

# Perspectives

Community College  
Leadership for the  
21st Century

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*As retirements loom among executive-level administrators, there is a critical need to develop the next generation of leaders who are prepared to assume the dynamic, complex, and challenging roles that their positions demand.*

- Carlos Nevarez  
& J. Luke Wood

*The pool of potential applicants to fill CEO positions who possess the requisite skills to 'hit the ground leading' is shrinking...To develop and implement a student success agenda, leadership development and faculty engagement are critical.*

- Lee D. Lambert

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## Community College Leadership Development: A Recipe for Institutional Success

**Shara Lee, EdD**

*Campus Director, Faculty and Instructional Development  
Valencia College*

The function and role of leadership today is very different than in past decades. Leadership applies to more than just those who supervise others - it is both a privilege and responsibility of each member of a college community. We are all learners from the moment we enter the world, but we ask you to consider each of us as teachers as well. We are constantly modeling with our actions and inactions, and we have a responsibility...a civic duty... to teach both those who pay and those who are paid to affiliate with our college.

A core mission of community colleges is to grow the civic leadership needed to further society. It is a very service-minded philosophy that likens to the Wisconsin Idea of the early 20th century. With such a broad understanding of mission, we would be remiss to develop in absence of our guiding force - our community. Beginning a development strategy with a foundation on community and institutional values embodies the essence of authentic development, allowing for the design of development experiences that support the awareness, skill building, competencies, and demonstrated excellence required by the environment.

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A culture of growth and development begins before the first day on a job with the understanding that our employees glean from how they experience the hiring process. A solid development strategy begins well before there is a person attached to a position. Growth and development with articulated skills and competencies crafted carefully into a position description speak volumes about the position and institutional expectations. Although mission-centered development is critical to employee success, consider the impact of this mantra: hire for mission; train for position. Passion for institutional mission will carry an employee through changes in leadership and disappointments with circumstance in a way that may leave others feeling disenfranchised. We have had strong success with this hiring philosophy and enjoy bringing the right people to an opportunity while guiding them towards task-based learning success.

The next major touch point for employees is onboarding,

**Jenny Charriez, MA**

*Director of Employee Development  
Valencia College*

which affords a crucial opportunity for an organization to introduce the tone and intention behind its learning theory with new and growing employees. In today's environment, we have the opportunity to shift that entire process to one of relationship-building, decentralized opportunities for supervisor/employee engagement, and most importantly, setting expectations for how we should learn over the course of our careers at a community college.

Leadership development can also provide an opportunity to shift the organizational culture - either by maintaining the status quo or infusing new language, beliefs, working theories, and skills into an organization that is coming together (new) or established (renewal practices). Leadership development can be as diverse as the leaders we seek to develop. However, a critical factor to development success is an understanding and articulation of what great leadership looks like in the context of an individual institution's landscape. Perhaps the future of community college leadership resides within a definition of credible leadership that intimately includes a pulse on community needs and strengthening workforce development through an articulated value proposition. Alignment of the priorities of a governing board, governing bodies, and presidential values with daily decision-making is a structurally sound way to communicate the meaning of institutional leadership.

This development work happens in concert with informed decisions about development needs. Look at your organization as an anthropologist, using your own voice of inquiry in building questions that help you and your leaders make strategic decisions about investing in leadership development at your organization. Think about asking questions about connection and alignment to your organization's institutional effectiveness team, as research trends can help you identify opportunities for interventions at your organization. Consider a partnership with human resources to articulate questions that can help inform your development practice, such as gauging the average number of years that employees work at your organization, how much/what type of development employees are interested in, what developmental needs are left unmet, and how your performance review process informs leadership development and programming.

