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California Community Colleges' Leadership Challenge: A View from the Field

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Introduction

California State University, Sacramento (CSUS) has received a planning grant from the California State University (CSU) Commission on the Extended University to partner with area community college districts to enhance leadership in the community colleges. CSUS is collaborating with CSU Bakersfield, Chico, and Fresno in this effort. The new Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy (IHE) at CSUS is taking the lead in assessing the specific need for leadership recruitment and development.

The Director of IHE, Dr. Nancy Shulock, conducted interviews with 35 individuals, including 15 community college presidents/chancellors, 13 other community college administrators, two trustees, three statewide faculty leaders, and two community college organization leaders. The purpose of the interviews was to explore in broad terms what challenges face California's community college leaders and, more specifically, how a new leadership development effort can help the colleges meet those challenges. This paper presents the findings from the interviews—the “view from the field.” It is intended to provide both the context for and the content of a new certificate program in community college leadership at CSUS.

The Challenges Facing California Community College Leaders

We asked at the outset what were the major issues that would challenge community college leaders over the next several years. Their responses are summarized below in the approximate order of the frequency with which they were mentioned.

1. Funding and Growth

All respondents noted the challenge that leaders face in attempting to carry out the multiple missions of the colleges with very limited funding during a period of tremendous growth. As one president stated, “getting better while getting bigger is a daunting challenge.” Leaders were concerned not only about accommodating the sheer numbers on the horizon, but also about offering the appropriate variety of modes and schedules to meet students' diverse needs. Most respondents consider funding levels severely inadequate given the many missions of the community colleges. Some leaders expressed concern that those responsible for providing the funding do not understand the full range of what the community colleges are expected to accomplish. One complained of being “hamstrung by unfunded federal and state mandates” that make it that much harder for community colleges to meet those expectations.

Many were able to cite statistics to show how unfavorably California funding levels per student compare to community colleges in other states and to the four-year and K-12 systems in California. The historical under-funding of Proposition 98 for the community colleges is a source of much resentment as is what one respondent called the “class system” among the three segments of higher education in the state. Some particular areas mentioned where shortages are most severe are vocational education, instructional technology staff, and facilities. Some suggested that efficiencies from regionalizing programs and sharing costs and facilities across campuses and districts should be explored.

Lack of discretion over costs and revenues was cited as a chief challenge for college leaders. Examples include the open-door admission policy, federal and state mandates (many of which are unfunded), and no local fee-setting authority.

The budget *process*, in addition to the *level* of funding, was also commonly cited as a challenge for college leaders. Leaders report that they lack the information and funding mechanisms to make the best resource allocation decisions. For example, leaders do not know their final budgets until after the close of a fiscal year. This makes it difficult to use resources to the best advantage and can lead to over-spending, especially because much of the budget is committed via collective bargaining. Funding formulas strike most leaders as outmoded. Many complained that the use of a K-12 “seat time” based formula, rather than an FTE credit-based formula, limits the ability of college leaders to implement flexible approaches to scheduling and resource allocation. One person called the formula “draconian.” Some leaders expressed a preference for a kind of program-based funding model that would better align funding incentives with community and state needs. Under the current system, leaders have a fiscal incentive to target growth in lesser-cost programs, regardless of where demands are the greatest.

2. Governance

Another challenge cited by most interviewees is that of governance and particularly, of shared governance as mandated by AB 1725. Many find that the structure of the California Community colleges as a “quasi” system with 72 locally governed boards does not work particularly well. At the statewide level the system lacks the political clout of the better-staffed four-year systems. Districts cannot be effective political advocates when they don’t always agree and since few have the resources and political connections to advocate effectively in Sacramento.

At the local level, college leaders find challenges in dealing with the post-Proposition 13 role of local trustees. With trustees having virtually no role to play in district finance, they may become more involved in what presidents consider internal matters. As one president stated about the post-Proposition 13 era, “trustees look at the *college* as their constituency rather than the *community*”

and are not well known in the community. Whatever the cause, most presidents noted that maintaining effective relationships with trustees is an important and challenging task.

