting/environmental scanning skills (Becky and Janet), the ability to see the big picture (Becky and Jeff) and facilities management skills (Beth and David) were the areas most impacted by the professional experiences that the participating midlevel academic leaders acquired outside the higher education context.

Trial-and-error. Nine MAAs participating in the study (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) indicated that trial-and-error represents a primary means through which they have acquired skills and knowledge essential to performing their roles. Though trial-and-error was useful in assisting midlevel academic leaders in developing skills relating to resource planning and prioritization (Beth and Jeff), curriculum development and management (John and Lori), marketing (Becky and Lori), as well as their abilities to make decisions (Beth and Jeff), it has been a particularly important means through which these participants have acquired knowledge of the state higher education system (Alan, Becky, Jeff and Lori), interpersonal/networking skills (Janet, Jeff and Lori), time management skills (Beth, Jeff and Lori), forecasting/environmental scanning skills (Alan, Becky and Beth), and their knowledge of their constituents (Alan, Bill and Janet). Further, MAAs from both ends of the development spectrum underscored the value of learning through trial-and-error.

In discussing his own development, Tom, the longest-serving midlevel academic leader who participated in this study, stated, “I think you build some strengths sometimes by just getting in there and figuring it out for yourself.” Beth, one of the newest MAAs, highlighted the role that trial-and-error has played in her gaining key knowledge and skills as a midlevel academic leader.

When I mess up, I learn more than ever doing it right. And I learn that I never want to do that incorrectly again. And, so, it sticks in my mind better, and I go out-of-my-way *not* to have that happen again.

However, for most MAAs, trial-and-error is a means of last resort—utilized by midlevel academic leaders when other development means are not available to them, as revealed in the following statement by John.

Trial-and-error is probably not the best [means through which to acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to be an MAA], but it's probably the one all of us use most! It's probably not the best approach, but how else are you going to know?

Informal extrainstitutional networking. Eight of the individuals participating in the study (Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, John, Lori and Tom) indicated that interacting informally with participants outside their institutions has played an important role in acquiring skills and knowledge essential to performing their roles. Both Alan and Janet reported extrainstitutional networking which occurred informally on the periphery of extrainstitutional professional development sessions. According to Alan, “In education, I don’t ever feel like you’re totally reinventing the wheel. Other people do things well, and you can get good ideas [from postsecondary professionals] from other places.” Janet described her interactions with counterparts from other institution as beneficial: “We have a lot of similarities, and we're all learning. And so it really helps networking with them.”

Despite the fact that all are midlevel academic leaders for two-year campuses within the same university system, none of the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study indicated that they had interacted with—or were interested in interacting with—their MAA counterparts on the SCU-East or SCU-West campuses. Even though the two-year campuses are relatively unique with respect to their settings (i.e., urban versus rural), serve different student populations (i.e., nontraditional versus traditional),

and are located approximately 100 miles apart, this lack of sharing appears most influenced by time constraints. As indicated in the following statement by Jeff, positional demands severely limit midlevel academic leader interactions with counterparts at other two-year institutions.

I've been impressed with a few individuals [at other institutions] holding positions similar to mine. And I remember thinking "I could learn a lot from those guys."

But, I think the time factor and what it would have taken to reach out and make that happen [would have] been difficult.

The vast majority of the informal extrainstitutional networking described by Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, John, Lori and Tom consisted of interactions with industry professionals. According to these MAAs, the skill or knowledge area most impacted by informal extrainstitutional networking has been their knowledge of the disciplines for which the programs they oversee prepare students.

Previous personal experience. Eight of the 10 MAAs participating in the study (Alan, Beth, Bill, David, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) cited previous, non-professional, non-academic experiences as important means through which they developed their interpersonal/networking skills (Beth, Bill, David, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom), communication skills (Alan, David, Jeff, John and Lori), basic business skills and knowledge (Beth and Bill) and facilities management skills (Beth and David). In virtually every instance, these previous personal experiences involved interactions with friends and family. The following statement by Beth reflects the perspectives of several of these MAAs: "Every time you say these words I think back to my primary family. I think

[many of the skills and knowledge relevant to my MAA position] came from that base. Just how I was raised.”

Informal intrainstitutional networking. Seven of the 10 MAAs participating in the study (Alan, Beth, Bill, Jeff, Janet, John and Lori) indicated that interacting with individuals internal to their institutions played a critical role in acquiring skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. In fact, several indicated a preference for gaining skills and/or knowledge through informal intrainstitutional networking over other development means—as reflected in the following statement by John.

Have I [engaged in self-study or research to acquire skills and knowledge related to my MAA position]? Of course. . . . But, I would rather talk with someone across the table . . . rather than comb through volumes and volumes of resources and journals and books. . . . That may be the primary source that some people choose to take, but I would rather have open dialogue and find out what I really need to know.

Though the specific individuals they tapped for information and/or expertise varied somewhat by participant, those identified were primarily fellow midlevel academic leaders or the chief academic officers (CAOs)—a sentiment captured in the following statements.

You're always looking at other people—even where you work—on how they do things, and you can get tips from there. . . . Some good examples of that are my fellow [MAAs]. There is a lot we can learn from each other about the ways we run our divisions. (Alan)

Bill stated: “There’s no doubt that I’ve gained a lot of knowledge from people who’ve been doing what I’ve been doing.” John also addressed this issue.

Sometimes I will seek the counsel of the other [MAAs]—particularly if it’s an area that they’re stronger in. . . . Now, when I came in as [an MAA], I was the newbie. And here’s the other five that are steeped in tradition and know what’s going, and they’re the ones that I went to—as well as [the Academic] VPs[,] the current VP and his predecessor. . . . But, depending on what it was, I would seek the counsel of other [MAAs]. If it was another area, it would just be another person on the campus—again, just depending on what it was. Whether it was an assessment thing or a budget reporting thing or a curriculum thing—that’s who you go to.

Tom—the longest-serving midlevel academic leader participating in the study—was one of three MAAs to downplay the role of informal intrainstitutional networks in his development.

I don’t spend a lot of time talking with division chairs about too many issues. . . . I’m not saying it’s a bad thing, but I think you can over visit, you can over talk but you can’t over do. So, I think it’s pretty easy for me to observe what they do or did. I probably prefer to do that. (Tom)

Interestingly, two of the three other SCU-East midlevel academic leaders who participated in this study explicitly identified Tom as an important resource for their development as MAAs. However, this finding is not entirely surprising given that Tom, Becky and David—the midlevel academic leaders who did not identify information institutional networking as having played a key role in their development—each tend to

be somewhat reserved, and may therefore prefer other means of acquiring skills and knowledge related to their positions.

As indicated in the previous statement by John, the MAAs' informal intrainstitutional networking was not limited to their CAOs or fellow midlevel academic leaders. Given the sheer breadth of the position—which is well-documented in the research literature (e.g., Gillett-Karam et al., 1999)—MAAs regularly find themselves in situations which require knowledge or skills in specialized niches. As a result, midlevel academic leaders commonly must acquire accurate information quickly and effectively—which necessitates ongoing ties with a range of individuals within their institutions beyond their fellow MAAs and supervisors.

Four of the midlevel academic leaders (Beth Bill, John and Lori) underscored the importance of having relationships with a variety of on-campus individuals with specialized expertise (e.g., registrar, financial aid director and director of assessment). As Bill stated:

While you're not an expert in any of these areas by any means, you're often in a position where you have to answer those types of questions. . . . If I'm unsure, I call and visit with whomever has that information.

Beth reported that she acquired key skills and knowledge relating to facilities management from representatives of SCU-East's physical plant unit. John revealed that one of his faculty members has served as an important resource through which he has acquired skills in the development of specialized educational reports. For Lori, SCU-West's vice president for administration has contributed to her development as a midlevel academic leader.

According to the MAAs participating in this study, the skill or knowledge area most impacted by informal intrainstitutional networking was the midlevel academic leaders' curriculum development and management skills (Bill, Janet and Lori). However, this means also played an important role in helping the MAAs gain knowledge regarding the state higher education system (Bill and John), academic assessment (John and Lori), and institutional policy and procedures (Bill and John).

Postsecondary coursework. Seven of the study's participants (Alan, Becky, Beth, David, Janet, Lori and Tom) reported that their formal, higher education experiences helped them acquire skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their current positions. However, only four of the MAAs (Becky, David, Lori and Tom) identified their postsecondary experiences as a means through which they had gained competence in specific areas. Tom stated that his current presentation abilities were built on fundamental skills he acquired through an undergraduate speech course. Becky and Lori reported that their interpersonal/networking skills were partially developed through the learning experiences they had in college. David attributed some of his analytical skills to the science coursework he took as part of his training as a scientist.

Most of the MAAs (Alan, Becky, Beth, Janet and Tom) who identified postsecondary coursework as a key means through which they acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions stated that their experiences as students were most helpful in gaining a general knowledge of higher education processes (Alan, Becky and Janet), as well as the ability to empathize with students (Becky, Beth and Tom). The latter is revealed in the following statement by Becky.

It's amazing how the colleges treat students differently. . . . So, you kind of learn the dos and the don'ts and what the students like and what the students didn't like as you were a student yourself. So you come in with that knowledge: "Well, I remember when I was a student and *I* didn't like that!"

Similarly, Beth also draws on past postsecondary experiences when dealing with students.

For me, I have to go back a little bit further and remember when I was a student, and it's not very hard, really, when you think about all the things that upset you at that time or that were a concern to you. . . . It's looking back at past experiences and trying to see what importance students are putting on it.

One of the midlevel academic leaders, Beth, asserted that, as a woman, the higher education credentials she acquired contributed significantly to her ability to secure her previous and present positions. However, when explicitly asked to identify specific skills or knowledge she acquired through postsecondary coursework—beyond the ability to empathize with students—which have been important in fulfilling her current role, Beth was unable to do so, and instead spoke about the importance of her academic credentials to her career.

I always knew that education is what got me where I am today—particularly as a woman. It's not that I want women to be more successful than men—I think that we all have the opportunity. . . . But, I come from the time when there was something that was specifically thought of as "a woman's place." And I think still today, within the region that we work, there is the idea of "a woman's place." But,

my goal is to *move* that place! (Laughs) I wouldn't be here if I didn't have the education that I had.

Six of the 10 midlevel academic leaders hold, or are actively working toward, one or more undergraduate or graduate degrees in education. This may explain why John, the most senior, midlevel academic leader at SCU-West, with nine years in his current position, perceives his non-educational path as a limitation to his ability to fulfill his current role: "I did not go the path of an education degree—as many have done. So, that's probably been one of my challenges *as* [an MAA]." However, despite the fact that a majority of the higher education leaders participating in the study hold, or are currently pursuing, undergraduate or graduate degrees in education, none identified those experiences as important to acquiring education-specific skill or knowledge sets—such as those pertaining to curriculum development and management or academic assessment. As Jeff pointed out: "I have *two* education degrees, and, for the most part, three degrees in political science or politics, and there *is not a degree* that prepares you for this kind of role."

Previous professional experience in higher education. Seven of the 10 MAAs (Alan, Becky, Beth, David, Janet, John and Lori) identified the experiences they garnered through previous professional postsecondary roles (e.g., faculty and other administrative positions) as important means through which they acquired skills and knowledge necessary to perform their midlevel academic leadership positions. As Lori stated: "Previous experience in higher ed. . . [,] to me, is necessary to be really successful at this [position]."

According to these participants, resource planning and prioritization (Alan, Becky, Janet and Lori) and curriculum development and management (Alan, Becky, Beth and John) were the areas most impacted by previous professional postsecondary experiences. However, prior professional experience in higher education has also served as an important means through which MAAs have acquired skills and knowledge relating to the development of interpersonal/networking skills (Alan, Becky and Beth), the disciplines for which the programs they oversee prepare students (John and Lori), and knowledge of academic assessment (Alan and Lori).

The two MAAs (Bill and Tom) who did not take traditional career paths into their two-year midlevel academic leadership positions undertook their administrative roles directly from industry. Though Tom reported not being at a disadvantage as a result of the nontraditional path he took to his MAA position, Bill described his lack of experience in postsecondary education as a limitation he has had to consciously counterbalance.

