8-2018

Building the Case for Succession Planning in Higher Education: A Study of Succession Planning Pilots within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

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Building the Case for Succession Planning in Higher Education: A Study of Succession Planning Pilots within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faulty of

St. Cloud State University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in Higher Education Administration

August 2018

Dissertation Committee:
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Abstract

This qualitative research study examines the role of succession planning in five two-year colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU). The role of succession planning to help prepare colleges for the leadership crisis is examined by exploring the participation of these colleges in a system pilot program. Succession planning, commonly used in business and private sector, remains a new concept in higher education. Thus, the purpose of this qualitative study will be to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie leadership pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. College CHRO's and other involved college leaders were interviewed about their participation in the succession planning pilot, including their use of an adopted framework, to understand if and how succession planning impacted their ability to mitigate the factors of the leadership crisis. The results from the research provide new knowledge to inform the existing body of research, highlights information about the impact of succession planning, and gives guidance on the design and implementation of succession planning.

Acknowledgements

Education has provided me a path to a stronger, happier, more fulfilled life and for this I am grateful. A process like writing a dissertation teaches you a lot about yourself, your relationships, and what you find valuable. The highest value, which I place on my family, dear friends, and new arrivals, has often taken precedence over this process but I would not do anything different. My priorities are these people. We are blessed. Thank you for thinking I could do something like this even when I didn't believe it myself. As Barbara Bush said, "At the end of your life you will never regret not having passed one more test, not winning one more verdict or not closing one more deal. You will regret time not spent with a husband, a friend, a child, or a parent."

To Missy, my friend and colleague of almost twenty years. You made the impossible task of finishing this document possible. Wisdom, encouragement, timelines, prodding, editing, and tough love only made me respect you more. Only you understood how hard this was for me. Cheers to another twenty years. I am also thankful to many other old friends who were with me through all or some of this - each of you played a part in sustaining me through this process and I am grateful. Finally, to my new family, Rob and Amanda. Thank you for supporting me and keeping me on track to finish my homework every weekend.

I firmly believe having a pet in a process like this is critical for sanity, levity, and companionship. Syd, you were my constant homework helper and giving up weekends or a fun event was easier because you were there. Finishing this without you wasn't easy and I miss you every day.

Finally thank you to my committee, Dr. Steven McCullar, Dr. Michael Mills, Dr. Jodi Kuznia, and Dr. Melissa Majerus. This research is better because of you.

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Chapter I: Introduction

The concern surrounding the retirements of college and university leaders in presidential, administrative, and linchpin positions has led to an increasing amount of research on how to prepare future leaders in higher education (Ebbers, Conover & Samuel, 2010; Keim & Murray, 2010; Neefe, 2009; Richards, 2009; Runestad, 2014). Succession planning, a process for identifying and developing internal people with the necessary skills and capabilities to fill key leadership positions has been a topic of study in business and industry for over half a century, but only in the last two decades has higher education begun to more closely examine the topic in an effort to prepare for the predicted increase in leadership turnover (Davies & Davies, 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Keim & Murray, 2010; Luna, 2010; Middlehurst, 2008; Neefe, 2009). This turnover, often referred to as a “leadership crisis” in academic and education literature, is a reflection of the lack of qualified potential candidates to fill vacated leadership positions (Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; Neefe, 2009, Rothwell, 2010). Without qualified successors, institutions are left with vacated positions in mid and upper level administrative ranks that are critical to successful college operations.

In making the case for succession planning, institutions often identify key linchpin positions in which to focus their efforts. This includes senior administrative positions that include chief academic, student affairs, financial, human resources, and information officers that may also be referred to as provosts, vice presidents, and executive directors. Additional linchpin positions within colleges as identified in the 2010 Luoma Action Group’s study (MnSCU 2010) also include positions with working titles such as dean, director, and manager and come from a variety of operational areas within institutions that include academic operations, business office, registration, admissions, enrollment, development/fundraising, facilities, and marketing.

Significance of the Study

The lack of qualified potential candidates to fill vacated leadership positions has increased higher education's interest in the principles of succession planning (Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009, Rothwell, 2010). According to the literature, there are several conditions, as outline below, that frame why succession planning is so important to solving the institutional problems that stem from the predicted leadership crisis (Betts et al., 2009; Cook & Kim, 2012; Luna, 2010; Mann, 2010; Shults, 2001).

Anticipated high level leadership turnover. The first condition is anticipated high level of leadership turnover within higher education institutions. Retirements within community college administration will play a major role in the high level leadership turnover in upcoming years (AACC, 2012). In community colleges, 47% of the workforce is over 50, the average age of c-suite administrators is 54, and the average presidential age is 61 (Boerner, 2015; Boggs, 2003; AACC, 2012). Presidential and c-suite level positions are expected to retire at a rate of 75% within a ten year period (Teckle, 2012). National research suggests a similar retirement pattern for community college presidents, with 84% retiring by 2016 (Betts, Urias, Chavez, & Betts, 2009). For example, 16 of the 61 member Association of American Universities college presidents turned over in 2012 (Kiley, 2012). Since the most likely successors to these high level positions are also aging, the pool of potential replacements for these positions is even smaller (Davies & Davies, 2010; Keim & Murray, 2008; Rothwell, 2010). However, retirements are not the only reason for a higher rate of turnover. According to the 2012 American Council on Education report, the time in these positions has also decreased by one-and-a-half years (Cook & Kim, 2012). Attributed to the increased position responsibilities and challenges such as; fiscal pressures, array of constituents, and political climates, individuals are retained in positions for shorter periods of time (ACE, 2012; Cook & Kim, 2012). Therefore, these unprecedented levels of turnover in college and university presidential positions place question on how these individuals will be recruited, prepared, hired and evaluated.

Lack of perceived qualified potential successors. A second condition that highlights the importance of succession planning is the lack of perceived qualified potential successors in linchpin positions. Individuals in line to fill vacated leadership positions are perceived as being less capable, having less experience, and as lacking the education, training or skills necessary to be successful (MnSCU, 2010; Neefe, 2009). This perception is based on several factors. First, a steep decline in the number of conferred doctoral degrees to community college leaders (Keim & Murray, 2008) and specifically to community college administration (Evelyn, 2001) coupled with a decrease in the offering of graduate and doctoral-level programs in the field of community college leadership and administration (The Council for the Study of Community Colleges, 2015) have negatively impacted the ability of potential successors to formally prepare for community college leadership positions.

Second, the increased discrepancy in diverse representation on the career ladder of colleges when compared to student populations (Harlety, Eckel, & King, 2009) and the lack of attention paid to preparing their current mid-level leaders (Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt, 2005) have diminished the ability of these individuals to assume higher level administrative positions. Progressive experience is critical to career path development yet, since position requirements mandate existing experience, younger applicants, women, and minorities are often not able to secure experiences that build the strengths required to assume leadership positions (Land, 2003; Klein & Salk, 2013).

Third, leadership responsibilities in higher education increasingly require individuals to fulfill multiple roles including fundraising, mentorship, politician, figurehead, innovator, and public steward, which further add to the need for skilled, experienced leaders who can transition quickly into leadership positions (AACC, 2005; MnSCU, 2012). These broader and more complex job responsibilities in leadership positions require ongoing administrative experiences (Keim & Murray, 2008) yet administrative positions become less desirable as long hours, inability to balance personal and professional lives, and increasing external pressures are observed by potential successors and applicants (Evelyn, 2001; Land, 2003; Moser, 2008). Incoming administrators and presidents themselves report feeling underprepared for the overwhelming nature of the positions they assume (Shults, 2001). This need for advanced cumulative experiences along with the observed and experienced consequences of the sacrifices of the position directly impact the pool of applicants for high level leadership positions (Land, 2003; Moser, 2008; Shults, 2001).

Finally, the competition for talent between institutions and outside of higher education has become a challenge. As the pool of perceived potential candidates decreases, colleges must compete with the private sector, for-profit and private institutions, universities, and elementary and secondary schools to attract and retain talent (Evelyn, 2001; Bornstein, 2010). As incentives, salaries, and programs to attract talent increase, individuals can successfully seek employment outside the college environment to capitalize on greater rewards (Evelyn, 2001).

Lack of research and standard practice. The third condition that highlights the importance of succession planning is the lack of research and shared best practice of how to prepare successors to assume leadership positions. Research on why successors are not prepared, what skills and abilities are needed for leadership positions, and how they should prepare for higher education leadership positions varies. Additionally, the skill set of administration varies by institution type (technical college, community college, combined college, multiple campus-college, university, private or public) and geographic location (AACC, 2013; Betts et al., 2009; Land, 2003).

Moreover, institutions vary widely in practices and processes related to recruiting and hiring practices, incentive packages, job requirements, onboarding practices, retention strategies, and professional development opportunities which make it challenging for applicants to understand the process, set expectations, and advance to new positions (Moser, 2008; Rich 2006; Robken, 2007). As institutions continue to proceed with own insular strategies or practices they spend little time evaluating the return on investment or assessing the effectiveness of these methods (Runestad, 2014).

The research around succession planning in the higher education environment is also in its beginning stages. Research and results of succession planning strategies, initiatives, and programs are much more readily available in the business and corporate environment, however this research is applicable to higher education (Gaffney, 2005; Neefe, 2009). The topics of leadership development and performance evaluation in higher education, both components of a succession planning strategy, are beginning to emerge to support research in succession planning (Boggs & Kent, 2002; Davies & Davies, 2010). However, the actual use of succession planning strategies, programs, and initiatives within the two-year college environment is much less developed, leaving a gap in research and an opportunity to study the application of this topic within a specific environment (Neefe, 2009).

To better prepare for succession planning in higher education, it is imperative that we explore the obstacles faced by potential successors and the conditions needed to facilitate their access to leadership positions in higher education. This research will present a review of the literature that explores the use of succession planning in business and industry, in higher education, and in a specific system environment. The conditions that drive the significance of this study; anticipated high turnover, lack of perceived qualified successors, and lack of research will be woven throughout the literature review to further establish need while presenting a variety of past and present factors that integrate the need for succession planning in the higher education environment.

Description and Scope of Research

The purpose of this qualitative study will be to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. The research will aim to capture the experiences five colleges that are part of the fourth largest state system in the United States during a succession planning pilot program in a two-year union environment (MnSCU, 2015). This will be accomplished by investigating the relationship between the use of succession planning at two year colleges and the institutions ability to mitigate the challenges that prevent campuses from engaging in succession planning. The results of this study will help inform institutions or systems as they embark of the use of succession planning in preparing for a leadership crisis in linchpin leadership positions and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives.

This study will attempt to answer four research questions.

1. How have individual institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education?

2. How do the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis?
3. How has the development of a modified and adopted framework for succession planning been utilized/implemented within the college environment?
4. What experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time?

From this study of colleges piloting succession planning, recommendations can be made to better prepare colleges for the leadership crisis and support the succession of prepared leaders in linchpin and c-suite positions throughout the system. By exploring why colleges actively engage in (or do not engage in) the strategies of succession planning this study can identify how colleges experience the benefits of succession planning and provide recommendation on how to remove barriers to assist colleges in implementing succession planning. This would strengthen the pipeline of prepared administrative leaders thus increasing the availability of experienced, capable, motivated employees who are prepared to assume key positions or roles when they become available internally, within, or outside of the system. Finally, by examining the college's participation in the pilot program, a series of best practices for institutions embarking on succession planning will be developed to guide future efforts.

Research Method

This proposed qualitative study will include two-year institutions in the Minnesota State College and Universities system (MnSCU) who have self-selected to participate in a succession planning pilot program. The sample of this study includes five of six colleges that responded to an initial request from the MnSCU system office to participate in the pilot program. The sample includes those who participated initially and stopped out and those who continue to participate, thus representing participation at various stages of the succession planning process. At the time of this study, the pilot process had been underway for approximately two years.

The pilot program is guided by an adapted version of the succession planning model established by William R. Rothwell in his book (2005), *"Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within."* Rothwell's (2005, 2010) seven step succession planning model establishes clear requirements for succession planning that were modified and adapted to higher education by MnSCU to establish a framework (also with seven stages) to identify, develop, and promote leaders organizationally and within the system (About Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2011). Each adapted stage includes clear outcomes, defined value, common question and discussion points to address, and a supporting package of tools, techniques, and strategies for accomplishing the outcomes of the stage. Additional detail on the Rothwell and MnSCU modified model and framework of steps is included in Chapter 2.

Data collection techniques utilized in this research included interviews, document analysis, and direct observation to produce a holistic understanding of the succession planning efforts being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Interviews for this study were conducted with the Chief Human Resources Officer (CHRO) at each participating institution in the pilot using a semi-structured format with interview questions tied to the research questions of this study. Additional interviews using the same questions and format were conducted based on recommendations from the CHRO's who identified an additional project lead or champion within their institution.

Data analysis was ongoing and simultaneous with data collection during the course of this study, as is accepted in qualitative research (Merriam, 2009). Using Miles and Huberman's

(1994) interactive framework for qualitative data analysis as outlined by Punch (2009), the researcher collected, reduced, displayed, and drew conclusions about the data in an ongoing way throughout the study. The researcher examined the data generated throughout the process in great detail to develop generalizations that emerged from the patterns observed in the data. The analysis of the study produced information to enhance and expand the body of research around succession planning in higher education and provides practical application to improve the implementation of succession planning at colleges within the MnSCU system. Additional detail about the research method, design, and implemented process can be found in Chapter 3.

Definition of Key Terms

Several terms used throughout this document encompass multiple meaning. To provide a clear context and develop a firm understanding of the topic and research presented, the following definitions will be used when referring to the terms below:

Talent management – Talent management is the overarching term that includes all the planning, activity, and resources that focus on attracting, recruiting, retaining, and developing employees to meet current and future institutional needs. Under the umbrella of talent management are terms such as workforce planning, recruiting, onboarding, performance management, training and development, leadership development, and succession planning (MnSCU Talent Management, 2015).

Succession planning – Succession planning is a means of identifying critical management positions, from manager or supervisor up to the highest position in the organization (Rothwell, 2010, p.6). Succession planning is part of an overall human resource strategy and preparation process to address risk, build capacity, and create a pipeline of high-performing employees to meet current and future organization needs (MnSCU Succession Planning, 2015).

C-Suite – Positions of senior administration that include chief academic (CAO), student affairs (CSAO), financial (CFO), human resource (CHRO), and information officers (CIO). These positions may also be referred to as provosts, vice presidents, and executive directors within higher education organizational structures. C-suite, therefore, refers to the top level administrators in an institution responsible for the college operations.

Linchpin positions - This includes senior administrative positions defined within the c-suite but also includes positions or titles such as dean, director, and manager and come from a variety of operational areas within institutions that include academic operations, business office, registration, admissions, enrollment, development/fundraising, facilities, and marketing (MnSCU, 2010).

Leadership crisis – A 'perfect storm' combination of three factors: the increase in current and anticipated turnover due to retirement and attrition, a shrinking pipeline of successors for vacated positions, and a perceived lack of preparedness to assume the responsibilities of key leadership positions within higher education. (AACC, 2012; Betts et al., 2009; Cook & Kim, 2012; Luna, 2010; Mann, 2010; MNSCU, 2010; Shults, 2001).

Community college – As defined by this study, a community college is a regionally accredited institution that grants certificates, diplomas and degrees up to the associates (two year) level. In the scope of national research the term community college include junior colleges, technical colleges, community colleges, and combined technical and community colleges, as each state uniquely terms or defines their 'two-year' degree granting institutions.

MnSCU – Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) is the fourth largest statewide public higher education system in the United States made up of 31 institutions (7 Universities, 24 colleges) on 54 campuses located in 47 Minnesota communities that serve more than 430,000 students annually (MnSCU, 2015). The law creating the state system was passed by the Minnesota Legislature in 1991 and went into effect July 1, 1995. The system is governed by a 15-member, governor appointed Board of Trustees, a system chancellor, system presidents, and system policies and procedures. Oversight is provided by the Minnesota State Senate and House of Representatives. The system operates on a budget of approximately 1.9 billion sourced from tuition, state appropriation, and other sources (MnSCU, 2015).

Delimitations and Positioning

This study examines six individual college based efforts of succession planning at self-identified pilot colleges within the MnSCU system. It will also consider the efforts of the MnSCU system to support these planning efforts within the pilot colleges. The study does not address succession planning efforts at universities within the same system or efforts at other colleges not participating in the pilot program within the system. The study does not examine other colleges or systems efforts nationally but does draw from data on national studies on succession planning in higher education to inform research, findings, and conclusions.

The topic of leadership development and succession planning in higher education came to my attention through my work experience as an unlimited (similar to tenure in the Minnesota college system) faculty member, dean, and vice president level administrator since 2001. The college where I am employed is part of the MnSCU system. I am also currently or have previously been a member of several MnSCU system committees, taskforces, and activities including the Talent Management Steering Committee, Succession Planning Taskforce, Performance Management Taskforce, New Administrator Orientation programming, and several training and development initiatives for deans.

My interest in the subject of professional development and leadership succession comes from these work experiences and my own personal desire to better prepare myself and others for future senior leadership positions in higher education. I am a 2007 graduate of the Luoma Leadership Academy, an 18-month competitive entry leadership development program for MnSCU employees. The leadership curriculum includes application of leadership skills and concepts grounded in theoretical leadership concepts, principles and practices designed in cooperation with The Academy for Leadership and Development in Mesa, Arizona. I am also a part of the current Executive Leadership Development Program cohort (2015-2016), a year-long program designed to strengthen the executive leadership pipeline of the MnSCU system. This competitive entry, accelerated development program includes executive stretch assignments, sponsorship, coaching, mentoring, seminars, networking, and case study experiences to produce high potential, high performing leadership candidates. These experiences have expanded my knowledge, perspective, and understanding of the need for succession planning that is strategically designed to meet the needs of a large system.

I am also actively engaged in succession planning within the institution where I work. I have participated in the development of the system support website, the facilitation of succession planning at other colleges, in training and development around succession planning, and act as an active advocate within the system for succession planning. This active involvement in the subject has alerted me to the increasing need for succession planning at an institutional level as I experience first-hand the operational consequences of failing to prepare for turnover.

I am concerned about the turnover in community colleges. I see and experience mid-level directors and managers leaving higher education after burning out, dean's turnover at an alarming rate, a decreased time in position for c-suite administrators, and continued failed searches for high level administrative positions. I know the demands of the positions, the wage inequities, and the lack of personal and professional balance that exists for those in these positions, and yet I see many persevere, succeed, and bring their institutions to unprecedented levels of success. This study ultimately stems from my desire to better prepare myself and my colleagues to better lead our MnSCU colleges in the 21st century and avoid a leadership crisis (documented in the literature review) that could operationally paralyze our institutions. At the core of the community college mission we develop engaged citizens, prepare a future workforce, and deliver it in a lower-cost, supportive environment that serves those who need it most. How will community colleges continue to deliver this important mission if they do not plan for and invest in the people needed to lead these complex institutions in the future?

Summary

The need for succession planning within the higher education environment is becoming increasingly clear as the effects of the leadership crisis begin to impact the long term institutional health and advancement of colleges in a time of unprecedented change (Austin, 2015; Ebbers et.al, 2010; Land, 2003; Rich, 2006). The nuances of leadership in higher education require a long list of competencies: administrators who balance priorities, respond to demand in a competitive market, understand fiscal processes and accountability – a seemingly endless list (Rich, 2006). Yet how to prepare these individuals to assume linchpin positions and key leadership roles seems to elude colleges as the impact of the leadership crisis looms (AACC, 2012; Betts et al., 2009; Cook & Kim, 2012; Luna, 2010; Mann, 2010; MNSCU, 2010; Shults, 2001).

The key to succession planning is to start now. Rooted in several key principles – that leadership can be learned and is a life-long process, employees at all levels can lead, and that leadership is effective management and vision – the leadership crisis can be averted with the strategies and methods encompassed in succession planning (AACC, 2005; Rothwell, 2010). Higher education can produce its new leaders but it requires that institutions understand the value and fit of succession planning within the academic environment and begin to plan for the effective development of internal potential leaders now to prepare the next generation of leadership (Austin, 2015; Rich, 2006).

This qualitative study will examine how five pilot community colleges attempted to adopt succession planning as a strategy to prepare their institutions and a larger system for a leadership crisis. Their efforts and experiences will explore how succession planning efforts, guided by an implementation framework, tie leadership pipeline gaps and their resolution to succession planning practices, identify the challenges that slow progress or prevent campuses from succession planning, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. By investigating the relationship between the use of succession planning at two year colleges and the institutions ability to mitigate the challenges that prevent campuses from engaging in succession planning, the results of this study will help inform institutions or systems as they embark of the use of succession planning in preparing for a leadership crisis in linchpin leadership positions.

The following chapter will provide an overview and analysis of the existing body of literature on succession planning and drill down to specific research as it relates to its application within higher education. It will culminate by examining the existing practices of succession planning within the system environment of this study. In chapter 3 research questions, research method and design, and analysis procedures will be described. Chapters 4 and 5 will present the findings of the research conducted and provide an analysis and conclusions based on the results of research in this qualitative study.

Chapter II: Literature Review

This literature review will examine current research and practice regarding succession planning in higher education. The review will begin by covering the broad field of succession planning in business and industry and then move into research and application in higher education. The review will systematically present the research related to the leadership crisis in higher education including the opportunities and consequences associated with turnover in linchpin and c-suite level leadership positions. Aspects of leadership theory and practice related to the topic will be included throughout the review, with a focus on the succession planning research and practice. Established frameworks and models utilized will be presented as best practices are examined. Reference to other quantitative and qualitative research studies on succession planning and leadership development will be woven throughout the review to articulate key findings on succession planning. A summary of four dissertations on succession planning in the two-year college environment will culminate this section of the review. The purpose of this section is to examine how each of the study's methodology and research impacts the research questions of this study and provide increased depth to the body of research examined in the literature review.

Moving from a broad overview to a specific industry, higher education, the review will next focus on the succession planning research and efforts of one state system. The goals and efforts of the system and its member colleges in succession planning are guided by a Board of Trustees, system chancellor, and a system level talent management office. The efforts of the system are guided by a widely accepted framework from William R. Rothwell as described during the overview section of the literature review. This modified framework will be presented as a process for the system as it introduces succession planning to its colleges and universities and works to implement its goals across the state.

Broadly, succession planning is defined as the process for identifying and developing employees with the potential to fill leadership positions (Berchelman, 2005; Neefe, 2009). More familiar terms related to succession planning, such as ‘replacement planning,’ ’strengthening the pipeline,’ and ‘transition planning,’ refer to the same concept – increasing the availability of experienced, capable, motivated employees who are prepared to assume key positions or roles when they become available (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). This process for developing talent to meet current and future workforce needs requires building leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities with intentionality to add stability (Runestad, 2014). As Robken (2007) notes, stable leadership supports stable organizations.

Succession planning is not a stand-alone process but is part of a larger effort to manage talent. Talent management is a process for developing and integrating new employees, developing and retaining current employees, and attracting a highly-skilled workforce (Davies & Davies, 2010). The talent management system involves the policies, procedures, processes, and practices that help create a better prepared, more effective workforce and establish a culture of development (Neefe, 2009; Rich, 2006; Runestad, 2014). Succession planning, leadership development, human resource management, and workforce planning are all important components of talent management. What differentiates succession planning from other components of talent management is its focus. According to Gaffney (2005) succession planning is a way to help organizations identify, develop, and promote employees from within as part of a comprehensive talent management strategy. It is an active and continuous process that involves developing internal talent to meet current and future workforce needs (Rothewell, 2002; Rothwell, 2010).

Succession planning is not grooming or cloning. Grooming indicates there is a clear successor that is pre-identified, usually by the current person in the position or a higher level supervisor (Pierce, 2015). This type of action often leads organizations down a path of bias, where people are picked based on who they are replacing and how much they are alike (Pierce, 2015). This tendency to favor those who look, behave, or have similar characteristics is why succession planning helps organizations plan and take active steps toward mitigating built-in bias and prepare for the future, not replicate the past (Pierce, 2015). The goal of the succession planning process is to identify and develop employees with potential in order to increase the availability of experienced, capable, motivated employees who are prepared to take on future roles and responsibilities as they become available (Berchelman, 2005). This heightened awareness for a more strategic approach and comprehensive effort to establish the principles of effective succession is about preparing future leaders, not pre-selecting or favoring individuals. It is about deliberately and systematically working to ensure continuity in key positions and developing the intellectual capital for the future (Rothwell, 2010).

The Business Case for Succession Planning

According to Pierce (2015), succession planning involves establishing a culture that serves the institution and enables it to thrive, leaving it in a better place long after any one individual can have an impact. This groundwork gives opportunity for future success and creates a community of employees who care about each other and their individual and collective success (Pierce, 2015). Building intentional culture with defined values and a shared vision is what Jim Collins (2001) described as part of Level 5 leadership in his book, *"Good to Great: Why Some*

Companies Make the Leap…and Others Don't." Collins (2001) developed hierarchy of leadership that include five levels, where level 5 refers to the highest level in the hierarchy of executive capabilities that encompass all other levels including from level 1 to 4; highly capable individual, contributing team member, competent manager, and effective leader (p. 20-21). What Collins (2001) research found is that level 5 leadership is what differentiates a good company from a great organization and a key feature of this leadership involves setting up successors for success. This means that leaders in great organizations prepare the organization to continue to thrive when they are gone by focusing on the development of people and the successors needed to move the organization forward and prosper (Collins, 2001). These level 5 leaders want to see their organizations succeed in the next generation and are comfortable with not getting the credit for it, whereas comparison leaders are more concerned with their own greatness and gain rather than the success of the company after they are gone (Collins, 2001, p. 26). These critical characteristics of humility and will to build a sustainable culture of success as defined in level 5 leadership embody the purpose of succession planning.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) is the world's largest human resource (HR) membership organization and conducts published research on a myriad of HR topics, issues, policy, and standards. SHRM (2015) defines the business case for succession planning as a necessary strategy for moving from reactive replacement to proactive planning that includes monitoring, developing, and retaining critical talent. This results in a positive impact on the bottom line through continued effective performance with leadership continuity (SHRM, 2015). Often organizations focus on what will happen if a linchpin position person leaves rather than on preparing for the next person to take over. Since increasing job mobility is a characteristic of our current and future workforce, it is important to focus on building a robust channel of talent to mitigate the operational gaps, smooth transitions, and build capacity (Boerner, 2015). The practical side of succession planning is simply based in the need to prepare for impending retirements and turnover that impacts current leadership and the leadership pipeline (Shults, 2001, SHRM, 2009).

The interest in succession planning in business stems from survival, which is dependent on having the right leadership (Rothwell, 2002; Rothwell, 2010). In his book, "*Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within*," Rothwell (2010) notes that succession planning is critical to having the "right people in the right places at the right times to do the right things to get the right results (p. 15)." This may sound familiar as Collin's (2001) described how organizations go from good to great by using the example of a bus. This commonly cited passage in Collin's (2001) book noted that companies that go from good to great start by getting the right people on the bus, the wrong people off the bus, and the right people in the right seats (p. 13). Rather than hope and chance, both Collins (2001) and Rothwell (2010) note that a system to identify and prepare people for current and future positions is critical to sustained success. This supports the key concept of intentionality when developing talent to meet current and future workforce needs (Runestad, 2014).