There were a variety of opinions on how well or poorly the shared governance provisions of AB 1725 serve the needs of the colleges, but all agreed that the requirements of AB 1725 are challenging for leaders. The most sanguine view of the shared governance requirements was that “AB 1725 legislates good relationships so if you can maintain good relationships then AB 1725 becomes irrelevant.” At the other extreme is the position that “AB 1725 has handed the institutions to the faculty.” All agreed that compared to most other states, the California community college environment is more highly regulated and CEOs are more heavily constrained in their decision making. Several CEOs from out-of-state noted that for these reasons they faced a particularly steep learning curve and some major culture shocks when they began their work at the helm of a California community college. One CEO who came from the California State University system noted that she “was shocked” when she began the job about how much was mandated.

Another issue that shared governance raises for leaders is accountability for decisions. Administrators generally feel that they are ultimately accountable for decisions that they are allowed to make only with the consent of the faculty and others in consultative bodies. This perceived mismatch between authority to make decisions and accountability for the decisions made can be frustrating for leaders.

3. Diversity

Respondents stressed the need for leaders in the California Community Colleges to understand the enormous diversity in the student body, in terms of ethnicity, age, language, preparation for college work, learning styles, and educational goals. Diversity goes hand in hand with the multiple missions assigned to the community colleges. Transfer-seeking students have different goals and needs than students taking basic skills courses or those seeking their first jobs, or those returning students seeking to retrain for the information economy. Contributing to the diversity across the student body is the rapidly changing demographics. Regardless of program or educational goal, students who are immigrants, first-generation college students, limited English speakers, or economically disadvantaged require appropriate services, programs, and institutional cultures. The difficulties facing the K-12 system in graduating students with adequate skills for college and vocational study are inherited by the community colleges. All of these circumstances pose challenges for long-time leaders whose institutions are changing around them and for new leaders who must come equipped to lead successfully in this environment.

4. Leadership Recruitment and Development

“Nobody wants to be a leader in the California Community Colleges.” While this statement reflects the extreme view of the leadership crisis, most leaders interviewed expressed serious concerns about the ability of the system to recruit the necessary cadre of leaders. Escalating retirements are causing large numbers of vacancies, and growth in the system will increase the total numbers needed. The shrinkage of applicant pools has been cited widely in the literature and was affirmed by most leaders interviewed, who reported increasing difficulty filling leadership positions. Most leaders traditionally come from the faculty ranks, but leaders report a “thin bench” of prospective in-house candidates.

The challenge of recruiting talented leaders has four distinct elements:

First, there is reduced interest in leadership positions. Reasons for this include the perceived difficulty of the job, the contentiousness of the environment, and insufficient salary differentials compared to faculty ranks.

Second, people who may be interested in pursuing a position of leadership face few convenient options for getting appropriately credentialed. In particular, there is a dearth of affordable and convenient Ed.D. programs.

Third, even where there are interested *and qualified* persons seeking leadership positions, districts have trouble attracting those individuals. Not surprisingly, the primary reasons for this are cost of living and inadequate salaries. Cost issues are particularly salient for recruiting leaders on the “business side of the house” due to competition with private industry.

Finally, there is the challenge of developing those leaders who do get hired so that they will be successful in this complex and dynamic environment. Preparing new leaders for success requires great care, time, and resources, yet professional development does not receive a great deal of attention or support within the system. Moreover, many believe that leadership development is more difficult in today’s community college environment. As one president stated: “old structures of leadership will not work in the decade to come.” A different, more collaborative style of leadership must be achieved.

5. Accountability

Legislators and taxpayers are increasingly calling for public agencies to be accountable for results. This is a difficult challenge for any public agency. But community college leaders find themselves in between legislative expectations for clear and measurable outcomes and faculty insistence on institutional commitment to a full range of educational outcomes that are not easily measured, e.g. development of the whole person, citizenship skills. CEOs understand, in the words of one respondent, that “accountability is not just single numbers but is much more complex.”