Personality. Seven of the 10 MAAs who participated in the study (Alan, Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Jeff and Lori) stated that some of the skills they possess, which are critical to fulfilling their midlevel academic administrative positions, were inborn. This was especially true of interpersonal/networking (Alan, Becky and Lori), communication (Alan, Becky and Beth), time management (Jeff and Lori) and forecasting/environmental scanning skills (David and Lori).

Self-study/research. Five of the MAAs (Alan, Becky, Beth, Janet and Jeff) stated that they had acquired skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their roles through self-initiated pursuits of information. The Internet (Becky), news publications (Jeff), trade journals (Beth) and accreditation documentation (Janet) were all identified as media

important to MAAs' self-study/research activities. Though the skill and/or knowledge areas most impacted through this means varied widely by midlevel academic leader, self-study/research appears to have had the greatest impact on participants' knowledge of the state higher education system (Jeff and Janet), as well as curriculum development and management (Alan and Janet).

Observation. Five of the 10 MAAs (Becky, Bill, David, Jeff and Lori) identified observing others within the postsecondary context as an important means through which they acquired skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions. However, such reinforcement is not always positive, as noted in the following statement by Jeff.

I feel like I've learned more about how I *don't* want to be under the current system, than I have about how I *want* to be. Watching people above and below my pay grade and how they do it, and you think "Boy, I don't want to do that to my people" or "I don't want to be that way."

According to these MAAs, observation had the greatest impact on their interpersonal/networking skills (Becky, David, Jeff and Lori).

Formal intrainstitutional professional development. Four of the study's participants (Becky, Bill, John and Lori) identified workshops or seminars organized by their respective institutions as representing important means through which they acquired skills and knowledge relevant to their positions. The most significant contributions of intrainstitutional professional development opportunities for these MAAs have been in the area of computer technologies (Bill and Lori). Based on the responses of participants, formal intrainstitutional professional development opportunities hold the greatest relevance for nonacademic staff (Bill, David and Tom).

Formal extrainstitutional professional development. Three out of the 10 MAAs participating in the study (Alan, Becky and John) identified formal professional development opportunities outside their respective institutions as contributors to their development. Their knowledge of academic assessment (Alan and John) was the primary area influenced by this professional development means.

As noted earlier, extrainstitutional professional development opportunities have been important for Alan and Janet in facilitating informal, extrainstitutional networking opportunities with other postsecondary professionals: “I probably learn more informally between sessions than I ever do through the presentations themselves.” (Alan) Overall, the midlevel academic leaders appeared receptive to such opportunities provided they are relevant and worthwhile. However, as indicated by the following statement by Jeff, the two-year MAAs participating in this study did not attribute much importance to extrainstitutional professional development opportunities as a means for acquiring skills and knowledge relevant to their positions: “I would love to see [an extrainstitutional professional development opportunity focused on] how to be a more effective academic leader. . . . But all that stuff seems pretty fluffy to me.” Further, while none of the MAAs identified limited resources as a cause for low MAA participation in formal professional development opportunities, several of the midlevel academic leaders, as reflected in the following statement by Jeff, tend to focus the use of available resources on the professional development of the personnel they oversee: “I use all of our professional development funds for the development of my people.” (Jeff)

Mentoring. Only two of the participating MAAs (Becky and Lori) stated that they had opportunities to work closely with veteran, postsecondary professionals over

extended periods to develop skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. According to Becky, her relationship with the previous MAA of the unit she now oversees was a key means through which she acquired essential skills and knowledge relating to her MAA role.

I really lucked out. The [MAA] that was in charge [before me] really took me under his wing and kind of mentored me. He knew that he was not going to stay in as [MAA]. So, he kind of brought me up as being his successor. . . . Typically, the [MAA] is gone before you move into that role! . . . So, it wasn't that all of the sudden you woke up and had all these duties. It was that I was just *gradually* getting into more and more duties. . . . That's different from what all the other [MAAs] went through! . . . I kind of lucked out. (Becky)

Lori reported a similar experience.

I think I had a good mentor. My [MAA] used me as his sub and those kinds of things for a good three or four years before he actually retired. And so, I had a very good mentor to follow.

However, Becky's and Lori's experiences differed as to the skill or knowledge areas most influenced through their mentoring relationships with their previous supervisors. Though mentoring did not factor into his own development as a midlevel academic leader, Jeff asserted his support for the implementation of a mentor system for new MAAs.

I have no idea if I'm ever going to be an Academic Vice President. But, if I am, we'll have a mentor system for [MAAs]. Because we've never had that, and I sure as hell could have used one. I mean, I stepped on so many landmines that I felt

like all the other [MAAs] already knew about. And, uh, I think a mentor system just makes you more efficient.

Intrainstitutional directed readings. One of the 10 MAAs participating in this study, Beth, indicated that a variety of printed materials disseminated by SCU-East's president have assisted her in acquiring skills important to her as a midlevel academic leader. Though Alan commented on these same readings, he did not identify them as important to his development as an MAA. In fact, the distribution of these materials appears to have had the presumably unintended consequence of decreasing the likelihood that Alan would seek out such materials on his own.

I get lots of research articles from [SCU-East's president]. I read over those. This is . . . the first place I've ever been where the president *ever* sent us *anything* to read like that. In fact, I've never had *anybody* send me anything at any other institution. . . . I don't really have to go and seek it out on my own because, here, the president sends me so much. (Alan)

According to Beth, these readings have contributed to the development of her forecasting/environmental scanning skills.

Strength of Weak Ties

Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory holds that the nature of information and ideas available to an individual is directly influenced by the strength (or weakness) of interpersonal connections between that person and other individuals or groups. According to Granovetter, weak social ties provide individuals with access to more diverse information than those available through strong connections.

The data collected in this study clearly reflect that MAAs' social connections serve as primary means through which the participating midlevel academic leaders have acquired skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions. The following sections reveal the interpersonal connections the midlevel academic leaders have utilized, as well as the nature of the information they have acquired through them.

Strong ties. The MAAs who participated in this study identified a limited number of strong ties which played critical roles in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their leadership positions. Those identified as most influential to midlevel academic leader development were between MAAs and their fellow midlevel academic leaders, as well as, in certain cases, their institutions' CAOs.

Six of the MAAs (Alan, Beth, Bill, Jeff, John and Lori) indicated that they commonly seek out other midlevel academic leaders within their institutions for their expertise in particular areas of their positions, with such interaction proving critical to the development of knowledge and skills relevant to core unit operations (Alan), organizational skills (Alan) and scheduling (Alan), fundraising (Alan), developing external partnerships (Bill), institutional committee assignments (John), personnel evaluations (John) and revenue generation (Bill).

Though the ties between midlevel academic leaders would, in many circumstances, be classified as weak, a majority of the MAAs on the SCU-East and SCU-West campuses clearly characterized their ties with their fellow midlevel academic leaders as strong. The following statement by Alan, who has held midlevel academic leadership positions at SCU-East as well as at other two- and four-year institutions,

provides important insights into the nature of the ties between the MAAs on the SCU-East campus.

At other places, you tend to live in your own little world more so than you do here. I think *here* there is more opportunity to interact with other [MAAs] and talk about what's going on in their divisions and throughout the whole school. We are very unique. That is one thing that's unique about here. The [MAAs] interact more with each other.

According to Jeff, regular interaction between the SCU-West MAAs is a relatively recent—and important—development at SCU-West: “We collaborate more at the [MAA]-level in the past couple of years than we *ever* have before. Until fairly recently, the divisions [had] operated as separate entities. . . . which, by the way, is a mistake.”

According to John, he will often “seek the counsel of the other [MAAs]—particularly if it's an area that they're stronger in.” Bill noted that *which* MAA(s) he seeks out in a particular instance “depends on the situation,” but emphasized that, “for the majority, you can learn from everybody—even [the newest MAA at SCU-East]—because she has expertise relating to her area.”

Five of the six SCU-West MAAs who participated in the study (David, Janet, Jeff, John and Lori) identified their respective strong connections with the current CAO and/or his immediate predecessor as important means through which they have acquired skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. According to these midlevel academic leaders, the CAOs—the MAAs' current and past direct supervisors—have served as valuable resources in the areas of academic assessment (John), strategic planning (John), curriculum development (Janet and Lori) and instruction (Lori). None of

the SCU-East MAAs participating in this study identified their interpersonal connections with the institution's CAO as important means through which they have acquired skills and/or knowledge relevant to their current roles.

Weak ties. In discussing their professional development, the participating midlevel academic leaders identified several weak interpersonal ties through which they have acquired skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. Weak ties have played key roles in midlevel academic leaders' abilities to gain novel ideas and concepts—thus supporting Granovetter's (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory.

Nine of the study's participants (Bill, Beth, Becky, David, Janet, Jeff, John, Lori and Tom) identified their weak connections with industry representatives as critical to acquiring knowledge essential to their positions. According to these MAAs, such ties are key in garnering novel information and insights into the disciplines for which the programs they oversee prepare students, as well as the promotion of academic programs—as indicated in the following statement by Lori.

Two weeks ago we decided we were going to [begin promoting our new degree program] really, really hard, and I wasn't sure where to begin! So, [I called an industry representative]. . . . “You have any ideas?” He sent me six different things.

Based on the responses of two of the midlevel academic leaders participating in the study (Alan and Janet), individuals with whom they have informally interacted during extrainstitutional professional development sessions also represent weak ties which have been important in garnering novel information. As Alan stated: “[At formal extraninstitutional professional development activities] you come into contact with other

educators from [throughout the nation], from the region or area or whatever, and you get new ideas.”

Four midlevel academic leaders also identified weak ties with higher education professionals within their institutions. According to the MAAs, these individuals serve as important resources for gaining specialized expertise beyond the core skills and knowledge they require to fulfill their roles. As noted earlier, such professionals primarily include director- and vice president-level administrators in nonacademic areas of their campuses.

Other Realities

Even though the current project was focused on identifying the primary means through which two-year MAAs acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions, the study’s methodology allowed for other, unintended discoveries. Five unanticipated—yet noteworthy—findings emerged throughout the course of this study which fall outside Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory. Though they range from being highly relevant to largely peripheral to the current project, they are presented in the following section in the event they may be useful in this or a related study, or in the pursuit of an entirely unique line of inquiry.

MAA transitions. Through their interviews, the MAAs participating in this study revealed having undergone challenging transitions into their current positions. In speaking about his transition, John stated: “You think you have a pretty good idea walking in what’s expected—but you *don’t!*” Beth, who served as an SCU-East faculty member for eighteen years before becoming an MAA, described her transition into her

midlevel academic leadership position like “falling out of bed!” When asked to describe his transition experience, Bill likened it to an amusement park ride.

The first thing that comes to mind is a roller coaster. Fast and furious, some ups and downs. . . . And then someone throws you several curves, so you have to hang on tight, make adjustments, and hope you did the right thing for the right reasons. It was a fast, *steep* learning curve.

However, Lori most descriptively portrayed the experience of transitioning into a midlevel academic leadership role.

It was just all of the sudden. I had new responsibilities and I was going to [MAA] meetings and I was now in charge of the schedule and I was in charge of all these things now. And it just happened. It was pretty overwhelming at first. Just because it was so— I wasn’t really aware of how different being [an MAA] is. . . . It was just (claps hands loudly) *there*. It was just . . . one day it happened with no progression into it. . . . It’s just *huge*. Completely different than anything else.

MAA brain drain. Given that most midlevel academic leaders acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions primarily while serving as MAAs (Smith & Stewart, 1999), the departure of veteran midlevel academic leaders from institutions signals a significant loss of expertise that was developed, in many cases, using organizational resources. The following comments by Janet and Jeff underscore the problems of such occurrences. “When I took the position of [MAA], that year, four nursing faculty retired that had been here for between thirty and thirty-five years—including the [previous MAA]. So, all that experience just went away.” (Janet) “When

[MAAs] leave, they often take *so much* of that institutional knowledge with them. And institutions don't capitalize on ways to keep it—or at least copy and retain it.” (Jeff)

Politics and MAAs. Two of the midlevel academic leaders, Becky and David, made explicit, unprompted comments regarding the political forces that MAAs within their institution, SCU-West, face. According to these midlevel academic leaders, MAA positions can be heavily influenced by such forces.