The concept of succession planning as a system comes from the realization that human talent is an asset on the organizational balance sheet. After years of downsizing, rightsizing, and redesigning the middle layers of management, organizations have leaned their own pools of talent and reduced their capacity to replace individuals in vacated positions (Rothwell, 2010). The result is that organizations have cut to the point where they have fewer people to identify, develop, promote, and retain which creates a talent deficit (Rothwell, 2010). This deficit heavily impacts those who remain with the organization as high performers are overloaded, under-rewarded, and eventually dissatisfied with their work and environment (Rothwell, 2010).

Without strategic succession planning, practices like grooming, where current leaders tend to identify and groom successors who look, act, and have similar values to themselves, create 'homeosocial reproduction' leading to discriminatory practices (MnSCU, 2013; Pierce, 2015; Rothwell, 2010, p.15). Although not necessarily intentional, this homeosocial reproduction breeds similar thoughts, ideas, and actions and leads to exclusivity that works against common organizational goals of innovation, creativity, and diversification, thus not preparing for the business environment of the future (Rothwell, 2010).

Overall, these noted repercussions of failing to invest in the human assets within an organization detract from organizational success. The goal of succession planning is to create and maintain a system that focuses instead on preparedness, development, and potential which, in turn, requires purpose, structure, and clarity (Rothwell, 2010). To facilitate the implementation of intentional and strategic succession planning structures, organizations utilize clear frameworks and defined leadership competencies as described in the next section.

Succession planning frameworks. To create a system for succession planning, two frameworks were identified as the primary resources for organizational use: SHRM's (2009) defined steps of effective succession planning, and Rothwell's (2006, 2010) succession planning model. Both are globally recognized and have key stages defined by actions steps or characteristics the move organizations forward in the process of planning for leadership transitions.

In its 2009 publication, SHRM suggested clear steps to create a succession planning process and defined the key competencies of succession planning. These steps include 1. Adapt to demographic changes and talent scarcity, 2. Identify skill gaps and training needs, 3. Retain institutional knowledge in a knowledge economy, 4. Boost morale and retention by investing in employees, 5. Replace unique or highly specialized competencies (SHRM, 2009). These steps encompass the planning and activities that support the strategic growth of talent and link leadership development and performance to organizational outcomes. SHRM's approach to succession planning is holistic and does not modify to any specific industry or individual, but rather focuses on an organization's specific needs and broader strategies, goals, and objectives (SHRM, 2015). The model also takes into consideration the speed and type of change, industry complexity, and how work has/will modify (SHRM, 2015). Finally, SHRM recommends that formality in process, systemic and systematic approaches, and tailored initiatives that are experientially based (also called stretch assignments) be utilized throughout the steps to create an effective succession planning management system (SHRM, 2015). Table 1 below graphically depicts the steps of the SHRM (2009) model.

Rothwell's (2010) seven step succession planning model has a strong focus on developing people and includes: 1. Making a commitment to and establishing a systematic succession planning program, 2. Assessing present work requirements in key positions and clarifying key individuals who would be hard to replace due to unique knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSA's), 3. Appraise individual performance with an inventory of talent to understand current human assets, 4. Assessing future work requirements and competencies that align with the organizations strategic goals, 5. Assessing future individual potential with an established and objective process that is future oriented, 6. Closing the developmental gap with leadership development opportunities and internal promotion methods to meet succession needs, and 7. Evaluating the succession planning program with continuous improvements and ongoing commitment (p. 83-85). The outlined steps include what Rothwell (2010) identified as minimum requirements for succession planning such as written policies and procedures, strong communicated value statements, multi-rater/360/full circle assessments, individual development plans, skill inventories, and a personal commitment from the top (president/CEO).

When the two models are compared, the similarities are clear. There is a strong focus on identifying human resource needs that accomplish organization mission and strategy. The process to identify the needs and people to fill those needs is based on what the organization sees as critical to current and future operations. Although they use different terminology, the concepts of talent management, leadership development, and workforce planning are engrained within the succession process to recruit, retain, and promote internally which demonstrate a long term commitment to investing in people (SHRM, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). The expectation is that this investment in human assets will produce a strong return, thus a system of evaluating results and using said results for continuous improvement is ongoing and systematic. To meet organizational mission and strategy for the future, both frameworks also utilize defined leadership competencies to help guide development of employees.

Utilizing leadership competencies in succession planning. As Kotter (1999) explains, “more change demands more leadership” (p. 53). Faster technological change, greater competition, market deregulation, globalization, over-capacity and instability in capital intensive industries, changing workforce demographics, and an overall increasing rate and magnitude of change have shifted the business world (Kotter, 1999; Rothwell, 2010). These shifts have generated a business environment that has redefined what leaders really do creating an opportunity to capitalize on the strategies of succession planning. Kotter’s (1999, 2007) work on defining management and leadership as compliments have led the way for organizations to redefine how their own expected and required competencies in linchpin positions are articulated. This renewed focus on competencies as part of assessing employee potential and performance is a key step in effective succession planning as noted in SHRM's (2009) defined steps for effective succession planning and Rothwell's (2010) succession planning model. The next section will further examine the current approaches that have and continue to shape leadership competency definitions.

Theoretical roots of leadership competencies. Competencies are about work performance and results and their identification and assessment are foundational to effective succession planning (Rothwell, 2010, p. 87-88). Because succession planning is not an exclusive activity but rather an inclusive strategy of long term leadership development and preparedness, the concept of competency within a succession planning program is rooted in leadership theory. Several theories, models, and practices have informed the concept of leadership competencies including trait, skill, transformational and servant approaches. The following paragraphs summarize the work within each approach and its tie to leadership competencies as utilized with succession planning.

The trait approach focuses on determining specific traits that differentiate leaders from followers and the quality of those traits which individuals possess (Northouse, 2013, p. 19). As researchers (Stogdill, 1948, 1974; Mann, 1959; Lord, Devader, and Alliger, 1986; and Kirkpatrick and Lock, 1991) began to research and analyze different traits that leaders possessed within organizations, specific traits were positively associated with leadership (Northouse, 2013). These traits like intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability continue to present themselves in leadership trait research as these are traits organizations want leaders to have or develop as they take on advancing leadership roles (Northouse, 2013).

Heavily focused in personality or character, these approaches do not account for situational context, are highly subjective and lack a definitive list, and do not tie traits to actual outcomes, thus making the approach less useful in succession planning initiatives (Northouse, 2013). However, the initial traits identified have become increasingly common in other approaches and organizational competency descriptions.

The skills approach continues focus on the individual (leader) and includes personality characteristics, however it expands to develop models of organizational leadership that include knowledge and abilities that can be learned and developed (Northouse, 2013). Researchers such as Katz (1955); Bass (1990); Mumford, Zaccaro, Harding, Jacobs, & Fleishmann (2000); and Yammarino (2000) examined individual attributes, competencies, and leadership outcomes as a map for effective performance (Northouse, 2013). The body of research acknowledges that individual attributes and competencies can be developed through career experiences and that all components are impacted by environmental influences, which ultimately impact effectiveness and performance (Northouse, 2013). Although very general with weak predictive value (it does not explain how skills lead to or impact performance), the skills approach does acknowledge that competencies development is tied to performance which is a key component of succession planning models (Northouse, 2013).

Transformational leadership emphasizes intrinsic motivation, development of individuals, empowerment, and other more affective components of leadership that change or ‘transform’ individuals (Northouse, 2013). Many researchers (Downton, 1973; Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; and Zhu, Avolio, Riggio, and Sosik, 2011) have developed several factors of leadership that define transformational leadership and are summarized by Northouse (2013) as idealized influence, charisma, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (p.

191). Often used to as an antonym to transactional leadership, transformational leadership ties the above factors to a leadership process with expected outcomes and performance expectations and also emphasizes the need for growth and development of employees (Northouse, 2013). Collectively, these key components of competency development are also represented in succession planning (Rothwell, 2010). However, the measurement of these factors in transformational leadership and the ability to gauge its effectiveness on transforming individuals and organizations is anecdotal at best as the link between positive outcomes (like changes in employee performance and increases in organizational effectiveness) with the factors of transformational leadership are not yet established (Northouse, 2013).

Servant leadership also focuses on the point of view of the leader but emphasizes additional characteristics that demonstrate attentiveness, empathy, nurturing, and service to others (Northouse, 2013). Credited with the term servant leadership, Robert Greenleaf's work (1970) is referenced by others like Spears (2002), Covey (2002), Senge (2002), Wheatley (2002), Bennis (2002), Russell and Stone (2002), Patterson (2003), Blanchard and Hodges (2003), Hale and Fields (2007) and many others who have used the conceptual framework to build new models, define characteristics, and distinguish the behaviors of servant leaders from other leadership theories, styles, and approaches (Northouse, 2013). Servant leader behaviors are influenced by preexisting conditions such as context and culture, leader attributes, and follower receptivity which lead to desired outcomes that focus on follower performance and growth, organizational performance, and societal impact (Northouse, 2013; p. 225). Succession planning's priority of building talent to increase performance and the pipeline of qualified, prepared employees to increase performance and effectiveness ties readily to servant leadership's focus on building follower/employee through focused attention and development. However, servant leadership is not a robust or researched enough concept to have defined and proven abilities, traits, and behaviors to alone influence the definition of key leadership competencies within succession planning (Northouse, 2013).

In his book, *"Good to Great,"* Collins (2001) also examined competencies when defining his levels of leadership from a level 1 highly capable individual who makes productive contributions to a level 5 executive who builds enduring greatness through a blend of personal humility and professional will. Noted in the hierarchy of leadership is the focus on building talent, individual capabilities, achievement of objectives, and the personality and behavioral traits of leaders within each level (Collins, 2001, p. 20). Direct ties to characteristics, factors, skills, and traits can be found within this hierarchy from all the leadership approaches reviewed above; trait, skill, transformational, and servant. In addition, the focus on high performance standards, building talent, resource allocation, and ongoing personal and professional development in Collins (2001) book tie closely to the definition and noted frameworks of succession planning.

As summarized, each of these approaches to leadership theory and practice include components of traits and skills, abilities and capabilities, and competency definition. Each also advances an ever-expanding and complex view of leadership with a growing focus on competencies that shape the human capacity with organizations.

Competencies as a vital component of succession planning. Concern surrounding leadership retirement and turnover has led to an increasing amount of research on what leadership qualities and traits are needed and how to better prepare future leaders (Kotter, 1999; Kotter, 2007; Mann, 2010; Rothwell, 2010; SHRM, 2009). Other research supports the use of competency based assessment in leadership development as part of succession planning (Sinady, Floyd, & Mulder, 2010). Rothwell (2010) summarizes several reasons why competencies are critical to succession planning. These include alignment of organizational competencies to job competencies, defining high potential employees, clarifying future competencies essential to organization success, providing a basis for performance management, creating assessments that fit organizational culture, and designing development opportunities that meet individual and organizational needs. Both SHRM and Rothwell have extensively researched competency models to support and/or define traits to utilize within their succession planning frameworks.

SHRM (2015) defines seven categories of competencies: leadership, initiative, judgment, planning and organizing, teamwork, commitment, and political savvy. Each category has several defined characteristics that detail the components of each competency. These details create a rich description of each competency to support a definition that is comprehensive yet flexible. Rothwell (2010) does not recommend specific competencies or traits for organizations, but rather focuses on providing guidance on how organizations can build and define culture specific competencies for themselves. Rothwell (2010) does, however, emphasize that competency identification and definition are foundational to effective succession planning and notes that without competency identification and assessment, organizations tend to focus on work activities only, not what people need to be successful within the organization.

As leaders attempt to prepare themselves for increased responsibilities and new roles, this research can be utilized to push for development opportunities that increase competency in key areas. Current leaders should take responsibility for creating a corporate culture where people value strong leadership and strive to create it through preparation (Kotter, 2007). As Kotter (1999) said, “Institutionalizing a leadership-centered culture is the ultimate act of leadership” (p. 65).

Succession Planning in Higher Education

If succession planning is so important in other industries, one can reasonably suggest that it can also have a positive impact in higher education in a time of leadership crisis (Robken, 2007). Key differences between business and public higher education, such as civil service systems, forced talent pool approaches (must equally develop anyone who wants to be), and the role of the customer (student), may change how a succession plan is developed or titled, but does not change the need for it (Klein & Salk, 2013; Rothwell, 2010). There is a constant need to prepare the next generation of leaders as current leadership plans for long term institutional health and works to ensure the advancement of colleges through unprecedented change (Austin, 2015). There are already studies available about the application of succession planning in private higher education institutions that can be utilized by public two-year colleges for generalizable findings that include the definition of succession planning, the understanding of succession planning value and fit in academics, and the development of development practices for internal potential leaders (Klein & Salk, 2013). As noted by Rich (2006) in the following:

> Higher education requires administrators who effectively balance unity and integrate business and academic priorities; respond creatively to demand for increased market competitiveness in ways that support long term academic objectives; and connect the strategies for improvement of institutional infrastructure and fiscal resources with the requirements for strengthening the ingredients of academic progress. Higher education cannot import that kind of leadership, the must produce it. (p. 41)

Higher education institutions have long recognized that leadership development and career management efforts benefit employees and the organization, but increasing heightened awareness also exists for a more strategic approach and comprehensive effort toward succession planning as a long term strategic initiative (Davies & Davies, 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Keim & Murray, 2010; Luna, 2010; Middlehurst, 2008; Neefe, 2009). According to a 2000 study by the Society for Human Resource Management only 32% of organization had any formal succession plan with respondents noting that poor or mismanaged succession planning led to lack of clear career development, demoralized employees, inconsistent direction, turnover escalation, defection of talent, declined competitiveness, bad press, ballooning retention costs (Feeney, 2003). Consequently, Gaffney (2005), generally cited employee retention research and stated that “employees ten to stay longer where they are experiencing personal and professional growth.” She went on to state that “career development and succession planning synergy creates happier, more productive employees (p. 7).” Overall, Gaffney (2005) suggests succession planning, when implemented as part of business strategy, helps retain talented employees (p. 8), deliver worth and value (p. 9), better prepares the institution to take on future challenges (p. 9), increases overall employee engagement and productivity (p. 8), supports new ideas and innovations (p, 9), and “grows, grooms, and keeps the people they (organizations) need, for what they need, when they need it.”

This increasing recognition of leadership development and career management has impacted the pathway to academic administration in higher education. In their 2001 study, Cejda, McKenney, and Burley found that there is no longer a single progressive job ladder to positions, but rather that progressive administrative positions and experiences were the key to preparing leaders for high-level administrative positions. This varies from the more traditional pathway of faculty member to department chair to dean to CAO, although faculty member experience is still the most common starting point for administrative positions (Cejda et.al., 2001). There is also an increasing number of non-traditional career paths into c-suite and linchpin positions, particularly in the two-year college environment, however, the most common path to the presidency is still a senior administration or c-suite position (Land, 2003; Shults, 2001). This establishes that experience in administrative positions are significant to career path development and that progressive experiences and responsibilities are critical to preparing future leaders (Land, 2003). These progressive responsibilities and experiences are part of the succession planning model as noted by Rothwell (2010) and SHRM (2009) as part of the effort to assess and appraise individuals and invest in their competency development.

The need for a strategic and systematic approach that invests in strengthening the leadership pipeline is becoming increasingly evident (Austin, 2015; Boerner, 2015; Berchelman, 2005; Land, 2003). We can attribute this to a myriad of issues from changing workforce demographics (Rothwell, 2010), steep decline in the number of conferred doctoral degrees to community and technical college leadership (Keim & Murray, 2008), hiring freezes, financial constraints, broader and more complex job descriptions (Keim & Murray, 2008), and increased work-loads and stress levels in these positions (Davies & Davies, 2010). Without intervention, the result of this changing demographics is fewer people prepared for or motivated to take on key leadership positions within institutions. As the conditions of the leadership pipeline are further examined in the following section, the case for succession planning in higher education as a strategic approach to meeting these challenges and preparing its people will be critical.

Higher education leadership conditions. As leadership failures, particularly at the top level of administration, gain media attention, there is an increasing demands for succession planning from boards, accrediting agencies, state and federal government, and creditors (Manger, 2009). Several factors are contributing to the changes in the college pipeline. From demographic factors and competition to changing job requirements and political climates, all are combining to create a growing concern over the lack of prepared applicants for linchpin and c-suite positions in higher education (Evelyn, 2001; Land, 2003; Rothwell, 2010; Shults, 2001). Each of these conditions are outlined below to create the case for succession planning in higher education.

Forces in the pipeline. Several internal and external forces significantly influence the need for succession planning within higher education institutions while simultaneously impacting their ability to engage in succession planning activities. These include demographic trends, competitive forces, job requirements, lack of preparation, the complexity of defining competencies, the changing political climate, and the institutions own bureaucracy

Demographic trends. The demographic trends of administrators and faculty related to age, gender, race, ethnicity, and experience further demonstrate the need to examine how colleges are approaching leadership planning. In community colleges, the workforce is aging. With 47% of the workforce over 50 (Boerner, 2015), average c-suite age of 54 (Boggs, 2003), average presidential age of 61 (AACC, 2012), and a wave of retirements at the c-suite and presidential level (75% plan to retire within 10 years) (Tekle, 2012), turnover is eminent. Turnovers within these positions create challenges and opportunities. The challenge lies in finding applicants and qualified candidates while the opportunity to hire new leaders expands the vision of the college to fit the current and future needs of community college (Shults, 2001).

In its 2012 report *"The American College President,"* the American Council on Education examined key demographics related to race, ethnicity, gender, age, career history, and time in position for presidents of higher education institutions. Several findings in the report confirm the changing picture in higher education since 2006 including: an increase in the average age of college presidents to 61; a 7% increase of presidents whose prior position was outside higher education; a decline of one-and-a-half years in average time of the tenure of presidents; a 1% decline in the number of minority presidents; and a 3.4% increase in the number of women presidents (ACE, 2012). This data further demonstrates the shift in demographics at the highest level of leadership in college and universities, however, when compared to 25 years ago when the ACE began it study the overall profile of a college president hasn't changed much (Cook & Kim, 2012). For example, as the student body ethnically and racially diversifies, from 20% in 1990 to 34% in 2009, the racial makeup of college presidents has increased from 8% to 13% between 1986 and 2011 (Cook & Kim, 2012). Of note, gender diversification has increased since the first ACE study in 1986. There has been a 16% increase in female leadership, the highest percent found at colleges, however, since the last published study by ACE there has actually been a decrease in the number of women presidents (ACE, 2012). This lack of diversification within the higher education administrative ranks can also be tied to the career pathways to these positions, which have also remained relatively unchanged.

Although much research has focused on the college presidency and its successors, it is important to note that the most likely successors to all c-suite positions are reflecting these same conditions. The aging of key c-suite positions most likely to be in line to succeed college presidents indicate the need for stronger succession planning strategies in linchpin positions in other levels of administration (Keim & Murray, 2008). Studies referenced in the articles utilized for this review indicate that the pool of potential replacements for these c-suite positions is even smaller than those for college presidencies (Davies & Davies, 2010; Keim & Murray, 2008; Rothwell, 2010).

The AACC, 2012, provides the most current picture of college employee demographics. By examining the distribution at other levels we build a more comprehensive picture of who is in the pipeline. CEO's are 72% male, 81% white, 62% over 55, and 99% have an advanced degree. In comparison, at the administrative level (including c-suite positions), 53% are female and 80% are white, at the middle management level, 51% are female and 83% are white, and at the professional staff level 64% are female and 75% are white. Contrast this to the enrolled population at community colleges which is 60% female and 52% white (AACC, 2012). Because the middle management positions are most likely to succeed to c-suite positions, and c-suites positions to the presidency, what can be deduced from this data is that there is an increased discrepancy in representation within the career ladder of colleges as compared to the student population at community colleges (Cook & Kim, 2012; Harlety, Eckel, & King, 2009).

Competitive forces. The mass exodus of community college leadership due to retirement and turnover is an opportunity to build capacity for the future by supporting, nurturing, and encouraging talent, but is also a challenge (Calkins & Millsings, 2005; Hartley, Eckel & King, 2009). The competition for qualified candidates in key linchpin and c-suite positions is increasing. Competitive forces from the private sector, universities with higher salaries and incentives, and elementary and secondary schools with programs like loan forgiveness make it difficult to attract talent into colleges because of the greater rewards offered elsewhere (Evelyn, 2001; Rothwell, 2010). As leaders develop their skills, abilities, and talents to manage diversity, fundraise, manage fiscal resources and information technology, and conduct effective strategic planning they become ideal candidates for positions within and outside of higher education (Evelyn, 2001). This increase in demand and competitiveness for top candidates in at the highest level of college administration creates an increased pressure on the pipeline for succession, making planning and developing internal candidates for these positions even more important (Evelyn, 2001; Rothwell, 2010).

Job requirements. It is not only competitive forces that are impacting the pipeline, but also the lack of interest in moving into administrative positions from faculty and other professional positions within higher education (Land, 2003). Job requirements have become less inviting and idealistic as potential applicants see the long hours, lack of balance, and increasing demands in these positions (Evelyn, 2001). Less than 30% of CAO's aspire to be presidents for these same reasons (Land, 2003). Senior administrative positions like the CAO and CSAO were traditionally internally focused but now job responsibilities have expanded well beyond academic and student affairs programming and into IT, HR, assessment, and accountability measures (Land, 2003). Even presidents feel unprepared to deal with the changing aspects of their positions which now include more fundraising, accountability measures, budgeting, and work with boards, local, state, and federal legislatures (Shults, 2001). Incoming c-suite administrators and presidents report feeling underprepared for the high intensity of relationship building tasks, politics, and overwhelming nature of the positions they are in (Shults, 2001). The pressures of these requirements in higher education leadership have become more evident to those in the pipeline as well, decreasing the desire to move up to higher level positions (Land, 2003)

Lack of preparation. Lack of preparation to meet the job requirements as noted above for high level leadership positions leaves institutions in a tenuous position during turnover. Research since the mid 1990's has projected the high turnover among senior administration and the mass exodus of community college leadership while urging an increase in professional development programs specifically related to community colleges (Betts et al, 2009; Calkins and Millings, 2005; Land, 2003; Shults, 2001). Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt (2005) ascertain that higher education institutions pay little attention to preparing their leaders or to succession and that this lack of mid-level leadership preparedness impacts effectiveness and the ability of individuals in them to assume future and higher level administrative positions. As established, the progressive experience within these positions is critical to the career path development of leadership (Land, 2003) but institutions prefer older leaders with proven track records in similar positions which works against the pipeline of younger applicants, women, and minorities (Cook, 2012). The lack of a defined career ladder or a path to move through the ranks in academic or student affairs means institutions must find ways to internally and externally prepare leaders for succession (Land, 2003).

What might that look like? From the inside it can mean mentoring programs that promote transition of knowledge and skills, stretch assignments to broaden a portfolio of experience, conducting risk analysis of positions and assessing internal competencies, and hiring practices that promote inclusion and diversity of experience while building complimentive strength based teams (Borden, 2010; Klein and Salk, 2013; Land, 2003). Externally, the focus of preparedness turns to professional associations and higher education providers and universities to provide opportunities (Land, 2003). For example, the AACC (2005, 2013) has taken an active role in compiling a leadership program database, designing training and development opportunities, building a web based registry, and conducting awareness campaigns about opportunities for its membership.

It also requires a critical review of the lack of formal preparation for community college leadership positions. The shortage of doctoral programs, fellowships, and certificate programs to develop leaders in community college administration is evidenced by a 78% decrease in degree conferred with this emphasis during a time of increase in degrees conferred in higher education administration (Evelyn, 2001). Community colleges rely on these programs to prepare their leaders but seem to exert little influence or control over how and if this happens (Evelyn, 2001). There are several states, including Minnesota, that do not offer graduate or doctoral programs related to community college leadership and administration (The Council for the Study of Community Colleges, 2015). Doctoral programs must determine if their focus is to prepare leaders for positions in higher education administration or researchers. Both are important as research based programs contribute to the collective knowledge and understanding of higher education leadership and experiential programs develop practitioners with experiences that prepare them for administrative positions (AACC, 2013).

This lack of leadership preparedness plays a pivotal role in succession planning within community colleges. Sinady, Floyd, and Mulder (2010) reviewed the leadership competencies identified by the American Association of Community Colleges (2005). The study examined the effectiveness of doctoral programs in preparing for college leadership. Leadership competencies were developed in a three-year study and included organizational strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, advocacy, and professionalism (AACC, 2005). Sinady, Floyd, and Mulder (2010) found that the doctoral programs that embed the AACC competencies into their programs increased the likelihood of producing effective community college leaders. These competencies are not only used in the recruitment of students to programs, but also in the interview process and screening of leaders by hiring committees at community colleges (Sinady et al., 2010). The development of these competencies through theory and application-based curriculum builds talent and generates opportunities for development in targeted areas critical to leadership success in higher education environments (Sinady et al., 2010).

Similarly, in 2009 Romano, Townsend, and Mamiseishvili studied doctoral student's perspectives of these same competencies. The authors found that the development of these competencies within a program had significant influence on student's perception of their ability and preparedness to successfully take on leadership positions in higher education. Neefe (2009) also found the identification and communication of competencies supported the intentional and transparent efforts of organizations in professional development planning.

Competency complexities. The utilization of traits and skills, also called competencies, to define leadership abilities and identify high potential leaders is becoming increasingly common in higher education. But, as noted by Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006), the meaning of leadership in higher education is being redefined by those in positions of leadership who use alternative language or emerging definitions of leadership. This new definition includes reference to terms like team, servant, and transformative leadership and characteristics such as shared decision making, creativity, quality improvement, strong personal value systems, and vision (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006).

As noted in the business case for succession planning earlier in this literature review, industry has utilized both theory and professional practice to define leadership competencies. To add further complexity, higher education uses its unique institutional approach to further defining leadership competencies. Middlehurst (2008) acknowledges that not enough is known about exactly what makes a leader effective or ineffective in the higher education context. However, because leadership theory and practice are tied to historical and cultural context, framed by methodological approaches, and influenced by the socio-economic environment, the relationship between desired leadership practices in higher education and principles of general leadership theory are not that distant (Middlehurst, 2008). It is important to utilize this research and application from industry as a basis for development of competency development in higher education, one that combines leadership theory and practice with higher education mission and principles, to create a more holistic approach to preparing community college leaders.

To expand the competency conversation into higher education, specifically the community college environment, The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC), whose mission is firmly rooted in the development and continual improvement of community college leadership, has led the way (AACC, 2005; AACC, 2013). Through an extensive research process over a year and half (November 2003-April 2005), funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the AACC developed a list of competencies for community college leaders that has become the foundation of leadership competency definition in U.S. community college education. Initially the AACC included definitions and illustrations of six areas of competency which included organization strategy, resource management, communication, collaboration, advocacy, and professionalism (AACC, 2005). These competencies are firmly rooted in the AACC principles that 1.) Leadership can be learned, 2.) Many members at many levels of the community college community can lead, 3.) Effective leadership is a combination of effective management and vision, 4.) Learning leadership is a life-long process, and 5.) The leadership gap can be addressed with a variety of strategies and delivery methods that incorporate the competencies (AACC, 2005).