In addition, the measurement and documentation of student learning has proven elusive across institutions of higher education. The myriad missions assigned to the community colleges affects accountability challenges as well, because improvement in some aspects of the mission may appear as backsliding in other areas. Many current and prospective leaders lack training in and understanding of accountability issues—both in terms of its politics and the collection and analysis of data.

6. Public Relations and Image

Many leaders in the community colleges are frustrated by what they view as an image problem. They want to communicate the success stories that they see daily on their campuses yet they feel saddled by what one president termed “weak political advocacy” at the local and system levels. They envy the tremendous resources that the four-year institutions have at their disposals for advocacy and marketing. They acknowledge that the Chancellor’s Office tries to advocate for the colleges but is hindered by a lack of resources and, no less importantly, by the governance structure whereby community colleges are local institutions for which central advocacy can only go so far. The need to engage in effective advocacy and marketing at both the local and the state levels is therefore a major challenge facing current and prospective leaders.

7. Relations with the Community

The “community” to which leaders must successfully relate is multi-faceted. The workforce preparation mission of the colleges requires leaders to work extensively with the local business community to develop partnerships and specially designed programs and to help the colleges maintain appropriate curricula. The transfer mission requires close cooperation with local K-12 schools, area four-year institutions, and neighboring community colleges. The basic skills mission requires cooperation with social service agencies and the community at large. Local trustees comprise their own segment of the

community with whom presidents and chancellors must establish strong relationships.

Community colleges are local for a reason, and that reason compels college leaders to spend a great deal of time cultivating external relationships. But in doing so, they face additional challenges on their own campuses, because they need to orient the faculty toward the community in order to meet the expectations they raise. As the workforce preparation role of the colleges takes on increasing importance in the new economy, institutional leaders will face the challenge of reshaping the role of the full-time faculty to encompass these community responsibilities. Leaders hope to avoid the situation where community engagement is undertaken only by adjunct faculty while full-time faculty stay focused on campus-based teaching.

8. Curriculum and Pedagogy

Academic leaders in the community colleges have to be ever attentive to curricular change. More so than at four-year institutions there is a constant need to reinvent the curriculum to meet the needs of a changing economy. It is to community colleges that persons new and not-so-new to the workplace look to get the proper training. A sufficiently flexible curriculum requires faculty time (to develop new curricula), streamlined course approval processes, and effective use of external advisory committees. In addition, community colleges must teach students to be life-long learners and to prepare for a changing marketplace. This aspect of leadership is becoming more demanding as the pace of change quickens and the state increasingly relies on its community colleges for economic health and development.

Key Leadership Positions in the Community Colleges

We asked what positions in the colleges were key to addressing the above-mentioned challenges. Respondents affirmed the importance of faculty and staff leaders at all levels to institutional effectiveness. However, the most widely mentioned set of leaders were deans, associate deans, and “entry level” administrators, particularly those coming directly from the faculty. Some of the telling comments included:

“Deans are the ones trying to build the partnerships with business and industry and stretch the dollars.”

“Deans are critical because they are on the firing line and deal with faculty and programs.”

“Deans are especially important because they stand on the bridge between the status quo and change.”

“When faculty come right out of the classroom to become administrators, they lack relevant experience.”

The responses were useful for understanding for whom a certificate program should be designed. Many noted the importance of leadership development for entry-level administrators who are often faculty making the transition to administration without any administrative experience. Some noted that a certificate program would be especially useful for persons in, or aspiring to, leadership positions in *student services*, because the doctorate may not be as critical to these posts as it is to academic leadership positions. Many administrators in *finance* and *human resources* areas have good substantive backgrounds but could benefit from gaining a better understanding of California education law, finance, governance, and collective bargaining.

Most agreed that faculty leaders wishing to exercise leadership as faculty, rather than move into administration, have sufficient opportunities through faculty-based organizations to acquire the necessary faculty leadership skills and would not be a primary clientele for this program.

Recruitment of Current Leaders

Despite most positions being advertised nationally, most persons hired into district or college positions of administrative leadership are promoted from within the district. In the districts visited, most dean and vice president vacancies are filled internally. Not surprisingly, larger districts have more success filling positions from within. In general, pools are reported small and getting smaller.