I think part of getting to be [an MAA] is “How well do you fit in with the way things are going right now?” Because under the previous Administration, there wouldn't have been any way I would have applied. (David)

David's statement is reinforced by the following statement by Becky: “The [MAA] role does kind of change with different Administrations. . . . [So,] some of it's more learning the politics of it.”

However, executive administrators do not appear to be the only postsecondary professionals who impact campus climates. According to Lori, midlevel academic leaders also exert significant influence over the units they oversee: “When you look at each division . . . depending upon who [its MAA] is, is a real reflection of what that division is like. And each of our divisions are *so* different because of that.”

Position descriptions. Each of the MAAs participating in the study was asked to provide a current position description. Surprisingly, none of the MAAs from SCU-East were able to produce a copy of her or his position description. Three of the SCU-East midlevel academic leaders (Alan, Beth and Tom) indicated that descriptions existed at the time they were hired into their respective positions, but they had not retained them. Nevertheless, Tom encouraged the researcher to contact SCU-East's human resources

office to request a copy. While the office was not able to locate Tom's current position description, the office provided a copy of the descriptions for Alan's and Bill's positions—even though Bill stated, during his interview, that he had never received a formal description of his position. All but one of the MAAs at SCU-West, David, had retained and were able to quickly produce their respective position descriptions.

In reviewing the position descriptions collected, those provided by the SCU-West MAAs—with the exception of the description provided by Janet—were uniform, whereas the two descriptions provided by SCU-East's human resources office were clearly tailored to each position. When asked independently about the near uniformity of the SCU-West descriptions, two of the SCU-West MAAs reported that a representative of the institution's human resource office had recently updated them. (Janet had provided a copy of the position description she received when she originally undertook her current MAA position—as opposed to the revised, uniform position description.) Despite the recent updates, John asserted that the current MAA position description still does not accurately reflect his role at SCU-West.

Through the interview and documentation review processes, it was discovered that while the midlevel academic leaders on both campuses are classified as faculty, the MAAs at SCU-West maintain course delivery responsibilities, whereas those at SCU-East do not. (According to Alan, midlevel academic leaders at SCU-East may facilitate courses through separate employment agreements.) The midlevel academic leaders at SCU-East, on the other hand, are charged with overseeing the recruitment of students for their academic units. While the MAAs at SCU-West are involved in institutional and unit

recruitment initiative and activities, they are not, like their SCU-East counterparts, primarily responsible for the student enrollments of the programs they oversee.

According to the MAA position descriptions obtained, the midlevel academic leaders on both the SCU-West and SCU-East campuses are responsible for the professional development of the faculty they supervise. Neither of the SCU-East position descriptions reference the MAA's role in his own skill and knowledge development. The SCU-West descriptions explicitly reference the MAAs' responsibilities for their own professional development.

MAA areas of responsibility. Throughout the course of the current research project, the participating midlevel academic leaders revealed potentially useful insights regarding their areas of responsibility. According to the MAAs' responses, their primary roles in curriculum and instruction are to provide oversight and recommendations regarding future trends. For most, internal administration involves fulfilling core administrative tasks—such as completing necessary paperwork and overseeing committees—as well as representing their academic units to the executive administration and, as applicable, other academic units. With respect to faculty and staff professional development, the principal contributions of the MAAs participating in the current study are assisting faculty and staff in identifying professional development opportunities appropriate to their respective positions and goals, as well as in motivating their supervisees to participate in relevant activities.

Each of the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study identified human relations and personnel administration as a central component of their positions, to include hiring faculty and staff, and conducting performance evaluations. However, most

discussions pertaining to personnel centered on working with faculty. In fact, several MAAs, as reflected in the following statement by Alan, indicated that interacting with higher education faculty is significantly different than overseeing other types of employees.

Like I've always said, I've never met a teacher that thought that they weren't a good teacher. (Chuckles) So, I think you start from there. You kind of have to handle them fairly delicately or you can create a lot of conflict for yourself. . . . I think it's a little more delicate when you try to use constructive criticism with people in this line of work. I think the skin is a little bit thinner than it is when I worked in the business side. So, I think, you know, getting a good read on people and understanding how people work, I think, and how they think. And I think with faculty, in particular, sometimes it's kinda tricky—to try to keep them happy. We ask them to do a lot—and we don't have a lot of incentives with merit and raise programs like they do on the private side, either. So the reward system is more intrinsic, I think. So, you know, you try to compliment them when they do good jobs and encourage them to pursue more education. But, it's definitely different. It's little more of an art form, I would say, in education. Because they want to have control over their classroom. Because of the collegiality/academic freedom thing. I think it's just a little bit different beast to deal with. I think if you appear too heavy handed, then sometimes you may fight them at every turn.

Jeff revealed a similar perspective.

I tell you what: you treat a faculty member differently than you do any other sort of species. You really have to relate to them as a colleague. If you try to come down on high because you're the boss or whatever, that simply doesn't work.

Budget planning and development is another core element of the MAAs' leadership positions. All of the MAAs are responsible for overseeing their unit's budget(s), prioritizing expenditures and ensuring compliance with institutional and state policies governing resource use. Almost every individual participating in this study—from the newest to the most senior midlevel academic leader—identified budget planning and development as an area in which they desired greater skill and knowledge. Pettitt (1999) revealed a similar finding in a separate study on two-year MAAs.

Even though the nature of their direct interactions with students vary depending upon the size and structure of their academic units, the participating MAAs identified student relations and administration as central to their positions. In most cases, MAAs provide prospective and continuing students with academic and career advisement, as well as handle student complaints and conduct issues. (The MAAs on the SCU-East campus also regularly assist with intern and graduate placement.) For a majority of the participants, interacting with students is the most enjoyable and rewarding aspect of their midlevel academic leadership positions.

For the MAAs in this study, external administration primarily consists of interacting with industry representatives and other members of the community in acquiring information regarding the disciplines for which their programs prepare students, generating resources for their academic units, as well as in intern and graduate placement. The high levels of importance and attention the MAAs participating in this

study place toward each of these activities is significantly influenced by the fact that most oversee workforce-oriented academic programs.

Preface for Chapter Five

The following and final chapter, Chapter Five, first presents a summary of the study's important findings, and then compares these findings to the existing research literature. Next, the data are interpreted and the study's limitations are reviewed. Finally, recommendations for future research are proffered based on the outcomes of the current investigation.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the means through which midlevel academic leaders of two-year institutions acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their administrative positions, and the role of social network ties in this process. However, the discussion and analysis of these findings, which is the role of Chapter Five, is also essential.

First, this chapter provides a summary of the current study's major findings regarding the professional development means of the two-year midlevel academic administrators (MAAs) participating in this research project, and the roles of strong and weak ties in the development process. The following sections of Chapter Five focus on the extent to which the data generated through this project do and do not support assertions in the research literature, provide a discussion of key points from the data and their implications, and offer important information regarding the study's limitations. The penultimate section of this chapter presents recommendations regarding potential future research projects identified during the course of the investigation. Chapter Five's final section summarizes and brings the study to a close.

Summary of Core Findings

Several key findings regarding the means through which MAAs acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions were generated through this study. A summary of these findings follows.

Professional development means. The current research project identified 14 means through which the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study acquired the 23 skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their challenging administrative roles. These professional development means, as well as important insights about each, are presented in the following section.

Trial-and-error marked the most prevalent means through which the participating midlevel academic leaders acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions. Previous professional experience in higher education was identified as the second most important means through which midlevel academic leaders developed into their roles.

All of the MAAs participating in the study gained professional experience outside of the postsecondary context prior to working in it. Previous professional experience outside of higher education was identified as the third most influential means for midlevel academic leadership development.

Informal intrainstitutional networking—primarily with fellow MAAs and their institution’s chief academic officers (CAOs)—represents the fourth most important means through which the midlevel academic leaders acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their midlevel academic leadership roles. Outside of trial-and-error, informal intrainstitutional networking marks the most influential professional development means for MAAs while holding their administrative positions.

Postsecondary coursework and observation were identified by the MAAs participating in this study as the fifth most important means through which they acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their midlevel academic leadership posts.

According to the study's participants, higher education coursework impacted eight of the 23 key skill and knowledge areas. Observation, on the other hand, was identified as only having had a noteworthy impact on MAAs' interpersonal/networking skills.

Self-study/research and previous personal experience were identified as the sixth most influential means through which MAAs acquired skills and knowledge essential to their positions. However, there was no agreement among the study's participants regarding which position-related skills or knowledge sets were most influenced by self-study/research. Previous personal experience, on the other hand, was identified as the most important means through which MAAs acquired their current interpersonal/networking and communication skills—two of the three areas of competence the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study identified as vital to their positions.

Personality and formal intrainstitutional professional development were identified as the seventh most influential means through which midlevel academic leaders developed professionally. Of the 23 skill and knowledge sets identified by the participating MAAs, the midlevel academic leaders' personalities appear to have had the greatest influence on their interpersonal/networking and communication skills.

Formal extrainstitutional professional development and informal extrainstitutional networking were the eighth most important means through which MAAs acquired key skills and knowledge relating to their positions. However, each appears to have had a noteworthy impact on only one skill or knowledge area respectively.

Formal extrainstitutional professional development is one of three means through which the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study acquired skills and

knowledge regarding academic assessment. Potentially more important, however, is the finding that such opportunities serve as the primary venues through which MAAs interact with counterparts outside their respective institutions—informal interchanges which the MAAs identified as having greater importance to their development than the formal extrainstitutional professional development activities themselves. MAAs' informal extrainstitutional interactions occur primarily with industry professionals. Though informal extrainstitutional networking is only critical to a single area, it serves as the primary means through which midlevel academic leaders acquire their knowledge of the disciplines for which the programs they oversee prepare students.

Mentoring was identified as the ninth most influential means through which the MAAs participating in the study acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their midlevel academic leadership positions. One of the MAAs who did not identify mentoring as having played a role in his own development speculated that the existence of a formal mentoring system would have diminished his reliance on trial-and-error in gaining key skills and knowledge relating to his midlevel academic leadership position. Further, he asserted that his participation in a mentoring system would have made the development process considerably more efficient. However, there was no agreement between the two MAAs who worked with mentors regarding the skill and/or knowledge sets most impacted by this professional development means. Only one of the 23 skill or knowledge sets necessary to fulfill MAAs' challenging positions may be attributed, at least in part, to intrainstitutional directed readings: forecasting/environmental scanning skills.

Implications of strong and weak ties. According to Huy (2001), a common attribute of midlevel leaders is the ability to build and effectively use informal interpersonal relationships. The data collected through this study not only show that interpersonal ties are an important means through which MAAs acquire skills and knowledge essential to fulfilling their positions, but that most midlevel academic leaders are both adept at and possess a preference for networking with other individuals—particularly when it comes to utilizing such ties for garnering the resources (including competence) necessary to fulfill their administrative positions.

According to their responses, the study's participants make considerable use of strong ties early in their tenures when they are focused on gaining the core skills and knowledge they require to fulfill their new roles—particularly those relating to the internal administration of their academic units: interpersonal/networking skills, communication skills, resource planning and prioritization skills, knowledge of disciplines for which programs prepare students, knowledge of state higher education system, curriculum development/management skills, general knowledge of higher education processes, motivational skills, and forecasting/environmental scanning skills. MAAs garner many of these skills and knowledge through informal intrainstitutional networking with other midlevel academic leaders and, in the case of most of the SCU-West MAAs, their direct supervisor: the institution's current or previous CAO.

Later in their tenures, as MAAs begin to move beyond the initial stage of acquiring the core skills and knowledge needed to perform their new positions, they make greater use of weak ties—though their use of strong ties will continue, in most cases, at diminished levels. Through their weak ties, which are almost exclusively with

representatives of the industries for which the programs they oversee prepare students, midlevel academic leaders acquire new information and novel ideas (e.g., regarding industry innovations and trends) not available to them through their strong connections—thus supporting Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) strength of weak ties theory.

As noted in Chapter Four, some of the MAAs make limited utilization of weak ties with other postsecondary professionals inside and outside their institutions to acquire specialized skills and knowledge. As with midlevel academic leaders’ interpersonal connections with industry professionals, these ties are increasingly utilized by MAAs as they move beyond the stage of acquiring the core skills and knowledge they need to perform their administrative positions.