We are extremely fortunate to be able to work in a collegiate environment that reflects our core belief that anyone can learn anything under the right conditions and

*(continued on page 4)*

## EMERGING LEADERS' PERSPECTIVES

The historic mission of the community college continues to evolve at the same time that a leadership void is developing, largely due to the retirements of multitudes of seasoned leaders. Research has revealed that professional development is important to meeting today's challenging educational demands. Therefore, it becomes imperative that colleges proactively initiate measures to create a leadership development and succession planning framework to attract, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below:

### Karel Asbury, MA

Director, Academic Inquiry and Analysis  
Kellogg Community College  
Battle Creek, MI

To prepare for the anticipated shortage of community college leaders, we need to have authentic conversations with employees, develop an accurate understanding of the leadership skills needed, and invest wisely in professional development. If the last time you asked an employee, "Where do you see yourself in five years?" was in a job interview, you're probably missing an opportunity to develop and retain talented leaders. As employers and employees, we have a responsibility to have this difficult conversation. But why should it be difficult?

As employees, exposing our dreams makes us vulnerable to the criticism of those who find our goals unrealistic. Sharing what we want means potentially sharing the very personal disappointment of not achieving it. As employers, asking what an employee's goals are implies that you support those aspirations. Does encouraging the employee create an unwarranted expectation regarding promotion?

This is where we can take a lesson from our work with students. It is the responsibility of our students and of our employees to be honest about their ambitions and abilities. It is the responsibility of the college and of employers to provide assessment and feedback about the feasibility of those goals.

Part of determining an employee's potential for promotion is a realistic understanding of the required skills. In academia, we frequently require that administrators have three years of teaching experience. Yet the amount of time an administrator spends teaching is often none. If the premise is that teaching creates an appreciation of faculty's challenges, why don't we see an administrative requirement of three years for faculty? If we did, wouldn't we improve reciprocated empathy and understanding between administrators and faculty? We need to make sure our requirements reflect the skills needed and don't place unnecessary obstacles before otherwise qualified leaders.

Once we've assessed an employee's skills gap, we can establish a plan to reach the goal. Unfortunately the concept of professional development is fraught with negative connotations, such as the haphazard use of the knowledge gained and lack of fiscal accountability. Just as we are concerned for our students who swirl around collecting random courses, we need to be concerned about the costs of educating employees without clear goals. Do we support sharing of information when it's acquired and allow opportunities to implement innovative approaches?

The leaders of the future are in our midst; we need to ask the right questions, provide accurate information, and be willing to invest in education that develops strong leaders.

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

**What steps can community colleges take - whether internal or external - to prepare future leaders for tomorrow?**

*As resources and budgets become strained, many institutions understand that the path to innovation and advancement is based upon their willingness to train and develop their staff. ~ Jon Mandrell*

### Jon Mandrell, EdD

Dean of Academics and Student Services  
Sauk Valley Community College  
Dixon, IL

With community colleges facing some of our most trying and challenging times, professional development continues to be the lifeblood of an institution. As resources and budgets become strained, many institutions understand that the path to innovation and advancement is based upon their willingness to train and develop their staff. This steadfast

commitment to professional development ensures that an institution is forward-thinking, committed to its team, and recognizes how professional development benefits the most important individual—the student.

Current trends in professional development vary and are advancing in many ways, particularly relative to their delivery. Internal offerings at community colleges are now expanding into web-based and hybrid courses or professional development. In addition, the teaching and learning centers of community colleges are expanding and reaching out to individuals, both at the student and staff levels.

College faculty and leaders are also relying upon the historically valuable art of mentoring to instill growth within faculty.

Many faculty can speak to the success of having had a mentor and they pay it forward by being inspired to become a mentor themselves. Furthermore, with the discussion of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) being the latest buzz, such courses can serve as a refresher or to provide knowledge in a given discipline. Enrolling in courses through Coursera is free and provides an open door to some of the most well-known and accomplished institutions, as well as access to some of the most effective teaching resources.