Interestingly, the attitude about internal promotions is mixed. Most agree that internal recruits are the most successful and that there are advantages to grooming one's leaders internally. In one person's words: "it helps to have insiders." In another's words: "We have a new bias toward growing our own because we are building a new culture." At the same time, most respondents said it would be better if there were more mobility across districts and especially, more movement into the community colleges from outside the system. One president lamented that insiders prove to be the most "agreeable" candidates to search committees but are not necessarily the "best" qualified or the "risk takers" who are needed to meet today's challenges. Another respondent noted that the emphasis on "paying one's dues" within the system as the main requirement for a leadership appointment is "a major problem with the California Community Colleges but is unlikely to change."

Several barriers to a more open system were cited. Movement from other community college districts is discouraged by the provision of AB 1725 that eliminated administrator retreat rights upon inter-district transfer. Academic administrators who leave administration after changing districts are reassigned as probationary faculty. Entry into the California Community Colleges from out of state is rare with the exception of CEOs and some vice presidents. One respondent cited a trend toward hiring CEOs from out of state but added “and they don’t know what they’re getting into.” CEOs who come from non-unionized campuses have the most to learn in adjusting to the California environment. One CEO noted that the greatest challenge for CEOs coming from out of state is finding that “the CEO doesn’t get to make decisions” because of shared governance and so many mandates.

Movement from the K-12 system into the community colleges is becoming more rare. Many of the older generation of leaders began in K-12 but this background is now considered not as well suited for community colleges. There were some exceptions, where districts reported some influx of K-12 leaders. One respondent noted that a community college leadership certificate would be helpful to K-12 employees wanting to make the change into the community colleges.

On the “business side of the house” it is not uncommon for persons from the business community to be hired by the community colleges. Many felt that more persons from business should be hired by the colleges. But colleges can have a difficult time competing with private industry for talented individuals with strong business backgrounds. In addition, as one CEO noted:

“you can find good people in finance, human relations, and information technology, but not necessarily ones who understand the California Education code, finance, shared governance, and collective bargaining.”

Another underutilized source of potential leaders is the military. Some districts reported success with candidates from a military background, especially on the business side where lack of experience in a shared governance environment would not be as detrimental as it would be for an academic leader. Movement from four-year colleges and universities into positions of leadership in the community colleges was said to be uncommon.

The situation with respect to recruitment bodes well for a certificate program. There are internal candidates who would likely see a benefit to obtaining such a certificate. In addition, a certificate may help some of the “outsiders” become more acceptable candidates to those on the inside looking for more variety but fearing the newcomer with no knowledge of the real world of the community colleges.

What Makes for Successful California Community College Leaders?

We asked respondents what makes for a successful leader in the California Community Colleges. Responses included both characteristics (e.g. leadership and personal style) and competencies (i.e. knowledge of specific aspects of community colleges). From the discussions it appears that while both are important and should be covered in the curriculum of a certificate program, characteristics and personal style are especially critical determinants of success.

A. Characteristics of Successful Leaders

By far the most often-cited characteristics of successful leadership are strong communication skills and “people skills.” This includes listening, relationship-building, team-building, community-building, motivating and mobilizing people around a vision, negotiating, and resolving conflicts, as well as the basic communication skills of public speaking and writing. Collaborative styles were cited as essential—leaders must understand that authoritative leadership styles will not succeed in the California Community Colleges. Leaders must have a vision but not force it. They must inspire and motivate others to choose to follow the vision. Leaders must cultivate relationships and build trust, rather than use positional power. In the words of some of the respondents, these communication and people skills include:

“the sense to walk around and keep an ear to the ground and knowing that this is more important than paperwork”

“the ability to set priorities but to be inclusive in doing so”

“an understanding that administration equals service, not control”

“the ability to lead by giving up control”

Political skills were also noted as vital. Successful leaders have good political sense and enjoy the political interactions that come with working with locally elected boards, unions, senates, and other groups in a shared governance environment. They must know how to balance internal and external demands. One person noted, for example, that a CEO can achieve internal contentment by focusing primarily on internal matters, but that district “will not be a mover or shaker.” Others confirmed that CEOs need to be visible outside the campus, “demonstrate caring for the external community,” and spend a lot of time working with their boards.