Application of Granovetter’s (1973, 1983) theoretical lens in this study was useful in gaining key insights into the role of informal networks in the development of the participating two-year midlevel academic leaders. In particular, the theory was critical in determining the types of ties MAAs utilize to garner information and ideas, when midlevel academic leaders make use of such social connections, and the nature of information available to MAAs through them.

Based on these findings, new MAAs should work closely with their fellow midlevel academic leaders and supervisors early in their tenures to develop the core skills and knowledge necessary to perform the most essential aspects of their positions. It may be prudent for institutions to implement mechanisms (e.g., mentoring systems) which could foster greater interaction between new and veteran midlevel academic leaders. However, once such basic competence is acquired, MAAs—particularly ones overseeing workforce-oriented degree programs—should be encouraged to work more closely with

industry representatives from their disciplines. To a much lesser extent, MAAs may also find interacting with counterparts at other institutions, or postsecondary professionals on their campuses beyond their supervisors or fellow MAAs, useful in gaining knowledge and/or skills to fulfill their roles.

Comparison of Findings with the Research Literature

In the following section, several major themes from the research literature on two-year MAAs will be compared with findings from the current study. These topics include the career paths and transitions of midlevel academic leaders, their primary areas of responsibility, the participation of MAAs in formal professional development activities, the constituents they serve, and midlevel academic leader involvement in scholarly activities. Each are addressed separately below.

MAA career paths and transitions. According to Filan (1999), most two-year MAAs undertake their positions with previous professional postsecondary experience. Eight of the 10 MAAs who participated in the study followed relatively traditional paths into their midlevel academic leadership positions—beginning either in full-time or, in three cases, part-time faculty positions. Seven of the midlevel academic leaders held lower-level administrative positions (e.g., lead faculty) prior to becoming MAAs.

Scholars (e.g., Gmelch, 1994) have shown that most MAAs undertake their roles without adequately understanding the challenges and demands individuals holding these positions face, or the extent to which these positions differ from their previous roles in higher education as students and faculty. These assertions were clearly supported by the data collected through the current study.

Smith and Stewart (1999) reveal that midlevel academic leaders acquire most of the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill these positions while serving as MAAs. According to the MAAs participating in this study, four of the 14 means through which they acquired the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions include activities or experiences garnered prior to undertaking their current roles. Whereas, nine of the means through which the midlevel academic leaders acquired skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their administrative positions involve activities that occurred during their tenures as MAAs. (Personality, the only remaining means, was not included in either category.) Therefore, the assertion that MAAs primarily acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their roles while serving as MAAs is clearly supported by this study.

MAA areas of responsibility. Pettitt (1999) identified seven primary areas of responsibility for two-year midlevel academic leaders: “curriculum and instruction, internal administration, professional development, human relations and personnel administration, budget planning and development, student relations and administration and external administration” (p. 59). Though some variation existed between individual MAAs with respect to the level of importance each assigned to these different areas of responsibility, the data collected through the current research project show that the responsibilities of the MAAs in this study align with the categories proffered by Pettitt.

MAA burnout. According to the research literature (e.g., Gillett-Karam et al., 1999; Kuhl, 2006), the demands of MAA positions have resulted in high burnout rates among midlevel academic leaders. While virtually all of the MAAs participating in this study indicated that they hold challenging, administrative positions, none made any

reference to burnout—either in the past, current or future tense—regarding themselves or other midlevel academic leaders.

Piland and Wolf (2003) assert that fewer individuals are undertaking two-year MAA roles due to the demands of the positions. However, this claim is suspect in light of the fact that most MAAs undertake their positions without understanding the challenges of these critical leadership roles—as documented both in this, as well as other, research studies (e.g., Gmelch, 1994).

Formal professional development participation. As found in the scholarly literature (e.g., Piland & Wolf, 2003), few of the MAAs participating in this study take part in formal professional development activities. Though none of the MAAs identified resource restrictions as a limitation to their participation in formal professional development activities, it is clear that the midlevel academic leaders tend to focus available resources and attention on faculty and staff professional development at the expense of their own.

Piland and Wolf (2003) have also asserted that uncertainty exists among many MAAs regarding the relevance of formal professional development opportunities to their positions. This theme was supported in the responses of several of the midlevel academic leaders participating in this study.

Constituents. The research literature reveals that two-year MAAs must regularly interact with a wide range of institutional and unit constituents (Seagren & Miller, 1994). As noted earlier, each of the midlevel academic leaders participating in the study identified faculty, staff, students, other administrators, and a range of external stakeholders (e.g., industry advisors and graduate employers) among those with whom

they must work closely to fulfill their leadership positions. Also as reflected in the research literature, the data from this study show that interacting with such a wide range of constituents exacerbates the time challenges and positional demands MAAs face in fulfilling their roles.

MAA scholarly activity. According to Piland and Wolf (2003), two-year MAAs are not hired for their scholarly track records or regular participation in such activities—unlike their university counterparts. Only one of the midlevel academic leaders, who is presently pursuing a doctorate, indicated an interest in scholarly activities—to include giving academic presentations and publishing—which she views as a means to increase the status and visibility of the academic unit and programs she oversees. Nevertheless, none of the MAAs participating in this study identified, during the course of their interviews, such scholarly pursuits as required or even encouraged components of their positions—including the four midlevel academic leaders holding doctoral degrees.

Limitations of Study

This study focused on a limited number of midlevel academic leaders employed by two distinct, two-year campuses within a single university system in the south central United States (U.S.). Consequently, its findings may not be applicable to MAA positions within other higher education institutions—including two-year colleges in the south central U.S. (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Discussion of Findings

In the following section, the findings of the current research project are interpreted and discussed. Particular emphasis is given to the implications of these findings for current and future practice.

MAA recruitment and hiring. The MAAs participating in this study unanimously identified interpersonal/networking, communication skills and resource planning and prioritization as essential to performing their positions. As noted in Chapter Four, previous personal experience and previous professional experience outside of higher education served as key means through which MAAs developed interpersonal/networking and communication skills, and previous professional experience outside of higher education and previous professional experience in higher education represent primary means in which they acquired resource planning and prioritization skills. However, previous personal experience, previous professional experience outside of higher education, and previous professional experience in higher education had major impacts on several of the skill and knowledge sets which are critical for two-year midlevel academic leaders. These represent important insights for individuals considering pursuit of midlevel academic leadership positions within two-year institutions, as well as postsecondary professionals charged with the recruitment and hiring of qualified MAAs.

For individuals interested in pursuing midlevel academic leadership positions, such information could be valuable in evaluating whether they have acquired the professional experiences which will best prepare them to undertake MAA roles. If not, then prospective midlevel academic leaders may wish to focus on gaining professional experience within and/or outside the higher education context (as appropriate) to assist with their development in these key skill and knowledge areas.

Such data may also be useful to human resource personnel, CAOs and/or search committees charged with evaluating candidates for MAA positions. Given that some questions seeking personal information are prohibited by state and/or federal law, it is

unlikely that individuals charged with filling MAA positions will be able to gain considerable insight into candidates' previous personal experiences or, more importantly, the skills and/or knowledge developed through them. However, through review of candidates' application materials and interviews, individuals involved in midlevel academic leader searches may assess applicants' previous experiences in and/or outside higher education, and the extent to which those experiences have contributed to their development as MAAs. Based on the data from this study, individuals with previous professional experience outside of higher education *and* previous professional experience in higher education are more likely to possess the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill a midlevel academic leadership position than individuals who possess experience in higher education, outside of the postsecondary context, or neither.

Several of the midlevel academic leaders participating in this research project identified their personalities as important means through which they acquired skills—particularly interpersonal/networking and communication skills—essential to performing their positions. While a contentious subject among scholars (e.g., Griffith, Chmielowski, & Yoshita, 2007) and human resource professionals (e.g., HR Chally Group, 2007), such a finding may support the use of personality and soft skills assessments in screening prospective midlevel academic leaders.

Educational degrees. A clear trend existed among the MAAs participating in this study toward holding degrees in education—though none could identify education-related skills or knowledge (e.g., regarding curriculum development) which they acquired through those experiences. However, without further investigation, it will not be possible to determine the root cause(s) of this finding.

Presently, it remains unclear whether the administrators did not learn what they thought they would by pursuing degrees in education, if the postsecondary programs they undertook did not accurately or adequately promote their offerings, whether the midlevel academic leaders knowingly participated in educational programs unrelated to their MAA positions, or, which is most likely, if their career aspirations at the time they undertook these degrees included positions other than their current midlevel academic leadership posts. Most of the MAAs with education degrees completed these programs prior to undertaking their present positions. Therefore, it is unlikely they were focused on acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary for midlevel academic leaders while in those programs.

Nevertheless, higher education institutions which offer undergraduate and/or graduate degrees in education, based on the findings of this study, may wish to audit their programs (e.g., vis-à-vis alumni surveys) to ensure their offerings are both relevant to and current with contemporary practice in the positions and educational areas they prepare individuals for. At the very least, educational programs may need to review the extent to which students in their programs are meeting their intended learning outcomes, and, perhaps for marketing clarity, ensure those outcomes are accurately publicized.

Based on the data generated by this study, degrees in education do not appear to hold much practical value for MAAs of two-year institutions (or, consequently, their employers). Therefore, current and prospective midlevel academic leaders, their employers and higher education institutions offering education degrees may need to reconsider the appropriateness of such offerings for individuals whose primary career goals are to occupy midlevel academic leadership positions. For institutions, these

findings could have major repercussions on MAA credential requirements, as well as organizational incentives (e.g., tuition discounts and promotion) for obtaining educational degrees.

Knowledge management. Like many organizations, SCU-East and SCU-West have no existing mechanisms to facilitate the retention and sharing of expertise developed or acquired by individuals employed by the institutions. However, based on the data in this study, a strong case can be made for the development and implementation of a mechanism which would allow institutions to capture, preserve, update and, most importantly, share midlevel academic leadership expertise—including that obtained through a wide range of other professional development means (e.g., trial-and-error, formal extrainstitutional professional development, etc.). Knowledge management systems have been employed by organizations to facilitate the retention and utilization of organizational knowledge (Nevo & Chan, 2006). Capturing essential midlevel academic leadership expertise in a knowledge management system could insulate—to the extent of the quantity and quality of information collected—an institution from the attrition of key individuals.

Given that the midlevel academic leaders participating in this research project have evidenced a predisposition for drawing on the skills and knowledge of others—especially fellow MAAs—it may be prudent for the content of the knowledge management system to be comprised primarily of authentic scenarios and outcomes based on midlevel academic leaders' real-life experiences. Throughout the current project, the MAAs participating in this study openly shared expertise they acquired to fulfill their midlevel academic leadership positions—even though, in many cases, this

information was largely tangential to the questions posed. Nevertheless, such sharing evidences a willingness among those participating to serve as resources for others. The MAAs' willingness is not entirely surprising given that all are presently employed in higher education, and, as a result, likely possess a propensity to develop knowledge and skills in others.

A knowledge management system would likely have the greatest value among new midlevel academic leaders, particularly those who are more introverted, by providing those transitioning into their positions with access to the expertise of a number of veteran MAAs. However, such a system could also prove valuable to veteran midlevel academic leaders interested in accessing entries relating to areas (e.g., resource generation and facilities management) in which they have had little prior experience, or others have developed greater skill or knowledge. Further, for veteran MAAs, use of a knowledge management system might provide them with unique opportunities to assess their own knowledge and skills.

It may be prudent for the content of the knowledge management system to be arranged by subject, with the participating MAAs being allowed to determine the primary categories. Pettit's (1999) seven areas of responsibility, presented in Chapter Two, would likely serve as a good place of departure.

There is no reason that new MAAs, or any other midlevel academic leaders, should be prohibited from contributing relevant expertise garnered through experiences prior to undertaking their positions. Given that the knowledge and skill levels of MAAs vary, it may be prudent for institutions to explicitly encourage midlevel academic leaders with highly developed skills or knowledge in specific areas to make submission on those

topics—while still allowing others to submit entries on those, or similar, subjects.

Permitting multiple submissions on particular topics may assist MAAs in interpreting and adapting the system's content to their respective contexts.

