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COMMUNITY COLLEGE VICE PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC
PARTNERSHIPS

Community College Vice Presidents' Perceptions of Academic Partnerships

by

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Old Dominion University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

OLD DOMINION UNIVERSITY

DECEMBER 2014

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY COLLEGE VICE PRESIDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS

Gloria Jean Savage-Early

Old Dominion University, 2014

Committee Chairperson: Dr. Karen L. Sanzo

Partnerships have a very important place among two- and four-year institutions as they allocate limited resources to continue to give higher education students a quality education. Community college vice presidents desire to give students options of completing degrees while maintaining jobs and supporting families along with options of pursuing advanced degrees. This qualitative study, which uses a phenomenological approach, will explore the perceptions of higher education community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. The main research question and sub-questions, to be explored are as follow:

How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?

- a. How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- b. How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- c. How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- d. How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents and grandparents who are no longer here to witness this achievement, and to Jesus Christ who is ultimately responsible for it all.

Thomas Leon Savage, Sr. (Father)

Beatrice Walton Savage (Mother)

Daniel A. Savage (Paternal Grandfather)

Annie Peele Savage (Paternal Grandmother)

James Edward Walton (Maternal Grandfather)

Matilda Stewart Walton (Maternal Grandmother)

JESUS CHRIST (My Lord and Savior)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank all the wonderful people who have helped me on this journey. First, I thank my parents Thomas Leon Savage, Jr. and Beatrice Walton Savage, for loving me and giving me their best and I thank God the creator of all. Without God and my parents there would be no me.

Next, I thank other family members and friends, who are too numerous to name. I especially thank my husband (Wilbert), our son (Aries), and my siblings (Frances, James, Leon, Thomas, Charles, and Cynthia), who all encouraged me tremendously. Thank you and I love you all so very much.

A special “thank you” goes to Dr. Dorothy C. Cooke for being an extraordinary mentor and friend. She understood the dissertation process and believed in me. She always encouraged me to do my best.

I also thank my dissertation chair and committee members (Dr. Karen Sanzo, Dr. Mitchell Williams, and Dr. Alan Schwitzer) for their guidance during this challenging and rewarding process. Continue to help others. Thank you to the study participants, who agreed to be interviewed and the peer member who were sounding boards for clarity and validity as they listened to me talk about my dissertation and asked me questions.

Finally, last and most precious I thank Jesus, who is the center of my joy and my life. I have never been nor will I ever be anything without Him.

From my heart I thank you all so very much!

WE DID IT!!!

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Year after year educational leaders across the country provide assistance to students transferring from two-year colleges to four-year universities with hopes of increasing their graduation rate and helping those graduates to successfully transfer and complete a baccalaureate degree (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009). Community college vice presidents are able to help students accomplish these milestones because they are qualified leaders in education and they have learned the value of partnerships (Boggs & Irwin, 2007; Calder, 2006). Their successes included the combined efforts of vice presidents of both the former and latter institutions working together to help students who pursue their educational goals (Smith & Ayers, 2006). The function of these combined efforts was to plan, motivate, encourage, and support the transfer students achieving their goals and degree attainment (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009). These vice presidents have learned through their own journey that these diverse students need proper preparation for jobs and promotion opportunities (Murray & Cunningham, 2004). Their preparation depended on vice presidents, who made quality decisions to support the needs and aspirations of students (Owens, 2010 & Smith & Ayers, 2006). The vice presidents themselves must have been properly prepared before they can effectively lead, and prepare new generations of vice presidents to influence and affect populations of students (Calder, 2006). Responsibility for an educational system, which practices moral and ethical judgment, has been placed on the shoulders of vice presidents and other top administrators (Craig & Norris, 2008). These vice presidents needed to strengthen their institutions through partnership practices.

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two-

and four-year institutions of higher education. Stable partnerships help to make sure that vice presidents are qualified to ensure that students have a smooth transition from the two-year community college to the four-year university campus. The primary focus was the perceptions regarding factors that affect partnerships. The purpose of this study involved coming to an understanding of how individual perceptions may determine the values and benefits of the partnership between two- and four-year institutions. Satisfaction of all stakeholders in the partnerships was a gain to all served by the partnership.

These perceptions uncovered important information to vice presidents working with students who are transferring from two- to four-year partnership institutions as these students progress through their program of study. The support and encouragement these vice presidents give students will help students to successfully graduate with a bachelor's degree. Transfer students indicate that support from people is what they need most (Owens, 2010). An additional purpose of the study involved cost effectiveness and supports goal-accomplishment by improving the quality and options of articulation agreements. This purpose saves the student time and money resulting from the partnership between the institutions. Program articulation agreements between two- and four-year institutions allow a more affordable and seamless route to completing their baccalaureate degree (Garcia Falconetti, 2009; Mensel, 2010).

Background of the Study

As vice presidents successfully fulfill their professional goals and progress through retirement new vice presidents must arise to resume these vital roles and sustain the credibility of colleges and universities across the country (Luna, 2010). A professional labor force properly educated and qualified will replace these instrumental vice presidents (McNair, 2010). These new vice presidents will require different skills than those needed in the past and these skill sets

will need to be properly defined (Murray & Orr, 2011). Many universities do not clearly define leadership responsibilities and this has created a challenge in past years (Bisbee, 2007). This challenge will dissuade some vice presidents from pursuing upward mobility positions. Many others will pursue these challenging positions in academic leadership because of rewards such as social and professional status, higher salaries, career mobility and advancement, and professional recognition (Murphy, 2003).

The future holds new challenges that current and past vice presidents may not have faced. New vice presidents will have opportunities to acquire expertise that will help them work effectively with future problems and create trend and analysis documentation to propel community colleges in a more futuristic and technology-driven direction (Bisbee, 2007; Murray & Orr, 2011). Current vice presidents who have not experienced the same challenges cannot lend their expertise (Murray & Orr, 2011). The proactive responses and strategic planning of these vice presidents will be based on trends that did not continue in the expected direction (Murray & Orr, 2011).

It was highly important that vice presidents be Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in the field of higher education and that they have partnership experience (Mattick, 2008). SMEs generally have the answers to many questions concerning their position or area of work (Eckel, 2010; Mattick, 2008). Power comes in many forms and being an expert brings a source of power that can be passed on to others (Eddy, 2010). In sharing knowledge, vice presidents are investing in the growth of others as well as keeping their speaking and presentation skills sharpened (Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008).

Future vice presidents will be grown and developed by creating programs that cultivate the vice president's talents and skills (Ebberts, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Mitchell & Eddy,

2008). Many states have programs to grow their own vice presidents (Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Luna, 2010; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008). The need for development stems from the change in availability of resources and a need to work together to share those resources (Eddy 2010; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). These future vice presidents will need to be creative in establishing pathways to the new positions as they are learning the position and creating the pathway as they go (Clemetsen & Balzer, 2008; Hancock, 2010 & Mitchell & Eddy, 2008). Partnerships with fellow colleagues will be built long before these vice presidents are in their final leadership positions.

The skill set of these future educational vice presidents requires an understanding of leading staff members who live in a world of “multitasking” and web conferencing and meeting. Vice presidents will need to maintain a high level of effectiveness even in the absence of regular face-to-face contact of staff members. Multitasking is often used by education employees and may need to be monitored and possibly addressed, since switching between activities and processes can create a lack of focus and cause important information to be overlooked (Winter, Cotton, Gavin, & Yorke, 2010). This will need to be considered as vice presidents maintain a level of balance and avoid wasting valuable time. People spend the greatest amount of their personal time in communication (Hanson, Drumheller, & Millard, 2011). Corresponding through social media and other forms of communication is another time management area to consider. Vice presidents may not be able to monitor this area closely but they can tactfully discuss time savers in meetings and incorporate advanced technology features to build communication skills and create partnership opportunities (Charlton, Devlin, & Drummond, 2009; Decarie, 2010).

There have been many decisions to make in the past and there will be many more to make in the future (Murray & Orr, 2011). The way the decisions are made in the future will reflect the varied and different challenges experienced by new vice presidents (Murray & Orr, 2011). A different kind of vice president has to be trained to think differently in order to meet these unpredictable challenges faced in today's new educational economy (Murray & Orr, 2011).

There is a positive side to this equation – facing challenges does not have to be accomplished by one vice president or even a few vice presidents. Partnerships, some for goodwill and others from the opportunities to share cost and facilities, are being formed all over the globe to benefit greater numbers of people at the same time (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Clemetsen & Balzer, 2008). Partnerships are collaborative efforts or associations between institutions, businesses, or people and should have a clearly defined and purposeful intention (Eddy, 2010). Each partner in the relationship should gain from the opportunity of combining efforts and working together.

Purpose Statement

Collaboration between two- and four-year colleges and universities requires decisions and coordination at state, local, and institutional levels which require stable partnerships agreements affecting various departments or components (Garcia Falconetti, 2009). Strong partnerships give opportunity for vice presidents to grow and learn, and to save costs by generating lean organizations (Gould, Brimijoin, Alouf, & Mayhew, 2010; Hancock, 2010; Luna, 2010). Collaborations and partnerships are important to policymakers because these efforts give institutions an opportunity to save money by eliminating duplication efforts and spending of scarce state and federal education funds (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001).

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Stable partnerships help to make sure that vice presidents are qualified to ensure that students have a smooth transition from the two-year community college to the four-year university campus. The primary focus was the perceptions regarding factors that affect partnerships. The purpose of this study involved coming to an understanding of how individual perceptions may determine the values and benefits of the partnership between two- and four-year institutions. Satisfaction of all stakeholders in the partnerships was a gain to all served by the partnership.

Research Questions

This study was guided by the following overarching question and sub-questions:

How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?

- a. How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- b. How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- c. How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- d. How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

Professional Significance

This study explored the perceptions of the experiences of vice presidents who are currently filling leadership position as community college vice presidents. This population made and contributed to high level decisions related to operating higher education two-year institutions and made decision directly relating to educating students attending community college and transferring to four-year institutions. In order to sustain these institutions and move to their next level, as well as move their careers to the next level, vice presidents must know where they are going and how to get there (Basham, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2008; Boggs & Irwin, 2007; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011). As budget cuts continue in the local and federal government, employees have opportunities to exercise controlled spending (Edelson, 2009). As community colleges prepare to meet the needs of the community it is imperative that vice presidents use diminishing institutional funds wisely (Basham, Campbell, & Mendoza, 2008; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011). Vice presidents must be flexible and innovative in multiple areas, especially with the organization and administration of resources (Basham, Campbell, & Garcia, 2010). Vice presidents will improve the delivery of education by making high-level decisions that improve the quality of education. Combining resources will be a key to sustainability and growth in the future community college setting (Eddy, 2010; Edelson, 2009; Levin, 1998; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008).

This study examined a theory in a relevant, real-life setting with which practitioners and stakeholders, those that affect or are affected by what happens in the two- and four-year educational institutions, were able to relate. Stakeholders interested in this study include individuals holding the titles of president, vice president, executive staff member, college or board of trustee member, dean, director, and other primary decision makers in these institutions. Other stakeholders include future vice presidents planning to pursue leadership positions in

higher education and also community members, students and their parents. The results of this study will be valuable to all educational practitioners and stakeholders for several reasons. The results are valuable because of the attention and focus on the expected shortages of educational vice presidents and how to prepare future vice presidents to be effective in their positions as matters of turnover and attrition are managed (Basham, Campbell, & Garcia, 2010; Bisbee, 2007; Campbell, 2006; Campbell, 2009; Edelson, 2009; Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008).

The perceptions of vice presidents can provide a broader perspective on the need and impact of trained vice presidents with the ability to create and sustain strong partnerships. Vice presidents have considerable influence on setting and enforcing standard in carrying out the community college mission. Other employees look to vice presidents for guidance in accomplishing the mission. Documenting those learning experiences can serve as useful tools to promote personal and professional growth to community college employees on all levels. Additionally, educational partners, local community members, students, and parents benefit from quality vice presidents and strong partnerships.

Future education vice presidents will need to maintain and nurture strong partnerships that strengthen their institutions and produce growth in the local community (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Smith & Ayers, 2006). These vice presidents will need to have competency-based learning, which measures achievement by mastering certain skills, to sustain positions in higher education (McNair, 2010; McNair, Duree, & Ebbers, 2011). Being a lifelong learner will be an added benefit to these future vice presidents as they continue to stay abreast of ongoing changes (Basham, Campbell, & Garcia, 2010). Properly trained and confident vice presidents will be properly suited for sought after leadership positions and these vice presidents will decrease

unwanted turnover (Basham, Campbell, & Garcia, 2010; Edelson, 2009). They will experience a proper fit for their position and grow other vice presidents as they move forward and continue advancing in their careers.

Overview of the Methodology

The phenomenological method was best suited for this study, as it emphasizes the true meaning of the experience and the person to whom the experience belongs (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). This method allowed the researcher to discover the individual true meaning of a personal experience (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The researcher established a clear and definitive understanding of that experience and made the presentation clear and understandable to others (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). This approach was appropriate and allowed the researcher to discover the voice of each participant so their voice can be heard by others (Hays & Singh, 2011). Focusing on the participant's perspective rendered the data rich and complete and will facilitate collaborative research practices (Hays & Singh, 2011).

Sound ethical principles and practices were built into the design of the study and demonstrated throughout the entire study. Without ethical value a study is not worth the time and effort put into it. Ethical vice presidents, with ethics at the heart of their leadership, must be just and reliable in all areas including research (Wax, 2007; Xiaoyong, Fen, & Jiannong, 2011). These are vice presidents who lead appropriately and also convey the benefits of ethical behavior and the cost of inappropriate behavior to others in their sphere of influence (Xiaoyong, Fen, & Jiannong, 2011). Ethical guidelines were followed in this study by following systematic ethical research guidelines that protected the participants and the participants' information (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Roberts, 2010). For example, as the researcher collected data the

information collected was transcribed and reported accurately and no shortcuts were taken to save time during data collection or during any other research related activities (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Also the researcher stayed focused on the participants' meaning and not on the meaning the researcher brought to the research (Creswell, 2009) and protected the identity and the information of the participants (Patton, 2002).

The data collected through interviews was centered on college collaboration, decision-making, and working with other institutions. Some of these experiences were relate to collaboration practices, individual contributions to decisions, and tasks associated with decision-making. Other experiences covered general areas, such as the decision process and partnership responsibilities. Member checks of the themes and descriptions were used for clarity in coding and to validate findings (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Roberts, 2010).

Trustworthiness was used to verify the consistency of the codes and patterns based on agreement or the lack of agreement (Hays & Singh, 2011; Roberts, 2010). The researcher reviewed the questions, codes and patterns, and the findings of the data analysis to get multiple perspectives of single sets of data (Patton, 2002; Roberts, 2010).

Limitations beyond the researcher's control may have affected the results of the study or the way the results are interpreted by different readers. Although the researcher looked for quality and meaningfulness, a small sample size in the Mid-Atlantic region could be a limitation. The researcher may be clear in conducting the study and may employ ethical practices but a lack of truthfulness from participants is a limitation that could tarnish the results (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The time period, length in time, and selection of participants could all be limitations of the study. Other limitations could be centered on the participants' lack of community college experience or time in the Virginia Community College System.

The primary researcher conducted the interviews and recorded the individual participants one-on-one interview sessions on an audio recorder (Creswell, 2009). An index card was used to prompt the participants to state the current date and time, their name, and location. Recorded sessions were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy. The researcher was responsible for transcribing each participant's interview. The data were analyzed to make sense out of it, to get a deeper understanding of the participant perspective, and to validate the accuracy of the information (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011). First the researcher read through the data to get a sense of the information and the overall meaning. What are the general idea and the tone of the message? What are the researcher's general thoughts? The researcher might jot down notes as the material is being read (Creswell, 2009).

Next the researcher organized the data for coding by categorizing and labeling the data with terms used by the participants (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011). After reading the data of a few participants the researcher started clustering data into several abbreviated topics heading, for example main, diverse, and miscellaneous topics (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009). The researcher found descriptive words for the topics and organized, tracked, then listed the words in categories by theme (Creswell, 2009; Moustakas & Creswell, 1994). The researcher abbreviated the codes and drew lines to show relationships between categories and themes (Creswell, 2009; Ryan, 2009). The researcher split the themes into patterns and the coding was considered convincing with a point of saturation that yields a high degree of agreement within patterns of themes (Hays & Singh, 2009; Moustakas & Creswell, 1994).

Delimitations

The scope of this qualitative study was narrowed by employing delimitations. The study included participants and institutions that match the selection criteria established for the study. The criteria for selection included participants with experiences in community colleges located in the Mid-Atlantic region. Selected institutions were those with partnerships with four-year institutions.

This study was expected to take approximately three months to complete. Qualitative data for this study were collected through interviews and document analysis. The researcher selected adult participants and scheduled first interviews in person when possible with follow-up questions over the phone. The participants were selected through purposeful sampling. The selection of these adult participants was based on involvement with partnerships between two- and four-year institutions in the eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic.

Definitions of Key Terms

To ensure a basic understanding of collaboration and partnerships among two- and four-year colleges and universities clarification of terms is important. Several definitions of terms used in this document are listed below.

Accountability: A responsibility of a person or institution to be transparent about capturing and tracking useful data and being compensated for output (Bailey & Morest, 2006; Freeman & Kochan, 2012). Accountability, which recognizes sound decision making, is a call for responsibility in doing what is right, not just what one wants to do (Findlow, 2008; Schmidlein & Berdahl, 2005).

Articulation Agreement: Formal program agreements between two- and four-year institutions that allow agreed upon route to completing baccalaureate degrees (Garcia Falconetti,

2009; Mensel, 2010; Montague, 2012; National Center, 2011). These agreements have set terms and conditions that provide benefits to all parties (Fairweather & Smith, 1985).

Collaboration: Deliberate linking, agreement, or relationship between or among individuals or organizations that enables the participants to accomplish goals more successfully together by exchanging resources than they could have separately (Connolly, Jones, & Jones, 2007; Townsend & Shelly, 2008). Collaboration is working cohesively to accomplish a given task or shared goals and occurs when groups or individuals learn from one another by sharing strategies and making decisions about decisions together (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012; Plagens, 2011).

Community college: Generally a regionally accredited institution, also called a two-year college, that offers instruction adapted in content, level and schedule to the needs of the local community and its workforce (Frost, 2011; Vaughan, 2000)

Ethical Research: A standard or code of ethical practice in research, in which the researcher follows rules to protect the participants' rights and their information (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002; Roberts, 2010).

Full-Time Equivalency (FTE): A calculation to determine and measure the enrollment or number of the student enrollment at an institution based on student credits hours. It is a calculation of student enrollment used for funding and trend analysis. This calculation representing the amount of time a typical full-time student would attend class was developed to standardize reporting (North Carolina State Report, 1993; Pensacola Junior College Report, 1997; Schepp, Duben-Kalash, & North Dakota University, 2009; West Virginia State Policy, 2005;)

Partnerships: Collaborative efforts or associations between institutions, businesses, or people that have a clearly defined and purposeful intention of gaining from the opportunity of combining efforts and working together. An example would be one or more combinations of agencies, schools, or universities with dual enrollment programs or articulation agreements designed to strengthen student achievement (Amey, 2010; Amey, Eddy, & Ozeki, 2007; Eddy 2010).

Reliability: The degree to which the findings are accurate and independent of unintended circumstances, yielding the same results every time the findings are tested or the instance recreated (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002)

Stakeholders: People who affect or are affected by the actions of an institution and have a direct or indirect stake in the institution. They are organizations, agencies, clubs, groups, or individuals, who may gain or lose something based on decisions of the institution (Benneworth & Jongbloed, 2010)

Transfer: Procedure by which student credit hours earned at one institution are applied toward a degree at another institution. The dual enrollment commitment involves working with these students while they are in high school, indoctrinating them into the college environment, and navigating them into colleges (Jain, Herrera, Bernal, & Solorzano, 2011; Melguizo, Kienzl, & Alfonzo, 2011)

Trust: An emotional and logical action that exposes one's vulnerabilities at a different risk level in which the individual believes another individual has their best interest in mind to do right concerning that individual (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009).

Validity: The degree to which the research was carried out following proper procedures and using proper instruments to yield credible findings (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002)

As resources become more scarce colleges and universities will continue to build partnerships that will offer the opportunity to combine efforts and share resources (Eddy, 2010; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008). The more trust people build, the stronger the partnership will be (Dhillon, 2007) and the more resourceful they will be to each other through resulting benefits (Dhillon, 2007; Eddy, 2010; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). An increase in trust shows that the partnership is working (Dhillon, 2007). As the partners maintain a climate of trust and shared goals new ways of thinking and working meet daily challenges (Dhillon, 2007).