Another set of characteristics that was mentioned frequently relates to the ability of leaders to tolerate and thrive in a fluid and complex environment. Flexibility and adaptability were key responses here. Leaders must tolerate ambiguity, be patient and pragmatic, have good judgment, not over-react, and have thick skin and a sense of humor!

Vision and systems level thinking were also linked to success. Leaders must think globally and be able to see multiple dimensions to issues—the proverbial “big picture.” As one president stated:

“There is always an educational, a fiscal, and a political side to an issue. A leader has to be able to look at problems multi-dimensionally. If you forget one leg of the stool, you fall over. And this is more true the higher up you go.”

Some respondents noted the value in being a risk-taker and having the courage to make decisions, although others stressed the inability of leaders to make decisions in the shared governance environment. Although only two trustees were interviewed, there was a noticeable difference in focus between the trustees and administrators, with the former calling for a more “executive” as compared to “academic” approach to leadership. If this difference reflects a widespread distinction in expectations, it adds to the challenges facing the community college leader as he or she attempts to satisfy all constituencies.

The more commonly accepted attributes of success were mentioned as well, i.e. hardworking, well organized, good time management, good delegation skills. However, the message that came through unmistakably was that nothing was more important than good communication, strong interpersonal skills, and a commitment to collaboration. Simply put by one respondent: “general administrative skills are not enough.”

B. Competencies of Successful Leaders

An understanding of budget, personnel, and law were the three most important substantive requirements for successful leadership, according to those interviewed. Leaders need to understand the unique aspects of the California system of budget, finance, collective bargaining, contracts, and education law. One person noted that “when leaders get into trouble, it is almost always for personnel reasons.” Specific budget, personnel, and legal topics mentioned as important include the ability to prepare a viable business plan, resource management (of funds, rooms, equipment, people), staff evaluation, professional development, understanding of board of trustee policies, and ability to read and interpret laws.

A second important area of competency was knowledge of the environments, both internal and external, in which the college functions. With respect to the

internal environment, leaders must understand the teaching and learning processes, curriculum development, the student services-academic success connection, vocational programs, the academic senate, the unions, and the specific organizational culture of the campus. Of the external environment, leaders must know the community, the legislative process, the California Community Colleges system, and how public policy is made and influenced.

Other substantive areas mentioned include the history of the community college movement, fund raising, operational and strategic planning, and ethics. With respect to ethics, one president suggested that a leadership development program include case studies of “relational ethical dilemmas” noting that “the leaders I admire are clear about their own ethics.”

Most Important Leadership Development Needs

After discussing the attributes of successful leadership generally, we discussed which of the attributes are most lacking and therefore most important for the certificate program curriculum. There was no sense that some of the important areas are already well represented among current and prospective leaders, leaving only a subset for our curriculum. To the contrary, there was great consistency between the answers to this question and the prior question on leadership attributes. A few additional specific areas of competency were included here, such as assessment and accountability and understanding diversity. In summary, then, a curriculum that aims to prepare leaders for the California Community Colleges should address the following areas:

- Communication
- Collaborative leadership and decision making
- Community building—internal, including integrating student services and instruction
- Community building—external, including understanding the economics of the local community and its businesses
- Working with boards of trustees
- Organizational development, including organizational culture, change management, capacity building
- Strategic planning
- Budget and finance in California
- Fiscal management
- The Community College “movement” – historical
- California Community Colleges law
- California Community Colleges personnel and human resources, including collective bargaining, affirmative action, legal issues
- California politics and policy making
- Fund raising
- Ethics

- Assessment and accountability
- Diversity in the California Community Colleges
- Teaching and learning in the California Community Colleges

Many of the successful characteristics of leaders, such as flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity, don't lend themselves to curriculum topics. However, respondents noted that these qualities can be explored through the case studies and role playing activities that should constitute much of the format of the curriculum. Program format is discussed further below.