Such a system might serve as an important medium through which midlevel academic leaders could share innovative ideas acquired through their weak ties—thereby significantly expanding each midlevel academic leader's access to novel information. Exposure to new ideas has been shown to increase innovation among individuals (Faniel & Majchrzak, 2007). Increased access to novel information will be especially helpful to MAAs given that they are increasingly responsible for innovation within their institutions (Clegg, 2003). Of course, the content of the system would have to be updatable in light of the fact that institutions, policies, processes and entire contexts continually evolve.

Midlevel academic leaders would ultimately be responsible for determining the credibility and applicability of the system's content to their particular settings. Nevertheless, it may be prudent to include, as part of the system's functionality, a mechanism through which MAAs using the system could rate and provide commentary—to the individuals submitting content and/or those accessing it—regarding the usefulness of the various entries.

Any knowledge management system used by MAAs would have to be highly accessible and facilitate asynchronous sharing given the challenges midlevel academic leaders face regarding the excessive demands on their time. An Internet-based knowledge management system would facilitate MAA access virtually anytime and from anyplace. Although, if an information technology-based knowledge management system is utilized,

several other factors will have to be addressed. These may include adequate technical staffing, additional information systems and funding.

The respective MAAs' comfort levels with information technologies would also have to be taken into consideration before an Internet-based solution is implemented. Even among those with moderate skills in working with computer technologies, ease of use will be critical. Regardless of the technical capabilities of the MAAs, or how user-friendly the knowledge management system is, some level of introduction—or the development of a user guide—will likely be necessary.

A knowledge management system may have the unintended side effect of diminishing the face-to-face interactions of MAAs if those using it become unaccustomed to interacting synchronously. Therefore, it may be prudent to consider incorporation of chat and web-conferencing functions within the knowledge management system with the intent of allowing live interchanges with other midlevel academic leaders. Additional functionality might include the ability to print (e.g., to permit the review of submissions when accessing the knowledge management system is not possible or prudent), upload files (e.g., sample recruitment presentations and articulation agreements) and perform keyword searches (e.g., to facilitate rapid retrieval of pertinent information).

A multi-campus institution may choose to implement a single knowledge management system—given that two-year MAA positions share many similarities, even from campus to campus. However, the extent to which MAAs within a multi-campus system would use such a mechanism remains uncertain—particularly in instances where the organizations, such as SCU-East and SCU-West, differ in key ways.

Nevertheless, implementing a knowledge management system may improve the performance of both new and veteran MAAs, and smooth the transition of midlevel academic leaders into their positions. Select content from the system could also be useful to individuals in other positions, scholars studying knowledge management systems and their use, as well as anyone interested in MAA performance and professional development.

Mentoring. Two of the MAAs participating in this study identified working with mentors as important means through which they developed for their midlevel academic leadership roles. The use of mentoring in MAA development was explicitly supported by three of the MAAs participating in this study. Therefore, it may be prudent for institutions to consider implementing some form of MAA mentoring system through which new, midlevel academic leaders could work closely with veteran MAAs to gain skills and knowledge essential to fulfilling their administrative roles.

Explicitly identifying an on-campus resource for a new MAA may diminish reluctance among novice midlevel academic leaders—particularly those who are less outgoing—to seek help. Studies (e.g., Kilian, Hukai, & McCarty, 2005) have shown that mentoring can be a useful strategy in facilitating minority leadership development. Given that two of the MAA participating in this study are minorities, their participation in mentoring others may assist SCU-East and SCU-West in increasing the diversity of their midlevel academic leadership ranks. The mentors themselves might even gain additional skills and/or knowledge—or perspectives beyond their current purviews—through mentoring others.

The extent to which such a system could or should be formalized remains unclear, however, given the time constraints—reported both in the research literature (e.g., Gillett-Karam et al., 1999; Kuhl, 2006) and in the current study—that MAAs face. Based on the data generated through this research project, less structured mentoring systems may have greater successes given these time constraints and the propensity of midlevel academic leaders to seek help from—and assist—others whenever appropriate.

In addition, assigning a midlevel academic leader who is new to his or her position to a single mentor could prove counterproductive. Such an arrangement may result in the new MAA going to only one veteran midlevel academic leader for assistance on most issues—as opposed to approaching the MAA with the greatest expertise on a particular subject. Further, a new midlevel academic leader whose interactions are limited to a single veteran MAA would be insulated from multiple perspectives. On the other hand, a mentoring system that would permit new MAAs to work with multiple midlevel academic leaders, such as on a rotational basis, would diminish this problem, promote a sense of community, as well as strengthen intrainstitutional networks among the midlevel academic leaders.

It is important to note that both of the participating midlevel academic leaders who had mentors were mentored *prior to* undertaking their MAA positions—as opposed to working with mentors during periods immediately following. The practicality or effectiveness of a mentoring program in which prospective midlevel academic leaders are mentored before undertaking their MAAs positions remains unclear. Presumably, an institution seeking to implement such a mentoring system would have to be committed to promoting primarily from within.

In discussing her professional development, Lori, one of the two midlevel academic leaders who benefited from mentoring, indicated that mentoring may lead to smoother positional transitions for MAAs. However, Lori reported as challenging a transition as anyone of the other midlevel academic leaders participating in this research project.

Despite that the fact that two of the midlevel academic leaders who participated in this study indicated that working with mentors was important in assisting them acquire skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their roles, there was no agreement between these individuals regarding the skills or knowledge they gained through this means. Therefore, the extent to which mentoring could be useful in facilitating MAA professional development in specific skill and knowledge areas remains unclear.

Recommendations for Future Research

The principal objective of this study was to identify the primary means through which two-year midlevel academic leaders acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their administrative positions. Nevertheless, since its inception, this research project was intended to serve as a springboard for other researchers and studies seeking to uncover greater insights into the MAA role and, more specifically, the best approach(es) for facilitating the professional development of midlevel academic leaders of two-year institutions. Recommendations for further research follow.

Implementation of quantitative study. This study has generated valuable information regarding the primary means through which midlevel academic leaders develop the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their challenging roles. However, given the limited number of midlevel academic leaders who participated in this project,

the extent to which this study reflects the experiences of other two-year MAAs remains unclear.

It is hoped that this research project will provide a solid foundation for one or more quantitative studies which seek to determine whether the experiences revealed by the current project are reflective of all, most or only some two-year midlevel academic leaders. Additionally, other researchers are encouraged to utilize the findings from this investigation in the design and implementation of studies which focus on MAAs within other types of postsecondary institutions (e.g., four-year liberal arts universities), non-academic midlevel administrators (e.g., midlevel students affairs leaders) or midlevel managers employed in other contexts.

MAA-directed professional development. While the current study focused on identifying the means through which MAAs currently acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions, a subsequent study might focus on the mean(s) through which midlevel academic leaders believe these skills and knowledge *should* be obtained. Such a study might present two-year MAAs with a scenario similar to the following: Based on your own experiences as a midlevel academic leader, if you were charged with overseeing MAA professional development for your campus (or university system or state system), how would you approach it?

If such a project is undertaken, it may be prudent to provide half of the participants with several days to contemplate and provide responses, while requesting that the other half provide answers more extemporaneously. Both groups could be asked to reflect on their thought processes in developing their approaches. Though this line of inquiry may not form the basis of a major study, the responses to this question—which

might serve as a component of a larger research project—could have important repercussions for future approaches to MAA professional development.

Knowledge management. The departure of midlevel academic leaders can represent major losses of expertise for institutions. While the institutional utilization of knowledge management systems appears to be a potentially useful strategy for collecting and sharing such expertise—and addressing MAA professional development needs—further study will be necessary. Studies which focus on system implementation, the level and nature of information exchanged, the system’s impact on MAA performance, and the return-on-investment that institution’s receive in utilizing such mechanisms could be highly valuable to future practice.

Mentoring. Considerable research exists on the role of mentoring in the professional development of primary, middle and high school teachers (e.g., Sundli, 2007), school administrators (Michael & Young, 2006), graduate teaching assistants (e.g., Park, 2004), higher education faculty (e.g., Harnish & Wild, 1994) and postsecondary administrators (Warner & DeFleur, 1993)—including senior administrators within two-year institutions (VanDerLinden, 2005). However, no major study appears to have been conducted on the use of mentoring in the development of two-year midlevel academic administrators, which, based on the findings of this study, is worthy of further investigation. Additional research will be required to determine the viability (and, if applicable, the best practices) of utilizing mentoring systems in two-year MAA professional development. Such a study would represent an important contribution to the research literature.

Closing

Through this project, several key assertions from the research literature have been sustained. Midlevel academic leaders tend to transition to their positions, directly or indirectly, from the faculty ranks, yet underestimate the challenges they face—as well as the extent to which MAA positions differ from their previous roles in higher education. Unlike their university counterparts, two-year midlevel academic leaders are not hired because of their scholarly activities. Midlevel academic leaders primarily acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their challenging positions while serving as MAAs, though relatively little through formal professional development opportunities—which few participate in due to uncertainties about the relevance of such offerings to their roles, time constraints and a tendency among midlevel academic leaders to focus both attention and resources on the development of the faculty and staff they supervise. Nevertheless, formal extrainstitutional professional development opportunities serve as the primary venues through which MAAs interact with their counterparts from other institutions.

In addition, this study has revealed several novel insights. MAAs, at least those participating in the current study, gained more skills and knowledge through trial-and-error than any other development means, and primarily when other means (e.g., formal intrainstitutional professional development) are not available, or midlevel academic leaders perceive that other means will not facilitate their development of the particular skill(s) and/or knowledge (e.g., marketing skills) they seek. Previous professional experiences—both inside and outside higher education—are important means through which the MAAs developed a wide variety of essential, position-related knowledge sets

and skills. The midlevel academic leaders who participated in the current project evidenced a preference for, and effective use of, the (strong) interpersonal relationships they share with their fellow MAAs and supervisors—which are particularly influential early in their development—as well as their (weak) connections with industry representatives from whom they acquire novel ideas and information, which are of greater importance later in their tenures.

Of all of the development means identified by the midlevel academic leaders, previous personal experience and personality had the greatest impacts on the participants' interpersonal/networking and communication skills—two of the three most vital skill sets for MAAs. Midlevel academic leaders' knowledge of and skills in working with academic assessment and computer technologies were the only areas significantly impacted through formal professional development activities. Even though a majority of the study's participants hold or are currently pursuing degrees in education, postsecondary coursework was primarily useful in assisting the midlevel academic leaders in gaining general knowledge of higher education processes, and insights which allow them to empathize with students.

Having spent considerable time learning about 10 practicing two-year MAAs and their roles, little doubt remains that, as asserted in the research literature (e.g., Gillett-Karam et al., 1999), they occupy positions which are among the most challenging in higher education. Not only are these individuals required to serve a wide variety of constituents while fulfilling a considerable range of responsibilities, but they are faced with acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to perform their demanding

administrative positions—predominantly through informal means—while fulfilling the very roles they are seeking to develop into.

There is no question that the professional development of the dedicated individuals who occupy these two-year MAA positions is in need of much greater attention than it has received from scholars and higher education institutions to date. This neglect was, undoubtedly, among the principal reasons the individuals who contributed their time, experiences and expertise to this study were unanimous in their support of it.

All of the midlevel academic leaders who participated in this research project evidenced a firm dedication to the missions of their institutions and roles in them—regardless of the challenges met in fulfilling their demanding positions, or in acquiring the skills and knowledge necessary to do so. Therefore, in recognition of their contributions to this study, the MAAs who participated will receive the final word in it.

The closing quotation is from John, the senior-most MAA at SCU-West. Not only does his statement reflect the perspective of many of the MAAs who participated in this study, but the viewpoint of the graduate-level researcher who undertook it.

It *is* demanding. It *is* challenging. And we don't do this for the pat on the back.

We don't do it for the recognition. The Lord knows we don't do it for the money!

But, it's a personal challenge. It's something that you feel like you can make a difference in—or you hope that you can whether it's recognized or not. But you feel like you can make a difference. . . . It's good. I enjoy it. I wouldn't do it if I didn't.