In 2013, the AACC conducted additional research and modified some of the language around the competencies to further define the characteristics for executive positions at three different levels – emerging leaders, new leaders (less than 3 years), and mature leaders (in positions greater than 3 years). The premise of the additional research and recommendations specific to the CEO level was that many of the same skills required for emerging leaders were required, however, if CEO's were expected to meet an increasing number of accountability measures, their ability to master additional qualities was imperative to their ability to contribute to institutional transformation (AACC, 2013). The modified competencies include: organizational strategy; institutional finance, research, fundraising, and resource management; communication; collaboration; and community college advocacy (AACC, 2013). When compared, these competencies are evolutionary from those defined in 2005 and focus on progressive development within a leadership continuum (AACC, 2013).

The reader can draw conclusions about the similarities and differences between the identified competencies in business versus those in higher education. A chart to visually depict the competencies referred to throughout this literature review is available in Appendix A. In higher education, there are a variety of roles and paths to leadership and the competencies and skills needed will shift based on position. The changing nature and complexity of positions in higher education highlights the increased need for diversity of experience and skills outside the traditional path (Land, 2003). Developing individuals with the experience and skills needed in this emerging community college landscape within higher education will require ongoing, evolutionary, and long-term engagement and investment (Land, 2003). It is also critical for universities and community colleges to study these competency based models carefully as they examine their role in preparing future higher education leaders.

Changing political climates and institutional bureaucracy. It is hard to ignore the changing political climate and priorities that impact higher education. The political priority of higher education at the regional, state, and national level is in decline as evidenced by decreases in funding, increases in the costs of operation, increased demands to control tuition and fees, increased inquiry from media and public, more accountability measures and unfunded mandates from boards and legislatures, demand for new technologies and equipment, and escalating competition (Boggs, 2003; Rich, 2006; Robken, 2007). As noted in the job requirements section of this review, this impacts and changes the work of leaders to focus on competitive strategies, marketing, accountability measures, building political capital, and raising funds (Rich, 2006). The overall mission of colleges remains; open access, community responsiveness, resourcefulness, a clear focus on teaching and learning, and helping the most diverse student body in the history of higher education succeed (Boggs, 2003, p. 16) but the change in administrative work and responsibilities leads to contradiction.

Does the new political economy suggest leaders in higher education should view challenges as business problems that incorporate lessons from the private sector (Rich, 2006)? Rich (2006), uses the following quote from Bok to add context*:*

> Copying business practices from the private sector and actively engaging in marketing and selling their products are hardly new. What is changing, however, is the scale of commercialization and the marketing efforts by a growing number of institutions. Driven by diverse internal and environmental forces…., the drive for added revenue and market advantage has become self-reinforcing" (Bok, 2003 p. 14-15).

Land (2003) also noted the need for a similar skill set in college administrative leadership teams (budgeting, personnel, legal, managerial) to complement the composition of the management structure, similar to that found in private industry. This contradicts the traditional path of promotion within higher education that focuses on subject matter knowledge (demonstrated by degree attainment, research, and publication) and experience (increasing responsibility and promotion within higher education) (Land, 2003).

The roles of formal (position-based) and informal leaders within institutions is shifting and this shift has led to a separation between those who make the decisions and those served by them (Rich, 2006). Leadership requires forward thinking and a focus on long-term results, but with increased turnover, shorter times in positions, and an unprecedented number of retirements in higher education, the focus of leaders will increasingly tend toward short term gains and results (Betts et. al. 2009; Rich, 2006; Shults, 2001; Song & Harley, 2012). Increased turnover reduces capacity. Without individuals who are willing to commit for the long term and initiate change, there is a bias toward short term results and a reduced willingness to take on the challenges like funding, structure, relevance, and competition that impact the future direction of colleges (Rich, 2006; Robken, 2007). This lack of commitment by leadership to a long term future leaves employees and students feeling anxious and confused about the institutions priorities, strategies, infrastructure, and resource allocation. (Rich, 2006; Robken, 2007).

The seemingly natural faculty apathy toward administration because of perceived conflicting philosophies and ways of work, however, the changing and expanding roles of administrators does not help the situation (Rich, 2006). The freedom, independence, and autonomy that attracted faculty to the positions they hold isn't seen in administrative positions (Rich, 2006). Rather they see it encumbered with external demands, conflict, and organization change which they are not prepared to manage and don't want to (Rich, 2006; Wolverton et al., 2005).

The fear of changing roles from the known to unknown that include difficult and challenging aspects hold potential candidates back (Land, 2003). Moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar can cause anxiety and fear – fear of isolation, loneliness, sacrifice, workload, loss of personal time, conflict, criticism – leading many to believe it is not worth it (Land, 2003).

Inadequate searches, both those conducted internally and those done by firms, fail to attract a balanced pool of internal and external candidates (Klein & Salk, 2013). This reliance on search firms for c-suite and presidential positions is rooted in the need to mirror faculty search processes, the perception that internal candidates may not be able to make changes, a boards perception of insider loyalty or the inability to make personnel decisions, the inclusiveness of stakeholders with dissimilar objectives, and the prestige associated with bring in someone from the outside (Lapovsky, 2012; Carey, Ogden & Roland, 2000; Klein & Salk, 2013). In such instances, internal candidates may have a more difficult time in the search process because their weaknesses are known, there is a higher standard of hiring in a national search, or there is not an organizational culture that supports hiring from within (Carey, Ogden & Roland, 2000; Klein & Salk, 2013). This is contrary to corporate succession planning, where organizations frequently look internally to fill high level positions (Carey, Ogden, & Roland, 2000). Noted in its 2014 publication on recruitment strategies for new leaders, Witt/Keiffer presented multiple perspectives from several authors which summarized hiring nontraditional candidates (those from outside higher education), comparing academic leaders to corporate executives, the influence of institutional fit, and the impact of search committees on leadership selection. In this Witt/Keiffer publication (2014) Lucy Leske noted that in higher education internal succession was a new concept but that hiring or appointing internal candidates is a viable model leadership position if the candidate has demonstrated leadership within the organization (p. 30-31). Little research has been done on why higher education seems to prejudice internal hiring, however, the growing concern around the lack of well-prepared applicants and decrease in the number of qualified applications for two-year college positions leadership positions leads one to question why higher education pays such little attention to succession planning (Evelyn, 2001; Wolverton et. al., 2005).

Unique mission of two-year colleges. Managing talent through succession planning can be more difficult in higher education because institutional missions differ from those of business and industry, particularly those of public colleges and universities (Richards, 2009). The general focus of public higher education missions is on serving students, communities, employers, legislators, and the general public and the community college mission is even more focused (Richards, 2009). Community and technical colleges within the United States are founded in the core values of open access, community responsiveness, resourcefulness, a clear focus on teaching and learning, and enroll the most diverse student body in the history of higher education (Boggs, 2003, p. 16).

The unique mission and accountability structure of public higher education institutions particularly that of community colleges, leads to constraints and restrictions not faced by private and for-profit institutions. Examples include mandatory affirmative action plans; fixed employee hiring, discipline and promotion procedures; union contract regulations including claiming rights, tenure, and seniority; specific credentialing procedures and employment qualifications; complex funding models; and local or state politics (AACC, 2005; Cook & Kim, 2012; Hockady & Puyear, 2014). Higher education, specifically public higher education, also has a unique culture that incorporates the principles of involvement, development, and shared governance (Borden, 2010; Davis, 2008; Richards, 2009). Involvement refers to the participation and connection of the institution to key internal and external constituents which include institution employees, students, communities, legislators, advisory boards, systems, and other constituents impacted by the operations of the college (Davis, 2008). Development refers to the role of professional development in higher education to prepare, train, and provide experiences for its employees that enrich their professional lives and connects to the mission and values of the college (Davis, 2008; Richards, 2009). Using the American Federation of Teachers Higher Education Program and Policy Council's (2002) language, shared governance refers to "the set of practices under which college faculty and staff participate in significant decisions concerning the operation of their institutions." This definition inherently includes the engagement of all parties in the shared responsibility of what is best for the institution and is built on the values of transparency, accountability and ongoing communication (Davis, 2008).

The inclusive nature of the collegial culture includes consultation and collaboration where all stakeholders have a voice (Klein & Salk, 2013; Richards, 2009). These cultural components distinguish higher education from corporate America as they require that institutions examine and address how succession planning efforts involve and engage these stakeholder in the succession planning process (Klein & Salk, 2013; Richards, 2009). This raises the question of whether it is possible to align succession planning strategies and best practices in the employee selection, development, and promotion process with the culture and traditions of public higher education (Richards, 2009). A previous doctoral study in 2009 by Neefe indicates the answer is yes. Neefe cites the efforts of Daytona Beach Community College (p. 25), Maricopa Community College District (p. 27), a Canadian technical institute (p. 36-37) and efforts at several Ivy-Plus Universities (p. 40-41) as a strategic example of succession planning to foster a systematic approach to identify and fill employee knowledge gaps and proactively identify and cultivate future leaders. Establishing a culture that serves the institution and enables it to thrive while creating a community of employees who care about the future of the institution, each other, and students even after they are gone means developing people who are prepared to move in to new positions and responsibilities (Pierce, 2015). Succession planning requires that intentional building of culture that aligns with institutional values and vision and is reflected in practice and planning (Neefe, 2009; Pierce, 2015). There are not a limitless number of published examples in higher education of successful succession planning, however, the need is established and adaptations and adoption are possible if leadership development and succession planning are prioritized (Gaffney, 2005; Neefe, 2009; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Rothwell, 2002).

Leadership development – A critical element of succession planning. Leadership development and succession planning are not new concepts but their application in higher education institutions is (Davies & Davies, 2010). The idea of building talent to meet current and future workforce demands in organizations seems like a natural, common-sense, practice. The issue is not with the recognition of need or the realization that these practices lead to better prepared, productive, and more effective leaders, but with the actual use and formalization of these practices at higher education institutions or within systems (Davies & Davies, 2010; Feeney, 2003). Leadership development and succession planning are not mutually exclusive terms but rather inclusive. The role of leadership development in in higher education and the research surrounding its use has increased and shifted from a trait and individualized process to one that is more collaborative, shared, and collective (Kezar, 2009). This ability to focus on the institutions long term health increases the need for colleges to think about vertical growth and horizontal position with a constant emphasis on developing the next generation of leaders (Austin, 2015).

Preparing leaders through development is a key component of succession planning. Leadership development is included in both the SHRM (2009) and Rothwell (2010) models of succession planning as a key step. SHRM (2009) utilizes leadership development in the 'boost morale and retention by investing in employees' step, and Rothwell (2010) describes leadership development activities in the 'close the gap' step. The importance of internal and external leadership programs is demonstrated in the need to produce a pipeline of viable candidates for positions (Boerner, 2015). The pipeline of successors in higher education is built within these steps of the model through professional development activities. These activities include specialized external leadership programs (W.K. Kellogg Leadership Program, League for Innovation Executive Leadership Program, or the Higher Education Management Institute at Harvard), administrative internships and fellowships, mentoring relationships, and internal or college/campus based grow your own development programs (AACC, 2002; Runestad, 2014).

Because internal hiring and promotion continues to be the most common path to community college administrative (c-suite and presidential) appointments, the ability to understand and develop the internal labor pool within an institution is critical (AACC, 2002). This also means a more operational focus on leadership development at lower levels of management to develop clearer paths to leadership for faculty and staff, thus increasing the talent pool in the future (Davies, 2008). However smaller colleges must realize their efforts may actual be training future leaders for opportunities outside their own institution as the demand and competition increases for qualified leadership (AACC, 2002; Austin, 2015).

The internal, operational focus is also critical as it is part of ensuring successful transitions and college operations during turnover. This starts with preparing leaders from the middle (Ebbers et al., 2010). To fill these vacancies, “grow your own leaders” programs have become increasingly popular at the state level (Ebbers et al., 2010). These programs for middle and upper level managers require strong staff development resources to fill the pipeline for positions. Ebbers, Conover, and Samuels (2010) recommend a stepping stone approach that includes assessment of individuals, personal planning, credential attainment, and learning from successful, experienced leaders. Methods to accomplish this include: personal assessments and inventories on personal and leadership; review of identified leadership competencies and how individuals align with personal and professional characteristics; personal development plans that includes goals, timelines, and professional development activities; attainment of appropriate credentials based on the goals of the individuals and the requirements of the positions they seek; and mentoring, coaching and networking for other professional relationships that provide opportunities to learn, develop, and practice the skills necessary to succeed in positions (Ebbers et al., 2010).

Institutions that focus on leadership development can take the leap to succession planning by recognizing these current efforts and asking themselves how they can incorporate the current efforts and activities into a larger succession planning strategy. There is much research and information available on leadership develop programs, however the measurement to establish results and the return on investment remains more elusive (Runestad, 2014). In his 2014 study, Runestad summarized the efforts of community colleges in leadership development programs and activities noting that this was the most robust area of research in higher education but also not rigorously assessed. Klein and Salk (2013) note that research on the business or corporate based succession planning return on investment is more readily available, but not holistically applicable to higher education. This lack of systematic processes and evaluation, an integral part of succession planning as noted in the SHRM (2009) and Rothwell (2010) frameworks, can be attributed to several factors: a general gap of understanding; an entrenched traditional view of succession planning; a lack of planning; an unwillingness to let go of historic practices or revisit processes, beliefs and assumptions; anxiety; and/or a lack of awareness of the coming leadership crisis (Klein and Salk, 2013). This lack of research and the factors just described has led to an emerging body of work on succession planning efforts as described in the next section.

A summary of recent studies of succession planning in higher education. A thorough search of existing research on succession planning in the two year college environment had limited findings. This small body of research was informed primarily by broader topics of research on leadership development, succession planning in industry, succession planning for specific positions or with specific populations, or efforts in four year universities (Neefe, 2009; Richards, 2012). Four dissertations, as outlined below, were used to inform this literature review and guide the researcher's efforts. They include a combination of qualitative and quantitative studies conducted in different geographic regions over the past ten years.

Succession planning in a two-year technical college system. This quantitative study conducted by Neefe (2009), examined the relationship between succession planning and leadership development efforts when included in strategic planning to the hiring patterns within academic administration at the sixteen technical colleges within the Wisconsin Technical College System. Neefe's (2009) survey instrument was designed around three indices; strategic planning, succession planning, and leadership development and grouped into six sections with supporting questions on strategic planning, succession planning, career management, personal leadership preparation, strategic and succession planning links, and demographics. Analysis of the data showed a strong positive correlation between colleges with a mature strategic planning process and those with a more mature succession planning process, recognized common elements of succession planning used by the colleges in the study, identified leadership development strategies used by the colleges to develop academic leaders, and explored career progression pathways in academic leadership (p. 171-172). Notable findings of the study include: difference in career development activities and access by gender and geographic region; increased effectiveness of succession planning in medium versus small and large colleges; an untapped pool of aspirational leaders that has yet to be accessed; inconsistent value placed by participants on learning experiences at different career stages; and an increasing percentage of leaders who follow a non-traditional career path to academic leadership (Neefe, 2009). Generalizable implications regarding the importance of alignment of strategic planning with organizational processes and the need to utilize existing processes to develop, support, and articulate the importance of succession planning were balanced with implications specific to the Wisconsin Technical College System (Neefe, 2009). Suggestions for future research, specifically the need to examine tools and strategies being used in two year colleges to identify academic leaders led to this researchers study.

A new paradigm: Strategies for succession planning in higher education. This qualitative study explored the influence of governance structure and academic culture on succession planning at six institutions (public, private, 2 year and 4 year) across the U.S. using unstructured interviews with presidents and senior executives (Richards, 2009). Data collection sought to identify whether formal succession planning was being utilized and how it was being approached, what impact governance structure had on succession planning decisions, and how the institutional culture impacted methods or strategies of succession planning (Richards, 2009). Richards (2009) identified the following emergent themes within her study:

- Succession planning practices exist at each institution of the study but the formalness of those plans varied greatly. Efforts around leadership development activities were prevalent however these were not tied to succession planning models, strategies, or policies.
- Governance structure and type appears to influence the extent to which succession planning strategies were utilized. The type of college, presence of governing boards, and

the role of stakeholders all impacted individual responses yet all indicated that decisions around leadership development were presidential and/or board responsibilities. Findings indicated private institutions with corporate influence were more likely to engage in formal succession planning activities.

- Because academic culture is so unique, Richards (2009) attempted to understand its impact on an institutions ability to incorporate succession planning. All institutions indicated that collaboration and inclusiveness were a large part of decision making but the executive team were the primary decision makers (p. 85). Participants supported the concept of succession planning but found formal succession planning challenging to implement in the academic environment. Executive commitment, high level champions, strategic human resources, tactical planning, strategic communication, and perception of limits for faculty in succession planning were all identified as challenges to succession planning in the academic environment.

Richards (2009) also summarized additional strategies and recommendations for institutions embarking on succession planning to improve success within institutions and suggested similar exploration of other components of succession planning such as competencies, leader identification, and evaluation and assessment of succession planning efforts. This study impacted this researcher's current study by identifying a continued research gap and providing a qualitative methodology to reference.

Community college succession planning: Preparing the next generation of women leadership roles. In 2010 Luzbetak published this mixed method study to identify strategies of succession planning for use with middle-level management in community colleges. The study, focused on women in rural Illinois community colleges and their ability to develop professionally for leadership roles, specifically examined the effective planning strategies to prepare women for advancement, the variables impacting underrepresented populations for inclusion in succession planning, and the impact of the shared governance structure on succession planning (Luzbetak, 2010). The quantitative findings found disagreement between male and female respondents on the availability and equity of access to leadership development opportunities provided through purposeful succession planning efforts (Luzbetak, 2010). Four senior level administrators from the same sample were also interviewed about the challenges and potential obstacles to succession planning that led to emerging themes such as: need for fully developed planning process, Board of Trustee involvement and approval, internal and external stakeholder engagement and support (including unions), financial implications and impact, competition for talent, depth and breadth of skillset and the isolation that exists in high level leadership positions specific to rural college environments (Luzbetak, 2010). Strategies and techniques like mentoring, collaboration between institutions to support succession planning, talent recruitment and retention, internal career paths, grooming, and the diversification of the leadership pool were unique to each participant and had varying degree of disparity in regard to use, application, and impact (Luzbetak, 2010). The differing perspectives among participants in Luzbetak's (2010) study led to a series of recommendations (generalizable) on high level leadership involvement, systemic and deliberate practices, succession planning as part of the college's other major planning documents, and addressing the cultural components (included shared governance) on the institution. Luzbetak (2010) also provided specific recommendations for rural community colleges that include developing and institutional philosophy, articulating how and why the purposeful development of future leaders is critical, and developing an operational definition of succession planning (p. 142).

Future research gaps identified by Luzbetak (2010, p. 163) on career mobility, varied demographics within a similar study, the specific impact of the board of trustees, and the implications of developing transparent institutional succession plans informed this researcher of new areas of exploration. Several aspects of this study increased its relevance to this research including the involvement of rural colleges, the mixed method research approach, and the political climate and characteristics in the state of Illinois.

Succession planning for community colleges: A study of best practices. Susan McMaster's (2012) focused on adapting conceptual models from corporations for community colleges by connecting the best practice characteristics of succession planning to organizational structure. The research, primarily a content analysis of literature since 1996, was focused on characteristics that typify current thinking, implementation of best practices, and whether organization structure and culture impacted the process of succession or the reverse where succession planning changed the culture and structure of the organization (McMaster, 2012; p. 109). McMaster's (2012) conceptual model, built in a plan, implement, and assess cycle, was constructed to demonstrate the necessary interrelatedness of the components in each phase for successful implementation (p. 74).

In McMaster's (2012) summary of findings related to her research questions, she constructed a list of characteristics reflected in best practice. They include 1.) incorporating succession planning into overall strategic planning for the college, 2.) hiring potential leaders, 3.) developing individual professional development plans, 4.) providing leadership education, 5.) providing leadership opportunities, and 6.) mentoring (p. 109). In response to how community colleges can implement these best practices, McMaster (2012) ascertained that many of the key components of succession planning were already a part of the community college environment because of its mission and thus the adaptation from the business environment to community college may be more readily accepted.

McMaster's (2012) research also addressed the whether the organizational structure and culture of community colleges could adapt to the process of succession planning or if succession planning was adopted that it could change the structure and culture of the organization (p. 111). By comparing the community college horizontal, professional bureaucracy to best practices in succession planning, McMaster (2012) found that certain organizational structures and cultures within these institutions were more able and likely to adopt succession planning and that by adopting, the culture and structure of the organization could be modified. The nature of the professional bureaucracy within higher education encourages autonomy, shared decision-making, cross-functional teams, and professional development thus they have a built in structure and culture that supports succession planning (McMaster, 2012, p. 112).

The impact of this dissertation on the research for this study was two-fold. The thoroughness of the literature review, comprehensive reference materials, and analysis of body of scholarly literature provided a foundation for the research included as part of this literature review. Secondly, the recommendations for further research on the wide-spread adoption of modern succession planning to create a valid sample with long term studies to test the hypothesis that the adoption of a modern succession plan could change a community college's organizational culture and structure impacted the research concept and parameters of this study.

The review of existing and recent research related to succession planning elements within higher education was critical to understanding the gaps in research and informing the design of this study. As noted in each study summary, the research questions and methodology varied dramatically, however, the case for succession planning within community colleges emerged strongly in each.

Succession planning in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System (MnSCU). MnSCU is a system made up of 24 colleges and 7 universities with 54 campuses in 47 Minnesota communities that annually serves more than 435,000 students (MnSCU, 2015). The system is governed by a 15 member Board of Trustees appointed by the governor and confirmed by the Senate (MnSCU, 2015). A chancellor is appointed by the board to provide academic and operational leadership to the system and each college and university is led by a president who reports to the system chancellor (MnSCU, 2015). The system office includes divisions and offices that support its member colleges, universities, and stakeholders and includes offices in academic and student affairs, advancement, diversity and equity, finance, general counsel, information technology, internal auditing, public safety and compliance, and human resources (MnSCU, 2015). The human resource division serves prospective and current system employees with support, resources, and guidance both directly and through campus chief human resource officers (MnSCU, 2015).

The Talent Management unit reports to the Human Resource division and is responsible for workforce planning, recruiting, onboarding, performance management, training and development, leadership development, and succession planning (MnSCU, 2015). Succession planning is part of the overall talent management process to build capacity for leadership positions within the system. This branch of talent management provides expertise on succession planning for the system and its individual institutions with ongoing research, a succession planning framework supported by tools and techniques, and a pilot program (MnSCU, 2015).

The succession planning framework adopted by the MnSCU system is adapted from William R. Rothwell's 2005 book *"Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within."* This adapted framework (pictured below) includes seven stages that identify, develop, and promote leaders organizationally and within the system (About Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2011). Each stage includes clear outcomes, defined value, common question and discussion points to address, and a supporting package of tools, techniques, and strategies for accomplishing the outcomes of the stage. This comprehensive toolkit that supports the stages of the framework was created and is supported by the talent management office and its steering committee.

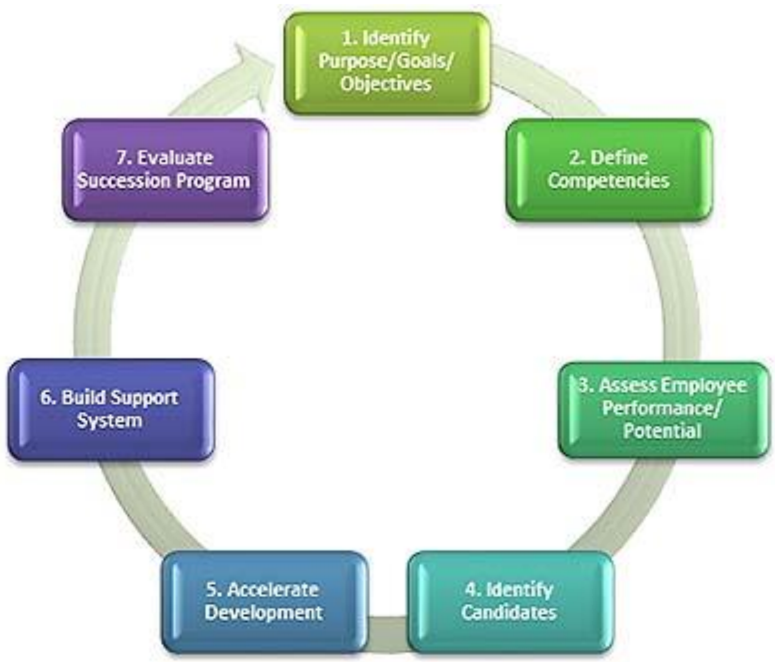

Figure 1. **Succession Planning Framework Utilized by MnSCU.** The system adapted from Rothwell's (2005) "Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent from Within" book.

The steps of the modified framework utilized by the MnSCU system is compared to the steps identified by SHRM (2009) and Rothwell (2010) in Table 2 to summarize the similarities and differences between the models. The MnSCU framework, tailored to its higher education environment, includes key components around commitment, competencies, assessment, development, and evaluation. Consistent across all the models are important components such as assessing current and future needs, investing in employee development, and document or tracking efforts. What differs between the three models is that SHRM's focus on retaining knowledge (organizational and human) is not articulated in the other two models. The Rothwell and MnSCU models strongly focus on planning and buy-in and continuous improvement, elements not as clearly state in the SHRM steps which lack focus on front end planning and continuous improvement planning.

Table 1

Succession Planning Model Comparisons

SHRM's defined steps for effective succession planning (2009)	**Rothwell's succession planning model (2010)**	**MnSCU's succession planning framework (2011)**
Adapt to demographic changes and talent scarcity	Make the commitment	Identify purpose, goals, and objectives
Identify skill gaps and training needs	Assess present work/people requirements	Define competencies
Retain institutional knowledge in a knowledge economy	Appraise individual performance	Assess employee potential and performance
Boost morale and retention by investing in employees	Assess future work/people requirements	Identify candidates
Replace unique or highly specialized competencies.	Assess future individual potential	Accelerate development
	Close the developmental gap	Build system support
	Evaluate the succession planning program	Evaluate succession program

The Human Resource division, specifically its Talent Management office, was created in an effort to prepare the system and its colleges and universities for its own version of the leadership crisis. The MnSCU Board of Trustees and previous system Chancellor first identified succession planning as a priority in 2008. In 2012 and 2014, the current system Chancellor also noted the importance of managing this turnover in his biannual work plan. Since 2011, the turnover of 21 of 31 college and university presidents has increased the priority of succession planning within the system (MnSCU, 2015). This priority is currently reflected in the system level human resources and talent management strategic plans with required reporting on efforts and their significance to the Board of Trustees at their request. This current and anticipated turnover directly demonstrate the significance of preparing a qualified talent pool, supporting the purpose of this study.