Leadership Development in the California Community Colleges

Support for the creation of a leadership development certificate was very strong. Most respondents reported that current and prospective leaders face insufficient opportunities to pursue professional development. Internal training within districts is spotty. Some districts have internal programs such as mentoring and new manager orientation. Many others have none. Smaller districts and those where most leaders are new cannot mount successful mentoring programs. Most have a limited professional development budget for sending staff to training programs, although these funds are always vulnerable to budget cuts. More commonly, leaders learn to be leaders through "OJT" and "trial by fire". One person acknowledged that "we do a miserable job of training department chairs."

Many of the leaders interviewed had attended workshops sponsored by professional associations and educational institutions, such as the Harvard and Stanford leadership institutes, the new ACCCA Administration 101 seminar, and programs sponsored by the League for Innovation and the Community College League of California. Although widely praised, these programs can be prohibitively expensive for those at or interested in entry levels of administration. And many of these programs are aimed at high level leaders, not those at entry levels of administration or those outside of the community colleges wishing to get in.

Respondents cited the dearth of public doctoral programs (Ed.D.) as a barrier to solving the leadership crisis in the California Community Colleges. People aspiring to top leadership positions must either pay private university tuition or travel to neighboring states. Many interviewees expressed the hope that the certificate program would be the first step toward the creation of a new doctoral program in community college leadership under the auspices of the UC-CSU agreement.

Characteristics of Valuable Leadership Development Programs

Many of the leaders we interviewed had extensive leadership development experience, including degree and non-degree programs. There was considerable agreement as to what makes these kinds of programs valuable:

Problem-based. A program should include theory but should quickly move to the application of theory to practice. Students should work on real problems that they bring from their workplaces. Practitioners should be used extensively as guest lecturers to provide first-hand examples of the application of theories and concepts to the work setting. Case studies should be used widely to illustrate the application of theory to practice. In addressing problems and cases, students should be exposed to a full-range of views. Analytical and problem-solving skills should be presented and practiced.

Cohort and group work. Students should move through the program in a cohort and should have ample face-to-face contact to learn from others and develop group dynamic skills. The cohort model increases retention and completion rates. Lasting relationships develop from cohorts that can serve program graduates throughout their careers. Interactions with other participants in the cohort can be as valuable, or more valuable, than interactions with instructors. A cohort should be selected to reflect diversity of background and perspective so that students can get “outside the box” in considering approaches to their own workplace issues.

Networking. The program should actively promote networking among the students and between students and professionals in the field. Networks provide “lifelines,” “therapy,” and “mentors” that can be invaluable in one’s career. Once formed, networks need to be nurtured. The program should commit to working hard to maintain networks for program graduates.

Role playing. As real problems are brought to class and case studies presented, students should engage in role playing exercises to build confidence in different settings. For example, students should practice managing meetings with controversial topics and adversarial participants.

California relevance. The curriculum should cover the national perspective as it relates to California but should avoid topics that are not relevant to the California Community Colleges.

Exposure to leaders. Extensive use should be made of guest faculty who occupy leadership positions in the community college system, in the legislature, K-12, the business community, and other arenas where interaction with the community colleges is valuable.

Active engagement. Straight lectures should be minimal and active engagement of students in the learning process should be encouraged.

Structure and Format of Leadership Development Program

Certificate model. We began our interviews with the assumption that the program would follow a non-credit, workshop model. We were quickly re-oriented by interviewees toward planning for a certificate program. There was a strong consensus that with the dearth of degree programs in community college leadership, this program needed to offer credit, in the form of a certificate, that could ultimately be applied toward graduate study. We were also told that people who wish to take a workshop on a specific topic have other opportunities. The market that needs to be addressed here is for more sustained study that could help with near-term employment and become a stepping stone toward advanced study. Most respondents advised us that at least 9 units of credit would be needed to attract students to this program. Some supported a 12-unit program. It was suggested, however, that we be flexible enough to allow students to enroll for non-credit in cases where administrators already have the appropriate advanced degree, do not need additional credit, but have a clear need for the program content.