REFERENCES

- Accenture. (2006). Ignore at your peril the plight of your company's middle managers. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from www.accenture.com
- American Association of Community Colleges. (n.d.). About community colleges fact sheet section. Retrieved March 22, 2006, from www.aacc.nche.edu
- Andrews, H. A. (2003). *Enrollment trends in community colleges*. Los Angeles, CA: Clearinghouse for Community Colleges. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED477914). Retrieved February 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Austin, D. (2004, December). Connecting middle managers: The next wave of leadership development. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from www.clomedia.com
- Barone, C. A. (1989). Planning and the changing role of the CIO in higher education. *Information Management Review*, 5(1), 23-31. Retrieved March 22, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Bascia, N. (2000). The other side of the equation: Professional development and the organizational capacity of teacher unions. *Educational Policy*, 14(3), 385-404. Retrieved April 30, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Benoit, P., Graham, S., & Heiman, S. (2002, March). Leadership excellence: Constructing the role of department chair. *Academic Leadership Journal*, 3(1). Retrieved March 7, 2006, from www.academicleadership.org

- Bornstein, R. (2005, November 4). The nature and nurture of presidents. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 52(11), p. B10. Retrieved March 20, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- Bragg, A. K. (1981, March). The socialization of academic department heads: Past patterns and future possibilities. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Washington, DC. Retrieved January 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Breiger, R. L. (Ed.). (1990). *Social mobility and social structure*. New York: Cambridge University.
- Campbell, D. F. (2002). *The leadership gap: Model strategies for leadership development*. Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (n.d.). Classifications descriptions section. Retrieved October 6, 2006, from www.carnegiefoundation.org
- Carroll, J. B. (1991). Career paths of department chairs: A national perspective. *Research in Higher Education*, 32(6), 669-688. Retrieved February 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Cejda, B. D., McKenney, C. B., & Burley, H. (2001). The career lines of chief academic officers in public community colleges. *Community College Review*, 28(4), 31-46. Retrieved October 17, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Chiriboga-Hahn, C. (2003). An evaluation study of a community college administrative leadership development program. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 64(04),

- 1161A. (UMI No. 3088654) Retrieved March 1, 2006, from
<http://proquest.umi.com>
- Clarke, M. (1998). Can specialists be general managers? *Journal of Management*, 17(3), 481-491. Retrieved August 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Clegg, S. (2003, December). Learning and teaching policies: Contradictions and mediations of practice. *British Educational Research Journal*, 29(6), 803-820. Retrieved October 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Conger, J. A., & Fulmer, R. M. (2003, December). Developing your leadership pipeline. *Harvard Business Review*, 81(12), 76-84. Retrieved August 16, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Education research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Davis, J. R. (2003). *Learning to lead: A handbook for postsecondary administrators*. Westport, CT: American Council on Education/Praeger Series on Higher Education.
- Davidson, C. N., & Goldberg, D. T. (2005, May 6). Managing from the middle. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(35), p. C1. Retrieved February 17, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- DeHart, A. (2003). Institutional leadership in higher education: An inquiry into perspectives and roles of college and university presidents in public institutions.

Dissertations Abstracts International, 65(02), 692A. (UMI No. 3121872)

Retrieved January 21, 2006, from <http://proquest.umi.com>

Dyer, B. G., & Miller, M. (1999). A critical review of literature related to the department chair position. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED432193) Retrieved September 23, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Embertson, M. K. (2006, July/August). The importance of middle managers in healthcare organizations. *Journal of Healthcare Management*, 51(4), 223-232. Retrieved September 30, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

Evelyn, J. (2004, April 30). Community colleges at a crossroads. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 50(34), p. A27. Retrieved April 18, 2005, from <http://chronicle.com>

Faniel, I. M., & Majchrzak, A. (2007). Innovating by accessing knowledge across departments. *Decision Support Systems*, 43, 1684-1691. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

Filan, G. L. (1999). The need for leadership training: The evolution of the chair academy. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(1), 47-56. Retrieved February 22, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Filan, G. L., & Seagren, A. T. (2003). Six critical issues for midlevel leadership in postsecondary settings. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 124, 21-31. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Fine, G. A., & Kleinman, S. (1979). Rethinking subculture: An interactionist analysis. *American Journal of Sociology*, 85(1), 1-20. Retrieved April 30, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Foote, E. (1999). Sources and information on midlevel managers in the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(105), 75-82. Retrieved February 16, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Foster, B. L. (2006, Summer). From faculty to administrator: Like going to a new planet. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 134, 49-57. Retrieved October 20, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Foster, E. K. (2004). Research on gossip: Taxonomy, methods, and future directions. *Review of General Psychology*, 8(2), 78-99. Retrieved May 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Friedkin, N. (1980). A test of structural features of Granovetter's strength of weak ties theory, *Social Networks*, 2(4), 411-422. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Gallos, J. V. (2002). The dean's squeeze: The myths and realities of academic leadership in the middle. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 1(2), 174-184. Retrieved October 3, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gardner, J. W. (1987). *Leadership development*. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. EJ385301) Retrieved October 5, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Genius, S. K. (2005). Published literature and diffusion of medical innovation: Exploring innovation generation. *Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science*, 29(1), 27-54. Retrieved May 7, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Griffith, R. L., Chmielowski, T. S., & Yoshita, Y. (2007). Do applicants fake? An examination of the frequency of applicant faking behavior. *Personnel Review*, 36(3), 341-355. Retrieved October 26, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gibson, T. L. (2001, April 6). Being a chairman is worth the effort [Letter to the editor]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. B20. Retrieved January 31, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- Gillett-Karam, R. (1999). Midlevel management in the community college: A rose garden? *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(1), 5-12. Retrieved February 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gillett-Karam, R. et al. (1999). College presidents examine midlevel management in the community college. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(1), 37-46. Retrieved March 7, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Giles-Gee, H., & McMahon M. J. (1997). System-wide and institutional development programs for chairpersons, *The Department Chair: A Newsletter for Academic Administrators*, 8(1), 18-19. Retrieved March 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gmelch, W. H. (1991, Summer). Paying the price for academic leadership: Departmental chair tradeoffs. *Educational Record*, 72(3), 45-50. Retrieved August 29, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gmelch, W. H. (1994, February). Five skills for becoming a more effective team leader. Paper presented at the meeting of the International Conference for Community College Chairs, Deans, and Other Instructional Leaders, Phoenix, AZ.

- Gmelch, W. H. (2002). The call for department leaders. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED460098) Retrieved September 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gmelch, W. H., & Miskin, V. D. (1993). *Strategic leadership skills for department chairs*. Bolton, MA: Anker Publications.
- Gmelch, W. H., & Parkay, F. W. (1999). Becoming a department chair: Negotiating the transition from scholar to administrator. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED430493) Retrieved October 5, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Gose, B. (2005, February 25). In some states, enrollments will just keep growing. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 51(25), p. B10. Retrieved March 18, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- Granovetter, M. S. (1973, May). The strength of weak ties. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1982). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. In P. V. Marsden & N. Lin (Eds.), *Social structure and network analysis* (pp. 105-130). Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Granovetter, M. S. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. In R. Collins (Ed.), *Sociological Theory: Vol. 1* (pp. 201-233). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Greenberg, M. (1999, July 2). So you want to be an administrator? *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 45(42). Retrieved January 31, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>

- Greenberg, M. (2001, June 29). The not necessarily thankless job of department chair. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47(42). Retrieved February 5, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- Harnish, D., & Wild, L. A. (1994, June). Mentoring strategies for faculty development. *Studies in Higher Education*, 19(2), 191-201. Retrieved October 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Henricks, M. (2007, March). Help middle managers bring out the best in your business. *Entrepreneur*, 35(3), p. 91-92.
- Hogan, J. M., Carlson, J. G., & Dua, J. (2002). Stressors and stress reactions among university personnel. *International Journal of Stress Management*, 9(4), 289-310. Retrieved February 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Holtgrefe, D. K. (1996). Community college program administrators' perceptions of key areas of responsibility. *Dissertations Abstracts International*, 57(10), 4242A. (UMI No. 9709830) Retrieved February 13, 2006, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- HR Chally Group. (2007, September). The 9 most common hiring mistakes. *Sales & Marketing Management*, 159(7), 28-29. Retrieved October 24, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Huy, Q. N. (2001, September). In praise of middle managers. *Harvard Business Review*, 79(8), 72-79. Retrieved October 14, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Hymowitz, C. (2002, July). Middle managers focus on skills and integrity. *The Wall Street Journal Online*. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from www.careerjournal.com

- Jack, S. L. (2005, September). The role, use and activation of strong and weak network ties: A qualitative analysis. *Journal of Management Studies*, 42(6), 1233-1259. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Jaeger, D. & Pekruhl, U. (1998, September). *New Technology, Work & Employment*, 13(2), 94-103. Retrieved October 14, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- James, D. (2006, June). Middle managers resurgent. *BRW*, 28(25), 69-69. Retrieved July 24, 2006, from www.global.factiva.com
- Johnson, G. (2003, December). Brain drain. *Training*, 40(11), 16-20. Retrieved August 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Keller, G. (2001). Governance: The remarkable ambiguity. In P. G. Altbach, P. J. Gumport, & D. B. Johnstone (Eds.). *In Defense of American Higher Education* (pp. 304-322). Baltimore, MA: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Kilian, C. M., Hukai, D., & McCarty, B. (2005). Building diversity in the pipeline to corporate leadership, *Journal of Management Development*, 24(2), 155-168. Retrieved October 17, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Klagge, J. (1998). Self-perceived development needs of today's middle managers. *Journal of Management Development*, 17(7/8), 481-491. Retrieved August 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Krackhardt, D. (1992). The strength of strong ties: The importance of philos in organizations. In N. Nohria & R. Eccles (Eds.), *Networks and organizations: Structure, form, and action* (pp. 216-239). Boston: Harvard Business School.

- Kubala, T. S. (1999, March). A national study on the community college presidency. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 23(2), 183-192. Retrieved October 7, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Kuhl, D. (2006, July). Factors that affect department chairs' performance. *Academic Leader*, 22(7), 6. Retrieved October 2, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Laumann, E. O., Marsden, P. V., & Galaskiewicz, J. (1977). Community-elite influence structures: Extension of a network approach. *American Journal of Sociology*, 83(3), 594-631. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Leaming, D. R. (1998). *Academic leadership*. Boston, MA: Anker Publishing.
- Leavitt, H. J. (2004). *Top down: Why hierarchies are here to stay and how to manage them more effectively*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Lin, N., Dayton, P. W., & Greenwald, P. (1978). Analyzing the instrumental use of relations in the context of social structure. *Sociological Methods and Research*, 7, 149-166. Retrieved April 29, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Lin, N., Ensel, W. M., & Vaughn, J. C. (1981). Social resources and strength of ties: Structural factors in occupational status attainment. *American Sociological Review*, 46(4), 393-405. Retrieved May 5, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic Inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Lindholm, J. (1999). *Preparing department chairs for their leadership roles*. (Report No. EDO-JC-99-08). Washington, DC: Office of Educational Research and Improvement. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED433870) Retrieved October 10, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Lumpkin, A. (2004). Enhancing the effectiveness of department chairs. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 75(9), 44-48. Retrieved March 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Mahatanankoon, P. (2007, April). The effects of post-educational professional development activities on promotion and career satisfaction of IT professionals. *Proceedings of the 2007 ACM SIGMIS CPR Conference, St. Louis, Missouri*, 9-14. Retrieved May 3, 2007, from www.acm.org
- Marsden, P., & Campbell, K. (1984, December). Measuring tie strength. *Social Forces*, 63(2), 482-501.
- McCabe, R. H. (2000). *No one to waste: A report to public decision-makers & community college leaders*. Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- McCarthy, C. (2003). Learning on the job: Moving from faculty to administration. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 123, 39-53. Retrieved February 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- McEvily, B., & Zaheer, A. (1999). Bridging ties: A source of firm heterogeneity in competitive capabilities. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20(12), 1133-1156. Retrieved May 7, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- McKenney, C. B. & Cejda, B. D. (2000). Profiling chief academic officers in public community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 24, 745-758. Retrieved October 17, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Michael, C. N., & Young, N. D. (2006). Preparing the next generation of school administrators: Advice from veteran leaders. (ERIC Document Reproduction