Managing talent for successful succession. Facing its own version of the leadership crisis, human resources at the system office commissioned a study in 2010 to test assumptions within it colleges and universities and provide data to help inform the Talent Management office of the short and long-term significance of succession planning efforts within its colleges and universities. The purpose behind the study was to create baseline of information to improve current efforts and design new programs and support mechanisms to help institutions prepare for turnover in key positions while maintaining successful operations and maximizing the strengths of employees (MnSCU, 2010). This study, conducted by a team of identified college and university leaders in the Luoma Leadership Academy (2010), included quantitative questions with room for comment and was emailed to all divisional MnSCU list-serves (exact number sent is not known) in the spring of 2010. Results included responses from 145 participants representing 41 of the 54 campuses in the system and produced several key findings to support the continued research of succession planning within MnSCU system. Below is a short summary of the findings produced by the team (MnSCU, 2010):

- Positions identified as linchpin within the MnSCU system expanded from presidents, and c-suite to include additional positions such as academic deans, human resource directors, registrars and financial aid directors.
- Review of demographic data confirmed the aging of people in these positions (85% of presidents and 60% of CAO's are 56 or older).
- Ninety five percent of respondents indicated that there were significant consequences and disruption to operations when the identified linchpin positions were vacant.
- Literature review and survey responses support the relevance of the current leadership competencies adopted by MnSCU and identified additional key competencies for the system to consider supporting.

This survey, along with the identified system goals approved by the board, brought the issue of succession planning to an increased level of importance for colleges and universities within the system causing all to question how the success of succession planning would influence their hiring, retention, and leadership competencies tied to performance. This survey also produced information on what elements of succession planning campuses were using, how and if succession planning was tied to institutional strategic planning and performance management, and ideas of how the system could collaborate to create the initiatives needed to prepare for the challenges of succession. This same study also re-examined the existing leadership competencies adopted by MnSCU in 2005.

MnSCU leadership competencies. In 2005, MnSCU adopted a list of 11 leadership competencies in four categories deemed crucial to incumbents in key leadership positions in the system. MnSCU (2012) defines a competency as the skills, knowledge, personal characteristics, and/or behaviors needed to effectively perform a role in an organization. The literature review and data collected through a MnSCU system survey, focus groups, and interviews conducted by Team Six of the Luoma Leadership Academy in 2010 helped validate the competencies initially identified in 2005, expanded competency definitions, and supported re-approval of the system competencies in 2012. This further solidified their importance in professional development efforts and performance evaluation throughout the system (MnSCU, 2012). The purpose of these competencies is to help develop curriculum for campus and system leadership development programs, assist in effective hiring decisions, set performance expectations, provide benchmarks for employee evaluation, and guide succession planning efforts (MnSCU, 2012).

The competencies are divided into four categories; leader of self, leader as relationship builder, leader as manager, and leader as innovator. Each category is divided into several subcategories that include defined characteristics that comprise the behaviors, qualities, and skills indicative of the subcategory (MnSCU, 2012). A summary of the categories and subcategories can be found in the last column of Appendix A.

Appendix A summarizes the industry, theory, and higher education competencies as examined throughout this literature review. The language of the descriptive competencies, behaviors, and practices has significant overlap between those used in industry, leadership development theory, higher education, and MnSCU. The first column, specific to industry, highlights the competencies from SHRM (2009). The next three columns highlight the competencies (practices, behaviors, or traits) from the highlighted leadership development theories or models outlined earlier in this literature review. The fifth column highlights the AACC competencies (2013) which are specific to the higher education and the community college environment. Finally, the last column outlines the competencies utilized by MnSCU (2012).

Unique to the MnSCU competencies is their inclusion of functional, job specific competencies deemed critical for successful contributions in multiple jobs on campuses and in the system (MnSCU, 2012). This feature helps to define and clarify what the system values, desires in its employees, and helps to build capacity for future growth (MnSCU, 2012). To ensure use and application, definitions of leadership competencies in the MnSCU system are continually communicated to system and college administration who are charged with measuring and evaluating these competencies as part of performance review and professional development planning processes (MnSCU, 2012). These competencies are also utilized to set individual goals and provide feedback to employees for use in informed decisions about future development strategies.

Leadership development to build talent in MnSCU. MnSCU is committed to growing its own leaders while continuing to attract talent from diverse pools. To support this effort strong recruitment strategies, training and development programs and resources, and ongoing leadership development opportunities are employed and maintained by the system office and campuses (MnSCU, 2015).

Leadership development programs are a core component of the succession planning framework adopted by MnSCU. Specifically, step 5 of the MnSCU succession plan framework focuses on accelerated development plans for individuals (MnSCU, 2015). This step is informed by steps 3 and 4 of the framework as employee performance and potential is examined and assessed to identify and prepare the individual for development (MnSCU, 2015). To support this growth and development, MNSCU has two programs specifically designed to nurture internal talent.

The Luoma Leadership Academy Program is an 18 month program supported by the MNSCU system and the Academy for Leadership and Development in Mesa, Arizona (MnSCU 2015). The program focuses on leadership at all levels and is designed to provide the leadership theories, practices, and skills needed to support current and future leaders in their departments and colleges/universities more effectively (MnSCU, 2015). Participants are those who aspire to leadership positions (with focus on the linchpin positions identified in 2010), or who want to improve their leadership skills and abilities. The program, which began in 2004, is application based with competitive entry and includes intense in-person training, a practicum experience, and team based action projects that benefit the system. A list of the action projects (historic – current) can be found at http://www.hr.mnscu.edu/training_and_development/Leadership_Academy/actionLearningProjec.html. Currently the program is in session with its eighth cohort and has graduated over 400 individuals.

The MnSCU Executive Leadership Development program is a year-long program designed specifically to strengthen the executive leadership pipeline within the system by accelerating the development of high performing/high potential leaders. The MnSCU system competes nationally for its c-suite and executive level positions and with support of the Board of Trustees, designed this program to identify internal senior leaders and accelerate their development to competitively apply for presidencies and c-suite level positions. By utilizing a 70-20-10 model of delivery, the program includes 70% individualized executive stretch assignments, 20% executive assessment, mentoring, and coaching and 10% seminars, case study, and networking curriculum. This competitive entry program requires presidential sponsorship, a rigorous review process, and begins every other fall. The program has graduated 41 participants with a 61% promotion rate (higher level position) including 11 presidential appointments and is currently in session with its third cohort.

The MnSCU system also offers a variety of leadership courses and seminars organized into topics around leading project teams, supervising people, successful leadership, and organizational change. Collectively, these programs, seminars, and resources work to strengthen the leadership pipeline within the system by identifying and developing a pool of diverse candidates for linchpin positions throughout the system.

Succession planning pilot. In 2013, the Succession Planning subcommittee, a branch of the larger Talent Management Steering Committee solicited system colleges and universities to participate in a pilot program to implement the succession planning framework within their institutions. Supported by the Board of Trustees, and included in the system level human resources strategic plan, this effort to create a pilot of interested institutions was an initial step toward meeting a stated goal of 100% participation in succession planning by 2016. In spring of 2013, the subcommittee hosted representatives from institutions interested in participating and introduced the succession planning framework and toolkit. Initially, one university, one division of the system office, and six college campuses responded. Services provided to these participants included resource training, facilitation, and on-going support. A similar meeting was held in fall 2014 to introduce new colleges and universities to the succession planning framework and to assist current pilots in continuing their efforts. From 2013 through present, institutional participation has varied, efforts have been impacted by a variety of internal and external conditions, and another pilot introduction/reintroduction is scheduled from summer 2016. The system of goal of 100% participation by 2016 will not be reached. This study will focus on pilot program and attempt to answer its research questions based on this effort.

The succession planning effort of the MnSCU system and its 31 colleges and universities is ongoing as it attempts to undertake and incorporate the strategies, resources, and principles needed to mitigate the consequences of its own leadership crisis and prepare to build capacity for current and future leadership talent needs. Pressure to succeed in these efforts comes from a Board of Trustees who is invested in preparing for leadership turnover, an increasing competitive national and international market for higher education leadership talent, an increasing number of internal system and college/university gaps that are impacting operations and service to students, and the recognized value associated with developing talent collectively rather than competitively within the system.

Literature Review Synthesis

As reviewed in this chapter, there is a growing body of knowledge related to succession planning in higher education. The research, application, and growing need have pushed institutions to examine succession planning as part of their strategic planning processes to prepare for current and future organizational needs (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Ebbers et al., 2010; Neefe, 2009).

The body of research utilized within this literature review provides several recommendations for utilizing succession planning, future areas for research, and summarized opportunities within higher education that can be used to frame implementation and use. This summary, including a clear tie to the research study proposed, frames the future of succession planning for the reader.

The ability to implement succession planning and take advantage of the benefits it provides relies on communication, commitment, and continuous improvement within an organizational culture that supports ongoing talent management and all of its components.

In a successful succession planning initiative, goals and objectives are continually communicated and transparent to all involved (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Davies & Davies, 2010; Ebbers et al. 2010; Kessler, 2002; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2002; Rothwell, 2010). The charter of the succession planning initiative is communicated through succinct messages and with clear direction (Rothwell, 2010). Formalized succession plans that include specific objectives, definitions, procedures, policies, and implementation strategies help organizations communicate clearly and in an accessible way (Steel, 2006). This includes communication with individuals on their career paths and up-down and lateral communication about the management of the process (Rothwell, 2010). With ongoing communication, efforts are transparent and systems are known to ensure fairness and an environment free of bias, thus decisions and intent are not questioned as the motive and reasons for decisions are clear (Kotter, 2007; Rothwell, 2010).

In his article on leading change, Kotter (2007) outlines steps to lead successful change initiatives and the first step calls for communication to create a sense of urgency around the system or process change. This kind of communication comes from a powerful coalition of people within the institution, including vocalized support from high-level system administrators and board members (depending on the structure of the institution), those in key linchpin positions within the institution, union representatives (as applicable), and system level committees (Kotter, 2007). This intentional, transparent, and participatory communication builds support and trust for the process and demonstrates commitment to the succession planning goals. (Succession planning gaining, 2008).

Commitment to the succession planning process is demonstrated by leadership as they actively engage in the planning and implementation of succession planning. Top leadership engagement and support must be evident to ensure that other leaders/managers/supervisors devote the time and effort needed to a plan to become systemic (McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). When linked to the institutions strategic plan and human resource plan, the activities of succession planning are tied to institutional activities with accountability (McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). This integrated process links succession planning to strategy and demonstrates the impact succession planning can have on the institutions long-term planning initiatives (Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). As integrated, the tactical elements of the plan are developed and utilized in ongoing activities such as onboarding, professional development planning, and employee evaluations (MnSCU, 2012).

Commitment is also demonstrated through clear competency development and career path structures for employees. Institutions that have taken the time to clearly define competencies identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities required now and in the future for leadership roles (Ebbers et al., 2010; MnSCU, 2012; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2002). Competencies can be used to keep position descriptions current, identify replacement needs, design training and develop opportunities, and establish career paths that identify ways for employees to promote in the organization (Rothwell, 2010). Continued research on the desired competencies of leaders specific to the institution and the higher education environment is ongoing and can help determine what competencies are desired and/or necessary for leaders in specific roles in education environments (SHRM, 2009; Rothwell, 2010; MnSCU, 2012). Using this research, institutions can better prepare current and future leaders by designing more effective development opportunities and performance measures as part of succession planning.

Commitment is also reflected in continuous improvement efforts. For a succession planning efforts to succeed mechanisms for feedback, accountability and evaluation must be included (McMaster, 2012; Rothwell, 2010). This includes feedback to and from users, monitored progress of those in the development process, evaluation of the policies, processes and systems, and analysis to make improvements (Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). This refining process helps ensure the programs and system are updated to reflect current and future organizational needs as they evolve (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Ebbers et al., 2010; Kleinsorge, 2010; Neefe, 2009).

This continuous improvement philosophy also extends to individuals within the organization. Consider the impact of the following: staffing strategies that address current and future needs to help prepare institutions for turnover and minimize downtime during transition (Gaffney, 2005); identifying potential successors and nurturing internal leaders through a process that helps on-board employees and promotes a successful transition experience in new positions (Succession planning gaining, 2008); encouraging growth and development of employees based on their performance and potential (Steele, 2006); and balancing succession planning with a commitment to diversity (Succession planning gaining, 2008; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). Collectively, these high impact strategies reflect best practices of succession planning from business and can be translated into the higher education environment to positively impact organizational culture and structure (McMaster, 2012).

Commitment to the human resources within the organization is also key to building a long-term, effective succession plan. The process of assessing individual talents are useful in development and planning and include methods such as personal assessments and inventories that target identified competencies, review of identified leadership competencies and how individuals align, and use of this information to create individual development plans (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Davies & Davies, 2010; Rothwell, 2010). Development is based on individual and institutional goals and continually reassessed to clarify what competencies are needed for the future if the institution is to achieve its strategic objectives (Rothwell, 2010, p.33). Repeatedly the strategies used in development include mentoring and coaching with experienced leaders and networking to build professional relationships that provide opportunities to learn, develop, and practice the skills necessary to succeed in positions (Conger & Fulmer, 2003; Davies & Davies, 2010; Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Kotter, 2007; McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009).

Kotter (2007) noted that leadership is about coping with change and more change demands more leadership (p.24). As individuals experience leadership training, accomplish advancement goals, are rewarded for their efforts, learn from their mistakes, and exemplify the competencies recognized as important to their institutions, their achievements will act as short-term wins (Kotter, 2007). Over time, these success stories build within the institution, increasing credibility for a system that works to build leaders that reflect the competencies, values, and mission of the institution. All efforts in communication, commitment, and continuous improvement within a succession plan establish and support a culture within an organization that increases the intellectual capital of the organization. The intellectual capital, or the value of the human talent in the institution, is a direct reflection of the investment made in employees (Rothwell, 2010, p. 22). This investment is reflected in improved recruitment, retention, morale, engagement, responsiveness, and productivity.

In his article, *What Leaders Really Do*, Kotter (2007) addresses how an organization can create a culture of leadership by consistently demonstrating the commitment to develop people into leaders. Kotter (2007) suggests that managing career patterns is an important way for organizations to establish people in effective leadership roles. This is done through a series of career experiences including significant early career challenges where individuals learn to take risks and experience both success and failure (Kotter, 2007). Additionally they experience an expanded breath of knowledge throughout their career in broad job assignments, and ongoing relationship development to secure strong informal networks of support (Kotter, 2007).

Higher education leadership development can create a culture of leadership by providing similar experiences to its potential leaders. For example, interim placements can help an institution transition through a difficult time and give an interim appointee the opportunity to further develop their skills and prepare them to complete for promotions or similar positions long-term (Steele, 2006). Removing obstacles so individuals can take advantage of these types placement or stretch assignments reflects investment in an employee and involves cooperation from many departments to be successful (Neefe, 2009). Specifically current efforts in leadership development focus on enrollment in graduate-level leadership programs, providing learning experiences for potential leaders (interim roles, temporary job assignments, stretch goals), and internal or external leadership academy experiences consisting of skills-based workshops, practicums, and seminars (Neefe, 2009).

Preparing future leaders for our institutions requires significant effort. The results of these efforts are better prepared, more productive, accomplished leaders who are ready to meet the challenges of the institutions in which they work. Instead of a worrying about a leadership crisis, higher education can use succession planning to fill its pipeline with talented, capable leaders who will serve students for years to come.

Connecting Literature to the Research Questions

The research questions of this study seek to add to the existing body of knowledge by minimizing gaps within the research, enhancing existing research, and providing new knowledge and understanding to the audience about the application of succession planning in higher education. Each question's purpose is described in the following paragraphs.

How have individual institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education? This question will investigate how individual institutions utilize succession planning to mitigate the consequences of turnover and draw out specific practices that are employed to prepare for the leadership crisis. The literature outlines many causes for the leadership crisis, yet only peripherally examines the actual impact on community colleges. By further exploring how the crisis has impacted specific colleges, the attempted use of succession planning to resolve these issues can be examined in more detail. This deeper dive into the issues and their resolutions (or lack thereof) will provide evidence to further support (or not support) the use of succession planning in colleges.

How do the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis? This question seeks to understand how the system pilot program has influenced the institutions ability to respond to the challenges presented by the leadership crisis and why institutions decided to engage (or not) in the pilot program. In an effort to discover which specific strategies and activities add value to the individual institutions the process and its corresponding outcomes will be examined.

How has the development of a modified and adopted framework for succession planning been utilized/implemented within the college environment? Using the MnSCU succession planning framework as a guide, each step will be explored to understand the impact the phase and corresponding activities have on implementation. Since the Rothwell framework is highly utilized in business environments, this inquiry will develop a deeper understanding of the framework as applied in a new environment, higher education. Specifically, by understanding each institutions strategy for deploying the steps of the framework, the framework will be qualitatively tested for applicability.

What experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time? Through this inquiry, the researcher will seek to determine what experiences influence a college's ability to utilize succession planning in the short and long term. Do the factors of communication, commitment, continuous improvement, and culture described in the literature review impact progress and longevity of a strategy? What resource investments most impact sustainability? These shared experiences will act as lessons learned for other institutions as they decide whether to embark on the work of succession planning.

Summary

This literature review has examined current research and practice regarding succession planning from a broad industry perspective to higher education to a specific system. The case for succession planning was outlined through the lens higher education by examining relevant leadership theory, a current body of literature, research studies, and models and frameworks that have significantly impacted the field. Key findings on succession planning were articulated as were the implications for higher education and the next generation of leaders associated with the leadership crisis.

The future of succession planning in higher education is largely determined by its current leadership and those in immediate position to succeed them (Conger & Fulmer, 2003). Current leaders can take responsibility for creating a corporate culture where people value strong leadership and strive to create it (Kotter, 2007). Leaders themselves can push for development opportunities that increase their responsibilities and expand their roles through development opportunities that increase their competency. Leading the succession planning effort in higher education will require addressing the change-resistant culture of colleges and universities and the barriers to effective change management, however the culture and structure of community college, inherent in their mission, does support succession planning (Fullen & Scott, 2009; McMaster, 2012).

Chapter III: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study is to capture the experiences of colleges during a succession planning pilot in a two-year union environment that is part of a large education system. The research sought to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives in higher education. By investigating the relationship between the use of succession planning at two-year colleges and the institutions connection to a larger system, the study will also seek to understand the college and system's ability to adopt and sustain succession planning principles. The results of this study will help inform institutions and systems as they embark on the use of succession planning in preparing for a leadership crisis.

This chapter will provide an overview of the methodology of this study including research questions, methods, and analysis. It will detail the participant selection, interview process and questions, data collection and analysis procedures, and detail any extraneous variables that may impact the study.

The study will address the following research questions:

1. How have individual institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education?
2. How do the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis?
3. How has the development of a modified and adopted framework for succession planning been utilized/implemented within the college environment?

4. What experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time?

Research Method and Design

Driven by a gap in existing research to explore why or why not colleges engage in succession planning, how and if current efforts prepare institutions for the leadership crisis, and whether or not a college can sustain succession planning strategies, the researcher explored which methods to best accomplish this. Because the study investigated factors of influence and value by connecting the research questions to the experiences and perceptions of the participants in a succession planning pilot program, a qualitative design was selected. Qualitative research attempts to make sense of, interpret, or understand meaning through gathering data and building knowledge and concepts, rather than 'testing' it (Merriam, 2009). This focus on interpretation, construction, and meaning of experience informs the development of the research questions, sample, data collection and analysis, and findings (Merriam, 2009). To build this knowledge and understanding, the researcher used interviews, document analysis, and observations to inform readers about the actual practice of succession planning in a specific environment.

In order to develop a richer understanding of the succession planning experiences in a two year college environment, each pilot was approached as an instrumental case within a bounded system to produce a collective case study that examines the research questions. Each pilot college, or case, share several common conditions; the institutions are part of the MnSCU system, have the same shared information and resources, and individually selected to be part of the system pilot. These conditions produce the boundaries of the study. This collective approach intended to produce a more holistic picture of the succession planning pilot program within the bounded context of the MnSCU system because of the multisite cases examined (Punch, 2009).

Therefore, an explanatory case study approach was chosen to examine each pilot college for insight and to develop a richer understanding about the preparedness, implementation, and impact of succession planning (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The additional benefit of this design comes from extending the explanation from the presumed causal links of belonging to the system to the real-life individual pilot college experiences (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This approach allowed the researcher to learn more about the context, connections, and interrelatedness phenomenon of succession planning in a bounded system (Punch, 2009). The more pilot colleges included in the research, the more compelling, stable, valid, and generalizable the results (Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009).

The use of only colleges who agreed to participate in the succession planning pilot for this study creates a more compelling interpretation and develops a fuller understanding of the interrelatedness of factors within and between the pilots and the system (Punch, 2009). The pilots thus become the embedded units of the case (MnSCU system succession planning) which allowed for data to be analyzed within the units, between the units, and/or across the units (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The ability to analyze at multiple level substantiates this approach as it produces several other benefits as discussed by Merriam (2009): it will produce more concrete and contextual knowledge, allow the reader to bring their own experiences and understanding to the interpretation of the research, and extend generalization to the reader's reference population (P. 44-45).

By acquiring information with practical application in a systematic way, the research also produced practical knowledge that colleges within the MnSCU system can use when planning their own succession planning initiatives (Punch, 2009). Succession planning is presented within this analysis and recommendations from research as a solution to the problem of the leadership crisis, reinforcing the need for action research that 'works towards solutions to problems in a cyclical, iterative way' (Punch, 2009, p.136). Because of this need, action research principles were referenced as part of the design of this research to assist in ensuring that the combination of 'doing' and 'inquiring' would have a practical application or impact that readers could apply (Punch, 2009 p. 135).

The research process was also exploratory in nature because it examined the implementation of the modified Rothwell succession planning framework at the pilot colleges. Instead of testing a hypothesis, the researcher attempted to make sense of the social phenomenon – the leadership crisis. The researcher examined the data generated from the pilot colleges in detail to develop generalizations that emerged from the patterns observed in the data. Therefore, the analysis drew general conclusions from specific data generated during the study. These generalizations were translated into practical application to improve the implementation of succession planning at colleges within the MnSCU system (Merriam, 2009; Punch, 2009).

Because the researcher is the main instrument in a qualitative study (Punch, 2009), it is important to review the researchers knowledge and experience with succession planning. The researcher's institution of employment is included in the pilot program and the researcher has taken an active role in the succession planning efforts of the college and MnSCU system since 2010. This experience and the relationship the researcher has with the participants enhanced the ability of the researcher to capture the perceptions of participants as an insider, increased the researchers ability to develop propositions for applicability and transferability, and added value to current shallow and incomplete research on the topic as it relates to the higher education environment (Punch, 2009). However, the researcher is aware there may be biases about the topic or the participants because of this involvement and that there is some hesitancy in education and social science research around the use of case studies (Punch, 2009). This hesitancy is rooted in the criticism that case studies are not generalizable (Punch, 2009). The researcher worked to mitigate this concern by firmly establishing the need for the research with clear research questions and boundaries, providing an in-depth understanding of the topic as it applies to higher education, and identifying a clear strategy for data collection and analysis (Punch, 2009). The learning provided by this research, particularly because knowledge of succession planning in higher education is 'shallow, fragmentary, and incomplete' (Punch, 2009, p.123) is intended to have a valuable contribution to the research topic.

Careful attention was given to the study's conceptualization, data collection, analysis and interpretation, depiction of detail, and the developed standards throughout the process to increase the validity and reliability of results (Merriam, 2009). These methods increase credibility of the study by affirming the congruency of the findings to reality, evidencing the training of the researcher, and provide transferable application to other colleges (Merriam, 2009). Evidence of these considerations is described in the following sections that address participant selection, interview methodology, data collection procedures, and analysis technique.

Participants

Participants from the MnSCU succession planning pilot effort launched in 2014 are included in this study. The purposeful attempt to include all of the participating colleges (six) was part of the collective design of this study and intended to produce a more holistic picture of the succession planning pilot program within the bounded context of the MnSCU system because of the multisite cases examined (Punch, 2009). However, after four attempts at communication, one college from the sample did not respond, thus the original sample size of six two-year colleges from throughout the state of Minnesota was reduced to five. Each college's CHRO was contacted by the researcher by email and phone to explain the research and purpose of the study and request participation. A follow-up communication by email and phone was made within a week to ensure understanding, purpose, and answer questions. Between communications participants also discussed any issues, considerations, or concerns with any other necessary college stakeholders before consenting to participation.

After the interview with each CHRO, the researcher asked if there was anyone else on campus that was actively involved in the pilot program. This question was asked, because as a participant in the talent management system-wide committee, the researcher knew colleges who participated in the pilot program were asked to have at least two key representatives (also called project champions). Three campuses did identify another key representative. All were contacted using an email communication that was slightly modified from the original and by phone. All three key representatives agreed to participate in the study. As a result, eight interviews were conducted representing five colleges from throughout the state.

Confidentiality and Informed Consent

This research is based on actual experiences and circumstances of participants, thus, all guidelines in accordance with St. Cloud State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) were followed. Participant's verbal and written consent were obtained prior to data collection with all efforts made to ensure minimized risk, privacy, and safety.

Following the ethical principle of beneficence, the researcher understands the responsibility to reflect on the possible consequences of the study for participants and the colleges they represent (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The stories, experiences, ideas, opinions, and information the participants provide are crucial to the results of this study, thus their concerns must be mitigated to ensure thorough and truthful response. The participants in this study signed a consent form prior to any data collection regarding their participation in the study to disclose any possible risks and benefits of participation (Appendix B). Final analysis will maintain the confidentiality of the participants. All participants were assured of the confidential practices of the researcher which include the following: referencing institutions in a nameless system (institution 1, institution 2, etc.), removal of all names within the study (a pseudonym chart is included at the beginning of Chapter IV), and increased attention to the study findings and recommendations to ensure responses that may identify a college or participant are not included.

Dual recordings of interviews were done using an application on the researcher's phone and Audacity on the researcher's computer. Both devices are password and thumbprint protected. Recordings were transcribed on the same computer and each transcribed file was password protected. Field notes were constructed in a Word document. Excel was used to collect and track data, construct themes, and analyzed the data collected. All transcribed recordings, field notes, files, and documents received from participants were scanned and stored in a password protected folder. Originals were filed in the researcher's locked office file drawer. No other individuals have/had access to the researcher's phone or computer.

Information specific to the pilot program within the system is accessible only to other participants, system talent management staff, and the talent management steering committee. Access to general pilot program information is stored on a password protected SharePoint site and accessible to the same parties.

The risk to participants during and after the interview process is minimal. Data collection in non-invasive and interviews were conducted to fit within the participants schedules. All transcribed interviews were sent to individual participants for review to ensure accuracy and intent/context.

Data Collection

The methods of data collection in qualitative research enhance credibility if they are inclusive of multiple sources (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The data collection techniques of this study included interviews, document analysis, and direct participant observation to produce a holistic understanding of the succession planning efforts being studied (Baxter & Jack, 2008)..