Delivery format. There was strong support for a Friday/Saturday once-a-month delivery format such as is used by many private colleges and universities for professional programs. This model is not only convenient for working professionals but allows for quick application of knowledge to the workplace. Respondents said that most districts would be willing to adjust work schedules to accommodate staff participation in a monthly Friday/Saturday program. The program could make use of a more intensive week or two in the summer to begin and/or end the program or during winter or spring break. Some on-line components would be advisable to minimize the travel demands; however, we were strongly advised that face-to-face participation is essential to deliver the needed content and practice the needed skills using groups and role playing. The structure of the curriculum should be flexible and allow for courses of differing lengths. There was some variation in opinion about the overall length of the program but most people thought that a program of approximately one year in length was best.

Program location. Representatives from the more distant parts of the four-CSU campus service region expressed some serious reservations about participants traveling to Sacramento on a monthly basis. As an alternative, it was suggested that we explore regional cohorts that could have the majority of their sessions at the nearest CSU campus. Distance education could help alleviate the travel concerns only to some extent because of the need for considerable face-to-face class time. There appears to be no compelling reason, other than convenience, to decentralize the delivery location. Respondents felt that the issues don't vary

much from place to place and that, because of the mobility of leaders, program content should not be overly regionalized. One person suggested that if multiple locations are used, the same faculty travel to the different locations so that all students receive similar instruction and there are no perceived differences in program quality among sites.

Target clientele. Everyone agreed that the program should try for a good mix of participants among current community college leaders seeking advancement, community college faculty and staff seeking to move into administration, and people outside of the community colleges (i.e. business, military, K-12) interested in pursuing an administrative career in the community colleges. As noted above, most people believe that the system is too closed to those from outside. A certificate program might help break down some of the barriers to entry from outside the system. A mix of participants would also enrich the experiences, help with “outside the box” thinking, and build more understanding among community college leaders of the communities with which they interact. Even among persons already in leadership positions in the community colleges, a mix of types of positions across functions and levels should be sought.

Recruitment. Most respondents were convinced that there will be a strong demand for this program. Nevertheless, a number of recruitment issues need to be addressed, especially given the short lead time before implementation. Some suggested that we use various statewide professional community college organizations to publicize the program. Others suggested that a process of nomination and selection would increase interest and awareness. We were advised to develop a clear message as to why someone should seek the certificate. Any guarantees or information we can give on the transferability of credit toward future graduate study would be helpful. Once the program has established its quality, we should seek to have districts include “certificate preferred” language in their job announcements where appropriate.

Faculty. A lead faculty member with a doctorate and leadership experience in the California Community Colleges is needed to give the program credibility for a successful launch. The lead faculty would provide some instruction (particularly the more theory-based content) but would primarily orchestrate the delivery of the content by experienced practitioners from the California Community Colleges, the business community, K-12, the public policy community, and elsewhere as appropriate to the curriculum. Presenters should include faculty leaders to discuss issues of shared governance, CEOs, business and finance leaders, legal experts, trustees, policy makers, and others.

Program cost. Most respondents drew a distinction between a program for credit, where students should be expected to pay the tuition, and a program for professional development only, where districts might sponsor participants. For our certificate program, it is likely that district contributions would be limited to

release time, schedule flexibility, and possibly some scholarships. As one respondent noted:

“Institutions have to find ways to be flexible with employee schedules since the need for leaders is so great.”

Most districts would not be able to sponsor the non-scholarship candidate, nor would it be appropriate for districts to use professional development funds for a long-term credit-based program such as this one. The greater the benefit that students see from participation, the more willing they should be to pay program tuition. Although the total cost would depend on the length, location, mode of delivery, and unit value, the range of \$3,000 - \$5,000 was offered by some as a guide.