Still, there are some obvious threats to professional development. The most frequent concern relates to the funding of such programs. Many programs and offerings require funding to maintain or to pay stipends for completion and some require both. Fortunately, numerous community college leaders have remained firm in their commitment to such funding, as human capital is quite possibly their best investment. With many budgets being analyzed and cuts made across the board, professional development can be vulnerable.

Higher education is continually changing and updating with today's trends. Faculty and staff are familiar with innovative technologies on college campuses that are provided within the many course offerings and programs, but professional development should be as much of an institutional priority. Community colleges easily provide value and open access, but providing the community with the finest instruction starts with a commitment to the continuous improvement process of faculty and staff development. In the end, this commitment must evolve into a culture.

**Karel Asbury** currently serves as Director of Academic Inquiry and Analysis at Kellogg Community College, located in Battle Creek, Michigan. As an administrator since 1999, her previous areas of responsibility at KCC have included non-credit programming, tutoring, testing and assessment, developmental education, and currently institutional research. Karel earned her MA from Western Michigan University and is currently enrolled as a doctoral student in the Ferris State University DCCL program.



**Jon Mandrell, EdD**, serves as the Dean of Academics and Student Services at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois, where he is the Chief Academic Officer (CAO) and Chief Student Services Officer (CSSO). He holds an EdD in Community College Leadership from Ferris State University and a MA in Law Enforcement and Justice Administration from Western Illinois University. He previously served as Criminal Justice Faculty and as a local police officer before joining the college administration.



## NATIONAL LEADER PERSPECTIVE

The historic mission of the community college continues to evolve at the same time that a leadership void is developing, largely due to the retirements of multitudes of seasoned leaders. Research has revealed that professional development is important to meeting today's challenging educational demands. Therefore, it becomes imperative that colleges proactively initiate measures to create a leadership development and succession planning framework to attract, develop, and retain a highly qualified workforce. We posed the following question to emerging and national leaders; their answers appear below:

### QUESTION OF THE MONTH:

**What steps can community colleges take - whether internal or external - to prepare future leaders for tomorrow?**

#### Tom Grady, MS

Faculty Development Coordinator  
Johnson County Community College  
Overland Park, Kansas

The leadership void that community colleges are facing is an issue that institutions have to address. The stakes and demands are extremely high for institutions to meet the demands that are placed upon them to increase completion rates, effectively prepare students for the 21st century workforce, improve social mobility, and positively impact economic growth. If community colleges do not strive to develop new leaders effectively, the risk of failure to meet these demands will increase.

The educational landscape at community colleges has changed dramatically and will continue to do so currently and in the future. I jokingly like to say, "Shift Happens." However, this really isn't a joke as it is the current reality. Institutions cannot solely rely upon taking internal measures and action to create effective leadership development and succession planning frameworks. Building collaborative relationships and partnerships with external organizations at the local, state, and national levels is a critical step institutions must take in order to accomplish this task. Today, community colleges are under a very large microscope. Leaders at the national, state, and local levels are looking to community colleges to help meet the completion agenda and improve workplace skills. Future leaders need to be effectively mentored on how to build these relationships with business and industry, academic leaders at four year institutions, and with state boards of education. The efforts to accomplish this task must be intentional and woven throughout the fabric of the institution.

***If community colleges do not strive to develop new leaders effectively, the risk of failure to meet these demands will increase.***

The creation of high-impact professional development opportunities that focus on succession planning and leadership development can help institutions prepare future leaders and exemplifies the intentionality I just mentioned. For example, in 2006, Johnson County Community College developed a Leadership Institute specifically designed to prepare the impending leadership void and thus develop future leaders. The Leadership Institute is based on the Competencies for Community College Leaders developed by the "Leading Forward" Project through the American Association of Community Colleges. The program is a year-long cohort and participants have the opportunity to hear from internal and external leaders. In addition, the participants cultivate and grow their leadership skills through targeted, dynamic, and collaborative activities. The institution is in the process of creating a designated space, or collaboration center, that will provide the opportunity to invite business and industry leaders to work directly with academic disciplines to assist in meeting workforce and academic needs.