Interview. Interviews were conducted with CHRO's and identified key representatives (project champions) on each campus using a semi-structured format to guide the process and provide flexibility to utilize follow-up questions to probe for greater understanding (Merriam, 2009). As suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) the interview included a briefing, prepared interview guide, and debriefing to ensure participant preparation and engagement. During the briefing, participants will be reminded about the purpose of the study, reviewed research protocol, were alerted to the recording software and devices, and had the opportunity to ask questions to reduce any concerns or anxiety. Participants were then provided with an interview guide that outlined the main questions guiding the interview but be made aware that questions, dialogue, and probing or follow-up questions could be utilized. This was done to assist the participant in preparing for the interview with specific and relevant answers, yet still allow spontaneity (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The guiding questions can be found in Appendix C.

In an effort to increase the validity of the data collection process, the reader should note that these guiding questions were vetted through the researcher's committee, constructed using the quality criteria as outlined by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), and followed the good question principles to stimulate responses found in Merriam's (2009) text. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that quality criteria be applied to interview process to conduct an ideal interview. These quality criteria include: the extent of spontaneous, rich, specific, and relevant answers; the mix of short and long interviewer/interviewee questions; the degree of follow up and clarifying by the interviewer; the ongoing interpretation of the interview; the interviewers ability to verify interpretations throughout the interview, and the totality of the self-reported story (p. 164). Merriam (2009) suggests the use of experience and behavior, opinion and value, feeling, knowledge, sensory, and background questions to uncover stimulate responses, uncover insight, and solicit descriptive data for analysis.

To complete the interview, the researcher provided a short closing in an effort to culminate the experience for the participant. This provided another opportunity for the participant to ask questions, voice any closing comments, and in the case of CHRO's, to provide a key representative name for additional interviews. The closing also included time for the researcher to inform the participants of any next steps and thank them. Interviews were scheduled for 90 minutes but lasted from 35-75 minutes which allowed for additional dialogue and open communication. Interviews were conducted from early November 2016 – late January 2017. Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and, as completed, were sent to the participants to ensure accuracy and intent from January 2016 – March 2017. The analysis of the transcripts did not begin until after approval by all participants in the study had been received.

Document analysis. For the purpose of this study, documents are defined as a wide range of relevant written, visual, digital, physical materials, and artifacts (Merriam, 2009). It includes all documents utilized or referenced by the participants and all documents produced as a result of this study including all notes (observation, field), secondary research sources, data mined from participants, transcripts, and web pages. The researcher considered an array of questions using Merriam's (2009) summary to determine authenticity and accuracy of documents during the research process and disclose any further systems used for review to the reader (p. 151).

Observation. The researcher had some ongoing interaction with the participants throughout the course of the study because of the work responsibilities of the researcher. As previously disclosed, the researcher's institution is involved in the pilot program and the researcher engages with the participants in an ongoing way because of activities associated with these responsibilities. These responsibilities may include steering committee work with the MnSCU Talent Management office, visits to the campuses of the participants for work that is related or unrelated to succession planning, and presentations to other parties on the college and system level work related to succession planning. This ongoing involvement provided additional opportunities to observe and experience the phenomenon firsthand throughout the research study, a key component and benefit of observations (Merriam, 2009). This is a variation or form of participant observation because there was access to additional information through these situations and experiences by the researcher. This active member status led to fieldwork observations that were implemented into this study. This is an unstructured observation strategy as the nature of access, focus, and logistics were not predetermined (Punch, 2009). To record observational data, the researcher used field notes to document the observations by writing brief notations that are stored in the researcher's files.

Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research is ongoing and simultaneous with data collection as the researcher cannot anticipate what the final analysis of the study will be (Merriam, 2009). Merriam (2009) notes the process of deciding what will impact the study, assessing relevancy, reforming data collection based on previous experiences (interview, observations), and exploring while in the field is what adds to the richness of the data but cautions this can extend collection into infinity. To manage this process the researcher used a coding system to consolidate, reduce, and interpret meaningful units of data related to the research questions (Merriam, 2009). As referenced, Lincoln and Guba (1985) further define these meaningful units of data with criteria that will be used throughout this study (Merriam, 2009). These criteria require that the unit should reveal relevant information and stimulate the reader to critically think about the information and that the information be able to stand alone, meaning it can be interpreted without additional information or context. With these criteria in mind, interviews, field notes, and documents were coded to find emerging categories and themes. The researcher explored available computer programs to assist in the tracking of data, construction of themes and analysis but selected to use Word and Excel to manage the process.

The researcher used the Miles and Huberman (1994) framework for qualitative data analysis as outlined by Punch (2009). This interactive framework shows the ongoing nature of data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion and provides analytic guidance during the analysis process (Punch, 2009, p. 174). An inductive approach was utilized to allow for a bottom up approach where ideas, concepts, and themes emerged from the data. Using a recommended approach from Punch (2009), a process was developed to affix codes; note reflection, sort for phrases, relationships, patterns, and distinctions; isolate patterns and processes to use in upcoming data collection; create sets of generalizations within the data; and confront those generalizations with a formalized body of knowledge (Punch, 2009. p. 346).

Using Merriam's (2009) step by step process of analysis to produce coherent findings in cross and within case analysis, category construction, sorting, naming, were critical. Specific tactics recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) that range from descriptive to explanatory and concrete to conceptual were also followed by the researcher to build a logical chain of evidence and create coherent findings.

To implement this process, the researcher began by identifying units of analysis which included printing each interview with large margins, browsing through each transcript as a whole, noting first impressions, and then rereading each transcript line by line to open code each interview. An iterative process was used to constantly compare each interview and to give short summary codes to each chunk of data. The researcher then built a code structure to imbed the research questions into the codes to prevent drifting. This compilation of codes evolved through four rounds of analysis. Final themes, codes, subcodes, and subdomains were constructed that were responsive to the purpose of the research, exhaustive, mutually exclusive, sensitizing, and conceptually congruent (Merriam, 2009, p. 185-186). Finally, to add consistency and dependability to the analysis, the researcher had the committee chair and a committee member review a step-by-step plan prior to beginning the coding process and the drafts of the coding process at each of the four rounds of analysis.

Delimitations and Positioning

This study examines individual college based efforts of succession planning at self-identified pilot colleges within the MnSCU system. It will also consider the efforts of the MnSCU system to support these planning efforts within the pilot colleges. The study does not address succession planning efforts at universities within the same system or efforts at other college not participating in the pilot program within the system. The study does not examine other colleges or systems efforts nationally but does draw from data on national studies on succession planning in higher education to inform research, findings, and conclusions.

Delimitations. This qualitative study is constructed with volunteer participants whose role is as a CHRO in colleges who have participated in the MnSCU succession planning pilot. It also includes those key representatives or project-champions who have been identified by a college's CHRO. It is assumed that the participants act in a leadership role for succession planning efforts within their colleges and understand the terminology, research, benefits, and challenges that require it for both the college in which they are employed and the MnSCU system.

The primary delimitations of this study are rooted in sample size and participant selection. At the time of this study, six colleges have self-identified and chosen to participate in the succession planning pilot supported by the MnSCU system. However, only five of these colleges are represented in this study. By selecting to focus on colleges that have chosen to participate, the study does not include the perspective of those who chose not to participate and why. This limits the scope of the study but aligns with the research questions as proposed. The participant selection was limited to those acting in the CHRO and/or project champion role within their colleges. Each CHRO was asked to identify an additional key representative or project champion to interview, which resulted in three additional interviews. One campus did not identify a project champion and in the case of the other college, the researcher was the identified project champion. It is not anticipated that additional interviews would not have yielded any additional information from the colleges for two reasons. First, succession planning efforts within the MnSCU system have been led primarily by the Talent Management Division which reports to the Human Resource division. Communications regarding succession planning efforts, activities, and expectations have been primarily reported through and from this division and the college CHRO's. In addition, the subgroup of the Talent Management Steering Committee whose primary role is to encourage and support succession planning at colleges and universities, is partially made up of pilot college CHRO's. As a member and attendee of these bi-weekly meetings, the researcher has observed that efforts in succession planning at colleges within this subgroup have been primarily led by CHRO's.

Researcher position. The topic of leadership development and succession planning in higher education came to my attention through my work experience as an unlimited (similar to tenure in the Minnesota two-year college system) faculty member, dean, and vice president level administrator since 2001. The college where I am employed is part of the MnSCU system. I am also currently or have previously been a member of several MnSCU system committees, taskforces, and activities including the Talent Management Steering Committee, Succession Planning Taskforce, Performance Management Taskforce, New Administrator Orientation programming, and several training and development initiatives for deans.

My interest in the subject of professional development and leadership succession comes from these work experiences and my own personal desire to better prepare myself and others for future senior leadership positions in higher education. I am a 2007 graduate of the Luoma Leadership Academy, an 18-month competitive entry leadership development program for MnSCU employees. The leadership curriculum includes application of leadership skills and concepts grounded in theoretical leadership concepts, principles and practices designed in cooperation with The Academy for Leadership and Development in Mesa, Arizona. I am also a graduate of the Executive Leadership Development Program (2015-2016 cohort), a year-long program designed to strengthen the executive leadership pipeline of the MnSCU system. This competitive entry, accelerated development program includes executive stretch assignments, sponsorship, coaching, mentoring, seminars, networking, and case study experiences to produce high potential, high performing leadership candidates. These experiences have expanded my knowledge, perspective, and understanding of the need for succession planning that is strategically designed to meet the needs of a large system.

I am also actively engaged in succession planning within the institution where I work. I have participated in the development of the system support website, the facilitation of succession planning at other colleges, in training and development around succession planning, and act as an active advocate within the system for succession planning. This active involvement in the subject has alerted me to the increasing need for succession planning at an institutional level as I experience first-hand the operational consequences of failing to prepare for turnover.

I am concerned about the turnover in community colleges. I see and experience mid-level directors and managers leaving higher education after burning out, dean's turnover at an alarming rate, a decreased time in position for c-suite administrators, and continued failed searches for high level administrative positions. I know the demands of the positions, the wage inequities, and the lack of personal and professional balance that exists for those in these positions, and yet I see many persevere, succeed, and bring their institutions to unprecedented levels of success. This study ultimately stems from my desire to better prepare myself and my colleagues to better lead our MnSCU colleges in the 21st century and avoid a leadership crisis (documented in the literature review) that could operationally paralyze our institutions. At the core of the community college mission we develop engaged citizens, prepare a future workforce, and deliver it in a lower-cost, supportive environment that serves those who need it most. How will community colleges continue to deliver this important mission if they do not plan for and invest in the people needed to lead these complex institutions in the future?

Summary

This qualitative study will examine the responses from two-year colleges participating in a succession planning pilot program in the state of Minnesota. The responses of CHRO's representing each college will be used to explore the factors of influence and value in a succession planning initiative while constructing knowledge that can assist other colleges in preparing for a leadership crisis. The use of interviews, document analysis, and observations will work together to inform the reader of the actual practice of succession planning in a specific environment. The study will strictly adhere to the principles and processes described in the research method and design section of the chapter to insure validity in findings. The following chapter will discuss the findings and analysis related to the research questions of this qualitative study.

Chapter IV: Results

This study attempts to answer four research questions related to the succession planning experiences of pilot colleges in a two-year union environment. The research questions, listed below, were designed to add to the existing body of knowledge on the subject by minimizing gaps within research, enhancing existing research, and providing new knowledge and understanding to the audience about the application of succession planning in higher education.

1. How have individual institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education?
2. How do the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis?
3. How has the development of a modified and adopted framework for succession planning been utilized/implemented within the college environment?
4. What experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time?

This chapter is constructed by framing the study results around each research question which includes; interpretations, direct responses from the participants, comparison to data from the literature review, and summary analysis. The research results will tie the interview questions and responses to each research question to present the factors of influence and value each participant experienced.

In order to protect the identity of the participants in the study and the institutions in which they work(ed), the eight individuals within this study are referred to by name as found in Table Two. As noted in chapter three, these individuals and their responses represent their experiences related to succession planning within their institutions, as college and MnSCU system employees, and as members in a succession planning pilot program.

Table 2

Participant Pseudonym Chart

Pseudonym	Organization
Mark	College A
Richard	College A
Melissa	College B
Susan	College C
Robert	College C
Ana	College D
Claire	College E
Henry	College E

In forming the research question results, it is important to note that responses to each interview question were not directly tied to a specific research question. During analysis, responses from the interview questions were not categorized by research question or by interview question initially but by theme. These themes and their emerging categories and codes were completed regardless of when the responses occurred. After this process, these themes, categories, and codes were then tied back to the research questions. Thus, elements of the interview questions and the responses that occurred from them were no longer tied to a specific research question. This is important for the reader to note as responses that were a result of an interview question may (and often do) tie to more than one research question.

Research Question Results

This section of chapter four will present the result related to each of the four research questions. Each section below will reintroduce the research question, tie interview questions to the research question, present detailed results in the participants own words, and provide an analysis summary.

Succession planning utilization - Research question one. Research question one was designed to identify how individuals within their institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education. This question sought to draw out how individual institutions utilize succession planning to mitigate the consequences of turnover and draw out specific practices that are employed to prepare for the leadership crisis. The literature outlines many causes for the leadership crisis, yet only peripherally examines the actual impact of the crisis on two-year colleges. To understand college efforts in succession planning and the impact of these efforts in more detail, several interview questions were designed to more deeply explore the issues surrounding utilization of succession planning and if these efforts led to resolution.

Interview questions were designed to establish participant's knowledge of and engagement in succession planning, the system pilot program, and their institutions involvement, thus summarizing the reasons why both the individual and institution were involved. As a result of this question, participants also articulated why succession planning is important to them (as individuals), to their institutions, and to higher education as a whole. An additional category of response related to the ability to utilize succession planning to prepare for issues related to the leadership crisis also emerged. This directly related to the organizational structure and current philosophy of leadership at the institution and their understanding, support, and engagement in succession planning.

To continue this thread of engagement and utilization, an additional interview question tied specifically how participants had engaged in succession planning in their institutions so far. As follow-up or prompt if needed, reference was made to the succession planning framework and whether or not it had been introduced and/or applied as part of the engagement and utilization process. Responses from interview questions also specifically addressed the framework by seeking to understand what challenges or roadblocks had been experienced in applying the modified model of succession planning on the campus. These questions led to participants discussing what had worked as part of the model and which elements they had been using or planned to use. This specially ties to the utilization element of succession planning for preparing for a leadership crisis as asked in research question one and how the framework was utilized within the institution as asked in research question three. As participants described their short and long term goals related to succession planning as part of interview question six, current efforts in succession planning and the framework and its steps were repeatedly referenced. The overall value (or not) of succession planning and how it was (was not) helping to resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education was also referenced in interview question seven as participants provided advice and recommendations to other colleges moving forward.

Participation in succession planning pilot program. In establishing how institutions (and individuals) had utilized succession planning to prepare for and resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education, it is important to establish a baseline for why institutions (and individuals) selected to be a part of the succession planning pilot. This question regarding how succession planning was utilized was posed to participants in interview question one and included prompts to understand how participants had learned about and been involved in the system succession planning pilot program.

The responses split into two categories which focused on individual and institutional reasons for or need to engage in succession planning. From the individual perspective, there were several reasons for engagement. Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, Robert, and Henry responded their engagement in succession planning was part of their institutional role or job responsibilities. This may be a formal role such as the job title of CHRO, or an informal role such as the champion that was delegated or self-selected. Some appointed roles were based on known or perceived strengths or experiences (Robert and Henry), and some based simply on passion for the topic area (Richard). Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Henry were part of the system level talent management steering committee or related subcommittees at some point in their tenure, although not necessarily working on succession planning initiatives within that larger committee. This exposure to system level committee work was reflected in their responses throughout the study and specifically in response to this question.

Engagement in succession planning. In continuing to understand how and why participants engaged in succession planning in their institutions, a second interview question was posed. The responses below are framed from a broader institutional perspective and include sub categories that emerged in responses such as: turnover; leadership knowledge, understanding, and support; system level influences; and a culture of support for professional development emerged as categories of response.

Turnover. All participants' responses included reference to turnover. The responses reflected concern about turnover in high level leadership positions, including c-suite positions and the presidency, and turnover at the mid-management level. Primary concern in the mid-management level focused on IT, facilities, and dean level positions. During the course of the interviews, several participants noted concern about current or anticipated turnover due to retirement, organizational restructure, use of interim's and attrition. The concern was evident to the researcher as participants described examples of how turnover had led to issues with continuity of operations, loss of organizational history and process knowledge, and gaps in service. Further, the lack of preparation for turnover and the difficulties filling positions because of budget and time constraints was of great concern to two participants. These responses will be also be expanded and further summarized later in review of research question four.

This concern, as established in the significance of the study section of chapter one, is identified as pipeline issues related to demographics, competitive forces, and lack of qualified candidates from the literature review (p. 11-15). Turnover, leading to vacated leadership positions, is a primary condition both for higher education's increased interest in the principles of succession planning and for establishing the need for succession planning to resolve the institutional issues that stem from the predicted leadership crisis (Betts et al., 2009; Cook & Kim, 2012; Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; Mann, 2010; McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009, Rothwell, 2010; Shults, 2001).

Key leader involvement. All participants also vocalized that a key leader on campus and their knowledge of succession planning or role at the institution or system level had influenced their institutions engagement in succession planning. In all cases, the interviewees responded that the CHRO had a crucial role in advocating for involvement. Although all noted presidential knowledge of succession planning initiatives, Mark, Melissa, Ana, Richard, Robert, and Henry noted the college president as being actively engaged in some form with the process. In describing the involvement of the president in succession on the campuses participating, the words used included active support, verbal support, passive support, financial support, part of (or not) the project team, and disengaged. In three instances, the president of the college left during the course of the pilot which directly impacted the direction and pace of succession planning utilization. Mark voiced further concern about this presidential turnover stating, "High and mid-level staffing changes, including the president have hurt our progress. We had four different presidents in four years plus four different VP's and several new deans. It's hard to renew interest in succession planning with new people in key leadership positions." Noting that "leadership style has a definite impact and influence on succession planning," Henry sought ways to include succession planning as part of the strategic plan to help sustain its importance. This turnover at the presidential level "creates inconsistencies in organizational structure and leads to more time, lack of understanding and people knowledge, lost institutional history, and lots of restarts." Thus, the importance of engaged and consistent leadership was vocalized because recent turnover had negatively impacted succession planning progress and efforts.

Culture of leadership development. A desire to create or support a culture of leadership development also emerged as a reason why colleges were interested in participating in the succession planning pilot. This culture of leadership development as component of succession planning was presented in higher education section of the literature review as building talent to meet current and future workforce demands with practices that lead to better prepared, productive, and more effective leaders (Davies & Davies, 2010; Feeney, 2003). The role of leadership development in in higher education and the research surrounding its use has increased and shifted from a trait and individualized process to one that is more collaborative, shared, and collective (Kezar, 2009). The recognition of building leadership development into the institutional culture was voiced by participants as both a reason why to participate in the pilot and how they either were or wanted to prepare for the leadership crisis.

Citing success in leadership development initiatives in pockets within the institution, Richard articulated a clear need for a culture of leadership which includes professional development and measures that provide clarity and understanding and are tied to institutional strategic goals. Ana echoed this response by speaking about the desire to integrate leadership into the culture of the college and provided a recent leadership development example within the college used to develop selected individuals. This leadership development pilot in the college included select participants from multiple unions in a semester long training series on supervisory management techniques, generational workplace issues, and polarity management which tied to a survey of employees on development needs. Ana noted the success of the series but expressed concern as the college was not able to move beyond this pilot and was unsure how to measure the success of the pilot.

This desire to build internal talent capacity was also reflected by Melissa who noted the need to develop internal talent but yet to balance this with external hires. Citing examples of investment in individuals she expressed the desire for a more comprehensive and long-term focus on development, especially with expected high turnover in key positions which were the knowledge base of the college. Mark spoke of a comprehensive leadership development program that had investment from leadership and had been successful and embedded into organizational culture after several sessions. This "collaborative culture between administration and employee" supported a "culture of engagement, involvement, and input" which he noted as part of how the college was establishing itself as a desirable employer. Henry summarized the need to establish a culture of development as part of succession planning by stating that there is a “direct influence and impact of leadership style on systems thinking and the need to build maturity into organizational development and culture.”

Organizational leadership, structure and plan. Stemming from the first interview questions, another theme emerged that tied the leadership team make-up, organizational structure, and the strategic plan of the colleges to preparing for/engaging in succession planning. As participants spoke of the leadership team, the researcher asked a probing question about the make-up of the team at each institution. The leadership team at the college’s used as part of this study included the president, c-suite employees, and in two cases expanded to deans and institutional research and effectiveness. C-suite employees represented all facets of the organization including academic affairs, student affairs, college foundation, information technology, finance, human resources, and administrative services, although position titles did vary.

The philosophy of these executive leadership teams and the ability of the institution to tie succession planning to strategy seemed to directly impact whether and how much the institution engaged in succession planning. In several institutions, succession planning was included in individual, department and/or institutional goals. Richard provided samples of personal, department, and college goals that directly tied to succession planning. These included terms or components of succession planning like leadership development opportunities, performance evaluations, and resource allocation. However, direct alignment and inclusion of succession planning within a departmental and college-wide plan was not necessarily articulated. This was also noted by Mark, who explained succession planning was “reflected as elements of succession planning like employee development, retention, selection, and performance within HR and college-wide plans.”

Noting the mention of strategic plans (organizational and departmental) during the first interview, the researcher included this as a probing question to all other participants as well. The impact of strategic planning on succession planning was the focus of Neefe's (2009) study presented in the literature review. In this study, the data showed a strong positive correlation between colleges with a mature strategic planning process and those with a more mature succession planning process (Neefe, 2009). Henry supported this finding as he spoke about using succession planning to develop goals as part of the strategic plan so specific activities are reflected in departmental goals. By including succession planning or its related activities into strategic college and departmental plans, this increases the priority of these activities and their likelihood of being accomplished. Henry remarked, "This creates a shared understanding of how to prioritize efforts to systematically organize and achieve goals."

In addition to inclusion in strategic planning, Susan and Ana also indicated they had or were about to use succession planning strategies to fulfill accreditation requirements. (Note: all colleges in this study are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission.) In one of the accreditation tracks approved by the HLC, action project(s) are required and institutions must track and report progress on an ongoing basis. Such a commitment reflects a high priority on succession planning and its activities.

However, outside of one institution, this ability to accomplish a holistic and comprehensive approach to inclusion in strategic planning was not reflected in other participant's responses. Rather, responses indicated a siloed approach in departments throughout the college where pockets of use of succession planning elements were reflected in specific activities related to succession planning. These siloed activities were not necessarily included in departmental strategic plans and were not part of the overall college strategic plan. Melissa listed several activities such as employee onboarding, training and development, evaluation, and retention – all elements of succession planning – but not able to indicate, outside of HR, where, how, and if these elements were comprehensively and/or strategically addressed at the department level. Another example, shared by Claire, included the use of an employee portal that was created to support clear and transparent communications related to succession planning activities. However, she noted that the portal was not used college-wide and seemed to be accessed only by a few individuals. Robert responded that he was unsure if any elements of succession planning were even in the overall strategic plan or reflected in any departmental area. Susan indicated current efforts were underway to align HR departmental plans with the strategic plan of the college and other departmental plans such as the diversity, academic, and facility plans. However, the pace of those efforts and the inclusion within those plans had yet to be completed. From the researcher's perspective, it seemed conceptualizing how these plans fit together proved challenging overall due to a lack of knowledge at the leadership level about what was included in the college strategic plan or within departmental plans outside their own area. When asked the reason for this disconnect, turnover of the president, CHRO or other c-suite position was cited repeatedly (Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Claire). This aligns with the research from Richards (2009) who identified this as one of the emergent themes in her study, noting that succession planning practices exist at each institution in her study but the formalness of those plans varied greatly. Richards (2009), found that efforts around leadership development activities were prevalent however these were not tied to succession planning models, strategies, or policies.

Participants did recognize the importance of preparing the leadership team to learn about succession planning and several participants referenced engagement strategies that had been utilized to facilitate the discussion around succession planning. Involvement was key as noted by Melissa, Susan, Robert, and Claire. Whether describing exposing the leadership team to the concept of succession planning to build collaboration or conducting one-on-one meetings with the leadership team, the desire to have facilitated discussions to build knowledge around succession planning was clear. Robert described a discussion around using an outside facilitator to manage the succession planning process but that the ultimate decision was to utilize the strengths of the leadership team to identify facilitator and project managers internally to increase engagement and involvement. Claire also described a similar process of using a member of the campus community to support and share expertise around succession planning to build a spirit collaboration and teamwork. Melissa described the learning process of the leadership team as the concept of succession planning was introduced from realization to seeking information to buy-in. She described how realization was brought about by using an example of turnover in each team member's area and as current and upcoming turnover was discussed, recent examples of loss of institutional knowledge, operational gaps, and performance issues were shared. Realizing the impact, they began to seek out information through research which led to prioritizing succession planning efforts. This prioritization led to a commitment to succession planning which was confirmed in an action project with the HLC. Susan used a similar strategy but utilized system level resources, including the succession planning toolkit, from the beginning, to emphasize the significance of the project and the need for open communication about future possibilities and opportunities.

Individual engagement. As responses were coded, it became clear there was a distinction by participants between why succession is important to an individual (and their department), institution, or to higher education in general and the actual reasons cited for participation in the pilot program. Richard simply noted a strong passion for the concept, noting that even though it wasn't in his job description or part of his formal education, the subject and its implications were very interesting. Robert placed high value on the importance of succession planning in his/her department noting, "I have great staff and I have lost great staff and so I think our employees make or break the organization and so I personally value this strongly." When asked to further expand on why succession planning was important to him, Robert responded:

> I don't know what triggered it in my mind. I think maybe I just like to sleep at night. I mapped it out, drew up a little Vizio diagram of all the main duties of all of my direct reports and kind of mapped out. If this person in this position were no longer here, how would I temporarily cover it the next day?

From the institutional perspective, the concept of mitigating risk during turnover, especially in high level or high risk positions, was voiced repeatedly by Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, and Claire. Changes in turnover patterns within the college have been top of mind to Mark, Melissa, and Susan. Susan spoke of the impact of the turnover stating,

> As long time people in positions retire and turnover increases there is a feeling that the knowledge base of the institution is changing. There is a knowledge gap has led to the loss of our (college's) history. People have been employed at the college, maybe even in the same positions for decades, and their positions have changed to include lots of different elements as their abilities and capabilities expanded. Replacing these individuals is difficult.

Melissa also spoke of the growing fear of losing multiple employees from the same area at the same time, citing maintenance and IT employees as examples. She went on to describe how new employees, if they could be found, were met with overwhelming expectations and workload, thus making transitions for these new employees difficult and retention an issue. Claire simply said the college was not prepared for turnover in key leadership positions. As Henry summarized why succession planning is important to the college, he stated:

> Succession planning is to think systemically about your talent and how you mitigate the risks of people losing but also how you grow people so that if you think people have potential they are ready to take on opportunities as they emerge.