The next chapter, Chapter II, broadens the knowledge base as a comprehensive review of the literature is accomplished on community colleges and their national status, Virginia Community colleges, partnerships, the shortage and replacement of community college vice presidents, communication agreement and trust, and collaboration and accountability.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

American community colleges have existed since 1901 when Joliet Junior College was founded in Chicago, Illinois as the first of America's community colleges (Ayers, 2010; Krebs, Katsinas, & Johnson 1999; Vaughan, 2000). The Truman Commission of 1947 saw higher education as a public good and visualized a national system of two-year colleges available free of charge so prospective students who qualified could benefit society (Ayers, 2010). Year after year community college students complete their associate degrees and transfer to four-year institutions with the hope of completing a baccalaureate degree without leaving their local community (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009).

The partnership between two- and four-year institutions of higher education is becoming a more common way of survival and growth in many institutions (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007). Institutional growth results from leaders and students being connected and engaged in the learning process. Keeping higher education partnership as a viable option will allow working adults, and others who want to remain in their local area, the opportunity to complete sought after baccalaureate degrees (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009). Not only will students complete their degree but they will also do so while maintaining their work and family life. They will have the opportunity to accomplish these goals without the need to uproot their families and transfer to a new location. These actions will allow precious time to focus on other personal and professional obligations, as well as foster individual growth that will lead to community growth.

Effective vice presidents are needed for these partnerships to grow and thrive in local areas of the community colleges (Smith & Ayers, 2006). These valuable vice presidents will have a vision, which clarifies where they are going and where the institution is going (Calder,

2006). These vice presidents will also maintain a balanced work and home environment with continued growth in each area. Change will not alarm these vice presidents, who will initiate partnership changes, with the knowledge that key constructs will be needed not only to establish partnerships but to sustain partnerships. The problem is that many community college vice presidents are retiring and qualified vice presidents are not prepared to replace the outgoing vice presidents (Campbell, 2009; McNair, 2010; Taylor & Killacky, 2010). Fulfilling this need will require ethical vice presidents with a vision for technology advancements, partnerships, and shared resources among other services.

Community Colleges

Many people would never have an opportunity to attend college without the community college and its open access (Bassett, 1997; Boggs, 2011a; Johnson & Briden, 2004; Vaughan, 2000). Community college graduates are included among the people that started their educational pursuit in their local community colleges, and includes families of friends of those graduates, who became students and were able to persist and balance personal and professional goals. Many students even returned to the community college from a four-year university often after a difficult semester or year (Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2008). These students were comfortable and content in the warmhearted environment of the local community college. Many students feel confident enough to return to local community college professionals to get back on track.

The tradition of community colleges has been to enroll students and offer options in obtaining any necessary prerequisites rather than turn students away because of their lack of prerequisite coursework (Dogan-Dunlap, 2006; Soria & Mumpower, 2012; Vaughan, 2000). Describing the student who needs prerequisite courses is not a simple process because the needs

and the background of students vary immensely. This open access has always been a key to the mission of community colleges, as well as its success in helping countless students from various backgrounds (Amey, 1999; Bassett, 1997; Vaughan 2000). Inclusion in community college can give each member of the entire community a sense of connection to the community college. The local community college has continued to supply inclusion as an educational tool and a means of support to the community.

Another tradition, and strength, of the community college has been the little distinction it makes between the lifelong learner and the full-time student in relation to the programs and courses in which a student may enroll (Vaughan, 2000). This availability of course enrollment allows all students the same high quality and quantity of education. The student will get the same quality whether they need a class for a degree, a promotion, or just to broaden their personal knowledge. College students can expect the same delivery of quality of education represented through documented programs that ensure equalized quality (Whitebook, Phillips, Bellm, Crowell, Almaraz, Jo, 2004).

The community college continues to make essential changes to adjust to the needs of the community and to survive (Dougherty, 2001; Levin, 1998). Survival is a result of continuous improvements toward staying relevant and satisfying community needs. Relevance is important, and its changes over the years have allowed the community college to remain important to the community that it serves. This relevancy continues to help students meet their professional and educational goals (Ayers, 2002; Mensel, 2010). Meeting goals bring strength to the community and prepares the workforce with the needed skills for more and varied work opportunities.

Not everyone views the importance of the community college the same way, nor have community colleges received the attention they deserve. This lack of attention has caused some

scholars and laypeople to view community colleges as catchall schools for students unable to attend other colleges (Dougherty, 2001). Students make decisions for college for different reasons and many prospective students and parents research different schools with the desire of finding a major that compliments their professional goals. There is academic disagreement about the role of the community colleges and their influence on the lives of students (McGrath & Van Buskirk, 1999). On the positive side, community colleges continue to grow and provide the needs of students in many locales.

What are community colleges? Community colleges are generally regionally accredited academic institutions, also called two-year colleges, that offer instruction adapted in content, level and schedule to the needs of the local community and its workforce (Frost, 2011; Vaughan, 2000). The local ties of the community colleges connect these colleges with the very people they serve – the local community. The goal of the community college is to offer an affordable way for people in a local community to have access to a college-level learning environment and to provide a range of additional educational opportunities for local residents (Boggs, 2011b).

Local community colleges owe their success to access, community responsiveness, creativity, and student learning (Boggs, 2011a). Their “open door,” which enables access to many people who would never have attended, is inviting to students of all ages and abilities with different preparation levels and educational experiences (Boggs, 2011a; Johnson & Briden, 2004; Vaughan, 2000). This open reception encourages students from all walks of life and reminds students and prospective students that education is for everyone.

Community colleges have not always had a favorable reputation as being as credible as four-year higher education institutions. Students who began their educational pursuit at a four-

year institution were considered more advanced learners and were found to consistently achieve more academically and were found to be more likely to complete a bachelor's degree (Long & Kurlaender, 2008; Vance, 2009). Many years ago there was a general idea that students who first attended two-year colleges had a lower educational achievement than their counterparts at four-year institutions and it was argued that two-year colleges caused students to lower their educational expectations (Clark, 1960; Clark, 1980). When compared to four-year institutions community colleges were often labeled and view as inferior and their students were penalized and required to retake many courses when they transferred to four-year institutions (Ignash, 1992; Wolfson, 1994). When compared to a university the community college diploma was considered and inferior credential rather than an alternative academic credential (Holgerson, 2005). Community colleges started to experience an increase in popularity and those two-year school began making large investments in technology to help them meet competitive demands for education (Ramaswami, 2009).

Community colleges generally cost less per credit hour to attend than four-year colleges and universities (Belfield, 2012; Fonte, 2011; Van Noy, Zeidenberg, & Columbia University, 2009; Vedder, et al., 2010). This makes the community college an attractive opportunity to people of all walks of life. Having a family life and moving through college at a comfortable pace, with classes small enough to receive personalized attention, becomes a realistic goal to local residents and their family members (Security, 2005). Families are able to give support while maintaining family ties.

The purpose of the community college continues to be serving the needs of the community by being a link between high schools and universities with the responsibility of individual student development (Mellander, 1994). This service to the community builds and

grows the local community by preparing individuals and groups to meet the ever-changing reforms in their local community. Prepared individuals are able to make broad contributions in their homes and society. The confidence of being prepared will enable individuals to contribute new knowledge and experience toward making greater, timely adjustments in many areas.

Nationwide status of community colleges. In the United States community colleges are the largest and fastest growing area of higher education (Boggs, 2011b; Boggs, 2012).

Community colleges all across the nation have something of interest targeted for all members of their local communities. Many community college transferable associate degrees allow students to qualify for priority admission considerations and guarantees for admission into four-year universities with junior standing (Hodara & Rodriguez, 2013; Johnson, 2011). In between finishing a bachelor's degree the student with the transferable associate degree has a college degree to their credit.

Career education offers additional associate degrees and certificates for traditional students who want to move directly into the workforce (Shulock & Offenstein, 2012). The degree, and the educational training these students receive, prepares students with career and technical knowledge for specific jobs to meet the economic needs of communities. This knowledge, also called technical education or career technical education, is based on manual and practical activities used by large and small businesses. Community colleges want to ensure that students are completing programs that are valuable to the current labor market (Moore, Jez, Chisholm, & Shulock, 2012). Career and technical educational has diversified into industries such as cosmetology and barbering, information technology, funeral services, retail, tourism, fire technology, and automotive technology (Moore, Jez, Chisholm, & Shulock, 2012). There are many opportunities for students to pursue career and technical education, yet career readiness has

only improved slightly and many high school graduates are still not prepared for a career (ACT, 2012). Students will need to be prepared when the opportunities are presented.

Developmental education is also offered in community colleges nationwide. This remedial education is believed by some to bridge the gap and closes the level of academic achievement (Altstadt, 2012; Bailey, Jaggars, & Scott-Clayton, 2013; Collins, 2010).

Developmental education provides basic skills that students need for college readiness or to give students a refresher on a particular class or area of study (Altstadt, 2012; Sherwin, 2011).

Additionally, some developmental education may be aimed at improving psychosocial, social and mental awareness or achievement such as understanding learning styles or improving time management (Rutschow, Cullinan, & Welbeck, 2012). While students may not like taking developmental courses, these are the courses that are often needed to prepare for the success in the course needed for degree attainment (Barnett, Bork, Mayer, Pretlow, Wathington, & Weiss, 2012; Quint, Jaggars, Byndloss, & Magazinnik, 2013).

Continuing education is important to prepare for entry into some occupations and to meet the changing employment needs in others (Choy, Billett, & Kelly, 2013). This education is offered for personal or professional development or individual interest, and allows professionals to acquire, maintain, and increase knowledge and abilities (Bradley, Drapeau, & DeStefano, 2012). This education can be delivered in the form of conferences, seminars, or workshops. Anyone can get involved in continuing education. Continuing education is an opportunity to advance one's current knowledge, skills, and competencies that can be shared with other colleagues (Choy, Billett, & Kelly, 2013). Involvement in continuing education can be formal or informal, in or out of the classroom, and can involve a diversity of participants (Cohen-Miller, 2012). Attaining the education is an opportunity for the general public to share extended

learning opportunities and keeps adults motivated and their minds stimulated and engaged (Meyers, Billett, & Kelly, 2010). This stimulation has benefits to the individual as well as agencies and activities with which these learned individuals come in contact.

Community colleges are viewed as important to local economic strength and recovery and are regularly being challenged to improve student success by increasing access and educational quality (Boggs, 2012). Leaders and members in the community want local families to have access to a quality education that benefits the community. Continuing to produce quality sometimes requires mission changes. The community college mission is always changing as its members work toward continuously offering learners what they need (Skolnik, 2001). Supplying these needs improves communities and economic stability.

Virginia community colleges. The Virginia Community College System (VCCS) has ties to Virginia's early history, including the educational and developmental views of Thomas Jefferson (Bassett, 1997; Vaughan, 1980). During the 1960s there was a growing need for more skilled technicians, which created the necessity for a new level of higher education (Bassett, 1997). The VCCS plan for 23 community colleges materialized in the 1960s and grew to a resilient establishment through the 1970s and 1980s (Bassett, 1997). Northern Virginia Community College, the largest of the 23, is one of the largest community colleges in the nation (Puryear, 1990). For many years the VCCS has addressed critical economic development and adult educational literacy issues at various levels throughout the state (Puryear, 1990). Times change and new issues arise and the community colleges in Virginia are still delivering quality education and workforce training on 40 campuses. State employees are regularly being required to be more productive and do more with less (VCCS, 2013). This requirement creates challenges and opportunities to meet those challenges. Due to a loss of state funding based on full-time

equivalency (FTE) the VCCS reported exceptional enrollment increases of 13% (22,000 students) from fall 2007 to fall 2009 (VCCS, 2013).

Despite past years of negative descriptions of community colleges, Virginia's community colleges and many other community colleges have managed to increase enrollment and report delivery of quality education through transfer comparison and state of the art technology. Community colleges no longer have the stigma of being a school for students who cannot qualify for four-year universities. Many changes have taken place over the years as community college vice presidents strategize to create more learning opportunities for students. In Virginia community college students that are underprepared for math college-level work are enrolled in one of three mathematics referral levels and outperform their four-year counterparts when also enrolled in student success courses (Cho, 2013). Successes of this kind, which are supported and integrated by community college vice presidents across the country, remove stigmas and give local students more options and more favorable outcomes.

The image of an institution is not always influenced by truth but sometimes image is influenced by pervasiveness that does not represent the truth (Tucciarone, 2007). In a world of competition and persuasion it is important to understand how the current and prospective students view institutions. A generality is a view that does not always equate to a truth, but a generality can and does determine institutional continuance or selection by students and prospective students. Locality and confidence that an institution will deliver a quality education is still important to students everywhere (Tucciarone, 2007). Students should still conduct their individual research on educational institutions to ensure that schools are delivering the expected education and that they are receiving the expected experiences. The research will give students the information needed to capture the institution's image and make comparisons in their best

effort to find out if the institution meets their expectations (Sunderman, 2007). These fundamentals are steps in the right direction.

Partnerships

Partnerships, some for goodwill and others for the opportunities to share cost and facilities, are being formed all over the globe to benefit greater numbers of people at the same time (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007). Partnerships can have a beginning that appears effortless and exciting to each member of the partnership. Initial results may come easily and there may be few if any major moments of concern or distress. However, the successful long-term partnership will need continuous efforts on the part of each partner to sustain its strength and cohesiveness.

In the beginning stages of the partnership it is important to build, establish, and explore the partnership, as it is being formed and strengthened. The partners should jointly define goals and objectives and activities to support those goals as they build a foundation of appreciation for the reputation and resources each partner brings to the partnership (Brady & Galisson, 2008). Building a healthy design of patterns will create a solid partnership foundation. A solid foundation will not fall apart at the first sign of disagreement. As the partners explore each other's interests and visions, the partnership will grow and mature into a long lasting, positive relationship and the partners will work with the understanding that relationships are vital in the success or failure of a partnership (Breault & Breault, 2010). This will create an atmosphere where the partners will add to the list of qualities they share and there will be a greater appreciation of their benefits to each other.

It will be important to recognize that partnerships change over time and that partners need to have meetings to ensure that needs are being met and that partners are making improvements (Brady & Galisson, 2008). Evaluation of the partnership is critical and should include thorough

evaluations and regular reviews of its tasking, quality, and cost benefits (Brady & Galisson, 2008). Evaluations will help to ensure that the partnership remains healthy and beneficial to each partner.

What are partnerships? Partnerships are collaborative efforts or association between institutions, businesses, or people and should have a clearly defined and purposeful intention (Eddy, 2010). The collaboration brings agreeable balance to the relationship as well as a sounding board for change. Collaborative efforts should be a multi-sided association and each partner in the relationship should gain from the opportunity of combining efforts and working together. A partnership is formed by one or more combinations of agencies, schools, or universities and is designed to strengthen effectiveness while solving problems (Amey, 2010; Amey, Eddy, & Ozeki, 2007; Gilles, Wilson, Elias, 2009). The ability to create strength through partnering allows each partner to benefit through the association of combined efforts.

All partnerships have challenges of varying kinds and degrees of intensity. How the challenges are approached and resolved is important. It is imperative that the conflict resolution, as with the building process, include a balance of combined efforts.

Establishing effective partnerships. Trust is one of the most important characteristics of effective and sustained partnerships (Dhillon, 2007) and this characteristic needs to be important to vice presidents. Initial trust creates the foundational framework for continued trust. Vice presidents, faculty members, and students will all benefit from the results of a partnership built on trust. Trust involves being vulnerable to others and requires confidence, openness, and reliability (Clouder, 2009). Having confidence in each other and being open concerning strengths and weaknesses will open doors to more reliability and trust. The partnership grows stronger as the level of confidence increases and the trust continues to rise (Dhillon, 2007). Vice

presidents who instill confidence in their teams and colleagues will therefore experience an increasingly strong partnership.

Strong effective partnerships give opportunities for vice presidents to grow and learn and to save costs by generating lean organizations (Gould, Brimijoin, Alouf, & Mayhew, 2010; Hancock, 2010; Luna, 2010). When organizations are lean, vice presidents, and those they lead, are in the practice of saving time and money by eliminating excess. This elimination of duplication efforts and spending of scarce state and federal educational funds results in increased capital spending and shows policymakers an vice president's ability to provide a strong foundation and effectively lead people and produce institutional growth (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001). Continued institutional growth builds confidence, experience, and reliability. The cycle continues, as does the growth of the institution.

Three key tenets of partnerships. Institutions across the globe are faced with challenges resulting from the changing bureaucratic structures of a digital world of advanced technology (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). As vice presidents adjust to these changes, and prepare for future success in all areas, preparation from the top leadership has to guide the process that is planned and implemented. The initial planning of such vital processes needs to have strong partnerships as part of the strategic plan.

The tenets of partnership are many and overlapping. For this reason three key tenets will be discussed. Not including all the tenets, by no means, excludes the needs or values of other tenets. Other tenets may easily fit appropriately beneath or beside one of the key headings. Communication, agreement, and trust are the three key tenets of partnerships that will be covered in detail. These three tenets are keys because they are foundational and often drive many leadership decisions and actions. Stability in the future requires driving force to take individuals

and institutions to a more progressive and productive level. These tenets will knit institutions together and cause creative growth through the relationships.

Communication. Interacting with people through communication is a survival need found in human beings in all different levels of society (Yalcin, 2012). Communication skills have an important role in life, education, the workplace, and partnerships, and partnerships help develop healthy relationships and improve the world (Hynes, 2012). The partnership involves a team working together to discover how they can be of assistance to each other and keep each other motivated and productive. Each partner works cohesively through communication to stretch their resources in such a way that the combinations of their services attracts more students and more employees (Sink & Jackson, 2002). Communication has been identified as the essential factor in effective teams and communication efforts should to be planned, with expected results in mind, to assure that the partners have ample time to invest in understanding where they are going and why (Sargeant, Loney, & Murphy, 2008). Partners will need quality verbal and written communication skills in order to take advantage of every opportunity for all employees to promote the services offered by the partners. Writing and speaking comfortable in public about quality services is just one aspect of the communication process.

There is a business side of communication that includes marketing, advertising, customer service, and public relations. Each of these areas is unique and brings a different quality to the strength of the partnership. Through integrating similar marketing strategies and combining efforts the value of the educational service can be enhanced and increased (Hoyt & Howell, 2011). This will create a quality educational choice for each partnering institution, which means that a quality choice for one institution is a quality choice for the other. The partners make an intentional and credible choice for each institution that increases the overall success of the

institution and increases student satisfaction yielding increased returns on marketing efforts (Wright, 2008). Sound marketing strategies and decisions can affect a large marketing environment and benefit each partnering institution.

The function of advertising is to get the persuasive message to the audience, the students, and anyone connected to the students and the learning process (Cheung, 2011). Advertising encourages the parents and prospective students, and informs the entire community, that the partnering institutions are doing new and exciting endeavors as they continue to provide education that is relevant, applicable, and current. Combined advertising will give partners a greater chance of communicating more programs offering to a wider group of people. Institutional vice presidents should use advertising practices as a means to survive and prosper (Ancil, 2008). Combined institutional advertising practices will be a sign of continued growth and will send a message of continuity.

Educational institutions should seize every opportunity to value their customer because customer service builds a reputation of quality service and an image that the institution cares about the people they service (Keith, 2005). Providing quality customer service in education requires having a trained staff of people who will put forth the extra effort to ensure that internal and external customers receive satisfaction for the products or services provided. A quality education is the product and the service is the manner in which it is delivered and received. Community college vice presidents must place qualified personnel in key positions who will ensure that both the product and the service is delivered in such a way that they have a positive impact on funding and do not produce negative public attention (Onsman, 2008). These key personnel will make sure the primary customers, who are the students, receive a quality education that will help these students reach personal and professional goals beyond completing

degrees. These goals might be getting their first professional position or getting a promotion. Customer service also includes making realistic promises that are in line with the mission and vision of the institution. Vice presidents need to promote continuous delivery of a high standard of quality education.