Community college leaders should strive to create a culture on their

campuses that fosters leadership growth and development amongst all of its employees. I realize that in this day and age of shrinking budgets and the increased fiscal constraints community colleges face, providing professional development opportunities may be difficult. The potential cost of failing to provide some level of professional development opportunities to prepare future leaders is simply too great. Strategic planning and intelligent budgeting and allocation of resources to address this issue is extremely critical.

Fortunately, institutions do not have to "reinvent the wheel" in order to prepare their future leaders. The American Association of Community Colleges has created the John E. Roueche Future Leaders Institute. The institute is a four day leadership seminar designed for mid-level community college leaders. Colleges can also create their own leadership development program and frame the program around the American Association of Community College's Competencies for Community College Leaders.

***Community college leaders should strive to create a culture on their campuses that fosters leadership growth and development amongst all of its employees.***

The risk of failing to address the leadership vacuum that is occurring at our nation's community colleges simply cannot be ignored. Institutions must address this issue in order to effectively deal with the increased demands that are placed upon our colleges from governing bodies, accrediting agencies, business and industry, and communities. We must be intentional and very strategic in developing frameworks that have a clear sense of direction and purpose in order to achieve these goals. The institutions that can effectively accomplish this will be the ones who will be most adequately prepared to tackle the challenges of the leadership vacuum. As a former collegiate student-athlete, I learned very early on that failing to prepare was essentially preparing to fail. Building upon this important lesson as it relates to preparing future leaders, I pose this question: "Are we preparing to succeed or preparing to fail?"



**Tom Grady** serves as the Faculty Development Coordinator at Johnson County Community College, Overland Park, KS, as well as adjunct faculty at Kansas City Kansas Community College. Tom is a Certified Faculty Developer and certified Strengths Educator who serves on the boards for the Kansas City Professional Development Council and Kansas Council for Workforce Education. He earned his MS in Health, Physical Education, and Recreation from Emporia State University and his second MS in Adult, Occupational, and Continuing Education from Kansas State University.

**QUICK TAKES**  
**Highlights**  
**from the Field**

**Anticipating the Community College Leadership Void**

by **Jonah Rice and Steve O'Keefe**

Retirements of the baby boom generation in community colleges have resulted in diminished pools of seasoned leaders, fostering a leadership void. The authors suggest that community colleges that face significant leadership turnover in the coming years would benefit from implementing an internal leadership program. Incorporating original quantitative research from Illinois community colleges, this paper explores the "current and growing predicament" of the loss of experienced leadership, while presenting practical, informal, and formal strategies for leadership development. Read the full article here:

<http://bit.ly/1LmMDSZ>

**Leadership Development: A Strategic Imperative for Higher Education**

by **Linda Hill**

Linda Hill, Professor of Business Administration at Harvard University, notes that the increasingly complex dynamic in colleges and universities is resulting in the development of leadership talent becoming a strategic imperative, although most institutions have not analyzed their leadership supply and demand. Hill applies her work on leadership development in the business world to higher education and outlines lessons from business that suggest what higher education can do to foster a culture conducive to learning to lead.

<http://bit.ly/1ZmHtMY>

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**Community College Leadership Development: A Recipe for Institutional Success**

(continued from page 1)

also is committed to enlivening that belief through daily practices. If we demonstrate care through cultivation of college, career and life success skills and combine it with mentorship on qualities such as grit, we are creating the environment that allows people to feel comfortable learning through both failure and success. After all, "fail" is merely an acronym for "first attempt in learning" in a growth-oriented mindset.

**Leadership programs should offer opportunities for reflection, planning, and collaboration. Above all, we must strive to build community through communication.**

One of our Essential Competencies of a Valencia Educator is a focus on learning outcomes-based practices. This means that we commit first to envisioning the outcome of our work (a productive community member) and then to striving to craft a meaningful pathway to attainment. This guiding principle helps us keep our goals in mind for student, employee, and program development. For example, our institution has developed four main outcomes for all graduates in partnership with the community and we prompt course development to occur explicitly through the lens of each of them within the format of a curriculum plan. Infrastructure is a piece of the solution; implementation completes the picture.