Service No. ED491530) Retrieved October 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

Michael, S. O., Schwartz, M., & Balraj, L. (2001). Indicators of presidential effectiveness: A study of trustees of higher education institutions. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 15(7), 332-346. Retrieved March 15, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Miller, M. (2006, September 22). The legitimacy of assessment. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 53(5), p. B24. Retrieved August 25, 2007, from <http://chronicle.com>

Nevo, D., & Chan, Y. E. (2007). A temporal approach to expectations and desires from knowledge management systems. *Decision Support Systems*, 44, 298-213. Retrieved October 16, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

Olson-Nikunen, S. L. (2004). Community college presidents in the new millennium: Competencies for leadership as identified by position announcements and relationship to board type. *Dissertations Abstracts International*, 65(11), 4084A. (UMI No. 3154786) Retrieved March 5, 2006, from <http://proquest.umi.com>

Palmer, D. A., & Miller M. T. (2001). Academic leaders in Alabama community colleges: Roles and tasks of department chairs. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED453856) Retrieved October 5, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Park, C. (2004, July). The graduate teaching assistant (GTA): Lessons from North American experience. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 9(3), 349-361. Retrieved October 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Peltason, J. W. (1984). Foreword. In A. Tucker (Ed.), *Chairing the academic department: Leadership among peers* (p. xi). New York: Macmillan Publishing Company.
- Pettitt, J. M. (1999). Situating midlevel managers' training: Learning and doing in context. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(1), 57-66. Retrieved February 22, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Phillippe, K. A., & Sullivan, L. G. (2005). *National profile of community colleges: Trends and statistics* (4th ed.). Washington, DC: Community College Press.
- Piland, W. E., & Wolf, D. B. (2003). In-house leadership development: Placing the colleges squarely in the middle. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 123, 93-99. Retrieved March 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Plater, W. M. (2006, Summer). The rise and fall of administrative careers. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 134, 15-24. Retrieved October 15, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Pomeroy, A. (2006, July). Middle managers unhappy. *HR Magazine*, 51(7), 16.
- Raines, S. C., & Alberg, M. S. (2003). The role of professional development in preparing academic leaders. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 124, 33-39. Retrieved February 25, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Ross, J. A. (2007, March). Creative leadership: Be your team's chief innovation officer. *Harvard Management Update*, 12(3), 3-6. Retrieved May 1, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Rosser, V. J. (2000). Midlevel administrators: What we know. *New Directions for Higher Education, 111*, 5-13. Retrieved February 17, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Rosser, V. J. (2004, October). A national study on midlevel leaders in higher education: The unsung professionals in the academy. *Higher Education, 48*(3), 317-337. Retrieved October 7, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Rosser, V. J., Johnsrud, L. K., & Heck, R. H. (2003). Academic deans and directors: Assessing their effectiveness from individual and institutional perspective. *Journal of Higher Education, 74*(1), 1-25. Retrieved March 6, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Samuels, K. T. (1983). Management role of community college division chairpersons in Florida's systems of public higher education. *Dissertations Abstracts International, 44*(12), 3613A. (UMI No. 8407009) Retrieved January 18, 2006, from <http://proquest.umi.com>
- Scharmer, C. O. (2002, March). Managers in the middle. *Training, 39*(3), 16-19. Retrieved August 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Seagren, A. T., & Dockery, M. S. (1996). Academic leadership: Past, present, and future. *Academic Leadership, 3*(3), 33-34. Retrieved February 15, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Seagren, A. T., & Miller, M. T. (1994). Academic leaders and the community college: A North American profile. *Academic leadership: Journal of the National Community College Chair Academy, 1*(1), 6-11.

- Shults, C. (2001). The critical impact of impending retirements on community college leadership. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED451833) Retrieved October 2, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Smith, A. B., & Stewart, G. A. (1999). A statewide survey of new department chairs: Their experiences and needs in learning their roles. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 27(105), 29-36. Retrieved January 17, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Spaid, R. L., & Parsons, M. H. (1999). Meeting the millennium's challenge: Leading from where you are. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 105, 13-20. Retrieved February 4, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Spangler, M. S. (1999). The practitioner's guide to midlevel management development. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 105, 21-28. Retrieved February 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Stevenson, J. M. (2001). Modern practice, pragmatism, philosophy in higher education administration: Knowledge leadership of the chief academic officer. *College Student Journal*, 35(2), 162-168. Retrieved March 18, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Strathe, M. I., & Wilson, V. W. (2006, Summer). Academic leadership: The pathway to and from. *New Directions for Higher Education*, 134, 5-13. Retrieved September 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Sundli, L. (2007). Mentoring: A new mantra for education? *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23, 201-214. Retrieved October 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

- Tenhaken, V. (2004, January/February). New respect for middle managers. *The Futurist*, 38(1), 8. Retrieved August 23, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Tucker, A. (1993). *Chairing the academic department: Leadership among peers* (3rd ed.). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Vacik, S. M. (1997). Critical incidents impacting the role and development of the academic department chair, 1870 - 1925 (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Alabama, 1997). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58, 2111. Retrieved August 24, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Vacik, S. M., Miller, M. M. (1998). Critical incidents impacting the role and development of the academic department chair, 1870 - 1925. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED421905) Retrieved September 16, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wallin, D. L. (2002, Fall). Professional development for presidents: A study of community and technical college presidents in three states. *Community College Review*, 30(2), 27-41. Retrieved September 15, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wallin, D. L. (2006, August). Short-term leadership development: Meeting a need for emerging community college leaders. *Community College Journal of Research & Practice*, 30(7): 513-528. Retrieved October 2, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wang, J., & Chen, C. (2004). An automated tool for managing interactions in virtual communities—Using social network analysis approach. *Journal of*

- Organizational Computing & Electronic Commerce*, 14(1), 1-26. Retrieved April 30, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wang, H., Law, K. S., Hackett, R. D., Wang, D., & Chen, Z. X. (2005, June). Leader-member exchange as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' performance and organizational citizenship behavior. *Academy of Management Journal*, 48(3), 420-432. Retrieved on November 2, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Warner, R. & DeFleur, L. (1993). Career paths of women in higher education administration. In P. Mitchell (Ed.), *Cracking the wall* (pp. 4-18). Washington, DC: The College and University Personnel Association. Retrieved October 2, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Watts, D. L., & Hammons, J. O. (2002, Winter). Leadership development for the next generation. *New Directions for Community Colleges*, 120, 59-66. Retrieved August 25, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wilson, I. (1996, March/April). The practical power of vision. *On the Horizon*, 4(2), 3-5. Retrieved January 21, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.
- Wilson, R. (2001, March 2). Beggar, psychologist, mediator, maid: The thankless job of a chairman [Electronic version]. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 47(25), p. A10. Retrieved January 31, 2006, from <http://chronicle.com>
- Wolverton, M., Gmelch, W. H., Wolverton, M. L., & Sarros, J. C. (1999). Stress in academic leadership: U.S. and Australian department chairs/heads. *Review of Higher Education*, 22(2), 165-185. Retrieved February 12, 2006, from the EBSCOhost database.

Wylie, J. L., Cabral, T., & Jolly, A. M., (2005). Identification of networks of sexually transmitted infection: A molecular, geographic, and social network analysis. *Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 191(6), 899-906. Retrieved May 3, 2007, from the EBSCOhost database.

Yen, J. W., Lange, S. E., Denton, D. D., & Riskin, E. A. (2004, June). Leadership development workshops for department chairs. Paper present at the Women in Engineering Programs & Advocates Network 2004 Conference, Albuquerque, NM. Retrieved March 17, 2006, from www.engr.washington.edu/advance

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Prospective Participant Letter

Scott Newman
1526 West 117th Street South
Jenks, Oklahoma 74037
gsnwmn@aol.com
918.284.7055

<Date>

<Prefix> <First Name> <Last Name>
<Institution MAA Title>
<Institution Name>
<Address>
<City>, <State><Zip>

Dear <Prefix><Last Name>:

I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University (OSU). Presently, I am working on my dissertation, a study required for completion of my doctoral degree in Higher Education. The objective of my current research project is to identify the primary mean(s) through which midlevel academic administrators (MAAs) of two-year institutions, such as yourself, acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions.

While the results of this study will have major implications for postsecondary theory and research, its most important impact will be on practice. Specifically, the findings are expected to prove valuable to a wide range of higher education professionals, including those involved in institutional professional development initiatives at two-year institutions, charged with filling midlevel academic leadership positions, responsible for appraising MAA performance, considering pursuit of midlevel academic leadership positions, and/or involved with graduate programs for current and future two-year college leaders.

As an MAA of <institution name>, you are in a unique position to provide information valuable to this study. I have already been in touch with <CAO first name> <CAO last name> to review this study with <appropriate pronoun>, and ensure that Dr. <CAO first name> is aware that I would be contacting <institution name>'s <institution MAA title>s to see if they would be willing to assist me with this project. I am writing to request your participation in an interview lasting approximately one hour.

Pseudonyms will be used for all organizations and individuals. No data will be reported or published which may identify participants. Any raw information you provide will only be accessible by me, my dissertation advisor, Dr. Kerri Kearney (contact details provided below), and the OSU Institutional Review Board (IRB).

Dr. Kerri Kearney
School of Educational Studies
College of Education
Oklahoma State University
315 Willard
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
405.744.2755
kerri.kearney@okstate.edu

This project has been approved by the OSU IRB. Questions regarding your rights as a participant may be directed to:

Dr. Sue Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board
Oklahoma State University
219 Cordell North
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
405.744.1676

I will follow up with you via telephone regarding your participation in this study five business days after posting this letter. Thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this request. I look forward to visiting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Scott Newman

Appendix B

Consent and Confidentiality Script for Prospective Participants

“My name is Scott Newman. I am a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. Presently, I am working on my dissertation, a study required for completion of my doctoral degree in Higher Education. The objective of my current research project is to identify the primary mean(s) through which midlevel academic administrators of two-year institutions acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions, and am contacting you to see if you will be able to assist me.

While the results of this study will have major implications for postsecondary theory and research, its most important impact will be on practice. Specifically, the findings are expected to prove valuable to a wide range of higher education professionals, including those involved in institutional professional development initiatives at two-year institutions, charged with filling midlevel academic leadership positions, responsible for appraising midlevel academic administrator performance, considering pursuit of midlevel academic leadership positions, and/or involved with graduate programs for current and future two-year college leaders.

One formal interview, lasting approximately one hour, will be conducted with each participant at a time and location convenient for her or him. Short, follow-up interviews may be conducted as required to clarify information provided during the primary interviews. All interviewees will be requested to review transcripts of their interviews to ensure accurate transcription.

Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in my home office. Any raw information you provide will only be accessible by me, my dissertation advisor, Dr. Kerri Kearney, and the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board. With the exception of audio recordings, all raw data acquired during this study will be destroyed after two years. All audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as possible after they have been transcribed. Data will be reported in various academic documents. However, no data will be published which may identify participants. The Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.

If you choose to participate, I will provide you with my contact information so you may reach me before or after your interview for any reason. You may also contact my dissertation advisor, Dr. Kerri Kearney, at 405.744.2755, kerri.kearney@okstate.edu or 315 Willard, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078.

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a participant, please contact Dr. Sue Jacobs, the Institutional Review Board Chair, at 405.744.1676 or 219 Cordell North, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and you may discontinue your participation in this research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty.

Will you be able to assist me with this study?"

- If interlocutor is unable or unwilling to participate: "I fully understand. Thank you very much for your time in visiting with me about this research project."
- If interlocutor is able and willing to participate: "Thank you for your willingness to participate in this study. I will provide you with a copy of the written consent form for this study for your review and approval prior to your interview. May we go ahead and establish a date, time and location for your interview?"
 - Date: _____
 - Time: _____
 - Location: _____
 - "In the interim, please feel free to contact me for any reason at gsnwmn@aol.com or 918.284.7055."