Relating to the public is important to the success of any educational institution, any institution for that matter. This proper relationship to the public must start at the top and flow throughout the entire institution as vice presidents direct the institution's culture (DiConsiglio, 2012). Changing times indicate that rights responsibilities and obligations, not just pedagogic issues, have brought about unexpected changes in administrative approaches (Onsman, 2008). For this reason it is important that vice presidents have some legal knowledge to give credibility to their selection criteria as they deal with laws that apply to employees, employers, education, immigration, safety, privacy, military issues, and other (Lunday, 2010). When the quality of services an institution delivers does not coincide with what is advertised, legal firms can thrive by suing those universities that violate customers' rights by not delivering exactly what they promise (DeKay, 2012; Onsman, 2008). Undesirable communication, even when untruthful or from an unreliable source can have a damaging effect and bring negative attention to stellar institutions.

Agreement. Agreement is planning and committing how resources will be brought together and used to benefit all partners in the relationship (Sink & Jackson, 2002). This synergistic effect is what causes the combining of resources to produce a greater increase of output (Sparks, 2013). Without agreement there is disagreement, which causes division and a decrease in output. This increase of output and production increases the level of commitment and the agreement to that commitment. There is a need for a high level of commitment to ensure

the seriousness of the intentions of the partners and to eliminate legal difficulties. Even with hard work and dedication some legalities may still arise.

Many times there will be different arrangements and different opinions about what is important to individuals, groups, and institutions. It is important to work out arrangements among different departments within one's institution, and within other institutions, prior to partnership agreements and during the continued agreement processes (Sink & Jackson, 2002). Agreements should deal with day-to-day operations, making decisions and solving disputes. There are times when the day-to-day operation of a facility or service is the sole responsibility of one person or institution. All partners in the agreement do not have to deal with the same issues. It is important to address many issues before the agreement is finalized so that all partners know the expectations and responsibilities. There will probably be some overlap of responsibilities and some changes to address new issues that might occur, but it is important to address as many areas of concern as possible before the agreement is made, especially when cost issues are involved. Essential day-to-day operational responsibilities are assigned to ensure safety in task completion and to provide efforts to eliminate unnecessary and costly duplications (Gibbs, Heywood, Weiss, & Jost, 2012; Overlap, 2011). Having the agreement written with clarity and signed by partners will promote task accomplishment through assigned responsibilities.

Partners will need to have regular meetings to ensure timely and quality services and products and to help strengthen the parity between partners (Mckenzie, 2005). Meetings will give partners opportunities to brainstorm and be creative in assigning routine undertakings, and important issues or changes as they occur (Agypt, Rubin, & Spivack, 2012). These meetings will encourage partners to participate and share their creativity, while allowing stakeholders the benefit of timely updates and accurate reports that give credibility to progression and quality

reporting (Aud et al. 2012). When decisions are needed there should to be a process already established to ensure proper care is taken to address decisions in an order of precedence where risk has been considered. Decisions as tools must be evaluated and used with an intended service in mind, which is to be predictable with accuracy and minimal risk (VanDerHeyden, 2010). High-risk decisions will often cost partners far more than either partner is willing to pay, especially if there has been any trouble coming to an agreement. For this reason it is important to have discussions and agreement on solving disputes, as disputes indicate possible underlying problems.

Resolving a dispute can be time consuming even when plans for resolution have been discussed at length. It is imperative to recognize that there is a problem and that the problem needs to be worked out together for the best resolution. Lack of attention to the problem or delayed actions may cause the problem to escalate rapidly over a short period of time. As disputes are being resolved partners will need to find the best method for dealing with a particular situation. One of three common methods, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, may be used; finding the best method might require lots of time and some trial and error. Because the partners have already agreed on several issues, discussing the problem and reaching a mutual agreement through negotiation might work for some situations. Negotiation, the most common method, allows the partners to use facts to voice their opinions to develop a beneficial solution (Pope, 2009). An unbiased mediator might have some success if the partnership is strained or negotiation is not progressing. A third person mediator is a good listener who does not decide the outcome but listens and facilitates discussions that help partners to achieve more with assistance (Hardman, 2010; Pope, 2009). When neither negotiation nor mediation works arbitration would be a reasonable next option. Through this option an arbitrator or panel of

people will make the decision for the partners (Pope, 2009). Moving to a more involved level of resolution increases the time and cost of resolving an issue and slows down routine quality production.

In addition to dealing with how agreement impact day-to-day operations, making decisions, and solving disputes there are also matters associated with specific types of agreements. Some of these specific types of agreements include dual enrollment agreements, and articulation agreements. These agreements allow community colleges to work with some students while they are still in high school, continue to work with these students to complete associate degrees through a local community colleges, and work further with these same students to complete bachelor and graduate degrees with four-year universities.

Dual enrollment occurs when students are enrolled in two separate academic institutions at the same time (Columbia University, 2012). Dual enrollment often refers to high school students taking college course, but it also refers to students taking college credit from two different higher education institutions (Marken, Gray, Lewis, 2013). Some criticism of dual enrollment agreements and programs between high school and community college is that the high school students are inadequately prepared for college-level coursework (Speroni, 2011). Others question whether the high school teachers are adequately qualified to teach college courses. Many do agree that dual enrollment is a very cost effective way for high school students to earn college credit in high school (Estacion, Cotner, D'Souza, Smith, & Borman, 2011), which makes an education very attractive to parents of all income levels. When working with high school students in dual enrollment agreement programs, the high school students are completing community college courses, which are taught in a local high school or on a local community college campus, with full tuition paid by most high schools and discounted by others

(Marken, Gray, Lewis, 2013). The students in these particular classes are concurrently enrolled and receive credits for high school and college simultaneously, which should improve their preparedness for success after high school (Columbia University, 2012; Marken, Gray, Lewis, 2013; Struhl & Vargas, 2012), yet some reports suggest little indication that dual enrollment alone increases the likelihood of high school graduation, college enrollment, or college completion (Speroni, 2012). This would give reason for parents and teachers to consider slowing the pace for students to take a slower more deliberate approach to such a life change and life forming experience.

Articulation agreements are formal agreements between two- and four-year educational institutions, or groups of institutions, that provide guarantees and transitions for transfer students from community colleges to four-year colleges and universities (Montague, 2012; National Center, 2011). These agreements have received attention and institutions and stakeholders have worked on policies to make the agreements and the processes well-defined and effective for students, parents, and employees working with students. All parties benefit from articulation agreements that set terms and conditions to help students transfer from two- to four-year educational institutions and meet professional and personal education goals, and the articulation process needs changes consistent with mission and technology changes (Fairweather & Smith, 1985). Staying abreast of needed changes can create a challenge to the transfer and articulation process. Education reform committees and vice presidents continue to address issues that affect student transfer and articulation, such as the transfer process, factors that simplify or delay the process, cost and time savings, and increasing success of the transfer students (Education commission, 2009; Hazel, 2010). Properly addressing these and other issues is critical and

requires researching and tracking measurable finding so vice presidents will know what is working and what changes need to be incorporated.

Nationally about 70 percent of community college students reported pursuing transfer associate degrees designed to prepare for success in transferring to a four-year educational institution and completing their bachelor's degree (Hodara & Rodriguez, 2013). These numbers indicate a consistent need to monitor student success in an effort to ensure success and growth of higher education through meeting the demands of the students. Many students do not know some basics about transferring to another college, such as if transferring is a desirable option, how the process works, their personal fit for the process, or where they currently are in the process (Education commission, 2009). Experienced and knowledgeable support personnel need to be in place to help students understand transfer options, know and complete course requirements to meet transfer agreements, and also know and plan for department requirements needed for the intended four-year program of study.

Some institutions have articulation committees whose essential role is to facilitate and expand educational opportunities for transfer students by providing information and instruction, promoting course and program equivalency, and aiding the transfer process (Finlay & Orum, 2011). This helps to prepare students for some of the roadblocks faced while giving students the support and confidence needed to face challenges ahead. The White House, foundations and states have initiatives to increase the number of Americans who complete college program and effective articulations will be key to the success of these initiatives (Education commission, 2009; National Center, 2011). It is vital that all entities continue working together with transfer programs and transfer students to achieve success. The future outcomes will be the conclusive results.

Trust. Trust is defined as a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). This willingness is extended to other individuals in the midst of exposing oneself to hurt, criticism, or rejection. It is that level of trust that believes in the person or institution in which the trust is given. A willingness to take risks is a common characteristic to all trust situations (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982). The trust transcends the risk and any associated factors and voids the possibilities of harm or danger because of the confidence in where the trust is placed. The trust is not viewed as good or bad; it is willingly given or awarded to someone else.

Building trust in a relationship can be a difficult process yet it is needed to provide strong and stable teams and institutions. Trust is fundamental to learning in all stages of lifecycles and learning is enhanced with trust and impaired without it (Tschannen-Moran, & Tschannen-Moran, 2011). It is important when one has to depend on another person or apparatus. Trust is one of the most important fundamentals for keeping any team or unit working together in harmony and when the level of trust increases group processes and performance increase (Dirks, 1999).

There are different characteristics that will enable different individuals to trust other individuals. When employed, these characteristics will build trust. Let us consider three characteristics of trust. These characteristics will enable individuals and institutions to build, maintain, and increase trust. Author Robert Bruce Shaw described these characteristics as results, integrity, and concern (Shaw, 1997). Sociologists Roger Mayer, James Davis, and David Schoorman called these characteristics ability, benevolence and integrity (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). David Lewis and Andrew Weigert's described these characteristics as levels of trust: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral (Lewis & Weigert, 1985a; Lewis & Weigert,

1985b). In this research document the researcher will call these characteristics ability, benevolence, and character.

Ability is a characteristic of trust that relates to the individual skills and talents (Ficici & Siegle, 2008; Panter & Kelley, 2012). These abilities can be technical or interpersonal and various testing can indicate different skill levels for different individuals. Some tests may indicate a balance in technical and interpersonal while others may vary significantly. When one consistently relies on someone's skills and talents they begin to trust that person's abilities. Someone's technical abilities may be proven in a more dynamic ways than their interpersonal abilities. In this case, the technical abilities will be easier to trust, as they are proven. As abilities in an individual increase and are demonstrated, the trust level will increase. An individual's ability to trust may be based on a false assumption.

The second characteristic of trust is benevolence. Benevolence is the kindness, compassion, and generosity shown by individuals and demonstrated through institutional practices. The characteristic is centered on the belief that the person or institution shows care and concern about an individual or a particular project. People want to be treated fairly and will generally trust those who display fair treatment. Some people will trust individuals who are proven trustworthy, while others will trust individuals until they are prove untrustworthy. Effective communication is at the heart of building trust and benevolence is often demonstrated through acts of kindness (Wellner, 2012).

The third characteristic of trust is character and it includes one's personality, temperament, and behavior. People will trust others who have a positive personality and behavior that displays integrity and reliability (Kline & O'Grady, 2009; RAJAGOPAL, 2010). When people show that they can be trusted over time and by others, more people will trust those

individuals. Being a person of integrity requires telling the truth and doing what is right even when doing right is difficult. You will be respected and trusted for doing the right thing in challenging situations.

Five ways to building trust. It has been mentioned that building trust can be difficult. People are able to build trust by displaying characteristics of trust demonstrated through our words, actions, and deeds. There are several ways to building trust, five of which will be addressed. Five of the many ways to build trust are to display trust, maintain openness, remain reliable, respect others, and support others. The first of these five ways of building trust involves trusting other people. Nothing betrays trust more than a lack of trust because issues with trust cause trust to vanish (Bowman, 2012). When trust is generously displayed to others trust will usually inspire others to return that trust. This reciprocation of trust is an exchange that allows others the opportunity to trust because trust was extended to them, thereby motivating them to return that trust back to the one who gave the trust. It is a worthy notion to have trust in oneself and one's own values before you can give your trust to others. That is why establishing an inner journey that sustains trust is an important criterion to building trust on a foundation that is laid incrementally by disclosing sensitive and personal information (Bowman, 2012). It is difficult to trust others in the absence of self-trust.

When people display trust in one other they share their power by sharing their knowledge (Blankenship & Ruona, 2008). They share their experiences, facts, opinions, and thoughts freely because they have given their trust freely. They also say no when they mean to say no and when they need to say no. When someone knows that taking on one more task will cause neglect to family or current tasks, they need to politely and respectfully say no, even if no means being labeled as selfish. Sometimes one simply can neither take on another task nor do another favor.

If someone say yes and cannot fulfill your obligation people will doubt them and lose trust in them and in their leadership abilities (Trakman, 2008). People also display trust by refraining from jumping to the worst conclusion when someone disappoints them or makes a mistake. It is essential to give people the benefit of the doubt until facts surface to prove otherwise, then the important issue is to deal with the situation in a professional manner.

Maintaining openness is the second way to build trust. Openness involves trusting without selfish and hidden agendas. When people work together regularly, one will eventually and occasionally rub the other the wrong way and block productive interaction (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Hackenberg, 2010). During these times speaking directly to that person is important. It is crucial to be able to communicate both negative and positive information with confidence and care (Thomas, 1988). Complaining to others and reporting petty displeasures causes division and destroys trust. Talking directly to a person builds trust and sends a message that one values the professional relationship and is willing to deal with a situation even when doing so is uncomfortable. Directly dealing with problematic situations is not always easy, but it opens doors to increase levels of trust. To defuse the situation at an early stage is better than waiting until anger and bitterness builds up in either person (Bettman & Tucker, 2011; Mathis, 2012). Anger and bitterness can cause a relationship to fall apart and dissolve.

The third way to build trust is to remain reliable. In order for a relationship to function effectively the members in the relationship need to be reliable. Reliability involves knowledge and follow-through actions that display dependability and consistency. No one meets every obligation every time, but consistent practices speak volumes about their reliability (Musschenag, 2009). Because complex projects are often time consuming it is necessary to build in extra time to allow timely completion. Reliable relationships have members who have

confidence in their abilities to complete their share of the load and also confidence in others to complete their share. Reliable people in the relationship are people who have proven their dependability over time and who can be counted on to do what they agree to do. Reliability results in expected outcomes and a reasonable explanation of delayed results (Cedefop, 2013; de Jager & Gbadamosi, 2010). People are looking for reliability that shows a consistency that results in high standards and exceptional quality.

Respecting others is the fourth way to build trust (Preston-Ortiz, 2010). One way of respecting others is to respect their time. This is sometimes accomplished by following through on commitments or giving an early notice when one cannot commit. This simple gesture gives people time to rearrange schedules and helps others to stay organized. For example, some people turn down luncheons to attend a working meeting. If there is an opportunity to attend a luncheon or some other meeting advance notice might give someone just the time they need to schedule a much needed break. On a more serious note, if someone is not notified of the delay of a very important project not only will someone feel disrespected but funds may be forfeited, contracts might be lost or need renegotiation, or precious time away from family, or family events may results; these routine and day-to-day promises are important (Sprangel, Stavros, & Cole, 2011). One can also respect others by treating each individual the way they want to be treated. When the focus is on the positive actions people do well and encourage the continuation of positive actions by showing respect. In showing respect for others people make positive individual contributions to promote a healthy work environment. Appreciating and valuing the words and actions of others shows respect for the individual and their ideas. Showing respect for others opens the door to receive reciprocal respect.

The fifth and final way to built trust is to support or help others (Blankenship & Ruona, 2008). One of the first ways to support is to listen carefully. Some people just want to talk ideas over and they do not want anyone to do anything about their situation. In this case, supporting is just listening to understand what a person is thinking or experiencing (Cleaver, 2011). Giving help when help is not wanted nor needed can be counterproductive or even destructive. It is critical to hear what a person has to say before determining if they need help, as well as what particular help is needed (Cook-Sather, 2009). One of the easiest ways to support others is to share something. You can share food in your home, knowledge and skills in the workplace, volunteer time in the community. When people help others they show care, concern, and goodwill while sharing our talents, skills, and resources to assist others (Smith, 2012).

These are just five of the many ways of building trust. The building process of trust does not happen automatically. The process requires time, patience, and consistent work. An important result of trust is an effective long-term partnership, which can benefit many people as well as organizations (Wellner, 2012). Adopting practices of trust by vice presidents will demonstrate professional behavior, which will set a standard for others to follow (Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Consistency in the area of trust will build trust in the people in the institution and in the institution itself. The weight of trust and the responsibility of vice presidents to adopt and nurture trust are strongly encouraged in all levels of the workforce (Kutsyruba, 2008). This creates a work environment that many people will gravitate towards and desire to have a connection to. The trust people develop in stable people and environments will influence their motivation for impacting performance (Dirks, 1999).

Community college partnerships. Several factors affecting programs within the college and community partnership revolved around communication, procedural, and organizational

issues (Ludwick, 2011). It is necessary to keep educational programs updated and flowing smoothly. Many different issues work together to ensure proper growth of an institution. Proper communication is key in setting a professional environment where internal customers are important. Setting an internal standard will create a conscious awareness for continuance action throughout the institution. Once communication is flowing smoothly following procedures and agreement becomes easier and organizational challenges diminish (Bracken, 2007).

Combining resources will be a key to sustainability and growth in the future community college setting (Eddy, 2010; Edelson, 2009; Levin, 1998; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). Conserving resources is vital to the continued success and growth of many institutions and agencies. Economic uncertainties present more reasons for individuals and institutions to have conservation practices in place and performed by all agency supporters. This presents an opportunity for all to gain, whether through experience, additional funding, or shared operational expenses.

Although transfer partnerships have received little attention in scholarly literature they have become increasingly common in the United States (Kisker, 2007). The literature presented offers useful insights into ways in which two- and four-year institutions can partner, thereby helping students transferring between institutions to complete their bachelor's degree (Garcia Falconetti, 2009; Mensel, 2010). As individuals invest time and energy into building strong and effective partnerships between colleges, it is vital to involve key contributors in top leadership positions to support initial and continued efforts (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Eddy, 2010). Continued efforts will ensure established partnerships stay solid as programs and procedures change.

When people come together and work together toward the same goal they have better results than they would if they work separately (Eddy, 2010; Hancock, 2010; Luna, 2010). This synergistic approach allows groups to accomplish more when they work together. Synergy is when every single part works together to produce something stronger than the individual part can achieve individually (Lisy & Theobald, 2009). This partnering involves working individually and then collectively and comparing the results of the progress. There is truth to the cliché that “two heads are better than one.” The result of synergy brings balance to each person and to situations. As individuals work together they discuss areas of strengths and weaknesses and how to build upon what is currently in place (Gould, Brimijoin, Alouf, & Mayhew, 2010).

Shortage of community college leaders. Leadership shortages are expected in community colleges across the nation as vice presidents prepare for transitions to retirement (Bisbee, 2007; Campbell, 2006, Campbell, 2009; Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010; McNair, 2010; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). The expected shortage and replacement of community college vice presidents, as the core group of experienced vice presidents enter retirement in record numbers, continues to consume discussions of vice presidents in community college systems (Bisbee, 2007; Campbell, 2006; Campbell, 2009; McNair, 2010; Murray and Cunningham, 2004; Taylor, 2010; Taylor & Killacky, 2010). As these experienced vice presidents retire and leave their positions in great numbers, colleges will lose a large degree of human capital that embodies many years of human knowledge. It is this asset of human resources that creates and nurtures strong and effective partnerships. Many of these professional partnerships became personal collegiate relationships that have grown stronger over much time.

Replacing community college vice presidents. As vice presidents successfully fulfill their professional goals and progress through retirement new vice presidents must arise to resume these vital roles and sustain the credibility of colleges and universities across the country (Luna, 2010). A professional labor force properly educated and qualified will replace these instrumental vice presidents (McNair, 2010). These new vice presidents will require different skills than those needed in the past and these skill sets will need to be properly defined (Murray & Orr, 2011). Many universities do not clearly define leadership responsibilities and this has created a challenge in past years (Bisbee, 2007). This challenge will dissuade some vice presidents from pursuing upward mobility positions. Many others will pursue these challenging positions in academic leadership because of rewards such as social and professional status, higher salaries, career mobility and advancement, and professional recognition (Murphy, 2003).

When there is a new challenge not faced by other vice presidents in the past, new vice presidents do not have the required expertise to eliminate the problem; neither do they have trend and analysis documentation to point to the right direction (Bisbee, 2007; Murray & Orr, 2011). Current vice presidents who have not experienced the same challenges cannot lend their expertise (Murray & Orr, 2011). The proactive responses and strategic planning of these vice presidents was based on trends that did not continue in the expected direction (Murray & Orr, 2011).