The lack of understanding of what succession planning is and why it is needed within the college, was also cited as a short-coming within the industry as a whole by Susan, Claire, and Henry. Examples from two participants noted specific frustrations about perception within the industry. Susan spoke with mixed emotion about the union influence on succession planning in higher education, specifically in Minnesota. Recognizing the need for balance and that people cannot just be “picked” for positions, there was frustration around not being able to identify people and train them for certain positions.

Claire voiced her frustration around the perception of the role of human resources in general stating:

> Higher Education is notorious for short changing its offices of human resources and really puts HR into this transactional space. Understand we are trained professionals and that’s only a portion of the work we do. We do much greater, much more strategic kinds of things.

In this section the researcher has examined and summarized the participant responses related to research question one: How have individual institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education? To answer this research question, the researcher first sought to understand the base knowledge participants had about succession planning and how each individual was involved in succession planning. A bifurcation emerged that indicated there were different perspectives about how and why each was engaging in succession planning from a personal (participant) perspective and a colleges or institutional perspective. These responses indicate a close tie to the institutional culture, which emerged as a strong theme in this question as participants worked to define how culture and leadership (collectively and individually) at the college was a determining factor in deciding to take part in and utilize succession planning. Each college's approach to succession planning was different, as were their engagement strategies. Broadly speaking, this was impacted by the issues presented in participant responses such as knowledge level, organizational culture, strategic planning, and leadership philosophy. These issues support those identified in the literature review, specifically in studies conducted by Neefe (2009), Richards (2009), Luzbetak (2010), and McMaster's (2012) that identified institutional culture, strategic planning, and leadership philosophy as factors of best practice that institutions can develop to support succession planning.

In regard to resolving the issues presented by the leadership crisis, the responses focused largely on one issue – turnover. Reasons for turnover were clearly outlined in the literature review (demographic, competitive forces, job requirements, lack of preparation, competencies, changing political climate, institutional bureaucracy), but responses did not focus on these. Rather responses focused on the positions vacated, impact, and the desire or need to find ways to mitigate the impact of the turnover. These impacts have led participants to design effort to prepare for this turnover, which is the focus of the next research question.

Current efforts in succession planning - Research question two. Research question two asks how the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis in higher education. This question sought to understand how the system pilot program has/had influenced the institutions ability to respond to the challenges presented by the leadership crisis and why institutions decided to engage (or not) in the pilot program. To build understanding about the efforts for the reader, the interview questions were focused first on benefits and opportunities the participants and their institutions experienced by engaging in succession planning. This line of questioning sought to understand the value of succession planning at the institution and explore what participants saw as opportunities as a pilot in the succession planning process.

In discovering benefits and opportunities, the challenges and roadblocks experienced by the participants and their institutions were also explored. In interview question four, participants were asked specifically about the challenges or roadblocks experienced when applying the modified Rothwell model of succession planning/implementing succession planning on their campus. However, this line of questioning took two distinct paths during the analysis process. One path was big picture, meaning the challenges and roadblocks had nothing to do with the framework or its application but rather with higher education, system issues, and institutional priorities. This themes will be explored as part of research question two as the responses tie to the efforts of the system and institution rather than the modified Rothwell framework explored in research question three.

During the analysis process, specific strategies and activities were gleaned from participant responses that add value to succession planning from and institutional and system level perspective. The description of these practices is included in the analysis of this research question as this demonstrates how efforts were supported, implemented, and adopted and can indicate whether such efforts were successful and sustainable.

Succession planning benefits and opportunities. When asked about benefits experienced by engaging in succession planning, including benefits from participating in a system led succession planning pilot, participant responses were at the individual (benefits experienced by the participant), institutional, and system level. However, in analysis, the researcher focused exploring the overarching concepts that supported these benefits, such as developed processes, flexibility, preparedness, process, and managing change, as they are a result of succession planning strategy implementation.

Benefits. When describing the benefit of creating processes around succession planning, Henry focused on the characteristics of those processes, stating they should be “clear, easy to follow, inclusive, and utilize technology to support.” In designing processes, Ana noted that the right design of succession planning processes can “create and support a culture of engagement and belonging.” Processes were noted by Ana and Henry as a way to support and increase the sustainability of succession planning efforts.

A benefit of participation in the system pilot for succession planning was that many processes were shared from the system or between institutions to support efforts in succession planning. These processes, noted Richard, could increase the system-wide type and availability of opportunities for qualified applicants who desired promotion. This recognition of importance of integrated processes to align succession planning to strategy is an important step to formalizing succession planning and impacting long term planning initiatives (Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010).

The knowledge of the development and preparedness of employees as a result of succession planning at the system and institutional level “created a more holistic view of human capital”, which Henry noted as a “better sense of employee capacities and capabilities.” To support employee development and preparedness, Henry stated that, “fundamental documents like job descriptions could be redefined from traditional roles and positions to meet current and future institutional needs.” He continued that this “brought a consistency around the employee review process and use of best practices which also created agreement and buy-in around succession planning in critical positions.” This focus on agreement and buy-in required improved c-suite communication, a benefit noted by Robert, which “broadened knowledge and understanding of what other leaders and supervisors were doing in their areas and departments.”

This improved communication and knowledge base established through the succession planning process also helped increase organizational understanding, which Richard saw as a stepping stone to “challenging the status quo around organizational design, structural models, and positions titles.” This same sentiment was shared by Henry who stated, “Tools like succession planning help build a more sophisticated understanding of what you really need that can then make your reactions and decisions more powerful. In doing so we can refocus work from transactional to transformational.” Susan echoed this need to utilize succession planning in decision making, indicating it was a “change in the mode of managing turnover, from crisis to planned, and being more strategic.”

Recognition of this more strategic approach and its resulting benefits was something Ana didn’t expect. As one of the pilots who presented to the Board of Trustees at a system board meeting, she noted the recognition from the board, system, and other institutions as an indirect benefit. This reputation for utilizing succession planning led to inclusion in other conversations and discussions with institution in and outside of the pilot, further increasing the understanding of the importance of succession planning to resolve issues and challenges as part of the leadership crisis in the state and higher education.

Another benefit stemming from this more systematic approach to the way individuals approach succession planning in higher education articulated from several participants was about the development opportunities provided to employees at the system and institutional level. “A systematic approach was needed to provide people with development opportunities…there is a need for a more integrated system around employee development,” Henry said. All participants noted some kind of professional development benefit as part of succession planning which included: connecting employees to a network and expanding skill sets (Ana); bringing awareness to the need for professional development to ensure continuity in the face of change (Robert); developing a clear pathway for development and promotion with a clear roadmap (Claire); and including high level leadership in development through conversations about positions to build continuity in operations (Susan). This more systematic approach to development as part of succession planning also led to increased detail and documentation, a benefit noted Richard, Claire, and Henry. Specifically Claire stated:

> Succession planning is scenario planning. It forced us to think through a whole series of what-ifs. Its contingency planning that forced us to think about the potential issues if people in key positions leave. This is operational security.

As the reader considers the benefit of leadership development to build talent, recall the leadership development programs in the MnSCU system outlined in the literature review. The Luoma Leadership Academy Program, Executive Leadership Development program, and variety of leadership courses and seminars organized by the system were designed to build a strong leadership pipeline within the system (p.62-63). Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Henry noted the benefit of these programs from a direct participant or institutional perspective. These development opportunities and their ability to build capacity at the college and system level were seen as not only benefits, but were among the opportunities articulated by participants as discussed in the next section of this research.

Opportunities. During the interview process participants intertwined opportunities with benefits and challenges as they spoke about their efforts in succession planning. The researcher differentiated benefits from challenges to provide the reader with a more historical and current perspective, (benefits) and a future perspective (opportunities). In addressing what opportunities participants felt existed for themselves and the institution the largest area that emerged focused on building capacity, both for the institution and the system, through development.

To build capacity, Mark, Susan, Ana, Richard, and Henry recognized the need for a collaborative culture that may require a change in how institutions think about their employees. To produce systemic change Henry called for institutions to "develop a maturity in thinking among leaders that integrated systems-level thinking in the philosophy of work." As an example he noted the need for changing traditional roles and workloads in HR from transaction to transformational. Susan looked for institutions to change their mindset to do things differently with a focus on what is best for student, noting that "this requires a collaborative culture between the system, administration (at colleges), and employees." Specifically Mark called for a "culture that supports responsibility and accountability with involvement, input and engagement." This culture may involve actions such as hiring practices that support the idea of hiring and building creative minds (Richard), using data in decision making (Ana), using an HLC AQIP action project (Ana), or building strong union relations that are proactive and work through problems (Melissa).

In reference to future opportunities Susan, Ana, and Robert narrowed in on the potential from current talent within each college and the state system. To accomplish this, Ana planned to use a risk assessment tool from the toolkit to create an opportunity for dialogue and to create a greater understanding among leadership about employee's roles, responsibilities, and possibilities. Susan shared that turnover could be a great opportunity to redefine the needs of a position. Rather than simply reposting a position with the same qualifications and responsibilities, Susan acknowledged how it was important to "take the time to make changes, reorganize, and modify position descriptions to attract internal and external talent while meeting institutional goals." Noting there was "lots of talent and room for opportunity to advance, just not always within the institution but within the system," Robert focused on building a positive message about development and promotion opportunities by "taking succession planning to the next level to impact morale."

Ana voiced the opportunity to learn more from other institutions work and replicate their best practices but noted that would "require some system organization with more training and support." As Ana spoke about the desire for additional training and support from the system she offered a specific suggestion for the system to continuously improve the succession planning toolkit campuses can access. She saw this as a way to use new and existing information and data to update the toolkit and move initiatives forward while guiding system and campus decision making. Continuing to expand upon the opportunity, she provided additional examples of possible support including: providing data on determined data points (system and institution) to campuses; use of existing data from campus climate, employee satisfaction, and engagement surveys for improvement; and/or conducting a longitudinal study of the effects of policies, procedures, and programs and their impact on succession planning.

Development opportunities, from other campuses or from the system, was something several other participants also referenced as they continued to provide specific suggestions in their responses. Acknowledging that there are "lots of learning and development opportunities out there," Mark provided a detailed example of an internal leadership program, done in collaboration with the unions, with the goal of changing and expanding roles of leadership on campus. The concept of internal (within a college) development programs was also mentioned by Ana, who indicated the campus had run an initial pilot leadership program with employees but had run into issues with selection and sustainability. Mark and Richard noted that their organization(s) was/were interested in moving forward with project based stretch assignments for employees as a way to let employees explore different areas of work, retrain, and add value to work. The concept of adding value to work was something Henry also desired as he looked for the system to help develop a "maturity in thinking among leaders with a more integrated system-level thinking."

As listed in this section, participants identified several benefits (current and anticipated) and opportunities, supported by the system or at the institutional level, which supported efforts in succession planning. These benefits and opportunities, along with the examples of these efforts, are outlined first to establish how they might prepare institutions for upcoming challenges or roadblocks they do/may face as outlined in the next section.

Succession planning challenges. In an effort to identify what challenges or roadblocks impacted current efforts as institutions engaged in succession planning the researcher used responses from several interview questions. Challenges wove into responses as participants discussed benefits and opportunities, resource needs, the use of the framework, and next steps in succession planning, thus they emerged as a separate theme. During responses regarding challenges, those specific to the application of the modified Rothwell framework also emerged which will be summarized later in analysis of research questions three. As this theme emerged, it became evident to the researcher this was a separate area that should be addressed and that these challenges had a direct impact on the current efforts of pilot colleges. Broadly speaking, the challenges addressed here had/have a direct impact on current efforts, but specific examples of these challenges, as experienced by the participants and their colleges, are also summarized in research question four which sought to specifically identify what experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time.

Challenges became the largest section of data to review during the research and analysis process and as result several codes emerged within the theme which include entrenchment, resource allocation, leadership transition and turnover, employee workload and capacity, planning and prioritization, data measures and return on investment, and union contracts. These challenges align with those introduced earlier in the introduction of this dissertation (p. 11-15) and literature review, particularly the section on higher education succession planning (p. 38-53). The perspectives provided by the participants provide additional insight into the impact of these challenges.

Entrenchment. Entrenchment is a term the researcher will use to describe the challenge of stagnancy or complacency faced by institutions as they attempt to move succession planning initiatives forward in the culture of higher education institution. Collectively, all participant responses further defined this as immobility and a lack of flexibility due to an absence of understanding, dated career paths and sluggish career mobility, and union influence. In describing the difference between a complacent versus challenged and motivated employee, Richard started by describing the higher education environment in the United States:

> Education is at a major crossroads in how it is delivered. It's going through a more radical change that it probably has in 2000 years…what is that going to mean in terms of what skill set you want to bring to the table from an administrative standpoint or from a back office standpoint or from an infrastructure standpoint that is going to allow an institution of higher education thrive and grow over the next 50-100 years that is radically different than it was 20 years, even 10 year ago. It's a different animal.

Richard continued to articulate how change management in the higher education environment was difficult and explained how personnel planning must consider the rapidly changing roles and responsibilities. Continuing, he emphasized the need for creativity in problem solving, adaptation, and motivation to support change. The need for creativity was echoed Mark, who voiced a frustration in trying to work as a system because of the lack of flexibility and inability to keep up with career paths and positions as they grow and change. Melissa described it by posing a question, "How do we refresh efforts in succession planning after or when they are derailed." The statement reflected a frustration with the continual starting over with new personnel in leadership roles.

Conceptually there was a challenge voiced about the lack of leadership understanding and buy-in with regard to succession planning. Unsure of why the resistance existed, Robert noted a general "why go through the work to do it (succession planning)" because there is a fundamental lack of understanding of what succession planning really is institutionally and in higher education. He continued this sentiment stating, "It seems if there is understanding, it's an isolated application, done in one area or for one department, but not throughout the organization. It's not broadly utilized."

Even terminology around succession planning proved difficult said Melissa, who stated, that the “lack of understanding and training led institutional leaders to see the work as part of HR’s job, when what is really needed is peer involvement, ideas, and ongoing support.” Henry noted, “We know what to do but can’t move forward in an education environment due to the lack of understanding, proactive thinking, and systems level thinking.”

Career paths in higher education was a concern of Mark, Melissa, Susan, and Richard. Concerns fell into several categories about the lack of: available opportunities for promotions and related constraints or hurdles; supervisory experience and ability to manage; and a performance evaluation processes. Opportunities for promotion and advancement was part of the previous section, however the reverse was also voiced by Melissa and Richard concerning the availability and types of opportunities that existed, particularly within individual institutions. As employees voiced desire for promotion or growth opportunities there was often little available internally. This led to turnover, Melissa noted, specifically in areas in entry and mid-level professional positions in areas like student affairs and advising. Both Melissa and Mark also noticed gauging employee interest in development was also a struggle in some cases as supervisors lack the knowledge, ability and skill to develop people. Along with Mark and Melissa, Susan also saw part of the challenge was the ability to establish a consistent process for employee evaluation that included professional development discussions. The lack of understanding of how to conduct a comprehensive evaluation processes was chalked up to several factors: lack of clear processes (Susan), large numbers of direct reports (Melissa), need for training and support tools for supervisors (Mark and Melissa), and lack of important documentation (updated position descriptions including defined competencies, previous evaluations not completed/incomplete, no professional development plans) (Mark and Melissa).

From Richard's perspective, the entire perspective of development needs to change – from strategy to resource allocation - to build and invest in human capital and capacity.

Financial and human resource investments. This investment was specifically addressed during the interview process as participants were asked what resource investments (human, information, financial) had been made (or not made) in developing leaders within your campus as a result of succession planning. These past and current efforts to allocate (or not) resources varied widely, however, financial and human resources (time) were noted by all participants as a challenge to current efforts to prepare for or engage in succession planning. Challenges in regard to finances and time investments were noted during several interview question responses and thus results from this and other interview questions are merged in this section.

Financial resources were addressed by all participants, however, proved to be an ongoing challenge voiced by Susan, Ana, Richard, and Robert as they acknowledged budget cuts and declining resources (from tuition revenue, state allocation, and fundraising efforts). As Robert summarized,

> Funding changes have led to position cuts which limit the ability to cross train employees or spend time in activities that support the institution. There is a workload issue as the capacity and ability of current employees take on more during a cut mode (at the institution). We've been cutting, cutting, cutting and just fill necessary vacancies as needed so there's not a lot of excess staffing.

Similarly, Susan and Ana referenced budget concerns that had led to cuts in staffing and professional development funds. Richard noted even the time allocated to complete professional development is indirectly a cost because of the cost of cross training or other methods to cover the work when the individual is allowed time away from work.

Funding models varied widely in regard the amount of money allocated toward succession planning efforts, including professional development activities. Ana noted that some professional development activities are supported by the union contracts, such as tuition waivers and guaranteed annual funds per employee (MSCF contract), which are guaranteed for employees. She stated, “This can be a substantial expense to institutions who are required to pay for these expenses.” In cases beyond those required contractually, several references were made to spending on professional development, however only Richard estimated an actual annual budget amount ($50,000) outside of contract requirements. Mark, Susan, Ana, Richard, and Claire all noted their institutions had tuition assistance or tuition reimbursement programs for employees beyond contract requirements. Other examples of spending included professional memberships (Claire); professional conferences (Claire); system sponsored leadership development programs (Mark, Ana, and Claire); financial support for credentialing or certifications in linchpin positions or to retain employees (Susan); and internal leadership development programs (Mark, Ana, and Richard).

The other most mentioned resource investment was time. Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, Robert, and Henry all mentioned time as a constraint to accomplishing efforts in succession planning. In their responses, Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Robert all discussed time related to scheduling, prioritization, and workload. “Time is always an issue to get the leadership team together…We a lot of times run the succession planning meetings without everyone there which is a challenge,” said Robert. Ana echoed this desire for prioritized time to meet stating, “Dedicated time is needed to plan this project (succession planning). Time to plan, time to do the work, and time to see the results, and time to build this as part of our culture. I’m frustrated because we just don’t have time right now.” Mark noted a similar concern when he brought up the simple lack of time stating, “The workload is already too high and so we can’t give full attention to succession planning.” The issue of high workload dominated Susan’s response as she questioned how to even begin to prioritize succession planning in busy schedules. This included time for HR to plan and define their role as part of the succession planning process and time to support others in succession planning. As an example, she also noted the constraints of supervisor’s time who had wide span of control, a high number of direct reports, and a large depth and breadth of workload. Melissa agreed by adding the workload was too high and the lack of time to work on succession planning and its elements was a challenge. She quipped, “I love the concept and understand it’s important, but how can I make time to actually get to it?”

Along these same lines, Henry noted the capacity of leadership as his institution but even so, the workload was simply too much. Noting a lack of planning and systematic thinking about employee development and the inability of leadership to view time as an investment, Henry acknowledged that, “it takes a lot of investment to go through your positions, to think what are the skills someone would need, to plan ahead….and that all takes time to document.”

The time of the leadership team, particularly the CHRO was noted as well by Mark and Richard. “It can’t be just an HR responsibility, HR is overwhelmed already,” Mark said. Richard spoke of the time of administration and the amount of money that was already invested stating, “The expense of dedicated staff to find, organize, develop, communicate, and train is substantial,” he said. Claire echoed this as she spoke of the involvement of high level leadership in the succession planning project noting, “These are the highest compensated individuals on campus so that is a lot of money in the room.”

Prioritization. The lack of time in an already lean leadership team led participants to articulate another challenge in their current efforts – the difficulty to prioritize succession planning. As Susan explained, “the priority given to succession planning at the leadership level varies and so the competence and accountability related to succession planning activities varies.” Competing priorities at the institution, specifically at the leadership level and in HR, also meant immediate needs take precedence over succession planning remarked Mark, Melissa, and Susan. “We just get bogged down with the day to day work and we’re not able to focus on succession planning as much as we should,” noted Mark. Melissa had a similar response stating “We change our priorities due to the latest fires on campus.” Susan asked, “How can we maintain support and momentum? How can we continue to make it (succession planning) a priority for leadership? How can we prioritize this with so many other initiatives going on at the college and system?”

Competing initiatives are an issue for colleges. Examples of system wide initiatives like HR and finance hubs and charting the future (a system led planning imitative) that impact the prioritization of work on campus were given by Susan. To Susan, these examples further demonstrated how outside influences can’t be predicted or planned for but rather how they sometimes impact the support and momentum for succession planning. Melissa agreed, noting that “system and college priorities don’t always align and may lead to competing interests.”

Internal examples of competing priorities were also mentioned mention by Mark and Melissa. Melissa provided examples of unexpected enrollment challenges and funding decreases which “immediately impact and change the priorities of the institution.” Changing priorities are also due to “fires” that need to be put out on campus every day noted Melissa. Mark agreed and again mentioned the need to change from this “transaction nature of work to one that was more transformational." The need for planning was emphasized repeatedly as a way to prioritize by Mark, Melisa, Susan, and Richard. Susan looked to planning to help define the stages of succession planning and develop a process but acknowledged, "Where to start when on each campus is so different. Pilots are looking for a cookie cutter approach to it (succession planning) and it just doesn't work that way." When referencing the need for planning to help prioritize work, Melissa put it succinctly stating, "What gets measured is what gets done."

Establishing clear measures with data. The question of how to prioritize succession planning with so many other initiatives (planned and unplanned) impacting a lean leadership's time remains, as do the issues around how to measure efforts in succession planning to gauge the impact of these efforts. As challenges were discussed in interviews, several participants eluded to the need for data and clear measures related to succession planning to make the case for the effort and investment in succession planning. As such, it became a prompting question from the researcher if not mentioned by participants to ensure it was addressed by each. All eight participants indicated they did not have or did not use established measures to gauge the succession of succession planning efforts, nor did they use data to measure the return on investment or aid in the furthering of succession planning. The question was why? Susan detailed how data such as separation analysis and retirement projections were calculated as she described the difficulty in measuring succession planning because it was "very manual." She, along with Mark, Melissa, Susan, and Ana all specifically mentioned the need to calculate return on investment (ROI) to make the case for sustaining succession planning. Whether that related to specific efforts, like a leadership development program (Mark), or to broader data on identified high performers to measure promotions and job changes through the system (Ana), all five agreed that measurements were needed, however no one actually calculated it. Robert, Claire, and Henry indicated that there had not been any discussion on data, measurement tools, or ROI as a result of succession planning at the institutional level. Mark mentioned how difficult it was to make the cost of engaging (or not) in succession planning tangible because "there was no immediate cost to pushing succession planning activities to the back burner." Melissa noted there was no data available to reference and that the lack of data, especially for comparative purposes, was a problem. "We're doing leadership development but we don't have a great way to measure it. We need to create measurements so we can assess what we are doing," she stated.

The question of what measurements to use seemed somewhat elusive to participants. Richard focused on the need for measurements tied to strategic goals and the strategic plan. He described the need for a dashboard or tracking mechanism to provide clarity and understanding but was unable to articulate what those measure should be. Ana described a future goal of her institution was to "measure promotions, job changes, and involvement in training and professional development," but at the point of this interview and into the foreseeable future did not see how these could be created or collected. Mark felt that the lack of documentation and measures made it difficult to formalize processes around succession planning and that "without good data it was hard to move forward." He also noted this as a flaw in the succession planning model from the system stating, "The model does not help with forecasting. It's a struggle to assess and then use data to forecast things that make a difference in succession planning."

Maintaining momentum in turnover. The concept of moving forward and making a difference threads into the next challenge articulated by participants in the study. Momentum was important to Robert, who spoke of the time it takes to build knowledge and energy around succession planning each time there are changes in leadership. Susan indicated frustration in a similar way, noting, "Although there is no cookie cutter approach to succession planning, it's important to define the stages of the process and be on the same page internally because each campus is so unique in their approach. But each time we have turnover, in all forms, it impacts momentum…and the waiting time to ramp up seems to stall out the efforts." Robert called for leadership to "practice what they preach" as they had talked about succession planning techniques but had yet "to do anything to actually operationalized anything to support it."

Turnover was a challenge all participants mentioned in their responses. Participants spoke about the impact of turnover at the system level, including the Chancellor and several vice chancellors, and at the college level including college presidents, c-suite employees and deans. All found it very concerning in relation to succession planning. Melissa noted, "Turnover at high levels leads to more time, a lack of understanding about the people, lost institutional knowledge, and lost history. Changing presidents changes priorities and impacts succession planning."

The "restarts" from leadership transition and turnover noted by Melissa were echoed by others. Claire noted the example that when a linchpin position, like the CHRO leave, the work is not continued. "Turnover in key positions that were part of the succession planning team has an impact. Succession planning efforts are stalled or discontinued because they were not institutionalized." Mark shared the same sentiment, "leadership transition leads to changing leadership styles with stops and starts in the process and no consistency." Susan voiced the same concern, "Efforts are stalled due to high level employee turnover. Then we have to ramp up new people in positions. We are in a tough spot. Are we investing in people and training them to leave us? If we don't (train them), will they leave?" A good question in a very competitive job market for talent, which Mark, Melissa, Richard, and Robert also mentioned as a challenge related to turnover.

Union impact. A final challenge identified and one specific to the state in which this research was conducted focuses on the impact of several unions within the college environment. All participants indicated they were familiar with and utilize the current contracts for one or more unions based on the nature of their current or past positions. Based on the efforts around succession planning at each college up to the point of this research, participants had varying levels of engagement with the union. Melissa, Ana, and Richard specifically noted the lack of flexibility within the contracts to reward employees with formal and informal advancements based on performance. All of the union contracts (MSCF, MMA, MAPE, AFSCME) and plans (Commissioner's plan, Managerial plan, Administrator plan) do not allow for advancement based on performance and have limited availability for performance based rewards.

This awareness of the constraints within the union contract also led Mark, Melissa, Susan, and Claire to question how they could use succession planning and its tools in such an environment. "I think there is a whole lack of understanding of what succession planning is and how to move forward in a public education environment. We have to reach that balance of affirmative action hiring and growing our own people. I think as budgets continue to tighten we just have less people (to do the work)," stated Susan. Mark noted the confines he felt, "As a state system we can't pick or groom people for certain jobs like in the private industry." Ana spoke about the locked language of the union contracts which made it hard to try new things or let new people in try different positions. "It can be prohibitive. Collective bargaining agreements don't encourage people to move from one position to another easily using stretch assignments or shadowing. They (contracts) are clunky and prohibitive."

As a public institution, "transparency is key to working with the unions," Robert said. Susan explored the concept of "grow your own," as she questioned how to do that without alienating employees that aren't selected for development programs, stretch assignments, or internal positions. "How do we select individuals for opportunities without "picking them'- without the perception of favoritism?" asked Susan. She also questioned how to work through the gossip and myth that is spread through the grapevine about this same perceptions. Speaking on ongoing union resistance, Melissa struggled with how to approach succession planning, collaborate, and align efforts with the union noting that it was a "reason for the delay in implementation and impact of succession planning." Citing an example of a grievance filed, Melissa noted the pushback from the union stating, "There was a feeling we were giving preferential treatment to some workers. In retrospect we probably should have met with them (unions) first to talk about the things we were thinking about doing." However, from the opposite perspective, Claire spoke more positively of her own experience in succession planning and his/her ability to combat union resistance stating, "We did not pick individuals for positions or leadership development opportunities but let them identify themselves. We took a very open approach, all were welcome, and used position roadmaps to help people prepare for positions."