Conclusion

It was clear from the interviews that the “crisis of leadership” about which we read and hear is real. The number of vacancies is growing. Pools of qualified applicants are shrinking. Pathways into positions of leadership are not expanding. Fiscal and governance challenges make the leadership environment challenging and conflictual. Current leaders can find the job as frustrating as it is rewarding. Although the addition of a certificate program cannot address all aspects of the crisis, there is strong support for our initiative across all districts we visited. In addition, there is great consensus about the issues and challenges facing leaders, the characteristics and qualities of successful leaders, and the components of a useful leadership development program. The support and consensus in the field bode well for the development of a program that can meet the needs of the participating regions and serve as a model for similar programs across the state. In the longer term, a more successful leadership cadre in the California Community Colleges will enhance the prospects of the California Community Colleges, its students, and the State of California.

APPENDIX

Major Questions for Advisory Board

CSUS has established an advisory board to assist with the development of the program. Building on the information in this report, the board will help design the certificate program. Some of the major areas to be addressed in the subsequent planning stages include:

Program structure

- The program will be offered for credit or non-credit, at the choice of the student. For credit students, is a nine-unit program structure appropriate?
- Should there be an internship (possibly added in subsequent years)? If so, how would it be handled for students who don't currently work in community colleges? (One goal of this program is to expand the pool to people outside the community college.)
- We are envisioning the program to consist of one "course" from start to end with students signing up for the whole 9 units. Is this appropriate or should the program be divided into discrete courses?
- Is the proposed Friday/Saturday schedule appropriate?
- Should any distance education be incorporated? If so, how and when?
- At CSUS the nine units will count fully toward a masters degree in Education, within the Higher Education Leadership option. How can the four participating CSU campuses best articulate the 9 units with their graduate degree programs?
- How should the outlying regions participate in the program? After the first year, which we propose be conducted all at CSUS, should their students attend classes in Sacramento or should there be separate sessions or separate programs to serve these regions?
- Within a CSUS-centered program, how can districts with staff participating in the program tailor a portion of the program to the local needs of their districts if they so choose?

Curriculum

- How can we provide sufficient information for those coming from outside of the community colleges and those new to California without boring those with significant experience in the California Community Colleges?
- Does the following basic organization to the curriculum make sense?
 - Generic leadership
 - Leadership styles
 - Communication
 - Motivation
 - Vision and planning
 - Organizational development
 - Leadership in the California Community Colleges
 - Collaborative leadership
 - Shared governance
 - Working with internal campus communities
 - Working with external communities (boards, business, fund-raising)
 - Working with boards
 - Understanding the California Community Colleges
 - Historical context of community colleges in US and CA
 - California Community College law: what are the colleges mandated and expected to do? What are the various missions?
 - Who are California's Community college students?
 - Faculty issues
 - Teaching and learning in the community colleges
 - Budget and finance
 - Collective bargaining
 - Personnel
 - Governance
 - Specific policy issues pertaining to California Community Colleges
 - Understanding the policy making process
 - Accountability and assessment
 - Diversity and affirmative action
 - Transfer
 - Workforce development
 - Other?

Faculty and staff support

- Is the following model appropriate?
 - A lead faculty member will attend all class sessions, facilitate a portion of each session, coordinate with guest faculty to ensure consistency throughout the curriculum, assign coursework, and assign grades
 - Guest faculty, both academics and practitioners, will participate in each session of the curriculum
 - Continuing Education, with the assistance of a program coordinator, will develop the curriculum, identify the guest faculty and practitioners to deliver the curriculum, and work with those faculty in advance to acquire the course reading materials
- If there are internships, who would be responsible for arranging them and monitoring the quality?
- Who would be good faculty and practitioners to participate in the program in each of the various topics?

Cost

- Is a total cost of about \$3500 - \$4500 reasonable for nine units of credit? (Students attending for non-credit would have a different cost structure.)
- Can districts be expected to sponsor any students?
- Are there any sources of financial support that the program should seek?

Admission Criteria and Recruitment

- What are the likely markets for this program? (Keep in mind that we want to draw in participants from outside the community colleges as well as from inside.)
- What should be our main recruitment message, i.e. why should someone take this program?
- Should there be any minimum educational requirements for admission to the program?
- Should there be a nomination and selection process in districts?
- How can we best recruit students from outside of the community colleges?
- Is the proposed cohort size of 30 reasonable?