It is highly important that vice presidents be Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) (Mattick, 2008). SMEs generally have the answers to many questions concerning their position or area of work (Eckel, 2010; Mattick, 2008). Power comes in many forms and being an expert brings with it a source of power that can be passed on to others (Eddy, 2010). In sharing knowledge vice

presidents are investing in the growth of others as well as keeping their speaking and presentation skills sharpened (Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008).

Future vice presidents will not be found; vice presidents will be developed with creative programs that develop the vice president's talents (Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Mitchell & Eddy, 2008). Many states have programs to grow their own vice presidents (Ebbers, Conover, & Samuels, 2010; Luna, 2010; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008). The need for development stems from the change in availability of resources and a need to work together to share those resources (Eddy 2010; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). These future vice presidents will need to be creative in establishing pathways to the new positions as they are learning the position and creating the pathway as they go (Hancock, 2010; Mitchell & Eddy, 2008).

The skill set of these future education vice presidents requires an understanding of educating students who live in a world of "multitasking" and "Facebook" accounts, some of whom will never be seen by their professors as they learn at home using modern technology. Multitasking, which is often used as a tool, will need to be monitored to ensure that switching between activities does not hinder the effectiveness of vice presidents (Winter, Cotton, Gavin, & Yorke, 2010). Vice presidents will need to maintain balance and safeguard their valuable time. Vice presidents will need to be cognizant of creative ways of saving time and recognize Facebook presents opportunities to develop communication skills and save time (Charlton, Devlin, & Drummond, 2009; Decarie, 2010).

Significance of prepared and qualified community college vice presidents. It is needful that community college vice presidents be prepared to effectively lead in these high level positions (McNair, 2010). There will be times that institutional vice presidents will learn as they

progress to new areas in which they lack knowledge. Because of the magnitude of budgetary shortfalls, these vice presidents do not have comparable experience that will help to confidently deal with the certain budgetary dilemmas (Edelson, 2009). These vice presidents will be on the learning spectrum of certain aspects of their job. There will be no blueprint for some tasks for these new vice presidents will be creating the blueprint. The vice presidents will need the high quality decision making skills in order to make the most advantageous decision given the lack of prior knowledge from which to draw (Murray & Orr, 2011).

The community college environment has its own unique tasking and requires specific leadership and decision making skills (McNair, 2010). Turnover of senior vice president results in a small pool of decision-makers available to provide some useful perspective for the next emergency, sometimes presenting a crisis where a good decision does not seem to be anywhere to be found (Edelson, 2009). Considering the pressures of such a high level position, why do vice presidents find themselves in these high stress roles? Some enjoy the social and professional status, increase in salary, professional recognition, and authority (Murphy, 2003). They get to there by different means; they stay there by being prepared and qualified.

Collaboration and Accountability

Collaboration is working cohesively to accomplish a given task or shared goals and occurs when groups or individuals learn from one another by sharing strategies and making decisions about decisions together (Brinkmann & Twiford, 2012; Plagens, 2011). Accountability is the responsibility of a person or institution to be transparent about what they are doing and how they are operating (McNeil, 2012; Perry, 2013). It involves disclosing processes, and money issues like how funds were spent, and who received those funds, and what was received

in exchange for the funds. The disclosure practices of accountability helps institutions by protecting their credibility and bolstering the confidence others have in their abilities.

Collaboration and accountability work hand-in-hand, and long gone are the days when people and institutions can do what they want with out both of these valuable tools (Schmidtlein & Berdahl, 2005). Society as a whole is being required to demonstrate accountability through documentation and collaboration and not just words. New ethical and governance practices are attempts to protect the best interest of the totality of society and not just pockets of groups or individuals (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010; Dimmitt, 2009; Gerstl-Pepin & Aiken, 2009). These demonstrated practices document the responsibilities and actions through routine reporting and thorough explanations of consequences (Council of Chief State School Officers 2012; Kotamraju, Richards, Wun, & Klein, 2010; New Mexico Higher Education, 2010). This will ensure that proper justifications will be in place for planned decisions and that actions will correspond with those decisions. Everyone has a part in the demonstration process.

Vice presidents in their respective institutions must initiate and demonstrate collaborative efforts if collaboration is going to occur (Paul, 2009). Collaboration reflects on professional and individual development to improve accountability (Ho, 2008). As vice presidents become more accountable to each other each they gain more dependence on one another. An increase in production is the result of accountability and dependence on each other. Research exploration has revealed some conflict between accountability and innovation, but accountability recognizes decision making on the basis of sound rationale (Findlow, 2008). Incorporating accountability has been difficult because capturing and tracking useful and concrete data is difficult, yet it is important that higher education vice presidents embrace and expect the challenges of

accountability (Freeman & Kochan, 2012). Dependence on one another will foster shared decision making and data tracking, and will cause continued collaboration efforts.

Through continued collaboration there are added suggestions, which lead to further discussions on how changes can be incorporated in an existing process (Van de Water & Rainwater, 2001). Once changes are incorporated in the process, it will be monitored and the degree to which progress is made will be annotated. Processes that work are kept, and processes that do not work are eliminated. At times it may be difficult to agree on what is working and what is not; therefore, it will be important to define success in the early stages of the collaboration efforts in order to eliminate the loss of innovation and enthusiasm (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007). It is also essential for partners to know what they are looking for, so that they know when they have achieved it. Higher education vice presidents are increasingly challenged to demonstrate contributions of accountability not only to government leaders but also to the nation (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010; Meyer, 2012). Institutions have traditionally been evaluated and paid based on input rather than output; this accountability shift looks at output, such as graduation rates (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010; Bailey & Morest, 2006). Measurable results, like graduation and completion numbers, let vice presidents know when standards are achieved and whether they demonstrate success as an institution.

Future collaboration and synergy towards a shared vision will promote seamless integration of core values into everyday training opportunities as partnerships are strengthened (Ho, 2008). Collaboration makes good sense and enables agencies to optimize their planning decisions and manage important processes (Baumann & Andraski, 2010). As students, parents, and public policy makers request more accountability to understand how higher education operates and whether they are properly preparing students for the future, collaboration and

shared systems of accountability will improve delivery of solid evidence of reporting (Liu, 2011).

Chapter two included an extensive and inclusive literature review, which broadened the knowledge base about community colleges on the national and local levels, as well as partnerships and key tenets for establishing and maintaining strong effective partnerships. The literature review also expanded knowledge on preparing top vice presidents who will replace the vice presidents expected to transition to retirement in the upcoming years. These new vice presidents will need to be proactive to effectively respond to the new and upcoming changes. New leadership responsibilities may not be as well defined as they have been in past year. Some vice presidents will have to make adjustments as they pave new directions. The literature implied that trust and ethics is lacking in too many of today's vice presidents and that resources and replacements for vice presidents for the future are scarce. It will be imperative to establish new partnerships and strengthen current partnerships and to study trends and issues to help current vice presidents. It will also be important to continue to prepare vice presidents to assume key positions.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methodology was outlined to address each research question. The researcher explained the research design strategy, discussed the setting, identified the type of participants, and described the survey instrument. The data collection procedures were discussed and the data analysis explained. Finally, the researcher listed and discussed survey limitations followed by the conclusion of Chapter III.

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Stable partnerships help vice presidents work effectively to ensure students have a smooth transition from the two-year community college to the four-year university campus. The primary focus was the perceptions regarding factors that affect partnerships. The purpose of this study involved coming to an understanding of how individual perceptions may determine the value and benefits of the partnerships between two- and four-year institutions.

The study was guided by the following overarching research question and sub-questions:
How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?

- a. How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- b. How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
- c. How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

- d. How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

Research Design

A phenomenological research design was used for this study, as it emphasizes the true meaning of the experience described by the person to whom the experience belongs (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011; Patton, 2002). This method allowed the researcher to discover the individual true meaning of each personal experience. The researcher worked to establish a clear and definitive understanding of the personal experience so that it was clear and understandable to others (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). This approach was best suited for this study because it allowed the researcher to find supporting data to discover the voice of each participant and to let that voice be heard by others (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011; Patton, 2002). Focusing on the participant's perspective rendered the data rich and complete and facilitated collaborative research practices (Hays & Singh, 2011).

Sound ethical principles and practices were built into the design of the study and demonstrated throughout the entire study. Without ethical value a study is not worth the time and effort put into its completion. Ethical researchers, with ethics at the heart of their research, must be just and reliable in all areas (Wax, 2007; Xiaoyong, Fen, & Jiannong, 2011). The researcher must convey the benefits of ethical behavior and the cost of inappropriate behavior to others (Xiaoyong, Fen, & Jiannong, 2011). In doing so researchers produce credible work, set a high ethical standard, and set a positive example for others to follow. Ethical issues include protecting the anonymity of individuals and the project, providing accurate accounts of the information, and writing and disseminating the final research report (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

Systematic ethical research guidelines to protect the participant and the participant's information were followed in this study (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002, Roberts, 2010). For example, as the researcher collected data, the information collected was transcribed and reported accurately and no shortcuts were taken to save time during data collection or during any other research related activities (Creswell, 2009; Maxwell, 2005; Patton, 2002). Also, the researcher kept a focus on the participants meaning, and not on the meaning the researcher brought to the research (Creswell, 2009) and protected the identity and the information of the participants (Patton, 2002).

The design was effective in investigating the problem of replacing vice presidents in vacated positions. Through capturing the experiences of key community vice presidents the researcher reflected on personal experiences and made insightful discoveries (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The perceptions of this study will assist current vice presidents who are planning and preparing future vice presidents to effectively lead the new community college systems and the colleges within those systems. Vice presidents will need to make quality decisions to protect what they perceive as the core mission of the community college system or the community college they are leading. Understanding these perceptions will enable decision makers to determine the skill sets needed by potential vice presidents to be successful in community college leadership position. The researcher was prepared to make changes in the design as realities unfolded during the process of learning from the participants (Creswell, 2009).

Participants

The prospective participants were recruited through purposeful sampling to ensure that the participants had relevant community college experience (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). It was also beneficial to have these participants involved with high-level decisions, academic

partnerships, and other issues at the community college, for example transfer and articulation agreements (Landrum, 2009). The researcher selected adult participants from community colleges in the eastern region in the Mid-Atlantic States through postal mail, Skype, telephone, and email. The selection of these adult participants was based on their community college vice president position of vice president of academic affairs, student affairs, or a position that combined the two titles. Interviewees were selected from community colleges in the eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic States because these community colleges typically feed into some of the same core four-year institutions giving a common regional reach. While the student demographics were not common, students transfer into some of the same universities, which make this geographic region important.

The initial contact with participants was made with a formal letter (see Appendix B) sent through the postal mail system to 17 individual vice presidents addressed to their community college mailing address. Through individual community college websites the researcher collected the names and address of vice presidents of academic affairs, vice presidents of student affairs, or a position that combined the two titles (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The initial group of letters received a quick response from a few prospective participants. The first participant responded via telephone, followed by several emails. When the initial prospective participants were contacted they mentioned remembering the help they received when working on their dissertation and their desire to help others.

Scheduling during the winter resulted in various closings due to weather conditions, which resulted in several rescheduled appointments. Some face-to-face meetings in VP offices were rescheduled to conference calls. A couple of appointments had to be rescheduled a second time. The researcher did not get the 12 sought after participants from the initial mailing list.

Some participants sent an early decline to participate in the study and some did not even reply. A “thank you for agreeing to participate” email was sent to those participants who agreed to participate in the study, and a “thank you for considering participating” email was sent to those who declined. An additional email was sent to participants who had not replied in hope that they would make a committed decision to participate. The scheduling started as soon as each vice president agreed to participate and the interview process proceeded as participants were scheduled and rescheduled. At a point before all 12 participants had been identified, the researcher moved along with interviewing and transcribing.

When 12 of the initial 17 prospective participants that were contacted had not been identified as agreeing to participate the researcher contacted ten additional new prospects. Others were added from the second group contacted and after some additional emails and phone calls the researcher had 12 committed participants. While several participants did not respond to the initial letter or the follow-up emails a total of 12 participants were interviewed from 11 different community colleges. Follow-up telephone calls and emails supplemented the initial letter as needed for confirmation and clarification. Much to the researcher’s delight all of the participants who agreed to participate eventually fulfilled their commitments. “Thank you” emails continued until interviews and transcriptions were complete.

Interview Process

The researcher conducted interviews of the participants. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gain in depth information while getting the participants’ perceptions during the interview process (Hays & Singh, 2011). The data collected through the interviews is centered on college partnerships. Some of the experiences related to collaboration practices, individual contributions to decisions, and tasks associated with decision-making in

partnerships. Other experiences covered general areas, such as knowledge of the decision process and knowledge of partnership responsibilities.

Detailed field notes were used to help the researcher clearly describe and communicate the perceptions. The researcher used all of the senses (hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste) to take notes of what transpired in the interviews (Creswell, 2009). Field notes were used in the form of mental notes, short notes, or full notes in chronological order (Creswell, 2009). These notes were further expanded as soon as possible after the interview while the information was fresh in the researcher's mind and the information was easier to recall (Creswell, 2009). The longer the time between the interview and writing the notes, the less likely the researcher would remember the details with clarity. The individual interview is a commonly used method in qualitative data collection (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009) and the questions for the participants were designed to explore issues important to community college vice presidents, which are centered on partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions and the decisions that affect these partnerships. The individual interviews consisted of 11 open-ended questions, which were expected to last about 45 minutes each to allow participants to describe meanings in their own words (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011) (see Appendix A).

Probing open-ended questions, for elaboration and clarification, were asked to get the interviewee to provide richer information to bring out the voice of the participant (Hays & Singh, 2011). The researcher also ensured clarity by repeating information and asking the participant if the information was accurate. Active listening was important when it came to confirming understanding and presenting the clear perceptions of the participants (Hays & Singh, 2011; Keegan, 2009). Communicating powerfully with silence was also used to allow the participants to work through their own thoughts and to slowly progress through areas that were more difficult

to communicate than others (Keegan, 2009). The silence also helped the researcher to gather thoughts and prepare for further probing, to finish writing a note, or to transition to the next question.

Each one-on-one interview session was recorded audibly (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011). An index card or pre-interview announcement was used to prompt the participant to state the current date and time, their name, and location. Participants interviewed by Skype and telephone conference were briefed about the introduction information prior to starting the recording. The researcher turned the recorder off after each interview session was complete. The amount of time for each interview varied among the participants. Participants were given an anticipated time of 45 minutes for the interview, which had 11 open-ended question, with four questions having a second part or a why. Only one participant answered a phone call while the interview was being conducted and that participant apologized and said they really needed to take that phone call, and apologized again after returning to complete the interview.

Several interviews had to be postponed due to other commitments such as weather conditions, changes in work schedule, changed meetings, or family situations. All meetings either took place during their scheduled time or were eventually rescheduled which spoke encouragingly about the vice presidents desire to help others achieve goals and a commitment to help extend the knowledge of research related to their current professional field. Some prospective participants did not feel comfortable agreeing to be interview because of different reasons including being new to their position, being too busy getting to know their new job, not knowing the researcher or enough about the study. Others were kind enough to say they thought they replied and that they were certainly willing to be interviewed. Modern technology allows some flexibility in the mode of conducting interviews. All interviews for this study were

conducted through one or a combination of these three means: face-to-face, Skype, and telephone. Most interviews were completely transcribed within two or three days of their completion. A few interviews were completely transcribed the same day the participant was interviewed.

Conducting the interviews in an environment familiar to the participants gave the researcher an opportunity to experience cause and effect explanations and reactions first hand where they may be readily understood (Hays & Singh, 2011). Cause and effect was evident even in interviews conducted as telephone conference calls. A simple example was when Participant 8 put the researcher on hold to answer an important phone call. The fact that the participant took the call set the precedence for its importance. The researcher used that time to go over notes that were being transcribed during the interview.

The researcher limited their portion of the interview to the open-ended questions and a few instances of on-the-spot clarification. The researcher wanted to get clarity when a phrase or passage sounded questionable. For example, for elaboration and clarification the researcher questioned what sounded like “We’re mostly invested in the process...” and found out that the participant actually said, “We’re both invested in the process....” The question and subsequent answer presented an opportunity to provide richer information to bring out the voice of the participant (Hays & Singh, 2011). The researcher also ensured clarity by repeating questions, sometimes at the participant’s request or during long pauses. Sometimes the participant would even ask the researcher to repeat the question. Active listening was important throughout the interview process and was instrumental in knowing when to speak and when to stay silent.

Transcription Process

The researcher was responsible for the transcribing of each participant's interview. Recorded sessions were transcribed and reviewed for accuracy (Hays & Singh, 2011). Participants were given an opportunity to review their individual transcribed interview for clarity and accuracy. Transcribing can be very time-consuming and has been known to take approximately one hour of time for every 15 minutes of recorded data (Hays & Singh, 2011), See Appendix C for the Participant Interview Schedule. The researcher transcribed the interviews using Dragon software for the majority of each transcribed interview. The parts of the interviews that were transcribed without the Dragon software were accomplished while the researcher was out of the home area, where the software was housed. Dragon Naturally Speaking Speech Recognition software (© 2012 Nuance Communications, Inc.), which was advertised and rated as the "best" and most well known speech recognition software, allowed the researcher to save valuable time (Hays & Singh, 2011). The invaluable time saved by using the transcription software allowed more time for coding and analyzing data. Training the software to recognize the researcher's voice was well worth the time saved in transcribing. Not only was this software used for transcribing the interviews, but also for taking quick notes and adding direct notes into draft documents.

The researcher was responsible for transcribing each participant's interview with precision and care. The researcher ability to get a full experience of the process was a reminder to appreciate all the hard work that goes into any task others are asked to complete. An added benefit was that it gave the researcher complete control of the data.

Data Collection

This qualitative research study took approximately seven months to complete, January through July of 2014. Qualitative data for this study was collected through interviews that

centered on college partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). Some of these experiences related to partnership practices and individual contributions to partnerships from both two-year community college and the four-year partners. Other experiences covered other areas, such as how communication, agreement, and trust affect partnerships and collaboration and accountability in the partnerships. Rich data collected in this study will be beneficial and useful in building and maintaining stronger partnerships between two- and four-year institutions. This data will benefit two- and four-year partners and the many students the partners serve.

The researcher ensured that participants interviewed met the established criteria of a position as vice president of a Mid-Atlantic community college, and in one case a designee, by checking the perspective community college for their current position and title. The agreement to participate signified their confidence in their area of responsibility in their position as vice president or the vice president's confidence in a representative's ability, as was the case with the one designee. The detail and structure of the participants' answers spoke volumes about the wealth of information they brought to the individual interview. The relative repetition and similarities of portions of data brought stability and consistency to the data the participants provided. Both similarities and difference were brought out in many of their experiences as their years and areas of experience varied.

During data collection the researcher had two recording devices and extra batteries on hand for all interviews in an attempt to cover all bases and be prepared for the unexpected. Sometimes it is the simple additional steps that bring extra confidence and relaxation to an interview. Covering all the bases gave the researcher a calm start for each interview and allows

the researcher's mind to stay in a focused listening mode, which captured data without major interruptions.

Late January interviews had some early rescheduling issues and the first participant, P1, was interviewed on February 3, 2014 and the last interview with Participant 12, P12, was on March 7, 2014. Some interviews were scheduled in one mode and actually occurred in a different mode. This was due to conflicting scheduling issues and an attempt to work within the boundaries of the participant and be cognizant of their busy schedules. For some distinct information on the participants refer to Appendix C, Participant Interview Schedule. Participants were asked to participate in the partnership research study based on their positions as a community college vice president and their location in an eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic States. Although being interviewed was based on the individual participant's agreement to participate in the study, gender was added to show the ratio of male and female vice presidents who agreed to share their community college expertise and experiences.

Some perceptions were impacted by the region as a result of similar partnership agreements and similar preparation of students who transfer to some of the same universities. Several participants mentioned some of the same four-year universities in which their students were considering as they prepared to transfer to the "Best of the Best" schools in the nation. Even popular universities in different states were capturing the attention of their prepared local community college students as they worked hard to achieve their dreams.

Data Analysis

The unit of analysis for this study was the participant and the perspective of the individual participants. The goal involved interviewing the vice presidents to gain information that would allow the researcher to discover their individual perspective on their community

college partnership with four-year institutions. Since the researcher wanted to discover the participant's perspective, the perspective/world-based individual unit of analysis was used (Patton, 2002). The geography-focused unit of analysis was also used in this study to capture the perceptions of community college vice presidents in the eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic States (Patton, 2002). These types of unit of analysis methods helped to answer the stated research question and sub-questions and aligned closely with the aim of this particular research (Hays & Singh, 2011).