In this section the researcher has examined and summarized the participant responses related to research question two: How do the current efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) prepare institutions for the leadership crisis in higher education? The researcher has summarized the responses from participants to highlight the benefits or opportunities experienced by participants and their institutions and aligned those to the benefits and opportunities presented in the literature review. The researcher further sought to establish if participants had found value in participating in succession planning at their institution and explore what participants saw as benefits and/or opportunities for their institution as a part of the system succession planning pilot. Finally, the researcher sought to discover what challenges or roadblocks were experienced by the participants and their institutions as they implemented succession planning, including any presented as part of the system pilot program. These challenges include many of the same challenges brought forward in the literature review.

Framework utilization – Research question three. Research question three focused specifically on the modified Rothwell framework and asked how the modified and adopted framework had been utilized and/or implemented within the college environment. The succession planning framework refers to the adapted framework highlighted on page 65 of the literature review. This framework, adopted by the MnSCU system, is an adapted version from William Rothwell's (2005) book, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent From Within*. In preparing the interview questions to support this research question, the researcher began by asking how participants had engaged in succession planning in their institutions so far and prompted specifically about the steps of the succession planning framework and whether or not they had been applied as part of the process in interview question two. The framework (as pictured in the literature review on page 65) was shown, either in paper or electronic format, to each participant to ensure mutual understanding of the reference to the framework in question.

Interview questions specifically addressed the framework by seeking to understand what challenges or roadblocks had been experienced in applying the modified framework of succession planning at the individual institution. This led to participants articulating what was working/had worked as part of the adoption of the framework and responses about which elements they had been using or planned to use. As participants described their short and long term goals related to succession planning as part of interview question responses, the framework and its steps were also repeatedly referenced. The frameworks value (or not) was also referenced in interview question seven as participants provided advice and recommendations to other colleges moving forward.

This line of questioning during the interview process sought to understand if the model was actually utilized, how it was applied in real-life, and whether or not it added value to the adoption and implementation of succession planning within the institutions. Because specific uses and challenges related to the implementation of the modified Rothwell framework were addressed holistically and at each step, this provides important and specific information about the model's applicability in two year colleges. By focusing on each step of the framework in responses from participants, the framework's applicability with in the institutions will also be qualitatively established.

Framework utilization. When asked if the framework was referenced or utilized as part of succession planning, six of eight participants responded affirmatively. The other two participants, Mark and Richard, were from the same institution and so their responses aligned that the framework had not been utilized. When the participants who did not utilize the model or framework were asked why, Mark stated, "Its not a one size fits all model. I struggle with what to use, how to use it…some areas have too much detail and some are too broad. We need to narrow down and focus."

The degree of utilization among the other participants, however, varied widely. Claire indicated a familiarity with the Rothwell model in its original form (for business and industry) but was not familiar with the adaptation of the framework to higher education until the MnSCU system modified, adopted, and shared resources related to succession planning. All other participants were not familiar with the model until exposure to the concept, framework, and toolkit were made through system level contacts in talent management, human resources, or academic affairs. Comments about the framework were generally positive and included:

- "The framework is a big picture model. It gives a how and where to start. It's a good model. It is continuous, circles back, you can go out of order, and handle critical pieces first" (Melissa).
- "The framework and model are a good starting point. You can deviate as needed" (Robert).
- "I recognize the benefit of the model and putting time into each of the steps" (Ana).

As interviews continued, participants were prompted to include more detail in their responses in regard to what steps of the framework were followed and what tools within each step had been/continue to be utilized as part of the succession planning process. The following sections will outline the steps of the framework, include a brief description of the purpose and tools within the identified step as found on the MnSCU Succession Planning website (2015), and present participant responses organized around each step.

Step 1: Identify Purpose/Goals/Objectives. Step 1 of the framework is designed to help institutions secure support and identify key objectives by identifying the value of allocating resources to succession planning, creating awareness and commitment, and identifying linchpin positions (MnSCU, 2015). The tools associated with this step include a succession planning communication plan, project charter template, readiness checklist, succession planning position assessment template, and risk analysis template (MnSCU 2015).

Participants approach step one in a variety of ways. Melissa and Ana indicated they had utilized all of the step one resources including the charter, checklist, position assessment, and risk assessment templates. Nonetheless, Ana did doubt the importance of the charter, indicating it was difficult to use and questioning the practicality of the tool. This widespread use and adoption of the tools was not prevalent among other participants, however, as each indicated they used/referenced tools as needed. The project charter and risk analysis templates were highly utilized tools within step one. Melissa, Susan, Ana, Robert, Claire, and Henry responded that they had used and were familiar with the project charter template. Claire noted the charter was a "good way for the project team to lay out what we wanted to do and move forward." Henry thought the charter was a "way to articulate what the project was, what the outcomes, deliverables, and timeline were, and a way to build a work plan."

Others saw the charter template as a guide. Robert and Claire noted that they used the charter template but modified it to meet their own needs. Robert commented, "We developed a draft charter but used it as a place to start and get a few things down. (We) review it continually and tweak it. (We) build on it and make it a fluid document." This concept of the charter as an ongoing reference point and fluid document was reflected in other participant responses during the interview process as well. Susan concluded, "The charter focused on the end result before you know where you're going and reflects differing opinions. We used other pilot examples. We view the charter as an ongoing document (that) provides focus and context."

Within this step, those who utilized the charter all requested or required input from their respective leadership teams. As noted earlier in this chapter, the positions that make up the leadership teams within each institution vary somewhat from institution to institution, however, Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Robert all indicated the charter was specifically used with their leadership teams. Claire's approach varied slightly as the institution where she work(s/ed) created a project team comprised of many of individuals on the executive leadership team but inclusive of other internal institutional stakeholders who could move the project forward.

The other most commonly used tool in this step was the risk analysis template. This template and its corresponding definitions outline the risk factors associated with a specific position including financial, legal, safety, and business continuity factors. The template includes a variety of expertise areas (subject matter, college, and MnSCU) and then assigns an overall risk factor to the position. The template also examines the succession need and capacity of the position and can include succession operational needs and specific candidates. This comprehensive assessment of risk and its use was discussed by Melissa, Susan, Ana, Robert, Claire, and Henry. Because the template is available in a spreadsheet format, participants often referred to it as the "risk spreadsheet" or just "the spreadsheet." After clarifying the researcher noted this reference and carried this through the coding process. In reference to the risk assessment, Susan, Ana, Richard, and Robert described how and why the tool was used during their responses. Robert specifically described the process, "(We) utilized a modified risk assessment to build a spreadsheet with prioritized positions that were identified as linchpin." This approach reflected the use of the risk assessment tool to identify linchpin positions. Melissa, Susan, Ana, Robert, Claire, and Henry responded affirmatively to using the risk assessment tool included some reference to linchpin positions. Richard indicated he used the tool to identify and then prioritize linchpin positions, while Susan referenced a survey to identify linchpin positions. Ana took a different approach and provided a list of all direct reports and after completing the tool defined those with highest risk as linchpin. The reader may recall that a 2010 study done as part of a Luoma Leadership Academy expanded the MnSCU definition of a linchpin position to include presidents and c-suite positions as well as those with title such as dean and directors in positions throughout the college.

Ana described the use of the risk assessment tool with all senior level (c-suite) managers to identify linchpin positions with their departments using a high, medium, low risk score. "The differences in leadership style and knowledge was evident through their (each senior level manager) engagement and progress in the process. The varied skill in leadership to address the position needs showed us that we need to build a base knowledge with leadership." To accomplish this, the CHRO and champion at the college met with each c-suite leadership individual to go through the risk assessment and assist in defining and then identifying linchpin positions within each leader's reports/employees.

Susan indicated her institution approached the risk assessment a little differently. Rather than having linchpin positions identified through the risk assessment tool Susan utilized a survey with the leadership group that came from the President to identify the linchpin positions. The leadership group then proceeded to complete the spreadsheet analysis together using a numbering system (1-5) to indicate risk rather than a high, medium, low ranking. Richard also noted the use of a high, medium, low approach to ranking rather than a numbered scoring system.

As the project charter was completed and linchpin positions were identified as part of step one, Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Richard referenced their use of the discussion questions, articles, checklists, and FAQ documents which supported the purpose of the step. These resources were utilized as needed on a continual basis from the system succession planning webpage. The work of defining the project and its scope and identifying linchpin positions accomplished in Step 1 is deemed important to complete in the framework before moving into Step 2, which defines the competencies for identified linchpin positions, however Melissa, Susan, and Ana did not delineate between the steps as they indicated moving between them without noting any difference. This indicated to the researcher that the defined nature of the steps were not part of actual use and/or implementation but rather that users moved between the steps as needed to move efforts forward.

Step 2: Define Competencies. Step 2 of the MnSCU (2015) modified framework focuses on defining the knowledge, skill, ability, and personal competencies associated with each linchpin position as identified by the institution. By providing clarity around the expectations of roles and responsibilities within each linchpin position, institutions are then able to assess high potential and high performing individuals to accelerate development (MnSCU, 2015). This step is a supportive step in that it assists with the development and implementation of steps 3, 4, and 5. Reference tools used in this step include the defined MnSCU leadership competencies (Appendix A) and samples of entry and higher level technical competencies for use in defining linchpin position competencies. These position competencies and their format, characteristics, and function are further defined on pages 60-62 in the literature review section of this dissertation.

As the interviews proceeded, fewer participants were able to respond with detail on how positions were defined in order to assess individuals as part of step 2. Those that did address step 2 specifically were Susan, Richard, Robert, and Claire. Susan indicated her institution had just begun work to define leadership and technical competencies in the linchpin positions identified as part of step one. Richard indicated that his institution had identified its linchpin positions and described how they were now working to define these key positions with competencies and skills in order to track, assess, and modify positions. Robert referenced a survey done with the leadership team to define critical tasks and which was then used to prioritize positions for action and next steps. Institutionally Robert indicated this was as far as the activity had progressed, however, he noted a supplemental position mapping strategy being used in the IT area of the college. This separate activity was done to help identify and map out how to cover linchpin positions to assist in recover and continuity of operations planning and had been shared as an example with the leadership team.

The most robust response related to step 2 was from Claire. Led by the CHRO, this institution had embarked on a project to create a position roadmap for all identified linchpin positions. This position roadmap was a template of each linchpin position with defined behavioral and technical competencies used to give employees a visual outline (map) of what was needed in a particular position. The position roadmaps were then used to identify ways to pursue a particular position through development strategies specific to the competencies of that position.

Participants Melissa, Ana, and Henry did not address this step in their responses but instead moved in to describing the activities embarked upon in step 3. Mark did not address any further steps of the model citing a “lack of supervisor ability to understand and apply the tools in the toolkit at this time.” When asked about the steps of the framework, Mark indicated that specific pieces of the toolkit had been or were being used, particularly those related to employee development opportunities and training based on performance needs, but that overall the institution did not reference or follow the model.

Step 3: Assess Employee Performance/Potential. Step 3 involves using documentation and data sources to assess employee performance and potential to prepare employees for succession planning efforts. To assess each employee’s current and future potential the focus of this step is to design and implement a process of evaluation in order to support decision making in steps 4 and 5 (MnSCU, 2015). Tools referenced within this step include a guide to conducting succession performance evaluation; sample staff, faculty, and leadership evaluation forms; a leadership competency rating grid; and a nine-block leadership talent grid with development actions (MnSCU, 2015).

Performance evaluation to develop employees was addressed during the interview process by all participants except Robert, however the methods, consistency of use, and purpose of use varied greatly. Mark spoke of a robust internal leadership development program for potential leaders with an overall high percentage of evaluation completion (by supervisors) at all levels. He noted the institution had approached this more from a holistic leadership development approach rather than with intentionality to develop any one individual specifically for accelerated development. He indicated that supervisors did at minimum annually discuss professional development with employees as part of the evaluation process. Ana also spoke of a leadership development program pilot that included training and development for supervisors on conducting performance evaluation and assessment. She hoped this would increase the completion rates evaluations and the value they brought to employees.

Melissa, Susan, Ana, and Claire called out a common theme related to performance evaluation and assessment, noting that it was a work in progress. “We are working on this now. There is a high completion rate of evaluations but it is not consistent and integrated with development and growth. (We) need to increase the value of the tools. (We) need to complete these to look at ways to accelerate development,” said Susan. On the same note Claire stated, “(We) need to rework performance assessment tools to include succession planning elements that allow employees to identify their interests and communicate this with supervisors.”

The idea of supervisor knowledge and involvement was not lost on Melissa who shared evaluation completion rates of staff were at 65%, full-time faculty at 84%, and part-time faculty at less than 50%. She stated, “This is a key role of supervisors – knowledge, ability and skills at developing people. We need to design an evaluation system to support succession planning.” Henry agreed noting the need to build an evaluation plan into the initial design with useful data collection. He questioned, “How many future job openings in high priority areas have internal candidates? Are we building the internal pool we need?” Melissa noted a similar need to “assess where talent is and develop organization talent matching skills to work with different experiences and with mobility.”

Overall this seemed to be the step where participants began to note difficulty, indicating they were working on this step, or had stalled out at this step. Only Melissa specifically referenced the use of the nine-block talent grid, a tool included in this step. However, when speaking about developing performance evaluation, Melissa, Susan, and Ana noted use of modified templates available from the MnSCU system website.

As interviews progressed, responses about specific actions, activities, or tools utilized did not fall into the remaining steps of the succession planning framework. The researcher will outline each of the remaining steps below for the reader to review and assess but note that there were no response from participants about the steps during the interview process.

Step 4-7 of the Modified Framework. Step 4 focuses on identifying and communicating with the employees (candidates) about development into linchpin positions to notify them and confirm their interest and to develop and implement a communication plan with key stakeholders related to this position (MnSCU, 2015). Tools provided within this step include an acceleration pool nomination form, succession planning supervisor notification form, a succession planning candidate notification form, and a sponsor and candidate leadership development commitment outline (MnSCU, 2015).

Step 5 uses the assessment from previous steps related to the employee to build an accelerated individual development plan to address gaps in knowledge, skills, or experience the potential candidate may have (MnSCU, 2015). The recommended approach for the framework is a 70/20/10 approach that includes approximately 70% experience based development; 20% coaching, mentoring and networking; and 10% formal education (degree completion and/or development programs) (MnSCU, 2015). Tools within this step reference resources that exist in and outside the system such as the MnSCU leadership development programs described in the literature review and regional and national leadership development programs. Other tools include leadership competency self-assessment tools, referrals to coaching and mentoring programs, and a nine-block leadership talent grid with development actions (MnSCU, 2015). Each tool is selected to help prepare the employee to successfully compete for positions identified as linchpin within the succession planning effort.

Step 6 involves creating practices and systems the build sustainable support for succession planning. This includes resource support, processes for moving prepared employees into linchpin position more effectively, and creating communications that support ongoing talent management efforts (MnSCU, 2015). No specific tools exist within this step but rather other models, articles, and practices are referenced and provided to assist institutions in making succession planning a cultural norm and sustainable practice on their campuses.

Step 7 is evaluative and supports process improvement and capacity building within the institution. This practice of evaluation measures if objectives and measures set by the institution in the beginning of the process were met and studies the impact of the process on the institution (MnSCU, 2015). In a process that is ongoing and reflective the institution can understand and make decisions that support succession planning efforts (MnSCU, 2015).

Research question three focused specifically on the modified Rothwell framework and its implementation and utilization at institutions. Overall institutions were familiar with the framework and the toolkit, but familiarity did not indicate use or adoption of all steps or resources and tools within each step. Rather, the framework became a reference or starting point and thus participants indicated they created, modified, or leveraged the tools within the framework to apply them to their own institution. Robert summarized his thoughts, "We created our own tools using technology to survey and gain information from leadership about what they felt and its purpose. We leveraged tools in the framework and tried to apply them, see how they applied at our institution." This type of modified adoption was also noted by Mark, Melissa, and Ana.

The applicability of this modified framework and its impact on an institutions ability to engage in or sustain succession planning efforts was explored as part of this research question as well. Overall, participants and their institutions seemed to struggle with building understanding around the framework with leadership teams and deploying the steps of the framework. The responses did provide examples of how the framework was applied in the initial steps, however, the remaining steps (4-7) and the corresponding activities and resources within those steps were unfamiliar to participants.

Succession planning sustainability - Research question four. Research question four sought to understand what experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time. The researcher primarily used three interview questions to support this research question and began by asking about the resource investments (human, information, financial) that had been made (or not made) in developing leaders within the institution to understand if resources discussed had impact on the sustainability of succession planning over time.

Next the researcher sought to draw out the short and long term plans of each participant and their institution by asking about next steps in succession planning. Participants did not relate their responses specifically to the steps in the framework or next steps in efforts but rather in terms of upcoming goals so a follow-up question was asked. This follow up question sought to discover if there were any specific goals the institution had set related to succession planning. This series of responses sought to understand how the institution planned to move forward in succession planning, whether current efforts were sustainable, and if there was intention to continue in succession planning.

Finally, the researcher asked what advice or recommendations the participants had for other institutions embarking on a succession planning initiative. By articulating specific recommendations for other institutions the researcher was able to frame what experiences influenced the participant and institutions ability to progress and what efforts "paid off" in terms of ability to continue in succession planning. Many of these experiences articulated in participant responses act as lessons learned for other institutions as well which may be helpful in decision making around succession planning initiatives.

Holistically these responses can help determine what experiences can/might/do influence a college's ability to utilize succession planning and what impacts the sustainability of succession in the short and long term. Specific factors regarding the impact these experiences on the progress and sustainability of succession planning were outlined in the literature review and include communication, commitment, continuous improvement, and culture (p. 74). Note the commonality between the participant responses and these factors in the sections below, adding to the qualitative evidence that these factors impact the progress and sustainability of succession planning.

Resource investments. When asked about the resource investments (human, information, financial) that had been made (or not made) in developing leaders within the institution participants focused primarily on the time spent by leadership in succession planning activities. Time allocated by these individuals was not equated to dollars and cents but still seen as a primary investment in efforts surrounding succession planning. Mark and Ana specifically mentioned the time of employees and supervisors in the succession planning process and its related activities, noting that internal investments in programming and training all came at a cost to the institution. Richard was adamant this was a large investment and stated:

> From a supervisory perspective there is a lot of time involved in succession planning. The personnel time, especially the leadership team and the CHRO, takes dedicated staff to find, organize, develop, communicate, and train employees. Time allocated to complete professional development is also costly. Time at conferences, in courses, for travel and so on and then time to cross train to allow time away…all have cost.

The cost associated with time was also echoed by participants Mark, Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, and Claire who wanted the researcher to understand that resources discussed had impact on the sustainability of succession planning over time. All mentioned the time of administration in meetings about succession planning, with Melissa, Ana, Richard, and Claire specifically naming the CHRO investment of time as vital. Claire stated, “The involvement of the highest level leadership in the project is the time of the highest compensated individuals in the institution. The commitment of the CHRO is critical.”

When asked specifically about budgets and a financial investment in succession planning the most common response was tuition assistance, mentioned by Susan, Ana, Richard, and Claire. Note that each union contract or plan handles tuition assistance differently. (See literature review for explanation of each union included as part of the two-year college environment within the system including MSCF, MAPE, MMA, AFSCME, Personnel Plan, Managerial Plan, and Commissioner's Plan.) Participants all noted a tuition waiver, which is available to all employees with varied use restrictions, while others Susan, Richard, and Claire noted covering tuition for individuals beyond what is contractual or in additional to union contract requirements. Susan expanded on the use of funds to support tuition assistance and waivers when describing financial support for individuals to achieve credentialing in specific, hard to fill, positions, "We need to develop a skill set or work to grow our own for difficult positions to fill like nursing faculty so financial support for credentialing in these areas is important." No exact dollar amounts of tuition waiver or assistance were given during the interview process.

Other budget related items mentioned during the interview process were professional memberships (Claire), established professional development cost centers for college and departmental use (Ana and Richard), conference attendance (Claire), and the Luoma Leadership Academy (Ana and Claire). Mark, Melissa, Ana, and Richard also briefly spoke about internal leadership development programs on their campuses with budgets ranging from approximately $4000 (Ana) to $50,000 (Richard).

The discussion around resources had an additional unique response from Henry who looked for a more strategic approach to investment. "It is a role or job as an employee development person on campus. I think all position descriptions should include succession planning components for development." The idea to include succession planning components in leadership position descriptions and to have a position dedicated to employee development was not something any participant noted existed, but rather Henry felt would be a necessary step in moving succession planning efforts forward. The focus of these steps or goals to move succession planning efforts forward is the focus of the next section.

Short and long term goals in succession planning. To further understand what experiences or activities influenced sustainability in succession planning over time, participants were asked about their next steps in succession planning. Initial responses from participants focused primarily on activities with light reference to process related next steps that may or may not have included steps in the modified framework. As a result of these initial responses and to further clarify what next steps were planned, a follow-up question was asked about the goals the institution had related to succession planning in the short and long term. Responses were coded into short term goals, defined as set or achievable in the next year, and long term, defined as set or achievable in the next two-five years.

Short term goals. Short term goals dominated the responses from participants. Responses were coded into three focus areas in the short term responses which included: hiring and retention of employees; design or redesign of position descriptions, evaluations, and professional development opportunities; and organizational structure and support which included data collection practices and the use of measures.

Hiring and retention was coded to include all the activities and processes related to the employee selection process and the retention efforts aimed at keeping or retaining current employees. Richard outlined his desire clearly stating, "We need to mitigate risk in hiring – recruiting, advertising, word of mouth, and search committees – and hire to fill our weaknesses and gaps." He also noted the importance of hiring and retaining racial and ethnically diverse employees to add perspective to the institution. To accomplish this Richard wanted to "use position assessments to fill positions that are designed to fill current and future needs rather than past needs. We need to redesign positions with flexibility so we can hire skill sets for the future."

This desire to redesign, update, or create position descriptions was prevalent in responses from Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, Robert, and Henry. Melissa sought to create position descriptions for all positions and increase the completion rate of evaluations and performance reviews to 100% for all employees. Henry indicated the same stating, "we need to go through positions that are linchpin and vulnerable and create guides to positions." He hoped this would directly impact the value of performance evaluations.

Going through positions was part of several other participants' short term goals. Robert noted the need to "identify crucial skills in positions and compile them for review by the leadership team." Susan indicated the intention at her institution was to "use defined competencies from MnSCU to guide employee development with assessment and growth opportunities worked into performance evaluation." (These referenced leadership competencies can be found in chapter two on pages 69-70 and in Appendix A). She also indicated they (her college) would need to "create a consistent process to support supervisors in working with employees on professional development planning." Ana was more specific in her response as it related to the modified framework and noted, "We need to work on step three, move into step four – accelerate development, tailor training, and create stretch and interim assignments for internal leaders. We also need to continue to expand and revitalize an internal leadership training program." Melissa also referred to the framework when indicating a desire to review and complete the risk factor analysis spreadsheet with deans and supervisors as a short term goal.

Organizational structure and support also emerged as a short term goal for Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, Robert and Henry. This theme emerged from short term goal responses and includes the physical organizational structure that exists (or not) within the institution and the measures or mechanisms that are desired to create processes around succession planning. Specifically addressing organizational structure, Richard called for a "departmental structure with clear reporting to help support efforts in succession planning." Robert referred to a recent system wide structural change, internally referred to as charting the future, and wondered if it the efforts would continue, noting the need to build and sustain momentum both at a system and campus level if it was going to succeed. Ana echoed the need for focus and stated, "We need to refocus and evaluate our own workforce internally (referring to campus and system based efforts). I mean we've got great people right here if we can develop them. That is cost effective, it increases morale, and it increases employee engagement." Melissa noted the same need and sought to further identify clear purpose and goals around succession planning. She added, "right now it's like we're throwing things at the wall and seeing what sticks. We're doing leadership development activities but we don't have a great way to measure what's working."

This concept of measurement resonated clearly with participants who spoke about the need for clear measures to document need, progress, and results related to succession planning (Melissa, Susan, Ana, Robert and Henry). "There is a need to building evaluation planning into the initial design (of succession planning) and to collect data. This would be a project management approach with clear milestones," stated Henry. Melissa and Susan both spoke of evidence through data to measure and assess the return on investment of succession planning initiatives. Susan looked to then “create and utilize a broader communication plan college-wide about succession planning efforts that includes intent, updates, and information for employees.”

Long term goals. Long term goals were defined as those set to be accomplished in a two-five year time frame. Two of the three participants who addressed this in response to the probing interview question articulated clear steps or ideas in moving succession planning forward (Melissa and Richard). Ana noted a general desire in the long term to “complete the succession planning framework with the toolkit and move into continuous improvement to evaluate and start next cycle.” Richard clearly noted a focus to “get creative” in the approach to succession planning noting a desire to find ways to “identify stretch assignments, work out of class, modify compensation and reward systems to operationalize succession planning.”

Melissa approached the response to long term goals with the most detail. Her desire to tie organizational structure to succession planning and succession planning to the institutional strategic plan was clear as she described the concept to “develop a plan for solid talent at every level of the college with individualized personal growth opportunities.” This plan included first identifying linchpin positions and creating retention strategies for employees that would build a bench of talent in the long term. Noting the desire to build in measures to evaluate progress, she also articulated the need to “learn to work with a new generation of employees to understand employee mobility and generational differences in employees.” In addition to developing talent within the college, Melissa also saw the need to develop talent in the system stating, “We need to make sure we develop our talent here, whether for us or the system. We believe it’s a wise investment because we’ve seen more turnover in the last five years than in our whole organizational history.”

This series of responses on short and long term goals related to succession planning is telling to the researcher. The long term philosophy for managing succession planning shared by Melissa in the above paragraph was not prevalent among participant responses. The stronger focus on short term goals may demonstrate an approach to moving forward in succession planning that is incremental but that lacks integration into strategic planning (at a departmental or college level). Sustainability is key to institutionalizing the benefits succession planning, which does require significant investment in process and people, particularly in development stages (Rothwell, 2010). With significant leadership turnover in higher education (ACE, 2012; Cook & Kim, 2012) this investment is even more necessary as processes that are integrated and adopted institutionally can withstand turnover (Rothwell, 2012). However, as reflected in participant responses, many do not have any goals in place long term to keep efforts moving forward or to complete the cycle of the framework.

Advice and recommendations. In an effort to uncover what experiences had influenced the sustainability of succession planning, the researcher asked participants about what advice they would give to colleges thinking about or beginning efforts in succession planning. Participants own responses revealed how their experiences had impacted their ability to engage in, implement, and continuously improve in succession planning. The advice outlined in the following section includes examples of what did and did not work for participants, thus revealing what influenced their own progress or ability to sustain efforts in succession planning.

During the analysis process several categories emerged in responses that reflect the importance of on-going positive experiences (momentum), the desire for succession planning to be part of future outcomes, and the need to acknowledge past challenges yet not let them thwart future opportunities. These categories also reflect advice and recommendations in four main categories from both the system and college and include: leadership support and commitment; resources and tools; communication; and planning.