Appendix C

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board Approval

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Thursday, June 07, 2007
IRB Application No ED0762
Proposal Title: Tie Strength and Two-year Midlevel Academic Administrator Development:
A Narrative Study

Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 6/6/2008

Principal Investigator(s) ✓

Gregory Scott Newman 1526 West 117th Street South Jenks, OK 74037	Kerri Shutz Kearney 315 Willard Stillwater, OK 74078
---	--

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

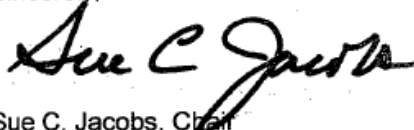
The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

Project Title: Two-Year Midlevel Academic Administrator Development

Investigator: Scott Newman, doctoral student, College of Education, Oklahoma State University

Purpose: Midlevel academic administrator (MAA) participation in this study will play a critical role in acquiring detailed, qualitative information regarding the mean(s) through which they acquire the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their positions.

Procedures: One formal interview, lasting approximately one hour, will be conducted with each participant. The interview will focus on participants' educational and professional backgrounds, the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their present positions, how those skills and knowledge were acquired, and their respective transitions into MAA roles.

Short, follow-up interviews may be conducted as required to clarify information provided during the formal interviews. Interviews will be conducted at times and locations convenient to participants. The interviews will be audio recorded to ensure accuracy. All interviewees will be requested to review transcripts of their interviews to ensure they have been transcribed accurately.

Risks of Participation: No known risks are associated with this project which exceed those ordinarily encountered in daily life.

Benefits: Information garnered through this study may provide valuable insight for individuals involved in institutional professional development initiatives at two-year institutions, charged with filling midlevel academic leadership positions, responsible for appraising MAA performance, considering pursuit of midlevel academic leadership positions, and/or involved with graduate programs for current and future two-year college leaders.

Confidentiality: Data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the home office of Scott Newman. Only Scott Newman, his dissertation advisor, Dr. Kerri Kearney, and the Oklahoma State University (OSU) Institutional Review Board (IRB) will have access to the raw research data. With the exception of audio recordings, all raw data acquired during this study will be destroyed after two years. All audio recordings will be destroyed as soon as possible after they have been transcribed. Data will be reported in various academic documents. However, no data will be published which might identify participants. Therefore, no foreseeable risks exist for participants. Note: the OSU IRB has the authority to inspect consent records and data files to assure compliance with approved procedures.

Compensation: No compensation will be available to participants in this study.

Contacts: Scott Newman
1526 West 117th Street South
Jenks, Oklahoma 74037
Ph: 918.284.7055
Em: gsnwmn@aol.com

Dr. Kerri Kearney (Advisor)
School of Educational Studies
College of Education
Oklahoma State University
315 Willard
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
Ph: 405.744.2755
Em: kerri.kearney@okstate.edu

For information on participant rights, please contact:

Dr. Sue Jacobs, IRB Chair
Oklahoma State University
219 Cordell North
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
Ph: 405.744.1676

Participant Rights: Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, and all subjects can discontinue the research activity at any time without reprisal or penalty.

Signatures: I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

Signature of Participant

Date

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

Signature of Investigator

Date

Appendix E

Principal Introductory and Interview Questions

1. What is your educational background?
2. What were your professional experiences prior to your current position?
3. Describe what you do in a typical, two-week period.
4. What skills and knowledge are critical to fulfilling your position?
5. How did you acquire those skills and knowledge?
6. How would you describe your transition into your present role?

Appendix F

Mapping of Primary Skill and Knowledge Sets to Midlevel Academic Administrator

Areas of Responsibility

Skills or Knowledge	Area(s) of Responsibility
Interpersonal/networking skills	Internal administration
	Professional development
	Human relations and personnel administration
	Student relations and administration
	External administration
Communication skills	Curriculum and instruction
	Internal administration
	Professional development
	Human relations and personnel administration
	Budget planning and development
	Student relations and administration
Resource planning and prioritization	External administration
	Internal administration
	Budget planning and development

Skills or Knowledge	Area(s) of Responsibility
Knowledge of disciplines for which programs prepare students	Curriculum and instruction Professional development
Knowledge of state higher education system	Curriculum and instruction Budget planning and development Student relations and administration External administration
Curriculum development/management skills	Curriculum and instruction
General knowledge of higher education processes	Student relations and administration
Motivational skills	Curriculum and instruction Professional development Human relations and personnel administration
Forecasting/environmental scanning skills	Curriculum and instruction Internal administration Professional development

Skills or Knowledge	Area(s) of Responsibility
Time management skills	Curriculum and instruction
	Internal administration
	Professional development
	Human relations and personnel administration
	Budget planning and development
	Student relations and administration
	External administration
Basic business skills and knowledge	Budget planning and development
	External administration
Resource generation skills	External administration
Ability to empathize with students	Student relations and administration
Marketing skills	External administration
Knowledge of academic assessment	Curriculum and instruction
	Human relations and personnel administration
Ability to see the big picture	Budget planning and prioritization
	External administration
Knowledge of institutional policy and procedures	Budget planning and development
	Student relations and administration
Knowledge of unit's curriculum	Curriculum and instruction

Skills or Knowledge	Area(s) of Responsibility
Facilities management skills	Internal administration
Ability to make decisions	Internal administration
	Human relations and personnel administration
	Student relations and administration
Ability to work with computer technologies	Budget planning and development
Analytical skills	Internal administration

Appendix G

Summary of Skills and Knowledge Sets, Means and Participants

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Interpersonal/ networking skills	Previous personal experience	Beth, Bill, David, Jeff, John, Lori, Tom
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Becky, Beth, Jeff, John, Tom
	Observation	Becky, David, Jeff, Lori
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Alan, Becky, Beth
	Trial-and-error	Janet, Jeff, Lori
	Personality	Alan, Becky, Lori
	Postsecondary coursework	Becky, Lori
	Formal intrainstitutional professional development	Becky
	Informal extrainstitutional networking	Janet

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Communication skills	Previous personal experience	Alan, David, Jeff, John, Lori
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Alan, Janet, John, Tom
	Personality	Alan, Becky, Beth
	Postsecondary coursework	Tom
	Observation	Becky
	Trial-and-error	Bill
	Resource planning and prioritization	Previous professional experience outside higher education
Previous professional experience in higher education		Alan, Becky, Janet, Lori
Trial-and-error		Beth, Jeff
Previous personal experience		David
Formal intrainstitutional professional development		Becky
Observation		Lori
Mentoring		Becky

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Knowledge of disciplines for which programs prepare students	Informal extrainstitutional networking	Becky, Beth, Bill, David, Janet, John, Lori, Tom
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Bill, Janet, John, Lori
	Previous professional experience in higher education	John, Lori
	Mentoring	Becky
	Self-study/research	Beth
	Postsecondary coursework	Lori
Knowledge of state higher education system	Trial-and-error	Alan, Becky, Jeff, Lori
	Self-study/research	Jeff, Janet
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Bill, John
	Formal extrainstitutional professional development	Alan
	Observation	Becky
	Informal extrainstitutional networking	Janet

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Curriculum development/ management skills	Previous professional experience in higher education	Alan, Becky, Beth, John
	Self-study/research	Alan, Janet
	Trial-and-error	John, Lori
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Bill, Janet, Lori
General knowledge of higher education processes	Postsecondary coursework	Alan, Becky, Janet
	Trial-and-error	Jeff, Lori
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Jeff, John
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Lori
	Observation	Jeff

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Motivational skills	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Bill, John, Tom
	Trial-and-error	Tom
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Alan
	Formal extrainstitutional professional development	Becky
	Observation	Becky
	Self-study/research	Becky
	Previous personal experience	David
	Formal intrainstitutional professional development	Becky
	Personality	Bill
Forecasting/ environmental scanning skills	Trial-and-error	Alan, Becky, Beth
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Becky, Janet
	Personality	David, Lori
	Intrainstitutional directed readings	Beth
	Postsecondary coursework	Lori
	Observation	Lori

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Time management skills	Trial-and-error	Beth, Jeff, Lori
	Personality	Jeff, Lori
	Previous personal experience	Beth
	Mentoring	Lori
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Becky
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Alan
Basic business skills and knowledge	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Beth, Bill, Janet, John, Tom
	Previous personal experience	Beth, Bill
	Trial-and-error	Bill
	Observation	Bill
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Bill

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Resource generation skills	Previous professional experience in higher education	Beth
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Alan
	Formal intrainstitutional professional development	John
	Trial-and-error	Tom
Ability to empathize with students	Postsecondary coursework	Becky, Beth, Tom
	Previous professional experience in higher education	David
Marketing skills	Trial-and-error	Becky, Lori
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Lori
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	John

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Knowledge of academic assessment	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Alan, John, Lori
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Alan, Lori
	Formal extrainstitutional professional development	Alan, John
	Formal intrainstitutional professional development	John
Ability to see the big picture	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Becky, Jeff
	Previous professional experience in higher education	Becky
	Trial-and-error	Jeff
	Postsecondary coursework	Lori
Knowledge of constituents	Trial-and-error	Alan, Bill, Janet
Knowledge of institutional policy and procedures	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Bill, John
	Self-study/research	Beth

Skills or Knowledge	Means	Participant(s)
Knowledge of unit's curriculum	Previous professional experience in higher education	Beth
	Self-study/research	Janet
Facilities management skills	Previous personal experience	Beth, David
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Beth, David
	Trial-and-error	Beth
	Informal intrainstitutional networking	Beth
Ability to make decisions	Trial-and-error	Beth, Jeff
	Previous professional experience outside higher education	Jeff
Ability to work with computer technologies	Formal intrainstitutional professional development	Bill, Lori
Analytical skills	Postsecondary coursework	David
	Trial-and-error	Beth
	Personality	Becky

VITA

Gregory Scott Newman

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Education

Thesis: NETWORK TIES AND TWO-YEAR MIDDLELEVEL ACADEMIC
ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A NARRATIVE
STUDY

Major Field: Higher Education

Education:

- | | |
|------|---|
| 2007 | Completed the requirements for the Doctor of Education in Higher Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma |
| 1999 | Completed the requirements for the Master of Studies at the University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom |
| 1997 | Completed the requirements for the Master of Music at The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma |
| 1995 | Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Music Education at The University of Oklahoma, Norman, Oklahoma |

Recent Experience:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| 2001 to Present | Served as the Chair of the Information Technologies Division at Oklahoma State University–Okmulgee, Okmulgee, Oklahoma |
| 2000 to 2001 | Served as the Assistant Chair of the Engineering Technologies Division at Oklahoma State University–Okmulgee, Okmulgee, Oklahoma |
| 2000 | Served as E*Learning Projects Coordinator at Oklahoma State University–Okmulgee, Okmulgee, Oklahoma |

Professional Memberships: Association for the Study of Higher Education, American Educational Research Association, American Association of Community Colleges, Information Systems Security Association

Name: Gregory Scott Newman

Date of Degree: December, 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: NETWORK TIES AND TWO-YEAR MIDDLELEVEL ACADEMIC
ADMINISTRATOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A
NARRATIVE STUDY

Pages in Study: 135

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Major Field: Higher Education

Scope and Method of Study: The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify the means through which midlevel academic administrators (MAAs) of two-year postsecondary institutions acquire the minimum skills and knowledge necessary to perform their positions, and the role of social network ties in this process. Purposive sampling was used to identify twelve prospective participants; ten participated. The data used in this study were generated through semi-structured interviews and review of basic institutional media, thematically coded, then categorized. Granovetter's strength of weak ties theory served as the theoretical lens for this research project.

Findings and Contributions: This study identified 23 skill and knowledge sets necessary to fulfill two-year MAA positions, as well as the 14 means through which these were acquired. A number of novel insights regarding MAA development were also revealed.

- The participating MAAs gained more skills and knowledge through trial-and-error than any other development means, and primarily when other means were not available, or the midlevel academic leaders perceived that other means would be inadequate.
- The MAAs evidenced a preference for the strong, interpersonal ties they share with their fellow midlevel academic leaders and supervisors, as well as their weak connections with industry representatives, in acquiring key skills and knowledge.
- Formal professional development activities only had a noteworthy impact on MAAs' competence with academic assessment and computer technologies, and were of greatest use in facilitating interchanges with postsecondary professionals outside their respective institutions.
- Postsecondary coursework was primarily useful in assisting the participating midlevel academic leaders in gaining general knowledge of higher education processes, and insights which allow them to empathize with students—even though a majority of the MAAs who participated in this study hold or were currently pursuing degrees in education.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Kerri Kearney