To make sense out of the data it was analyzed to get a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives and to validate the accuracy of the information (Creswell, 2009; Hays & Singh, 2011). First, the researcher read through the data to get a sense of the information and the overall meaning. What are the general ideas and the tone of the message? What are the researcher's general thoughts and are they credible? The researcher also jotted down and transcribed additional notes and thoughts, as the interview material was being read and transcribed.

Coding is a process that involved organizing the data collected and assigning meaning by labeling and categorizing the data with terms, and putting similar topics together into themes (Clark & Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2009). The researcher started the "thinking ahead process" of coding before conducting the actual interviews. Some research reasoned that coding should be guided strictly by the research questions, while other research presented an open view using various methods of coding. Research further concluded that with written text the researcher had to decide to code by word, phrase, sentence, or paragraph, and that coding was a personal preference (Hays & Singh, 2011). Based on the research questions and the interview questions, the researcher formulated different words and phrases that were expected during the interview.

Some of those included: accountability, advising, agreements, bachelor's degree, collaboration, course equivalencies, course substitution, curriculum, degree program, developmental courses, grade point average (GPA), graduation, registration, transfer students, and transferable course. When coding it is important to remember that sometimes a synonym, or closely related word, might be used to benefit the coding process. An example of this was the use of the words strong, good, very good, excellent, and robust as defining their favorable partnership.

Member checks of the themes and descriptions were used for clarity in coding and to validate findings (Creswell, 2009; Roberts, 2010). Trustworthiness was used to verify the consistency of the codes and patterns (Hays & Singh, 2011; Roberts, 2010). The researcher reviewed the questions, codes and patterns, and findings of the data analysis to get multiple perspectives of a single set of data (Patton, 2002; Roberts, 2010). Member checking with open-ended probing questions to accurately portray participants intended meanings was also accomplished to reduced bias and increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the study (Hays & Singh, 2011; Patton, 2002). Focusing on the participant's perspective was important in rendering the data highly trustworthy. The researcher used credibility of the data to determine if conclusions made sense (Hays & Singh, 2011). This process rendered the data rich and complete from the participants' perspective.

The researcher used member checking as an added layer of analysis to determine accuracy by delivering the product to the participant allowing the participant to review and comment on the accuracy (Creswell, 2009). The emails were sent to participants in two sets of six in each set, in a standard email with blind copies to recipients. Two participants did reply to the email saying that a review was not necessary. One participant said, "I trust that you transcribed our discussion accurately." The other said, "I don't think I need to review the

transcript of our interview.” This added to the researcher’s confidence in and reward of continuously undertaking credible and ethical research and following guidelines. After receiving no additional response the researcher made the assumption that no changes were deemed necessary.

The researcher also used peer debriefing as another layer of analysis to enhance accuracy. This process involved the researcher including peers, who reviewed and checked codes for consistency, and asked questions about the qualitative study to add validity so that someone other than the researcher echoed the interpretation of the accounts (Creswell, 2009). Initial member checks were made on Wednesday, March 26th with a PhD who is a retired community college employee and another PhD who is a four-year university employee currently serving in a partnership position with a community college. Each peer member enjoyed hearing about the study and was eager to know more. Additional member checks were also made the evening of Monday, June 16th with a PhD who is a recent graduate of the ODU’s Community College Leadership Program. The newly updated themes were reviewed and codes were checked for consistency. Additional questions were asked and more validity was added. The researcher was more pleased with the themes and these member checks received positive reviews and generated additional discussions that resulted in further minor changes.

Comprehensive sampling was used to ensure that this small population of 12 met the set criteria, and homogeneous ensured involving participants who were vice president in educational positions of academic affairs, student services, in a similar position, or a designee of the vice president in the positions (Hays & Singh, 2011). Homogeneous sampling also ensured that participants who worked in community college settings with similar environments and some similar experiences could also effectively address experiences related to partnerships between

two- and four-year institutions (Hays & Singh, 2011). The stratified purposeful sampling, which distinguishes features of subgroups, allowed the researcher to note similarities in the participants' experiences of partnerships with four-year institutions. Several are reflected in the dialogues. These categories of purposeful, or purposive, sampling methods did ensure proper selection of the community college participants.

Some considerations in using documents as data include benefits, content and dates, political and cultural value, and credibility and trustworthiness of the data (Hays & Singh, 2011). The researcher collected, reviewed and analyzed secondary data such as, graduation and transfer information, transfer and articulation agreements, and other information from Websites, to explain the questions, confirm information, and bring detail and clarity to the perceptions. Much of this was available on individual college websites. Written material was used as a supplement to data collection and provided some additional insight (Hays & Singh, 2011). These documents were used to support and confirm purposeful planned methods regarding vice presidents' perceptions of partnerships and how they benefit each institution. Success of the study evolved based on perceptions in general categories by community college and depended on accurately capturing and documenting the individual vice president's personal experiences and personal perceptions of partnerships in their environment. Success also depended on the researcher's ability to clearly present the voice of the participants. A lack of truthfulness on anyone's part could tarnish the results. Ethics is doing what is right when no one is looking and that is an important individual choice that researchers and each participant must make (Coulter, 2007).

When individuals are prepared, new skills will enable vice presidents to accomplish important community college missions, including working with college employees to strengthen the partnerships between two- and four-year institutions. Strong partnerships will ultimately

support vice presidents as they lead and students as they progress through their program of study. People have indicated that support from others is vitally important and in extreme need (Owens, 2010). The support vice presidents receive will give these vice presidents tools to lead and support others. The support and encouragement students receive from vice presidents help the students successfully transfer and graduate.

Program articulation agreements between two- and four-years institutions allow students a more affordable and seamless route to completing their baccalaureate degree (Garcia Falconetti, 2009; Mensel, 2010). Effective vice presidents understand the importance of articulation agreements as a component of strong partnerships. These vice presidents who have increased leadership skills and experience are more qualified to train others as well as improve the educational options for the employees and students they serve. These employees and students will in turn carry these teachings and demonstrate these teachings in their professional and personal lives.

Limitations

This study endeavored to provide vice presidents' perceptions of their partnerships between two- and four-year educational institutions. Limitations beyond the researcher's control could affect the results or the study or even the way the results of the research are interpreted by different readers. Although the researcher looked for quality and meaningfulness, a small sample size in the eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic states could be a limitation because the study was restricted to a specific population of academic vice presidents with experience working with academic partnerships between two- and four-year higher educational institutions. For this reason, findings of this study may not be automatically generalized to participants not fitting the selection criteria. Additional, the researcher may have been clear in conducting the

study and employed ethical practices but a lack of truthfulness from participants could be a limitation that could tarnish the results (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002). The time period, length in time, and selection of participants could all be limitations of the study.

Other limitations could be centered on the lack of community college experience or the limited time working in the particular community college setting. Interruptions before or during the actual interview could be a limitation. During interviews the presence of the interviewer could have been a limitation that could cause bias responses (Creswell, 2009). Others, on a phone conference, may have had a challenge not having eye contact with the researcher.

Although the participant was in a familiar environment the participant may have been uncomfortable with others in their space or they could possibly have experienced an unexpected challenge the day of the interview. Also, there is a chance that private information may be observed or heard that the researcher cannot report and that the participant asks not to be reported (Creswell, 2009). Findings and recommendations of this study may need adjustments depending on variations in time, culture, and current laws. Processes that work today may not work five year from now in the same manner. What works in one culture, even in the same area, may not work for another. Laws that are in effect today may have a slight change that might be illegal next year. The results for this study may still provide useful information to aid current and future vice presidents in community college settings.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the experiences of community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Stable partnerships help to ensure students have a smooth transition from the two-year community college to the four-year university campus giving higher likelihoods of success. The primary focus was the perceptions regarding factors

that affect partnerships. The purpose of this study involves coming to an understanding of how individual perceptions may determine the value and benefits of the partnerships between two- and four-year institutions.

Data were collected and recorded, then transcribed. Additional open-ended probing questions were conducted for clarity. Each participant was allowed to review the document of his or her individual transcribed interview for accuracy. Any needed changes were made to reflect the participants' voices. Data collected through interviews were compared among those interviewed. The findings through interviews was compared to the findings reported in literature for consist reporting.

In Chapter IV the researcher provided the results of the study. The results of each question was expanded and presented. The researcher presented the analysis of the perceptions of community college vice presidents in the eastern region in the Mid-Atlantic States.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In this chapter, the researcher provides the results of this qualitative phenomenology research study. In this study the researcher used 11 open-ended research questions to discover the individual meaning of the personal experiences of 12 community college vice presidents. The researcher listened intently to capture the experiences of those 12 participants. The results of each question is expended and presented in detail based on the interviews. The purpose of the interviews was to determine the perceptions and experiences of community college vice presidents of academic affairs and student affairs in the eastern region of the Mid-Atlantic States. This topic was chosen because it relates to the strategic framework questions of the study, and the vice presidents were chosen as interviewees because of their close working relationships with key partners in four-year institutions. Vice presidents need a thorough understanding the specific degree requirements for the programs offered at their institution. This clarity of knowledge will support and promote the credibility the two-year institution exhibits as vice presidents in this key position set the tone for building and sustaining partnership ties with four-year higher education institutions.

Valuable information has surface as a result of this study and these perceptions will increase the knowledge of many current and future community college vice presidents and result in discussions and improvements of community college operations. Some of this information will help with decisions and changes on available and viable programs to pursue, the grade point average (GPA) needed for acceptance into institutions of choice, the required courses needed for specific programs, and grades and requirements for continuing in programs and for graduation. When partnerships are strong and vice presidents are fostering and sharing knowledge among staff then students are better prepared to complete requirements and successfully graduate in

specific disciplines. Proper information and knowledge at the top will ensure each student is presented the same opportunities for successful transfer and degree completion. The following emerging themes in this study will increase knowledge and the help vice presidents in building and improving quality partnerships: nuances of partnership; agreements as the main partnership benefit; opportunities for partnership changes; partnership and relationship viewed interchangeable; agreements, curriculum, and transfer provide seamless affordable degrees; trust vital in building strong and continuous partnerships; communication and collaboration create improvement opportunities; accountability produces credibility and measurable outcomes; and role and voice of students are imperative (See Appendix D, Master Research Table).

Research Questions

To discern community college vice presidents perspectives of their partnership between their two-year college and four-year higher education institutions this study was guided by the following overarching research question and sub-questions:

- How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?
 - a. How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
 - b. How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
 - c. How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?
 - d. How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

Emerging Themes

Several emerging themes surfaced from the data analysis and were given a title or label and formed into categories, which were brought together into themes because of their similar meanings. These major themes are listed in a research table with the research questions and qualitative queries corresponding to the research questions (See Appendix D, Master Research Table). The development or emergences of these themes through the overall analysis of the data are detailed in descriptions below.

Nuances of partnership. Most participants had positive comments about their community college partnerships with four-year institutions. Others may have had positive thoughts and perspectives, yet their choice of words pointed to a possible need for much more progress. Examples of these thoughts and perceptions were included in statements by Participant Two and Participant Ten. Participant Two said, "If there is one word that characterizes the partnership with four-year institutions it would have to be complex....for students to transfer from the community college to the four-year institutions every relationship has to be worked out individually, with the institution." Participant Ten said, "I think far too often we enter 'partnerships' without a clear understanding of what that means, of what the implications are. And that's where that lack of trust or lack of accountability may come into play because one partner or both partners may not have a clear understanding or have different understandings of what the partnership and the intended outcomes are. And sometimes they conflict with each other." Participant Eight pointed out the need of partnerships with four-year institutions and said that, "by the nature of a community college we certainly cannot do our work without a wide range of partnerships. This participant went on to say that partnering with the four-year institutions define the community college's efforts "to streamline the transition from the

community college into the four-year to enhance student success.” The description of Participant Ten’s community college partnership with four-year institutions as “developing” was reflective of both time in a new position and “shift in external factors over the last couple of years, particularly as they relate to cost and transferability.”

Participant Eleven reflected on the partnership between two- and four-year institutions and it was noted that, “we’ve been very grateful to have working relationships not only in our program areas but also in our community efforts as well.” This is a definite reflection on the nature of the community college location in the local community and the realization that the community supports the community college. Community members have a vested interest, both economic and political, in having prepared professionals in the community. Educating and training local personnel will help to promote and sustain the local economy and will give local community members job opportunity close to their rural family members. That could be a large part of the reason that Participant Eleven’s stated that when the four-year institutions are looking at their programs, the community college has “been able to find some kind of natural fit from our programs to theirs.” The community is involved and connected, and it is promoting the community college’s efforts to develop and improve the training and education of local community members.

Agreements as the main partnership benefit. Articulation and guaranteed admission agreements were found to be the main benefit of the partnership. These agreements were found to be exceptional benefits and promoters of both the two- and four-year institution. Participant One said, “I guess I can focus a little bit on articulation agreements but I think that these types of partnerships to some degree exposes the two-year institution or the community college to the four-year institution, specifically with regard to the opportunities that are available” and

continued with “I really think it comes down to the relationship that you have with that institution’s understanding of the programs and services.”

The best fit is what Participant Two benefits from and said, “It’s not really promoting the institution, that’s not the basis for the agreement or for the partnership. It’s to promote the best fit for students and then we have partnerships with institutions,” but the participant also mention that students were “saving themselves some money and taking advantage of the guarantee admission agreement.” Participant Three saw the advertising and transfer benefits and said, “For the student who knows they want to transfer it’s a great partnership. It’s advertisement really, when you’re able to say that we have a guaranteed admissions process with a four-year,” while Participant Five noted a benefit of four-year institutions getting familiar with the environment of the community college. Participant Five said,

I think one of the biggest advantages is that it helps the four-year universities to be more familiar with the work that we do at the community college, and not only make them more familiar, but also make them have greater respect for the work that we do.

These areas of respect and validation benefits was evident when Participants Four and Seven mentioned their perceptions of the two- and four-year partnership as beneficial to the student and the partnering institution. Participant Four said,

I think the value is in the guaranteed admissions agreement. Those students whose end goal is to earn a baccalaureate degree see the community college as a way to achieve that. I think that’s how it promotes our college the best. We both recognize the value of the partnership.

Participant Seven said,

Students that we send to the four-year schools validate the quality of our programs when they maintain a strong GPA. We look at all of the guaranteed admission agreements with

our four-year partners and offer a voice at the table and provide input. I'm always promoting our partnership when we present anything on behalf of the college.

Participant Nine expounded on several promotion and benefit opportunities through which their institution's promotion of the partnership included "welcome talks to incoming student, local high schools talks, college website, student development courses, and the education wizard." These occasions and events benefit all institutional partners and the current students served by each institution, including prospective students who might be 'surfing the Internet' looking for prospects that will support local educational needs. The researcher visited the educational wizard at a community college system's website. On the right side was a note stating, "90% of recent high school grads believe they need more education" and on the left was the "Wizard" which helps students calculate the cost of community colleges in that particular system and compare the tuition cost and fees with those of the average four-year public and private universities. It also shows a total saving cost that shows several benefits of the two- and four- year partnership to the current students, prospective students, parents, and anyone else viewing the website.

Participant 12 also said, "We have a list of transfer agreements on our website and we promote those so the public can see them. Our advisors can use them that way," and this participant went on to share more selling point about the partnership as a marketing strategy.

It definitely is a selling point for the community college....We have a very strong associate degree in engineering and a guaranteed admission agreement....that partnership...and the success of the students that have transferred...and their stories help us to market our associates degree program and enroll strong students who are interested in transferring.

Marketing media partnership efforts with four-year institutions were addressed by Participant 11 who said, “We often partner with them in marketing efforts. We’ll have joint billboards as well as mailing campaigns, and even in some instances TV ads and direct newspaper ads.” These partnership initiatives show physical signs of the partnership to the entire public and foster avenues for decision-making on the part of students, their family members, and even prospective employees. Participant 10 expressed a student population view of the partnership and said, “As states focus more on transferability and articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions, I think that the relationship that we do have with four-year institutions is very important and critical to our student population.”

Community colleges are diverse institutions and students enroll in the program and course offerings for many different reasons, including closeness to home, financial issues, job retraining, remedial work, the love of learning, and plans to transfer to a four-year institution (Hornak, 2009). There are definitely partnership opportunities in the community college. Nearly 80% of students who enter the community do so with the intention of completing a bachelor’s degree (Doyle, 2009; United States Department of Education, 2005). Partnerships between two- and four-year institutions have been the catalyst to help these students pursue their goals and realize their dreams while continuing to work and live in their present communities. The high school dropout rate is a serious concern for many high schools across the nation and prevention program help but when 69% of dropouts say they were not motivated or inspired to work hard a lightly conclusion might be that some students are not ready for college (Burzichelli, Mackey & Bausmith, 2011). The fact remains that the community college is there when those students finally realize the need for education and have a desire to learn. The two- and four-year

partnerships make it possible for the unexpected students to realize their dreams. The agreements are the top avenue for making those dreams a reality.

Opportunities for partnership changes. As individuals are prepared for new areas of leadership new skills will enable vice presidents to accomplish important community college missions, including working with college employees to strengthen the partnerships between two- to four-year institutions. Strong partnerships will ultimately support vice presidents, and other vice presidents, as they lead institutional personnel and these partnerships will also benefit students as they progress through their programs of study. People in many walks of life have indicated that support from others is vitally important and is extremely needful (Owens, 2010). The support vice presidents receive gives them tools to lead and support others. That same support and encouragement the students receive will help their successful transfers and ultimate graduations. As community college vice presidents are acquiring skills at different colleges and universities, both two- and four-year, they are broadening their experience level and gaining a wide variety of knowledge that will help contribute to success in their current job. This will also position vice presidents for increased promotion opportunities and as well as opportunities to broaden the knowledge of those in their sphere of influence. Leaders are regularly influencing others including students they meet and greet in the hallways of their institution and the institutions they visit. This expansion of experience and knowledge will open the doors that will give vice presidents opportunities to keep processes that work and to change some processes to create new partnerships, strengthen current partnership, and enhance decision making to prevent the dissolution of fragile partnerships and strengthen weak partnership areas.

Strong partnerships will create additional collaborative opportunities for partners to discuss deeper areas of improvement on a more transparent level. Several vice presidents

indicated the articulation agreements and the guaranteed admission agreements as what was liked most about the partnership between two- and four-year institutions. Participant Four said, "I like having those guaranteed admission agreements upfront. That takes away a lot of ambiguity on our part and on the part of the student as far as wondering if courses will transfer and if they will be admitted. It's nice to be able to hand them a PDF of that agreement and say if you do these things...you will be admitted." This is definitely a means of streamlining the process while also giving the student some power to be proactive. This proactive power often stretches individuals and allows for more growth in the area of confidence. Participant 11, said,

What I like most is that it gives our students a greater number of options....I think it makes a more seamless transition for the students and we don't have to worry about whether they will accept different classes into their programs. So it's a great benefit to them.

Participant One likes "the fact that we have opportunities for students to articulate into four-year institutions for a variety of different program....there are a number of offerings that are available," and Participant Seven likes "the fact that the four-year schools are beginning to reach out to us...and will accept our programs at face value....the entire program." These are polite comment that will help the two- and four-year institutions see the benefits of their hard work and provide encouragement to consistently do the great jobs they are doing but what about moving forward? Vice presidents need to know what processes people dislike, find out why, and find out what changes will the make the process more effective.

Motivation to move forward is often stimulated through areas of dislike and areas where change is desired or needed. Sometimes an area that was liked about the partnership by one participant was disliked or needed changes by another. We will now look at some areas listed as

least-liked about the partnership and then the areas noted as desiring change. Some vice presidents disliked the difficulty in standardized agreements, complexity in matching courses, and the constant change in course delivery or delivery options. Participant One said, "It's very difficult to have a standardized agreement with all of the institutions." Participant Two said, it's very difficult sometimes to match up courses to various majors in the institution" and went on to say that "the partnerships help a lot, but they don't resolve the issue of a lot of the detailed requirements that various majors have." Participants Four and 12 were concerned about the confusion and frustration the students experience in the area of dislikes. Participant Four said,

There is still a little confusion about course transfer....some colleges have gone to a lot of trouble to be very explicit on how those courses will transfer and other colleges have not. So students who want to know exactly which courses will be satisfied and they are transferring to a college that either doesn't know how those courses will transfer or hasn't made it public.