One of the difficulties of implementation is that, like our students, not all employees are at the same development level with respect to leadership. This affords us the opportunity to build multiple entry points into the leadership development journey. Pathways for leadership development can be as varied and as complex as the intended audience for that program. Consider developing tiers, flex schedules, and blended modes for deploying leadership development to support building a culture of leaders that understands the pathways available for students. In our organization, we currently have four tiers of leadership development that support and grow our leaders in different ways based on function, groups, classification, and/or aspirations. We have experienced success with designing programs that layer experiences across a continuum that supports development plans for employees, from introduction to theory to building unique experiences for applying and demonstrating excellence in a particular concept or skill. Consider building pathways that intentionally take an employee through varying levels of mastery and allow yourself the latitude to build gradually. Our journey has taken almost a decade, and we are still layering and scaffolding opportunities for our leaders.

A common barrier to leadership development is funding, and we have found it effective to challenge ourselves to think of a reduced or diminished budget as an opportunity for creativity and innovation by design. Leadership programs should offer opportunities for reflection, planning, and collaboration. Above all, we must strive to build community through communication. With funding models for development varying widely at institutions, we recommend starting with collaboratively-designed outcomes and becoming increasingly creative with the

pathways you take to enliven it. Consider the institutional impact that a year-long, seminar-based leadership development cohort with a mentor relationship, leadership plan, and graduation ceremony can have - powerful potential. Juxtapose that with crafting a space for guided reflection, the time for which is the only institutional cost. What about creating a reading circle from open-sourced materials that provides both collegiality and intellectual stimulation? Each of these investments have the potential to create incredible return, especially as cultural leadership is communicated through both the fact that they exist and the way in which they are carried out.

An under-utilized, low-cost, and high-impact form of development is mentoring. Mentoring has been shown to be one of the most effective development strategies for minorities and creates a meaningful path for communicating cultural leadership throughout the organization. Programs such as Ten Thousand Coffees aim to formalize networking inter-institution, but consider the impact if you were to start a movement to support even a fraction of this number of networking conversation intra-institution. As you do so, take the time to formalize expectations between mentors and mentees and create a safe space for employees to make a mentorship ask from someone above their pay grade.

In conclusion, we ask you to consider each person - both student and employee - as a leader. We are building our students' future by investing in our employees as role models. Today's community college is much more than an institution of trade certification because we have evolved over time to meet the needs of our students in regards to both their technical and transferable skills. In our current landscape, high performers and those who lead must be fast, fluid, and flexible with their abilities to make decisions and inspire others to share their best (Eric Snow, *Leading High Performers*, 2010). Figuring out how to best create this recipe for success in varying environments can be challenging, but its rewards are incomparable for student, employee, and institutional success.



**Shara Lee, EdD**, serves as Campus Director for Faculty and Instructional Development at Valencia College's Osceola and Lake Nona campuses. She partners with academic affairs, student affairs, and supporting departments to create meaningful learning experiences around the Essential Competencies for Valencia Educators for and with faculty members. Her leadership background includes participation in and creation of internship, leadership and formal/informal mentoring programs at the University of Central Florida, where she also earned her doctorate, as well as at The Walt Disney Company and Valencia College.



**Jenny Charriez, MA**, Director of Employee Development at Valencia College, has served the college for 18 years in three basic areas: technology, education/training, and learning support. In her current role, she collaborates with leadership, peers, and teams throughout the college to implement and sustain employee recognition programs, leadership and supervisory programs, inclusive excellence initiatives, performance and development plans, and also manages the college's learning management system for employee deployment and training records. She earned her MA in Adult Education and Technology, and holds various professional certifications.