Participant 12 said, "When we have students that have frustrations that's what I like least, but fortunately we have fairly seamless transfers with the four-year institutions." Participant Three did not like the constant change and said,

More of a challenge for us is they constantly change, sometimes requirements. And it's somewhat on us to make sure we are abreast....from a student affairs perspective I get complaints. The majority of complaints come from transfer students that want to transfer...and say your advisors don't know anything. And we are advising them to the best of our knowledge for transfer, but yet sometimes it changes. And the student may be taking a class that all of a sudden in a new calendar year, an academic year, it is not a requirement anymore.

Participant Six said, “we have some good partner institutions and we have some others that I feel still haven't bought into the effectiveness of them (speaking of the agreements),” and “All of our graduates are not considered equal dependent on their age” according to Participant Nine. Participant 10 mentioned a dislike in the form of a “drawback,” and stated that

Each community college is developing articulation agreements. And so there is that lack of seamlessness for community college students across the state....while some schools are in our backyard our students are also looking to transfer to other places...it becomes complicated to advise those students and I think it limits their options also when there are multiple articulation agreements. There is a single entry and multiple exits but there are multiple courses that will transfer and it's not done in a clear and concise way for the student.

Some additional areas that participants liked least about their partnership included perceptions of arrogance and inferiority. Participant Five said,

There is persistent arrogance on the part of some four-year university's faculty that their programs are superior. And there is really no justification for it in most cases but they feel that way anyway....it's a huge barrier to develop academic program when we encounter faculty like that.

Participant Seven said, “sometimes the four-year schools will tend to look down upon us as inferior, even our faculty. And our faculty have to have the same credentials.... as any other faculty at a four-year institution.”

There were also areas participants wanted to change about their existing partnership with four-year institutions. One such change was in the area of specificity. Participant Two said,

One thing that a lot of us would like to change is in agreements...frankly to create options for students that aren't so course specific.... whatever those courses are that they used to meet that requirement, that should satisfy lower division general education core at a four-year institution.

Participant One said,

There could be some improvements particularly along the lines of transfer. So standardizing some things, particularly the course catalog, would be tremendous. That is beyond the institution. It's not anything that we as an individual institution can do about that. That would probably have to be legislated by the General Assembly, but if there was one thing that I could change it would be that.

Participant 11 said, "For the most part we deal with our partners one-on-one individually, and very rarely do we have an opportunity to have all of them at the table. I think that would be an advantage." Participant 10 would appreciate more "seamlessness in terms of transferability" which could include "a core transfer library of courses" and "a common numbering system to help unify" the transfer process. Participant 12 wanted to change "communication and navigating some of the bureaucracy of communication, just to eliminate some of those frustrations for students," and Participant Four wanted "to see every college buy-in to the guaranteed admissions program every four-year college and university participating."

Participant Nine thought more four-year presence on the community college campus would help the four-year institutions connect with the students and said, "I think it would be nice if they had a little higher presence on campus.... particularly our private schools, that have good financial aid packages available for students, don't really get much opportunity to connect with our students." Participant Three also wanted more presence on the campus so students "are

hearing it (information) directly from the source” and because it “releases others from the liability of giving out wrong information.”

I think what I would like to change comes back to the issue of communication....sometimes we come in on the tail-ends all conversations instead of at the beginning....I'd like us to be involved at the front end when we're just coming up with new programs and we're working together to develop those programs... it would make much more sense to students...and tell the story effectively to students (Participant Eight).

Participant Seven wanted to change, “the perception that the community college is inferior. I would just like to have an overall acceptance of the community college as a viable leader in higher education.”

There was some overlap in many areas but each participant had an area of concern that was particular to their community college or their individual experiences and encounters. Each comment about the existing partnership, whether it was a “like,” “dislike,” or “change” will give the partners opportunities to work on the partnership to make it stronger and more supportive to the needs of the partners and subsequently the students they serve. The function of the combined efforts of the two- and four-year partners is to plan, motivate, encourage, and support the transfer students goals achievement and degree attainment (Mayadas, Bourne, & Bacsich, 2009). These areas of concern, or obstacles, create opportunities for examining the work involved in the expanding and strengthening the partnership in a manner that is adequate and suitable to the partners and the students.

Realizing a need for continuous improvement through change, the participants voiced their individual concerns for change. All partners and educational recipients share and extend learning opportunities as their minds are motivated, stimulated, and engaged (Meyers, Billett, &

Kelly, 2010). Through mental involvement partners create opportunities for change within individuals and institutions. Agreed upon changes are incorporated to benefit individual students and contribute to overall student success, which promotes partnerships and provide institutional credibility.

Partnership and relationship viewed interchangeably. Partnership and relationship was often used interchangeably by most of the participants. The participants saw the partnerships as relationships between themselves and their four-year counterparts and also as relationships between their institutions and four-year institutions. When asked a question using the word “partnership” several answers would contain the word “relationship.” Participant One said “our institution has many types of relationships where we might partner with four-year institutions” and “I really think it comes down to the relationship that you have.” Participant Four said, “I have a very positive feeling about the relationship with four-year colleges and universities,” and Participant Seven stated that, “partnership is about relationship building, bottom line.” Bringing a student-centered prospective, Participant Nine said, “That’s the best relationship, when the students our students, are able to stay here...and pursue a bachelors, masters, or doctoral program.”

At times some words, or categories of words, may be used to broaden or expand knowledge or to pique one’s interest and at other times they may be used out of habit (Miller, 2012). In this study the researcher use of partnership as collaborative efforts or associations between institutions, businesses or people that have a clearly defined and purposeful intention (Amey, 2010; Amey, Eddy, & Ozeki, 2007; Eddy 2010) certainly could define a relationship between those same categories of words. Because meaning of words can often be confused or

misunderstood and can hinder communication it is important to have some terms defined, as was “partnership,” to give readers the benefit of clear understanding (Mauch, 1982).

Relationship were also promoted, built, and developed. Participant Two spoke of inviting “representatives from four-year institutions to come onto campus to be available to talk with students about transfer and promote those relationships,” and Participant Four spoke of “face-to-face meetings to sort of build those relationships.” Participant Eight also valued face-to-face relationships and said,

We’re always having face-to-face conversations often on their campuses or they’ll come to our campus to talk through things. But that’s our primary technique. We don’t do a whole lot with distance because we’re in a very small role area and it’s convenient for us. And we also just value that face-to-face relationship building.

Participant Ten has “purposefully and intentionally tried to reach out and develop relationships and not operate in a vacuum,” while Participant Eleven “build trust by building relationships and getting to know the people that you’re working with on a regular basis.” These collaborative efforts are the actions that promote, build, and develop these professional relationships referred to my many as partnerships.

The types were relationships mentioned were open, good, close, professional, and positive. Some of the were the same words used when speaking about the partnerships. Participant Four said, “it’s a pretty open relationship” and “it’s a very good relationship that we have with colleges and universities.” This participant went on to say, “To think that we can all be very closely connected to the four-year colleges, so we would have a very close relationship with all of them.” Participant Six spoke about communicating with four-year partners and said, “We talk on the phone, we email, we’ve communicated in person; so we’ve just build a direct,

good professional relationship to discuss issues as they arise to do what's best for students," making it apparent that the partners are directing their discussions and their focus toward optimum outcomes for the students. Participant Eight spoke of the "good relationship with four-year institutions" as well as "trust in those relationships." Again focusing on the students Participant Nine, said, "At this point I think we have very good positive relationships with all of our four-year partners and they are upholding their end of the agreements as our students meet those requirements."

When it comes to respect and trust in the relationship Participant One said, "I think that there has to be a greater level of respect and a greater level of regard for the community college, and what we do," while Participant Two said, "the accountability is in the mutual respect and trust that we have in our relationships." According to Participant Five,

One of the biggest advantages is that it (the relationship/partnership) helps the four-year universities to be more familiar with the work that we do at the community college, and not only make them more familiar, but also make them have greater respect for the work that we do.

Seeing an importance of getting to know the people, and again the art of communication, Participant Twelve said,

I think you build trust by building relationships and getting to know the people that you're working with on a regular basis. If you are communicating with them, asking questions of them, working through processes with them, I think that working relationship builds trust. Respect and trust are important aspects of the rapport that is expected in the relationship, and even when there may be time when that respect and trust has not reached optimal levels it is still desirous. Getting to know the partners is vital to the building and strengthening the fundamental

trust in the partnerships and that trust needs to be reciprocated as it is beneficial to the long-term endurance of the partnership (Dirks, 1999, Tschannen-Moran, & Tschannen-Moran, 2011, Wellner, 2012).

Agreements, curriculum, and transfer provide seamless affordable degrees.

Program articulation agreements between two- and four-years institutions allow students a more affordable and seamless route to completing their baccalaureate degree (Garcia Falconetti, 2009; Mensel, 2010). Effective vice presidents understand the importance of articulation agreements as a component of their strong partnerships. These vice presidents are continuing to gain leadership skills and experience to successfully work on areas that will serve student needs in a more effectively way. The employees and students in their leadership arena will have chances to demonstrate these teachings in their professional and personal lives. Every institution is different but the partnership does allow the partners to come together and work on those issues and agreements that are more valuable to their institution and their local area. Keeping lines of communication open will be very vital in strengthening the agreements between the institutions.

Participant Nine is proactively ready to move forward with additional agreements to give students more in cost-effective opportunities and said, “My philosophy has been anytime somebody...wants to enter into an agreement I'm always all for it...anything that gives our students more options and cost-effective ways to continue their education.” This participant also likes having the educational availability of the four-year institutions housed “on campus or hold classes on campus” and viewed their presence on the community college campus as “the best...of both worlds, providing that opportunity to continue on yet not have to leave home.” So many of today’s students are working parents with many responsibilities. Having a quality education provided right in a local community where students have options of various colleges,

degree levels and disciplines, is a definite advantage to working students. Travel time and expense alone is enormous benefit resulting for two- and four-year partnerships agreements.

Participant Nine added that their community college deals mostly with articulation agreements that are program specific and then the broader guaranteed admission agreements that are across programs....did a kind of direct guaranteed admission agreement that was across programs with one four-year school because they are one of the schools that does not have a system-wide guaranteed admission agreement,

and Participant Eight deals with “articulation agreements providing pathways...to four-year institutions...guaranteed admission agreements...dual enrollment” and agreements to “host events or...initiatives regarding wellness.” Participant Six was working with “guaranteed admission agreements, program specific articulation, also working with some grants in partnership with some of our four-year institutions.” In reference to teaching grant opportunities Participant six added that,

from a global standpoint there are certainly opportunities with four-year schools for grant opportunities to partner, to help community college students go into the four-year institutions to get them into either some of the STEM fields or into programs that are heavy in need as far as workforce.

Global reach and STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) initiatives are two areas in which technology and education are working to improve the competitiveness in technology at a younger age and among more than just gifted students. With rising concerns about America’s ability to maintain its competitive position in the global economy, more funding is being made available for individuals interested in STEM initiatives (Chen, 2009).

Participant 11 had just answered a question about a partnership decision relating to transfer agreements with a four-year institution. In an even earlier question the participant had mentioned that their community college took advantage of many opportunities to promote transfer agreements with four-year institutions. This came through loud and clear when the participant had to take an import phone call. The researcher was put on hold and an advertisement announcement included information on transfer. The researcher did check the website and found that there were 12 four-year institutions listed with which that particular community college had transfer agreements. Participant also had partnership agreements that “provide space for colleges or universities that want to come in and recruit” and some “partnerships with a few of the colleges that utilize our library services or computer labs or testing center.”

This variety of agreements community college vice presidents mentioned dealing with definitely broadens the “access opportunities” for which the community colleges continue to be so well-known (Boggs, 2011a). Several vice presidents talked about the articulation agreements they had with four-year institutions and gave details about the number and names of various four-year institutions with which they had agreements. When many of the vice presidents categorized their partnerships as favorable, agreements whether articulation or guaranteed admission, were often mention as a main reason for their favorable partnership.

When dealing with transfer students and transfer agreement the vice presidents had many different contact personnel with which to communicate or the committee on transfer from which to get advice. Participants Two and Seven both serve on their state’s “committee on transfer, which meets a couple of times a year (Participant Two).” This is an excellent opportunity to “sit at the table with...four-year schools (Participant Seven)” and discuss transfer policies, progress,

outcomes and ways to make a difference on how those policies are carried out. The culmination of agreements, curriculum and transfer paths, provide opportunities for all partners to work together to provide guidance at all levels of degree attainment. The consistent, quality work together helps to ensure degree completion.

Trust vital in building strong and continuous partnerships. Trust is an action that exposes individuals to vulnerability and risk (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Goddard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009). It is essential when it comes to establishing and sustaining strong partnerships (Dhillon, 2007). Participant Five said, “the way that we can build that trust is to get to know each other, spend time together face-to-face as opposed to just doing this by email or by phone.” Many of the participants mention the importance of face-to-face contact when building relationships and partnerships. Talking with someone face-to-face often yield itself to a more powerful interaction. Trust is build as rightful actions are demonstrated over and over again. Participant One said you build trust in a partnership when you “just say what you mean and mean what you say, and do what you say,” and “If there is something that we need to communicate, whether good, bad, or indifferent, we just need to be honest.” Those are the right and correct actions and words that cause one person to trust another person’s word. When a person is continually seen performing actions consistent with their words and at the time and place they agreed to perform those actions people begin to trust their words. These demonstrated acts of kindness build trust, and people learn trust by watching others and demonstrating that trust they witness (Wellner 2012). It is important that trust is demonstrated on all levels, especially at the top. Participant Five said, “I also have greater trust if the presidents are involved...because then I know that that trust starts from the very top,” and that “honesty and openness in negotiations and discussions will help to build trust.”

Participant 10 said, “truth start with legitimacy,” and that “partnerships don't happen overnight. Trust doesn't happen overnight. Most of those things take years to build.” When people keep genuineness and realness at the forefront and make that a part of their lifestyle there will be many opportunities to trust others and expect others to give trust because trust is fundamental (Dirks, 1999). Individuals will then open themselves to be trusted by first trusting others. Participant Three said, “To build trust, know the partner’s focus, purpose and mission for a truly symbiotic relationship” and that there is “only one way to build trust and that is congruence of words and action.” If partners are going to work collaboratively they will need to get to know what each other is doing and consolidate some of their plans and actions. Documenting the partnership actions are not enough, the actions need to be carried out following the agreed upon standard. Participant Two said,

Trust is built based on relationships, and not on policies and physical documents.

Partnerships on paper are nice but it's the people who interpret those and work with the students that are the ones that make it happen or not happen.

Participant 12 said,

You build trust by building relationships and getting to know the people that you're working with on a regular basis. If you are communicating with them, asking questions of them, working through processes with them...I think that working relationship builds trust. And it takes time.

Trust is important in the partnership from the beginning and throughout the partnership. As trust grows the partners grow and the partnership grows. Since trust is essential in building and sustaining the partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions. It is important to maintain a high level of trust in order to maintain a strong partnership. As

Participant One said, “say what you mean and mean what you say, and do what you say.” If people fail to meet their obligations habitually others will lose trust in you and your abilities with just cause (Trakman, 2008).

This reciprocation of trust is an exchange that allows others the opportunity to trust in return. Nothing betrays trust more than a lack of trust because issues with trust causes trust to vanish (Bowman, 2012). Participant Seven said, “Any four-year school that we enter partnership with, we go in with the attitude of trust...and if we have any uncertain feelings then we don't embark upon that pathway to a partnership.” A feeling of uncertainty could be a sign that the partnership has areas that need some immediate attention. Participant Four gave a concern with an issues of trust related to transfer. The participant said,

I find it frustrating, and it makes me distrustful a little bit of these other institutions, when I see inconsistencies in how courses transfer. One institution comes to mind where last year we had two students, pretty similar academically, transfer to this college. One student had courses that were accepted. The other student had the exact same courses that were not accepted.

Participant Three said, there was a lack of trust between the universities and our system. To defuse the situation at an early stages is better than waiting until anger and bitterness builds up in either person (Bettman & Tucker, 2011; Mathis, 2012). Again, this is where transparency and openness helps.

Communication and collaboration create improvement opportunities. Most participants considered the status and wellbeing of their community college's partnership with higher education four-year institutions as favorable. Several vice presidents used terms like strong, excellent, and robust to describe the partnerships. In addition to working with transfer

officers at four-year institutions Participant One was also “in contact with deans of schools, or VPs and Provost to execute agreements.” Participant One does not regret any partnership decision due to a strong governance process and stated that their transfer agreements are “vetted by a number of people....down to the level of advisor, through other members of the executive cabinet, to academic deans.” This participant went on to say that “Everyone takes a look at it and provide their lens to it and come back with what we might think is the best thing for the agreement.” This signifies a partnership with clear lines of communication that has proven to be beneficial to all partners.

Participant Four has active communication with transfer admission officers. They are “the folks who are coming to college fairs and leaving information...their business card...the folks who come here and do information session.” Participant Six generally communicates with lots of different vice presidents, including a transfer liaison that works with and schools from different states” and added that “each school has a different set up on how they work with their partnerships.” The respective community college system’s office works with their entire system of colleges to standardize many practices within their system. Participant Three said their state system “sets up who our guaranteed agreements are with and the matriculation and articulation agreements are all set up through the system office.” Participant Two on the other hand said, Agreements are negotiated and ultimately signed by the president or me.... in terms of the actual negotiation of the agreements, of the courses...that's generally done through an academic dean.” Much of these processes are handled with some differences from college to college. Participant 12 was very inclusive and said, “I communicate with a variety of different people including vice presidents of academics, deans of various colleges, program heads of various colleges, and admissions reps from various colleges.” The important issue is that different individuals and

offices come together and work as teams to benefit the delivery of educational courses and programs in many different areas to many different people. Partnerships are working and they are making opportunities available to many people.

There were many different positions and individuals that each participant worked with but most mentioned the importance of having specific face-to-face collaboration in addition to other means such as telephone and email. Participant Three said, "we do lunches for our partners." They have an "end of year celebration luncheon" to acknowledge "any student who has graduated and been accepted and is transferring" to a four-year institution. The colleges come to witness the celebration, which is "really a partnership luncheon where we recognize the accomplishment of completion and progression." Participant 10's use of face-to-face collaboration opportunities includes "scanning the environment and knowing and understanding the dynamics between the institution and the environment" and say, "It involves peeling back the onion, all the layers, and getting to the root of how we work together and why it's beneficial for us." Knowing how partners work together and benefit each other creates lead-ins for problem solving. Participant 11 said, "we typically get our counselors together with the counselors at the four-year schools to sit down and hash out any problems." A resilient working relationship makes those lead-ins possible.

The participants had a different twist on how they handled their communication and collaboration. Participant One said,

Establishing rapport obviously would be something that you need to do in order to facilitate collaboration...that is to getting to know the folks from...the other institution...and then, really trying to understand what their needs are, what they're trying to achieve.

As each partner gets to know the needs of the other both can focus on way to accomplish the needs together to save time and resources. Participant Six advises people to “find out who the right person is and get connected” then “contact the people that can help get it done and then build those relationships.” As partners work and plan together it is important to “schedule regular meetings” (Participant 12) and check-in to “make sure the execution is on track” (Participant Five). Continue collaboration efforts, not just to get the job done, but also to make continual improvements on the relationship itself. Make purposefully plans to “sit down with people” (Participant Nine) make meaning interactions and connections.

As two- and four-year higher education partners continue to communicate and collaborate to strengthen partnerships, new developments and changes will create junctures for more conversations and interactions for making continuous partnership improvements as well as creating new partnerships. Advancement in technology will offer additional approaches for unique ways to incorporate timesavers when scheduling and conducting partnership meetings that will give partners the most value from their collaborative efforts. Sharing best practices, templates, and ideas will be incorporated into the core of the partnership routine functions. Prevailing thoughts of superiority and arrogance can be discussed openly and dealt with in a professionally manner and partners can be determined to have a better understanding of the cohesive strength of their partnership and view themselves as one team working to benefit many.

Accountability produces credibility and measurable outcomes. Accountability is the responsibility to be transparent and it involves disclosing processes, and money issues about who received funds and what was received in exchange for the funds. The disclosure practices helps institutions by protecting their credibility and strengthening the confidence others have in the overall abilities of the institution. In promoting accountability in the two- and four-year

partnership many of the participants mentioned open communication and mutual trust and respect. Participant One mentioned the “need for continuous communication” and went on say, “I think that it just comes down to communication. Honest communication.” This is a reminder that communication can be continuous but it also needs to be honest and trustworthy. It is open integrity that gives the partnership strength. This open integrity is a visible and measurable responsibility to accountability.

Participant Two said, “Accountability is the mutual respect and trust that we have in our relationships with those institutions.” Each partner trusts the other to operate in a manner that allows both institutions to benefit from the partnership. Participant Four said, “accountability starts with trust and it starts with strong relationships.” As partners experience the increase in production that results from accountability and dependence on each other they recognize the need for the partners to be accountability in all areas of the partnership. This accountability factor creates a win-win continuum for each partner and demonstrates the strength of the partnership.

Higher education vice presidents, at the request of government leaders and stakeholders across the nation, are increasingly challenged to demonstrate contributions of accountability. Because educational institutions are experiencing an accountability shift that looks more at output, as opposed to input, many higher education leaders are adding more processes to ensure that measurable results are received and recorded. Results, like graduation and completion numbers, let leaders know when standards are achieved and whether there is demonstrated institutional success. Participant Ten said, “I think you have to develop these things (processes and relationship) in order to be able to know what the accountability pieces are...you don't wake

up on day and be a partner with somebody. It's a process and it's an ongoing process that requires definition."

When processes, standards, and results are defined and measurable institutions have a documented blueprint that defines success, and demonstrations how successful the partnership has become. These are the kind of standards that are the guiding light for success in an institution. This accountability among partners gives each partner a clear understanding of the direction embarked upon with measurable outcomes to announce achievements. When public policy makers and parents request more accountability to understand how higher education operates and whether students are properly prepared for the future, systems of accountability will improve delivery of solid evidence of reporting.

Role and voice of students are imperative. Many rural community college students are first generations college graduates. Several of the participants pointed back to the benefit of the partnership to the students and reflected on the changes in their lives. As the vice presidents climbed the ladder of success, in respective community colleges, it was vital to maintain a student-centered approach to providing an environment conducive to learning. Participants reported listening to their president, peers, deans, directors, provost, partners, and faculty members. They also reported listening to the students. It was apparent that the students' voices were heard and appreciated and that they should continue to be brought to the forefront.

Improving an educational institution's ability to compete with other educational institutions depends on several factors, including the quality of service provided to students - and students do know a great deal about the service they receive (Briukhanov, Kiselev, Timchenko, & Vdovin, 2010). The opinions of the students are important and information is often gathered through surveys to document and analyze students' opinions and thoughts. Participant Five said,

“we have to make sure that we hear from our students.” Participant One’s process of working with students is “very thorough and comprehensive with regard to having the best interest of our students at the forefront of what we’re doing.”

Oftentimes, as a service to students, all institutional employees should take some windows of time to reflect on how help is provided to students on a regular base. Not just how one worked to provide adequate learning time, but how split second decisions, or the absence thereof, can have a positive or negative effect on any given student at any moment during the day. It is important to take a closer look and how one’s silence, not just a powerful delivery style, motivates students to learn and achieve personal and professional goals. Vice presidents, who serve students in an overarching capacity, need to consistently know when to watch and make a mental note and when to take action. Many students are depending on the keen insight of those student-centered vice presidents to help them attain their goals.

The two- and four-year partnerships benefit institutions and also the students. The participants mentioned several specific benefits to the students who are served by the partnerships. Participant Five mentioned that some four-year partners “hold their classes on our campuses.... when that happens our students don't have to travel to the four-year university” there are also “career workshops that the four-year universities host on our campuses,” and “sporting and cultural event and other campus visits where they get to experience a little of the four-year university.” These benefits to the students include time and travel cost, various workshops and a taste of the four-year university experience. The students’ voice of approval is heard when they show up to these events. Participant Nine said, “Our students are used to that opportunity to get some sort of aid, whether its scholarships or Pell grants...and not loans...for our students cost is very much an important aspect,” which is a financial benefit. When the

financial voice of the student is heard action is often taken in the form of donor scholarships, financial grants, and sometimes loans. Persistent students will continue to look for ways to degree attainment. A role of vice presidents is to lead the way in helping many students find a way to complete their educational goals.

Participants Two and Six spoke about the agreements. Participant Two said that the transfer coordinator and advisors explain the agreements and make sure students have access to updated agreement and that these students understand the agreements. Participants Six like to make sure the updated GAAs and program specific agreements are on the community college website. These agreements are the crux of the partnership that serves the students and allows the counselors, advisors, and students to work together to create an educational plan around work and family events so that students can graduate successfully and in a reasonable time.

Several of the participants mentioned dealing with transfer as it related to the students versus being only a process. Some students have a desired college in mind to attend but just need a little direction and encouragement on the transfer experience. Participant Two wanted to make sure “transfer arrangements for the students are worked out individually” that “the career goals and the appropriate programs are matched with the student.” Participant Two said, we are more interested in the students’ transfer experience, and making sure that it's a good experience.” Participant Eight said, “When we think of where our students go once they leave us, there are really only two possibilities, one is directly into the workforce but a large percentage of our students, of course, go to four-year institutions.” For Participant Five who said, “for about 60% of our students, the two-year community college degree is not the end of their academic journey,” over half of the students at their institution transfer to four-year institutions.

Some participants work toward serving the students in the partnership by helping the students complete their programs. Participant Four said, "I think those schools that have built agreements with us and maintained those agreements, genuinely are interested in serving our students and they want to help our students." Participant Six said, "we develop these (agreements) in good faith and then we honor them by offering the classes and making sure students can finish what they started." Students want to take their courses and finish their programs but sometimes life does make completing their degree during their expected time-frame difficult and challenging. Participant Seven said, "We look at our students as their students, and their students as our students." These types of service toward all students show genuine care and concern.

Today's students are involved in advanced technology, multitasking, globally connected to people in other countries, and have different styles of learning. Ensuring that students are properly advised early in the process is vital to the timely completion of their sought after degree. Taking too many courses or the wrong courses can delay graduation from the two-year institution and transfer into the four-year institution. These delays can also result in delayed promotions. Proper advising is essential in keeping students on track and imperative to students' timely success rate in reaching their educational goals. The data analysis of this study showed a high degree of student-centered care and concern on the part of the community college vice presidents. The participating vice presidents voiced their desire to make sure that all students were given proper advising and guidance to ensure that their educational needs were met.

The next chapter discusses the findings that resulted from analyzing the interviews of the participants, the significance of the themes, limitations of the study, specific implications for future research, several recommendations, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding the factors that affect partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education. Stable partnerships help to make sure that vice presidents are qualified to ensure that students have a smooth transition from the two-year community college to the four-year university campus. The primary focus was the perceptions regarding factors that affect partnerships. The purpose of this study involved coming to an understanding of how individual perceptions may determine the values and benefits of the partnership between two- and four-year institutions. Satisfaction of all stakeholders in the partnerships was a gain to all served by the partnership.

A phenomenological research design was used to emphasize the meaning of the experience described by the participants and to allow the researcher to discover the individual meaning of each personal experience. Data were gathered primarily through one-on-one interviews using 11 interview questions. This chapter presented the discussion of the findings. It was divided into six sections: (1) Summary of findings, (2) Limitations of the study, (3) Implications for future research, (4) Recommendations, and (5) Conclusion.

Summary of Findings

The summary of findings was presented relative to the major research question and the four sub-questions that guided the study.

Findings Related to Major Research Question

Major research question: How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?

This questions sought to explore how vice presidents of two-year educational institutions view their partnerships with four-year institutions. Most of the vice presidents who participated in the study viewed their partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions favorably and used such words as strong, excellent, robust, and complex in describing the partnerships. These benefits were consistent with finding in the literature with reviews of agreements helping students transfer from two- to four-year institutions, and reach personal education goals or receiving a bachelor's degree (Fairweather & Smith, 1985; Hodara & Rodriguez, 2013; Montague, 2012). Many vice presidents like the contributions and benefits of the partnership.

Positive reasons participants favored their partnership with four-year universities was due to the articulation and GAA agreements, curriculum, communication, four-year institutions being on their two-year campuses, and the opportunities the partnerships present to local students. The articulation and guaranteed admission agreements were often mentioned as a benefit that was liked most about the partnership and the participants often found a way to bring the agreements into the conversation. One vice president said that the community college could not do their work with a wide range of partnerships.

One vice president in particular mentioned that far too often partnerships are formed without a clear understanding of what it means to be a partner and without knowing the implications that are attached to the partnership. There will always be certain levels of conflict in any partnership. Sometimes conflict occurs early in the partnership, especially if sufficient time has not been invested to build a firm foundation or documented roles and responsibilities have not been established. In additions to those benefits that community college vice presidents liked there were also certain issues about the partnership that vice presidents did not like. Some

of those perceptions were that agreements were not standardized across-the-board, the difficulty in matching the two-year courses with the four-year programs, continuous change in requirements, confusion on course transfer even when different students had taken and passed the same courses, arrogance from the four-year faculty that their programs are superior to the two-year, and the notion that four-year schools viewed the two-year schools as inferior.

Change is a constant and there is usually occasion for change. The vice presidents did have areas of change that were perceived to be important to each of them. Even though several vice presidents voiced positive opinions about the agreements, others felt that changes were needed. One vice president wanted the agreements changed to create options for the students that were not so course specific. Another vice president wanted to change the perception of the community college being inferior, and several wanted more four-year presence on the two-year campuses. Another vice president wanted to eliminate some of the frustrations of students due to the layers of bureaucracy. Still another vice president wanted the advantage of having all the partners at the table together to collaborate, discuss, and make plans.

Insight into how these partnerships are viewed and the outcome of their interactions are valuable tools in understanding the current benefit of each institution in the partnership. This insight is also an excellent way to move forward and work toward increasing and building upon the current benefits.

Findings Related to Sub-question 1

Research sub-question 1: How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions?

This research question sought to explore how interactions and contact through communication influenced the status of the partnerships between two- and four-year institutions. The importance of communication skills is clearly pointed out in literature and is evident

throughout all walks of life. Communication skills are manifested in every area of life, including education, the workforce, and partnerships; and partnerships support the development of healthy relationships and improve the world (Hanes, 2012). Partnerships synergistic approach to teamwork keeps partners motivated and productive.

The vice presidents in this study worked in communication and collaboration with several two- and four-year representatives, including presidents, other vice presidents, Provost, deans, transfer officer, admission representatives, faculty members, and students. Many of these vice presidents mentioned the importance of face-to-face communication even if it was supplemented by other means of communication, such as telephone, email, etc. Building rapport to facilitate communication between partners was important to participants in the study and so were additional formal and informal conversations.

Through partnerships team members work together to discover how to assist each other to stretch and combine their resources and services to attract more students and employees (Sink & Jackson, 2002). Study participants found that sharing of resources and best practices were agreed upon through clear lines of communication and helped to make the partnerships stronger. The partners needed quality verbal and written communication skills to take advantage of opportunities to promote educational and employment services to students and employees. These combined efforts gave the partners the best that each partner had to offer.

The business side of communication includes marketing, advertising, customer service, and public relations; each area bringing a unique quality to the strength of the partnership. Educational services are enhanced and increased through integrating marketing strategies and combining valuable efforts (Hoyt & Howell, 2011). Through combined communication efforts partners deliver more program offerings to a wider group of students and those who make a

quality choice for one institution also make a quality choice for the partnering institution. Most participants in the study communicated favorable comments about their partnerships with four-year institutions. Their communication was with different departments at different institutions and participants said each school had a different arrangement for how they worked with their partners. Calls could be made directly to partnering institutions and needed services were quick and effective. There was agreement that communication was mostly open and proved to be beneficial to all partners. Participants in this study mentioned that partnerships promoted shared resources (to include space, library services, computer labs, testing center, and even the students) and communicated that, "We look at our students as their students, and their students as our students."

According to the literature lawsuits may occur when the quality of services delivered does not coincide with what is advertised (DeKay, 2012; Onsmann, 2008). It is the combined high quality practices that are sought after by institutional leaders. Combining quality resources will be a key to sustainability and growth in the future community college (Eddy, 2010; Edelson, 2009; Levin, 1998; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). Sustainability and progression will promote continued growth and publicize the message of continuity. When people and institutions help others they show care, concern, and goodwill while sharing their talents, skills, and resources to assist others (Smith, 2012). Economic uncertainties present more reasons for individuals and institutions to have conservation practices that extend goodwill and protect each other from legal harm.

Findings Related to Sub-question 2

Research sub-question 2: How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

The exploration of this research question was intended to discover how agreement practices, policies, and documents between partners promote partnerships and create opportunities for positive and productive change. Partnerships are formed and designed to strengthen effectiveness and solve problems (Amey, 2010; Amey, Eddy, & Ozeki, 2007; Gilles, Wilson, Elias, 2009). While all partnerships have challenges it is important to approach and resolve the challenges in an efficient and productive manner. Many times there are different thoughts and different opinions about what is important to individuals, groups, and institutions. For this reason it is important to work out arrangements within institutions prior to partnership agreements and during continued agreement processes (Sink & Jackson, 2002). It is critical to address issues before the partnership agreement is finalized so that all partners know the expectations as well as the responsibilities.

In addition to agreeing on different issues it is also important to understand different types of agreements, such as admission and articulations agreements. Since agreements were at the top of several partnership benefits, it warrants highlighting. Vice presidents found the articulation agreements and guaranteed admission agreements to be exceptional promoters of both the two- and four-year institutions. Vice presidents like the exposure of the two-year students to the four-year institution; especially since it was highly probable that these students would be transitioning to a four-year institution. The vice presidents were looking for the four-year institution that was a best fit for each community college student that transferred.

Other promotion and benefit opportunities in the two- and four-year partnerships included welcome talks to incoming community college students, local high school talks, promotion through student development courses and college websites. Vice presidents also mentioned having the four-year institutions delivering classes on the two-year campuses. This

benefits saved time and money for local community college students who transferred to partnering four-year institutions.

Findings Related to Sub-question 3

Research sub-question 3: How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions?

Exploring this research question was intended to reveal community college vice presidents' thoughts on trust in partnerships between two- and four-year institutions and how to build and promote that trust. The literature pointed out that trust is a willingness to be vulnerable to the actions of another even in the midst of exposing oneself to risk, vulnerability, hurt, criticism, or rejection (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008; Godard, Salloum, & Berebitsky, 2009; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995). Several vice presidents in the study spoke about the time it takes to build trust. It was reiterated that building trust does not happen overnight and that trust is built by building relationships. The vice presidents spoke about trust on paper being "nice" but the people who interpret and work with students being the ones who make things happen to build trust. It is not enough to have trust in name only. The people with trust must carry out certain actions that demonstrate trustworthiness.

A willingness to take risks is a common characteristic to all trust situations (Johnson-George & Swap, 1982). Generally when trust is displayed or revealed to others it is usually returned, allowing opportunities for more trust. Nothing betrays trust more than a lack of trust because issues with trust cause trust to vanish (Bowman, 2012). One vice president recommended not going into partnership if there were any uncertain feelings. Trust needs to be the foundation and as one vice president said, as trust grows the partners grow and the partnerships grow.

Trust is built on a foundation that is laid incrementally by disclosing sensitive and personal information (Bowman, 2012). Vice president talked about building trust in the partnership by getting to know the four-year partners and spending face-to-face time as opposed to just email and phone conversations. Another vice president said you build trust when you say what you mean and mean what you say. It was evident that trust was vital to the strength of their partnerships with their four-year institutions.

Findings Related to Sub-question 4

Research sub-question 4: How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?

This final research question sought to explore what collaboration techniques vice presidents in two-year institutions used to promote the partnership process with four-year institutions and how accountability is promoted. Collaboration and accountability work hand-in-hand and both are valuable tools needed by community college vice presidents in order to carry out their jobs successfully (Schmidtlein & Berdahl, 2005). As leaders become more accountable to each other through partnerships they gain more dependence on each other. It is this accountability and dependence on each other as partners that results in an increase of production. Of course, all of this takes time and the vice presidents in the study talked about the importance of scheduling regular meeting and checking in to make sure the execution of partnership processes are on track. The vice presidents also mentioned continuing the collaboration efforts, not just to complete the process, but also to continually improve the relationship itself by making purposeful plans to sit down and make connections with people.

Institutions have traditionally been evaluated and paid based on input rather than output but the accountability shift looks at output (Bailey & Morest, 2006). One participant called accountability the mutual respect and trust in the institutional relationships and another said that

accountability starts with trust and a strong relationship. Higher education vice presidents are continually being asked to demonstrate contributions of accountability. Measurable output, like graduation and completion numbers, let vice presidents know when standards are achieved so that there is a measure of their level of success that can be documented and reported. With accountability systems in place vice presidents will be able to deliver documentation upon request from policy makers or interested students or parents. Future collaboration toward a shared vision will promote integration of core values and strengthen partnerships (Ho, 2008). Most two-year community college vice presidents viewed their partnerships with four-year institutions as favorable. Collaboration in the future will determine how these partnerships are viewed. Accountability processes will be a key component in determining those views.

Implications

American community colleges have had many changes since their beginnings with Joliet Junior College in Chicago, Illinois, which was founded in 1901 (Ayers, 2010; Krebs, Katsinas, & Johnson 1999; Vaughan, 2000). They are the fastest growing area of higher education (Boggs, 2011b; Boggs, 2012) and generally cost less per credit to attend (Belfield, 2012; Fonte, 2011; Van Noy, Zeidenberg, & Columbia University, 2009; Vedder, et al., 2010). The community college's goal of providing affordable educational opportunities to local residents has not changed but the process by which the provision is made has changed with economic challenges, partnership initiatives, and accountability policies.

The perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding their partnerships between two- and four-year higher education and the researcher's analysis of these perceptions suggest that the results of this study can be used in several implications for practice. As supported in literature many people would never have an opportunity to attend college without the community college and its open access (Bassett, 1997; Boggs, 2011a; Johnson & Briden,

2004; Vaughan, 2000). Combining and sharing resources through successfully long-term partnerships will be a key to sustainability and growth of the future community college (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007; Eddy, 2010; Edelson, 2009; Levin, 1998; Mullen, Harris, Pryor, & Brown-Ferrigno, 2008). As confirmed in the literature the data analysis of this study revealed that these academic partnerships are a favorable benefit to partnering institutions and for many residents in local communities.

Based on the findings of this academic partnership study, these are the implications for practice. This study implies: (1) promoting favorable and strong partnerships between two- and four-year institutions that support beneficial transfers for students; (2) continuing community colleges' open access so that more people, especially from historically underserved groups, will have access to higher education with opportunities to complete an associate degree and to transfer to a four-year institution; (3) supporting partnership opportunities to promote and advertise programs for both the two- and four-year institutions; (4) nurturing partnership trust through collaboration and communication; (5) feelings of two-year partners' lower perceived academic status from four-year partners; (6) promoting trust as an important issue in partnerships; (7) continuing essential communication and including face-to-face meetings and added joint accountability.

Implications for Institutional Leaders

There is an abundance of literature referencing the retirement of many community college leaders and the need to replace them with qualified leaders (Bisbee, 2007; Campbell, 2006, Campbell, 2009; Hassan, Dellow, & Jackson, 2010; McNair, 2010; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998; Weisman & Vaughan, 2007). In an era where many local communities are dependent on their local community college, it is imperative that these

two-year institutions continue to maintain quality institutional leaders to provide quality education and to maintain quality partnerships to train and educate local students.

The researcher suggests a proactive approach to vice presidents' training that will instill quality and continuous leadership training. The training will be formatted as "career broadening" to supplement their current knowledge by filling experiential gaps. This training can be broken into a three-tier component and delivered to vice presidents as needed or assigned to others in key positions. It is supported in literature that partnerships between two- and four-year institutions are becoming a more common way of survival and growth (Amey, Eddy, & Ozaki, 2007). Since partnerships were found in this study to be beneficial to both the two- and four-year institutions, the researcher suggest that the partnering institutions work together on the training component, especially the areas addressing partnership, as they will be beneficial to all partners. Current community college systems and the four-year partners could work together on this proactive approach to invest time and focused attention into educating and grooming leaders for future positions. This training could be part of professional development opportunities and individual community colleges or presented at conferences and seminars where they will have a more widespread effect.

Additionally, the researcher suggest that the four-year institutions with community college leadership programs incorporate more partnership initiatives into their programs or present a similar training component at conferences or during class discussions. Conferences could be presented in different regions of a community college system based on interested numbers of individuals in a particular region. Current institutional leaders could also be on hand for panel discussions, allowing conference attendees to hear from those in key leadership position.

Sample Three-Tier Training Component for Vice Presidents

Tier 1

Objectives – Understand

- a) what constitutes breadth of knowledge and experience for success as an academic vice president
- b) basic relationship building
- c) the importance of building, nurturing, and communicating trust in relationships and partnerships
- d) what sharing accountability responsibilities entails

Tier 2

Objectives – Establishing guidelines that

- a) list and explain pathways to attain knowledge and experience for success as an academic vice president
- b) teach how to build relationships and work with people
- c) list and explain steps in building, nurturing, and communicating trust in relationships and partnerships
- d) list and explain responsibilities in sharing accountability

Tier 3

Objectives – Incorporate actions that

- a) work with perspective vice presidents to help them attain knowledge and experience for success as an academic vice president (include mentoring and shadowing)
- b) build relationships and document what works and what does not work

c) build, nurture, and communicate trust in current relationships and partnership

d) incorporate, support, and document sharing accountability responsibilities

(Note: When possible integrate role-playing into areas of the component to generate creativity and prepare participants for actual situations.)

Implications for Staff and Faculty

The community college has an impressive reputation with assets like open access, program offerings, relevancy, locality, and cost, just to name a few. Improving on its stellar reputation involves generating quality documents regarding the outstanding results produced by community colleges and the students who graduate for the community colleges. A second part of that improvement involves getting these quality documents into the hands of decision- and policy-makers and the general public so that people have concrete information when form opinions about the community college. Opinions are changed with current documentation, current accomplishments, and current quality.

The literature and the findings support continued views of lower perceived academic status toward the two- year students, staff, and institutions from their four-year partners. The literature suggest, with exceptions, that students who went straight to the four-year institutions were consistently found to achieve more academically and were found more likely to complete a bachelor's degree (Long & Kurlaender, 2008; Vance, 2009). The community colleges have not always received the deserved attention to give a true picture of their importance and value. This lack of attention has caused some scholars and laypeople to view community colleges as catchall schools for students that are unable to attend other colleges (Dougherty, 2001). More information is needed to evaluate where these suggestions originate and how and why these suggestions influence others.

There is more that can be done to understanding the totality of the quality of education students receive from institutions and ways the partners can work together to identify and discuss what constitutes quality in education. The researcher suggest that the staff and faculty take the lead and collaborate with partners to review ways grades are awarded to consider whether grading policies are viewed as balanced or unequally awarded between two- and four-year institutions. The researcher also suggests that some discussion on whether grades appear to be curved at one institution more often than another be explored and discussed. A few common courses could be tracked, documented, and discussed to create some opportunities to learn and understand institutional processes. Valuable information staff and faculty members learn could be presented for discussions and ideas at conferences, to college administrators, and to students. The magnitude of what is learned and documented might be impressive and could change some long-held bias opinions.

Implications for Students and Other Constituencies

Additional findings in this study supported the importance of the thoughts and opinions of students in the community college setting. The literature review for this study supports the findings that many students often return to their local community college after a difficult semester or year at a four-year university (Hagedorn, Cypers, & Lester, 2008). Community colleges want to ensure that students are completing programs that are valuable to the current labor market (Moore, Jez, Chisholm, & Shulock, 2012). Students are comfortable enough to return to the community college, which speaks confidently about the students' desire to be valuable contributing citizens and to trust their local professionals to get them back on track.

This study brought out the importance of student involvement in change as important to the college and to the students. The researcher suggests that students be given opportunities to invest their voice into their college by sharing their thoughts and ideas through surveys and

projects. There are so many projects energetic and productive students can do to contribute to their college. Projects do not have to be complicated or time-consuming; they can be simple yet life changing. Some projects can start with one person or a small group and grow. Community college students are usually busy with their studies, families, and sometimes work as well; therefore, it is important that projects is designed in a way that it will not rob them of their valuable time. Monumental projects would take time from their studies or work, but little actions that make a big difference would be a lot of fun and promote unity and harmony among college students and employees.

Considering the student's limited time the researcher is suggesting a simple project with countless possibilities. For simplicity the researcher will call this project Student Investment Team (SIT). It is a simple project in which one person can make a difference. A student can sit for a minute or two and spring into action. SIT is about investing into others, one person at a time. Students simply need to do something positive for a student and a college employee everyday. It can be something small like getting a door for someone or being polite by saying "please" and "thank you." The important issue is to be consistent. If the college student is not around other college students or college employees they can invest their time into anyone with whom they come in contact. These small gestures of being positive and kind will students to be a positive change agent in everyday life. They can track, monitor, and discuss their outcomes and learn accountability through their own actions.

Other stakeholders and constituents support local community colleges and their students and have a vested interest in the college's success and reputation. These constituents serve and support the colleges and add their expertise as well as financial funding. They include parents, community, board members, alumni, state and federal government, and many other community

agencies. It is important to continue to include these important individuals and agencies into problem solving and celebrations. The researcher suggests that the college continues to consistently remind the community, and the body of constituents, that the local community college is their community college. This will be a prompting for continued guidance, service, and support. The researcher advises to continue the reminders that the constituents sense of belonging to the community is also a sense of belonging to the community college. As constituents are involved in events at the college there is an automatic reminder to mention the college and its services. They become partners of the college while maintaining their status as local members of the college. This creates a win-win situation for the college and the constituents.

Future Research

This research study has explored community college vice presidents' perceptions of academic partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions. The results of this study indicated that there are perceptions of partnerships between two- and four-year institutions that can help vice presidents to be more cognizant of ways to operate efficiently and affectively in building and nurturing partnerships. Vice presidents can work with four-year partners to create environments where the partners have open discussions with a greater possibility of strengthening current partnerships. Communication and trust will be key factors in bringing about some partnership changes. Based on the findings more research on partnerships between two- and four-year institutions is needed with results of strategies for improvements that are created by the partnering institutions as well as others, including faculty, staff, students, and other constituents. Research should include how the strategies for improvement were applied and implemented and the results of their outcome. Participants in this research study expressed a desire to see more research on institutional partnerships. Additional research will give the two-

and four- year institutional partners opportunities to discover common solutions for challenges that exist between the institutional levels. The following are recommended for future research:

1. Incorporate a training component, similar to the sample Three-Tier Training Component, as an actual training tool to assist institutions leaders creating and discovering future pathways to the academic vice presidency.
2. Conduct a study that compares students achievement with a larger sample to determine if it yields similar results to those found in this study.
3. Conduct a study to engage students from two- and four-year institutions. Through data collection and analysis discover if students have similar view as the vice president participants in this study, especially relative to quality and academic status of faculty and students.
4. Have faculty members integrate some of the participants' concerns into classroom assignment with team presentations and have vice presidents observe those presentations. Discuss the findings with two- and four-year partners.

Conclusions

This study clearly demonstrates a continued need and desire for strong partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions. As current community college vice presidents work to sustain these partnerships they will need a continued clear and diverse knowledge of economic, social, political, and legal issues. Documented trends point toward increased demands and accountability and knowledge in these areas will rise for future vice presidents in support of the demands. Emphasis on access, accountability, and partnership in higher education and other organizations will continue to cause readjustment of the roles of community college vice presidents throughout states and across the nation.

Due to the economic challenges and continued budget cuts the sharing of resources through partnerships will be a catalyst for continued success in extending growth and experience for vice presidents as they work toward educating the local community residents. Some of these vice presidents will be on the learning spectrum and will have to create blueprints for new and changing job responsibilities. Documenting these processes and procedures will be important during these discovery periods. Through growth and sharing, continuous opportunities to partners become even more valuable and useful.

One of the most significant challenges facing community colleges across the nation is the alarmingly high rate at which community college administrators will retire and vacate their current positions. The key is to strategically place qualified administrators in positions where each person is a “best fit” for success and upward mobility. Partnerships will allow decision-making to be a joint process with communication and collaboration of accountability partners. Through synergism the partnerships will help sustain the community college’s local economic strength and support continued preparation of local graduates to meet the current and future workforce needs while strengthening the overall community. The investment of quality education by entire community, including all employees, students, other constituents, and partners, will aid the challenge of keeping the local economy in a strong and stable position.

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APPENDICES**Appendix A****Interview Questions for Participants**

1. How would you define your community college's partnership with four-year higher education institutions?
2. How does your partnership with four-year higher education institutions help promote your two-year institution?
3. What do you like most about your community college's existing partnership with four-year higher education institutions? What do you like least?
4. What would you like to change about your existing partnership with four-year higher education institutions? Why?
5. Who do you communicate with, in partnerships with four-year institutions?
6. What agreements do you deal with regarding partnerships with four-year institutions?
7. What are your thoughts on trust in your partnerships? How do you build and promote trust in the partnership?

8. What collaboration techniques do you use to promote the partnership process?
9. How do you promote accountability to the partnership?
10. Briefly describe your involvement in a partnership decision? What could you have done differently?
11. What have you done to promote or benefit your partnership with four-year institutions?

Thank you very much for your time in responding to these questions.

Appendix B**Letter to Community College Vice presidents**

Gloria J. Savage-Early
9015 Cook Drive
Hayes, VA 23072

Community College Vice President's Name
Address
Address

Dear Community College Vice President,

I am a graduate student in the Community College Leadership (CCL) Program at Old Dominion University (ODU). I am conducting an educational study for my dissertation at ODU as part of my graduate requirements. The study focuses on perceptions of community college vice presidents regarding academic partnerships between two- and four-year institutions of higher education.

I would like to interview you and use your comments in my study. The interview will last approximately 45 minutes. Your name will not be used in the study. All information collected will remain confidential. You do not need to answer any questions that you do not want to answer. Any time during the interview you may stop your participation with no questions from me. The interview will be recorded and used to ensure that your perception is understandable. The recording will be destroyed at the completion of the dissertation requirements.

If you have questions regarding the study or your participation, please feel free to contact me at 804-684-2909/757-218-9058, or gsavage@odu.edu . You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Karen L. Sanzo at ksanzo@odu.edu

Thank you for your consideration in participating.

Yours truly,

Gloria J. Savage-Early

Appendix C**Participant Interview Schedule**

Participant	Date Interviewed	Interview Mode with Changes	Gender
P1	February 3, 2014	Face-to-Face	M
P2	February 4, 2014	Face-to-Face	F
P3	February 4, 2014	Face-to-Face	M
P4	February 10, 2014	From Skype to Phone	M
P5	February 13, 2014	From Face-to-Face Phone	F
P6	February 18, 2014	Phone	M
P7	February 9, 2014	Phone	F
P8	March 4, 2014	Skype & Phone	F
P9	March 4, 2014	Phone	M
P10	March 4, 2014	Face-to-Face Skype Phone	M
P11	March 5, 2014	Phone	F
P12	March 7, 2014	Phone	F

Appendix D

Master Research Table

Research Questions	Qualitative Queries Corresponding to Questions	Major Themes Uncovered
Main - How do vice presidents of two-year educational institutions perceive partnerships with four-year institutions?	<p>1. How would you define your community college's partnership with four-year higher education institutions?</p> <p>2. How does your partnership with four-year higher education institutions help promote your two-year institution?</p>	Nuances of partnership, agreements as the main partnership benefit, opportunities for partnership changes, partnership and relationship viewed interchangeable, role and voice of students are imperative
a. How do perceptions of communication affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?	<p>5. Who do you communicate with, in partnerships with four-year institutions?</p> <p>10. Briefly describe your involvement in a partnership decision? What could you have done differently?</p> <p>11. What have you done to promote or benefit your partnership with four-year institutions?</p>	Nuances of partnership, opportunities for partnership changes, partnership and relationship viewed interchangeable, communication and collaboration create improvement opportunities
b. How do perceptions of agreement affect partnerships between two-and four-year higher education institutions?	<p>2. How does your partnership with four-year higher education institutions help promote your two-year institution?</p> <p>3. What do you like <u>most</u> about your community college's existing partnership with four-year higher education institutions? What do you like <u>least</u>?</p>	Nuances of partnership, agreements as the main partnership benefit, opportunities for partnership changes, partnership and relationship viewed interchangeable, agreements, curriculum, and transfer provide

	<p>4. What would you like to change about your existing partnership with four-year higher education institutions? Why?</p> <p>6. What agreements do you deal with regarding partnerships with four-year institutions?</p>	<p>seamless affordable degrees, role and voice of students are imperative</p>
<p>c. How do perceptions of trust affect partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions?</p>	<p>7. What are your thoughts on trust in your partnerships? How do you build and promote trust in the partnership?</p> <p>10. Briefly describe your involvement in a partnership decision? What could you have done differently?</p> <p>11. What have you done to promote or benefit your partnership with four-year institutions?</p>	<p>Nuances of partnership, agreements as the main partnership benefit, opportunities for partnership changes, partnership and relationship viewed interchangeable, trust vital in building strong and continuous partnerships</p>
<p>d. How do perceptions of collaboration and accountability affect partnerships between two- and four-year higher education institutions?</p>	<p>8. What collaboration techniques do you use to promote the partnership process?</p> <p>9. How do you promote accountability to the partnership?</p>	<p>Nuances of partnership, agreements as the main partnership benefit, opportunities for partnership changes, communication and collaboration create improvement opportunities, accountability produces credibility and measurable outcomes</p>

VITA

GLORIA J. SAVAGE-EARLY

Department of Educational Foundations and Leadership
 Darden college of Education
 Old Dominion University
 Norfolk, VA 23529

EDUCATION Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA; Ph.D., Community College Leadership
 Golden Gate University, San Francisco, CA; MS, Human Resources-Personnel Management
 Saint Leo College, Saint Leo, FL; BA, Human Resources Administration
 Cum Laude; National Scholastic Honor Society
 Leadership Bible Institute, Honolulu, HI; Diploma, Ministerial Training (Co-Valedictorian)
 Community College of the Air Force, USAF; AS, Administration Management
 Saint Leo College, Saint Leo, FL; AA, Liberal Arts
 Community College of the Air Force, USAF; AS, Data Processing

EXPERIENCE

Apr 07 to Present	Distance Learning Site Director Old Dominion University, Norfolk, VA Manage the Rappahannock Community College distance learning site (2007-2012) and Dahlgren Military Site distance learning site (2012-present) in an efficient, effective and customer-oriented manner. Prioritize and manage numerous demands and complex operations in diverse settings. Provide quality, friendly and results-oriented customer service to students and colleagues. Perform functions in accordance with university policies, procedures, and guidelines. Provide personnel supervision, and professional development of site staff employees. Provide quality student support services through academic advising, student communications, and student file management. Participate with community college faculty and staff events such as festivals, workshops, staff in-service, joint marketing activities and sitting on committees. Market degree programs to the community college service area, the Dahlgren base community, and business and industry leaders. Maintain active involvement with the local chamber of commerce and local legislators. Received certification as Master Certified Advisor.
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- Jan 03 to
Apr 07 Project Manager
Rappahannock Community College, Glenss, VA
Manage and market contracted, open-enrollment, and online distance training, (both credit and non-credit offerings) within Workforce and Community Development throughout the Middle Peninsula and the Northern Neck. Advise students and participants and help them plan workable training and educational goals. Negotiates training contracts with local business/industry and school divisions. Is the key focal point for recruiting, hiring, and supervising (30-50) qualified trainers in various disciplines. Responsible for the registration of student inputs into the VCCS Student Information System. Develops and maintains a strong partnership with business and community leaders on the Middle Peninsula, Northern Neck, and surrounding areas. Responsible for developing and coordinating conferences and special events, to include setting up meetings for various business leaders.
- Apr 02 to
Jan 03 Soft-Skills Coordinator
Rappahannock Community College, Glenss, VA
Responsible for marketing and coordinating soft-skill training for Workforce and Community Development. Established and maintained a strong partnership with business and community leaders on the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Managed and marketed soft-skill training. Developed and approved marketing materials. Negotiated soft-skill related training contracts with local business/industry. Recruited, hired, and supervised (10-20) qualified trainers possessing a strong background in soft-skill areas.
- Nov 01 to
Apr 02 Education for Independence Coordinator
Rappahannock Community College, Glenss, VA
Analyzed and evaluated intake forms to determine qualification for grant funding of students. Dispersed stipend checks to qualifying students. Advised students and worked closely with financial aid to help the prevention of academic probation. Conducted support group sessions, published a monthly newsletter, aided job recruitment and placement, and submitted reports to the State of Virginia. Supervised two support staff personnel.
- Apr 01 to
Apr 02 Assistant Publishing Manager
Publishing Connections, Yorktown, VA
Managed varied office functions, including book signings and executing contracts with authors. Managed all areas of the business, including copyrights, permissions, and research. Worked with authors as their book projects progressed through all phases of production; including design, printing, and marketing. Collaborated with printing

- offices. Supervised seven to ten (free lance writers, photographers, designers & administrative support) personnel.
- Apr 00 to
Jul 01 Bookstore Manager & Office Manager
Lighthouse Worship Center, Hayes, VA
Operated the church bookstore. Managed the production of the monthly calendar and the weekly bulletin (included creating inserts, brochures and posters). Produced news releases and coordinate media write-ups and photo sessions. Supervised 5-10 office and bookstore volunteers.
- Sep 00 to
Mar 01 Program Analyst
ANSER, Hampton, VA
Managed the Validation Testing and Configuration Control section as a software analyst for a Defense Contractor. Primarily responsible for the testing of a unique software package for a Combat Search and Rescue Program. Performed classified and unclassified baseline and sensitivity analysis runs and interfaced with multi-level clientele.
- Feb 00 to
Oct 00 Instructor
Kee Business College, Newport News, VA
Instructed Skill Building (an introduction to computers), Keyboarding, Transcription, Medisoft, and Microsoft Word, in the Allied Health Department. Advised and counseled students to ensure success and prevent academic problems or probation. Managed and coordinated services and repairs for 25 leased computers and 3 agency-owned printers.
- Feb 00 to
Apr 00 Internet Researcher
Hampton University, Hampton, VA
Conducted temporary Defense Intelligence Agency research as part of a Hampton University grant. Established competency profiles for many aspects of military intelligence requirements, from highly complex missile trajectory data to biographical information on foreign military leaders. Documented research findings and prepared extensive reports.
- Sep 99 to
Mar 00 Substitute/Guest Teacher
Gloucester High, Gloucester, VA
Taught varied high school classes for teachers attending training, on vacation, or out sick. Managed each class with a high degree of professionalism. Assisted in the daily education of all students, including special needs students, Attended meetings for absent teachers.
- Nov 97 to Application Trainer

Jun 99	Computer Training Academy, Honolulu, HI Instructor for various Microsoft classes, including Windows, Word, and Excel. Administered telephone and walk-in software consultations. Reviewed lesson plans for content and errors. Edited lesson plans. Supervised 15-25 trainees a day.
Mar 78 to Apr 98	Member of the United States Air Force (20 Years of Active Duty Service) Pacific Air Forces, Honolulu HI; Tactical Air Command, Shaw AFB SC and Langley AFB; Pacific Air Forces, Okinawa Japan Managed numerous complex operations in diverse settings; holding a Top Secret Security Clearance and positions as Software Contract Manager, Quality Assurance and Configuration Manager, Programmer Analyst, Director of Administration, and Administrative Assistant. All duties were carried out in an outstanding manner, which garnered an Honorable Discharge with Meritorious Service Medals, Commendation Medals, Commandant Award, and other medals and awards.
OTHER POSITIONS/ SKILLS	Golden Key International Honor Society Member, Association of University Administrators Member, Published Author, Virginia Network Conference Presenter, William and Mary Symposium Presenter, Rotary International Member, Graduation Speaker, Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, Education Foundation Board of Directors, VCCA Support Staff Showcase Winner, Ministerial Association President, Volunteer Hospital Chaplain, Workforce Conference Speaker, Graduation Vocalist, Empire Who's Who, Strategic Sales for Colleges, Cum Laude Graduate, National Honor Society, Leadership Bible Institute Co-Valedictorian, Youth Counselor, Sunday School Teacher, Special Olympics Volunteer, Mission Briefer, Safehaven (home for abused children) Volunteer, Drama Guild Member, Telephone & Walk-In Counselor, Toastmistress, Air Force Entertainment Cast Member, Assistant Basketball Coach, Speaker's Bureau, Red Cross Volunteer