Leadership support and commitment. Within the leadership support and commitment category there were several recommendations that emerged. The first was the need for both the engagement and support of presidents and executive leadership team members were specifically noted as critical. Henry voiced that the "president and senior leadership team must be fully committed." Melissa agreed noting that "succession planning needs support from the leadership team, peers, committees, and the champion. We can't rely on one person." Ana indicated that "securing presidential and executive leadership team support up front" was imperative to efforts moving forward. She recommended that at least two individuals from different areas of the college were needed to lead the efforts and that they should be from high level leadership positions. Mark spoke about the strong influence that president leadership style and support plays in moving succession planning efforts forward and acculturating it to the institution. This advice aligns with Kotter's (2007) recommendation that an organization can create a culture of leadership with consistent commitment by leaders to develop people into leaders.

The concept of engraining succession planning into the culture of the institution is another recommendation supported by Mark, Ana, and Henry. Mark clearly stated how important it was to "build a collaborative culture with responsibility and accountability that had input and supported employees." Ana agreed that it must be part of the institutional culture. To do this she suggested that "you instill in employees, supervisors, managers, and leadership that we're (the college) hoping that you continue on and succeed for many years at this institution." Since higher education has a unique culture that incorporates the principles of involvement, development, and shared governance (Borden, 2010; Davis, 2008; Richards, 2009), this recommendation to incorporate succession planning elements into culture to ensure sustainability is also validated by research in the literature review.

The final recommendation tied to this category is about the level of understanding and knowledge about succession planning that exists within leadership. "(We) need to teach the team about succession planning and utilize existing research to have conversations and discussions to move forward," stated Henry. "You have or can build talent on leadership teams to have expertise and you can use that talent to move forward." Melissa supported this concept as she called for executive leadership and the college president to take the time needed to expand their knowledge and understanding of what succession planning is. Ana recommended building knowledge base in leadership of what succession planning is and to "provide campus leadership and HR departments with formal training." She commented that:

> I really had to spend a lot of time just going through all the information to get my head around it because I haven't been trained or had any courses on succession planning or anything like that. So I think it's useful to go through the whole process to understand what you're getting in to. This is what you're going to be selling the rest of your leadership group.

This issue of time, as noted in the quote above, is what originally led the researcher to consider the capacity of individuals and institutions to take on additional work load as its own category. However, after further coding and examination of specific responses, this category was merged with three other categories. In review of comments related to institutional culture the researcher noted these closely aligned with the leadership commitment category because of the influence of leadership on culture development and sustainability. Comments regarding the capacity of workload, need for dedicated human resources, and desire for financial commitment were merged into the resources category of responses. Finally, responses about creative use of time, inclusiveness of college planning processes, and individual and departmental expectations and accountability were merged with the planning category as they reflected a similar tone or desire to set clear strategic and operation direction.

Resources and support. The next category of recommendations from participants focused on the use (or not) of resources from the system office, institution, or individuals. From the system perspective advice focused primarily on the availability of training and professional development and use of framework with toolkit. Henry noted that “it’s useful to have lots of these tools that you can just take and modify and run with as well as steps in a conceptual model. Models, tools, and templates are available so you don’t have to recreate.” Claire agreed that, “we don’t have to reinvent the wheel, just use what is there.” Melissa and Ana also both noted how they learned to use the tools in the available toolkit and shared them with other members of their leadership teams hoping they would use them too.

But not all participants felt they had clear direction or knew how to use and implement the tools. For example, Melissa, Ana, and Henry indicated they still wanted to learn more and expand their knowledge about succession planning. Susan spoke about her experience noting that “it’s hard to know how to get started…where to start. You have to take the time to learn, review the toolkit, and bring it all together. Learn together.”

During these responses specific tools within the toolkit including identifying linchpin positions, conducting the risk assessment (template), and performance assessment and evaluations were identified as part of advice given from participants. Claire advised:

> Take the time to do the risk assessment and identify critical positions. Broaden you definition of a critical position and remember it’s not always high level leadership…for

> example network administrators and building or facility managers. It's the positions that are essential for keeping things moving and for business continuity.

Susan echoed a similar message stating:

> There is a lot of value in taking time to do the risk assessment together as a team – deciding on linchpin positions and working through each position. Spend time in conversations and learning other areas. You can pick up good practices, learn from each other. There is lots of value in leadership peer to peer conversations and discussion.

Melissa and Claire also referenced performance assessment resources as part of the toolkit they found important and useful. Claire advised on the importance of automating a performance assessment and performance management system. Melissa focused on the process as well noting that, "It's important to develop a culture of evaluation. Regular, ongoing evaluation and you must have accurate and up-to-date position descriptions and performance review systems."

In regard to system level resources, Mark, Melissa, Ana, and Richard all spoke about the online bi-weekly succession planning WebEx meetings that pilots could participate in. Melissa recommended to "take advantage of the bi-weekly succession planning conference calls. Learn from others, get new perspectives and ideas. We have a wealth of untapped knowledge." Mark noted the same as he recommended the bi-weekly WebEx's. "I get ideas and motivation from the WebEx's. I hear what other campuses are doing and the tools they are using and building." Ana said the same recommending that colleges participate in the pilot program and system level trainings and "take advantage of the bi-weekly touch base meetings."

A final recommendation related to resources focused on human resources at the system and college. At the system level, Susan, Ana, and Richard appreciated system involvement but sought more training and support. This included improving allocating resources to improve and update the toolkit (Ana), more proactive communication and training (Susan), and personnel time from system employees on campuses (Richard). Henry heavily emphasized the importance of high level commitment at the system but focused on the college, stating, “The president and senior leadership team must be fully committed to succession planning. They need to allocate time and resources and have buy-in.” Ana recommended that “two different people from two different areas of the college are needed to lead efforts. You need at least two and a dedicated champion.” Melissa cautioned the importance of “setting realistic expectations for workload and time commitment of those involved.” Claire summarized this expectation clearly and counseled the following:

> Be mindful of capacity. Higher education is notorious for short changing administration and human resources. Given our capacity as human resource offices we aren’t going to be able to do absolutely everything in the way that we would have like to because we just don’t have the power or people to do that. Be mindful of that and find creative ways to move important things like succession planning forward given the capacity you have.

Communication. Communication was the focus of the next category of recommendations provided by the participants of this study. Note that no parameters or specific definitions around communication were given by participants so recommendations vary in delivery and type of communication as well as where or whom communication came/comes from or is shared with.

Melissa and Henry also made specific reference to communication with the unions. Both advised to be aware of internal politics and union communications citing that “communication needs to be managed carefully,” (Henry) and that “conversations, discussion, and involvement are important and needs to include the unions up front,” (Melissa).

Susan, Robert, and Henry shared specific pieces of advice related to communication as noted in their own words in the following paragraph. Henry summarized his recommendation regarding communication as follows:

> Spend time up front to convince internal stakeholders why investing time and energy into succession planning is important. Communicate the value of succession planning with examples and outline the opportunity costs of not doing succession planning too – like lost talent, failed searches, and operational gaps.

The concepts of internal communications, specifically with the executive leadership team was also voiced by Susan who noted:

> We need to use succession planning to create an environment of open dialogue in leadership…to talk openly about transitions like retirement and org structure changes. The turnover of our long standing VPSA/AA (vice president of academic and student affairs) was an example of a great venue to be able to open up the conversation and say, ok, what is giving us heartburn when it comes to this. I mean because there was a fear factor there…not that somebody else can't come in and do those thing but when you have someone who has spent 30 years here there's a lot of things that aren't documented. I just think there is so much value in it (succession planning) but you have to set the time aside to do it.

Communication also had to do with letting employees know about their opportunities within the institution. Robert advised:

> Send a positive message that person can progress within the company. I used to be a college lab assistant when I was in school here. I was a student tutor and then I moved on to be the college's first network administrator. Then I moved into the classroom, and

then I moved in a director role and ultimately where I am today. For staff that want to move up and maybe even those that don't, if they know it's available I think it send a positive message.

Planning. Lastly, a category around planning – both operational and strategic – emerged in responses from Melissa, Susan, Ana, Richard, Robert, Claire, and Henry. From stating that we need to plan now (Richard), to planning next steps (Robert), to creating a system of integrated college wide planning that includes succession planning (Henry), to understanding the alignment of system and college priorities (Melissa), each found planning to be a critical element in moving succession planning forward. A solid plan or system for planning was also important to Ana because this would help, "define succession planning in terms of what it is (strategic and equitable), and what it is not (grooming or picking)." Put simply by Robert, "we need to practice what we preach. We put it on paper and make a plan. There's nothing wrong with working on the plan after you plan the work. We just need to plan next steps and figure out how to operationalize it."

Creating time and space for planning was important to Melissa who saw time to plan as a critical element noting, "A plan is needed to set realistic expectations for workload and time commitments of leadership." Susan agreed that, "It's important to set aside dedicated time for planning – not part of another meeting but instead set regular meetings and prioritize succession planning." Later in the interview Susan also offered this piece of advice, "This process is a journey and you need to plug away at it. It's not like one meeting and you are going to get everything done. You just have to keep inching your way along."

Planning also had many benefits articulated by participants. This included a way to "capture and manage knowledge transfer during turnover" (Robert), a way to "think ahead and build pieces of succession planning that keep people reflecting and talking about it (Claire)," a way to "be ready and prepared to start succession planning" (Melissa), a way to "mitigate risk from turnover" (Participant H), and a way to" complete key things and track them" (Henry).

Research question four focused on the participants and their perception of how their own or their college's experiences supported the sustainability of the college in succession planning over time. Supported by elements of several interview questions, the results of this research were coded around what experiences or factors influenced sustainability. These included resource investments that had been made (or not made), how the participants felt about their own and the college's ability to continue in succession planning, and what short and long term plans existed. To capture these experiences in another way and to understand what additional factors may impact sustainability the researcher also asked each participant for advice or recommendations they had for other institutions who were thinking about or just engaging in succession planning initiatives. These recommendations for other institutions helped to frame what experiences influenced the participants' and institutions ability to progress in succession planning and what efforts were or would have been valuable in initial or continued persistence in succession planning.

Summary

This chapter is constructed by framing the research results around each research question and includes interpretations, direct responses from the participants, comparison to data from the literature review, and a summary analysis. It reviews the qualitative research analysis from a research study that attempts to answer four research questions related to the succession planning experiences of pilot colleges in a two-year union environment. It reflects the participants' responses to a series of interview questions that, through supervised qualitative research procedures, were organized to respond to the presented research questions. Interview data, including direct quotes, was used throughout the chapter to emphasize participant's experiences in their succession planning.

Results for research question one, which focused on how individuals interviewed and their institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education, varied greatly among participants. Interviews were first able to draw out how individuals and their institutions got involved in utilizing succession planning and the system pilot program and then established participant's knowledge of and engagement in succession planning. Variations among respondents were based on organizational structure, philosophy of leadership at the institution, and leadership's ability to understand, support, and engage in succession planning. However, few responses included reference to the adapted succession planning framework utilized by the system in the pilot program.

Participants articulated why succession planning was important to them (individually), their institutions, and to higher education and began to describe how they and their institutions were utilizing succession planning to mitigate the consequences of the leadership crisis. Since the literature review outlines many causes for the leadership crisis, yet only peripherally examines the actual impact of the crisis on two-year colleges, it was important for this research to explore if these same causes impacted the participants of this study. The answer was yes. Turnover was addressed by all participants as were other causes such as leadership knowledge, understanding, and support; external influences; and organizational culture. Reasons for turnover were clearly outlined in the literature review (demographic, competitive forces, job requirements, lack of preparation, competencies, changing political climate, institutional bureaucracy), but responses did not focus solely on these reasons. Rather responses focused on the positions vacated, impact, and the desire or need to find ways to mitigate the impact of the turnover. These impacts have led participants to design efforts to prepare for this turnover, which is the focus of the next research question.

Research question two sought to discover specific efforts of the pilot colleges (supported by the system) as they engaged in succession planning. This question sought to build an understanding of how the system pilot program has/had influenced the institutions ability to respond to the challenges presented by the leadership crisis and why institutions decided to engage (or not) in the pilot program. To build understanding about the efforts for the reader, the interview questions were focused first on benefits and opportunities the participants and their institutions experienced and to establish the value of succession planning at the institution. The researcher differentiated benefits from challenges to provide the reader with a more historical and current perspective (benefits), and a future perspective (opportunities). Benefits articulated by the participants focused on developed processes, flexibility, preparedness, and change management as a result of succession planning strategy implementation. Opportunities presented, as they existed for individuals and the institution focused on building capacity through development. This concept and its specific strategies are more formally described by Kotter (2007) in the literature review (p. 77-78). Using development opportunities to prepare future leaders in higher education was also an opportunity outlined to fill the leadership pipeline with talented, capable leaders (Runestad, 2014; Robken, 2007). Noting the importance of institutional culture, leadership commitment, continuous improvement, and active engagement in the planning and implementation of succession planning, the participants offered similar opportunities to those expressed in the McMaster (2012) and Neefe (2009) studies summarized in the literature review.

In discovering benefits and opportunities, the challenges and roadblocks experienced by the participants and their institutions were also explored as part of research question two. Challenges became the largest section of data to review during the research and analysis process and, as a result, several categories emerged within the theme which included entrenchment, resource allocation, leadership transition and turnover, employee workload and capacity, planning and prioritization, data measures and return on investment, and union contracts. These challenge were highlighted in the introduction of this dissertation (p. 11-15) and the literature review, particularly the section on higher education succession planning (p. 38-53). The perspectives provided by the participants provide additional insight into the impact of these challenges.

Finally, throughout this section, there are specific strategies and activities that were gleaned from participant responses that add value to succession planning from an institutional and system level perspective. The description of these practices demonstrates how efforts were supported, implemented, and adopted and can indicate whether such efforts were successful and sustainable.

Research question three focused specifically on the modified Rothwell framework and asked how the system adopted framework had been utilized and/or implemented within each college environment. The succession planning framework refers to the adapted framework highlighted on page 65 of the literature review. This framework, adopted by the MnSCU system, is an adapted version from William Rothwell's (2005) book, *Effective Succession Planning: Ensuring Leadership Continuity and Building Talent From Within*. This analysis sought to understand if the model was actually utilized, how it was applied in real-life, and whether or not it added value to the adoption and implementation of succession planning within the institutions.

Responses were organized to focus on each step of the framework to qualitatively test its use and applicability within the institutions. Responses varied widely between participants in regard to use of the framework and its resources. Vastly different responses ranged from one institution not using the framework at all, to some use, to including its full adoption as an institutional short-term goal. Overall, participants and their institutions seemed to struggle with building understanding around the framework with leadership teams and deploying the steps of the framework. The responses did provide examples of how the framework was applied in the initial steps (1-3), however, the remaining steps (4-7) and the corresponding activities and resources within those steps were unfamiliar to participants. Not addressing or skipping these critical steps of the framework led to a lack of systematic processes and evaluation at the college's with consequences. The consequences were framed to be the challenges participants articulated here and were almost identical to those in the literature review. Challenges included a gap of understanding; an entrenched traditional view of succession planning; a lack of planning; an unwillingness to let go of historic practices or revisit processes, beliefs and assumptions; anxiety; and/or a lack of awareness of the coming leadership crisis (Klein and Salk, 2013).

Research question four sought to understand what experiences influence a campus's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time. Collectively, the analysis of interview questions presented in this section are designed to present the perspective of participants about the influences of internal and external factors that influence a college's ability to utilize succession planning in the short and long term. This focus on the participants and their perception of how their own or their college's experiences supported the sustainability of succession planning over time are summarized in three sections that include the resource investments that had been made (or not made), how the participants felt about their own and the college's ability to continue in succession planning, and what short and long term plans existed to support succession planning. These factors of impact somewhat parallel those presented in the literature review which included communication, commitment, continuous improvement, and culture (p. 65-70). As supported and enhanced by the articulated experiences of participants who described the influence of these factors on the sustainability of succession planning, these experiences add further qualitative evidence that the factors presented in the literature review and in this section of chapter four impact the progress and sustainability of succession planning.

To present these experiences in a way that frames how these factors might impact succession planning sustainability, the researcher also presented the advice or recommendations participants provided for other institutions who were engaged in succession planning initiatives. These recommendations for other institutions helped to frame what the participants experienced and how these experiences influenced the individual and institutions ability to progress in succession planning. It also frames what efforts were or would have been valuable in initial or continued persistence in succession planning.

Chapter V: Discussion and Conclusions

Using succession planning, both as a concept and as part of an applied framework, to prepare institutions for a leadership crisis, is still new to higher education (Davies & Davies, 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Keim & Murray, 2010; Luna, 2010; Middlehurst, 2008; Neefe, 2009). As leadership and linchpin positions turn over at an increasingly rapid rate, the concern over how to find and replace these individuals with qualified potential candidates escalates (Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; Neefe, 2009, Rothwell, 2010). As a result of this lack of qualified potential candidates to fill vacated leadership positions, higher education has shown an increased interest in the principles of succession planning (Ebbers et al., 2010; Gaffney, 2005; Luna, 2010; McMaster, 2012; Neefe, 2009, Rothwell, 2010). This interest and the emergence and application of succession planning principles provides the basis and purpose for this research.

Results Summary

Chapter five will summarize the chapters of this dissertation and outline the findings for each research question as presented in chapter four. Best practices that emerged from data and analysis will also be highlighted. These practices will frame recommendations for colleges considering moving forward with succession planning and for future research on this topic. The following section summarizes the perspectives of participants in this study with related information from the literature review broadly around each research question focusing on succession planning utilization, engagement in succession planning, framework adoption and use, and sustainability.

Succession planning utilization. The focus of research question one was to explore how individuals and their institutions utilized succession planning to prepare for or resolve issues presented by the leadership crisis in higher education. Responses varied greatly among participants. These articulated variations were based on organizational structure, philosophy of leadership at the institution and leadership's ability to understand, support, and engage in succession planning. Participants articulated why succession planning was important to them (individually), their institutions, and to higher education. They described how their institutions were utilizing succession planning to mitigate the consequences of the leadership crisis but overall did not reference the adapted succession planning framework.

Since the literature review outlines many causes for the leadership crisis, yet only peripherally examines the actual impact of the crisis on two-year colleges, it was important for this research to explore if these same causes impacted the participants of this study. The answer was yes. Causes such as leadership knowledge, understanding, and support (or lack thereof); external influences (competitive forces, economic conditions, politics); and organizational culture and mission were voiced by participants. However one cause, turnover, was addressed by all participants. Reasons for turnover were clearly outlined in the literature review and did align with participant responses, yet their concentration was not just on the why of turnover. Rather, participants of this study focused more on the impact of turnover on their short and long-term operations as positions were being vacated. Examples throughout the institution – academics, IT, student affairs, business operations, facilities – were shared emphasizing their desire or need to find ways to mitigate the impact of the turnover. These impacts led participants to design efforts to prepare for this turnover, which is the focus of the next research question.

College engagement in succession planning. By examining the engagement of pilot colleges in succession planning efforts (supported by the system), the second research question sought to discover additional detail about the more specific efforts being explored or implemented. This question sought to build an understanding of how the system pilot program has/had influenced the institutions ability to respond to the challenges presented by the leadership crisis and why institutions decided to engage (or not) in the pilot program. Benefits articulated by the participants focused on developed processes, flexibility, preparedness, and change management as a result of succession planning strategy implementation. Opportunities presented, as they existed for individuals and the institution, focused on building capacity through development. This concept and its specific strategies are more formally described by Kotter (2007) in the literature review and focus on experiences, accomplishments, rewarded efforts, and ultimately building the leaders that exemplify the mission of the institution (p. 77-78). Using development opportunities to prepare future leaders in higher education was also an opportunity outlined to fill the leadership pipeline with talented, capable leaders thus building the intellectual capital of an institution through investment (Runestad, 2014; Robken, 2007). Noting the importance of institutional culture, leadership commitment, continuous improvement, and active engagement in the planning and implementation of succession planning, the participants offered similar opportunities to those expressed in the McMaster (2012) and Neefe (2009) studies summarized in the literature review. Examples that support these opportunities such as strategic planning, organizational structure, access to traditional and non-traditional career paths, equity in exposure and opportunity to development activities, and hiring processes were all shared by participants.

The challenges and roadblocks experienced by the participants and their institutions were also explored as part of research question two. Challenges included entrenchment, resource allocation, leadership transition and turnover, employee workload and capacity, planning and prioritization, data measures and return on investment, and union contracts. There is much similarity to the challenges from the introduction of this dissertation (p. 11-15) and literature review, particularly the section on higher education succession planning (p. 38-53). The perspectives provided by the participants provide additional insight into the impact of these challenges.

Throughout this section specific strategies and activities were gleaned from participant responses that add value to succession planning from an institutional and system level perspective. They involve addressing each challenge, working as a system to create and share practices, investing in human capital, and increasing individual and institutional accountability. The description of these practices demonstrates how, when supported, implemented, and adopted, efforts can be successful and sustainable.

Framework adoption and utilization. This research also sought to understand if and how the system modified and adopted framework (modified from Rothwell, 2005, and pictured on page 65) had been utilized and/or implemented within each college environment. Responses were organized to focus on each step of the framework to qualitatively test its use and applicability within the institutions. Responses varied widely between participants in regard to use of the framework and its resources with one institution not using it at all to another including its full use as an institutional short-term goal. Overall, participants and their institutions struggled with building understanding around the framework with leadership teams and in deploying the steps of the framework, particularly in the latter steps (4-7). Not addressing or skipping these critical steps of the framework led to a lack of systematic processes and evaluation with consequences noted as challenges here and in the literature review. These challenges included: a gap of understanding; an entrenched traditional view of succession planning; a lack of planning; an unwillingness to let go of historic practices or revisit processes, beliefs and assumptions; anxiety; and/or a lack of awareness of the coming leadership crisis (Klein and Salk, 2013).

Succession planning sustainability. By examining the experiences of participants and their respective institutions, a final research question sought to understand what impacted a college's ability to sustain (or not) in the pilot program and continue in succession planning efforts over an extended period of time. The perspective of participants about the influences of internal and external factors that impact a college's ability to utilize succession planning in the short and long-term were presented. How experiences supported the sustainability of the college in using succession planning over time are summarized in three sections; the resource investments that had been made (or not made), how participants felt about their own and the college's ability to continue in succession planning, and what short and long-term plans existed to support succession planning. These factors of impact somewhat parallel those presented in the literature review which included communication, commitment, continuous improvement, and culture (p. 74). Thus, these experiences add further qualitative evidence that the factors presented in the literature review and in this section of chapter four impact the progress and sustainability of succession planning.

Highlighted in this research question are the advice or recommendations participants provided for other institutions who were engaged in succession planning initiatives. These recommendations for other institutions helped to frame what the participants experienced, how these experiences influenced the ability to progress in succession planning, and what efforts were or would have been valuable in initial or continued persistence in succession planning.

Summary of Findings

This study was conducted to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie internal and external pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. More specifically, this research sought to capture the experiences of five colleges during a system led pilot of succession planning in a two-year union environment.

As part of the research, challenges were clearly identified by the participants and included entrenchment, resource allocation, leadership transition and turnover, employee workload and capacity, planning and prioritization, data measures and return on investment, and union contracts. There is much similarity between these identified challenges and those articulated in the research on this topic. As participants provided additional insight into the impact of these challenges, they also spoke about the benefits and opportunities succession planning knowledge, participation, and implementation had on their institutions. These benefits such as developed processes, increased flexibility, preparedness, and planning for change all supported institutions ability to capitalize on opportunities presented by succession planning. The opportunities presented themselves as capacity building, cultural shifts in mindset about employees (development, retention, and promotion), talent building for institutions and the system through shared best practices, training and support systems, and additional research to use data to support the value of succession planning. The experiences of the participants are reflected throughout chapter four in summary and in their own words to add to the richness of the discussion around the value of succession planning.

By giving voice to these experiences as five colleges participated in a system led pilot of succession planning in a two-year union environment we can glean specific strategies and activities from participant responses that add value to succession planning from the institutional and system level perspective. The description of these practices demonstrates how efforts were supported, implemented, and adopted and can indicate whether such efforts were successful and sustainable. The more these strategies, practices, and activities are utilized the more actual and perceived value is assigned to succession planning. Although, as indicated in chapter four, it is difficult to measure value, participants did express examples of results that were valuable and ongoing. These included use of analysis tools to mitigate risk during turnover in linchpin positions (Robert), creation of a work culture with open dialogue about transitions (Susan), increased attention to the development of employees to assist them in work progression and promotion (Robert), a stronger bench of talent at colleges and in the system (Melissa).

By continuing to explore the relationship between the use of succession planning at these colleges and measurable results, the value associated with succession planning and its use can be more clearly articulated. Clarity around the impact succession planning can have on a college's ability to mitigate the risks and challenges associated with turnover and other leadership crisis conditions will further support its adoption.

Recommendations

The recommendations from this study will be presented in this section. Recommendations incorporate information from the literature review, research process, participants, and the researchers own experience in succession planning. The literature review outlined high impact practices to positively impact organization culture and structure which included: staffing strategies that address current and future needs to help prepare institutions for turnover and minimize downtime during transition (Gaffney, 2005); identifying potential successors and nurturing internal leaders through a process that helps on-board employees and promotes a successful transition experience in new positions (Succession planning gaining, 2008); encouraging growth and development of employees based on their performance and potential (Steele, 2006); and balancing succession planning with a commitment to diversity (Succession planning gaining, 2008; Neefe, 2009; Rothwell, 2010). Many of the findings within this research provide insight into the understanding and use of these high impact practices and how succession planning might help implement these high impact practices. One can also consider how the implementation of these practices, with insight from this research, might allow colleges to take advantage of opportunities and mitigate the challenges of the leadership crisis.

The recommendations below are outlined around one broad message – to begin to engage in succession planning. In doing so, institutions begin to prepare for turnover and all its effects. The *how* to begin, *how* to implement, and *how* to sustain efforts is the more detailed focus of the recommendations provided.

Engage in succession planning to prepare for turnover and minimize operational gaps. Concern about turnover in high level leadership positions, including c-suite positions and the presidency, and turnover at the mid-management level was voiced by all participants. The cause of the turnover – retirement, organizational restructure, interim titles, and natural attrition – was of less concern than the actual issues it created related to continuity of operations, loss of organizational history and process knowledge, gaps in service, and difficulty filling positions. Colleges, including those included in this study, are feeling the pain involved with challenges in the leadership pipeline of higher education (literature review p. 57-62). With such strong concern, it seems as if institutions would be eager to learn about and implement practices that would mitigate these risks so what is stopping them?

The case for succession planning in higher education is made throughout this dissertation, but still institutions seemingly rely on hope, chance, and short term gains rather than on long term strategic planning to develop talent (Collins, 2001; Rothwell, 2010). The challenges, particularly time, the entrenched culture in higher education, lack of human and financial resources, and the inability to prioritize succession planning above other pressing needs and initiatives keep institutions from committing to the very efforts that would help them overcome these challenges in the long-term. The tools to facilitate the implementation of succession planning are available, institutions are willing to share practices and processes, and, in the case of this research, there is system office support available to colleges that want to move forward.

And it is possible to move forward. The literature review established that it is possible to align succession planning strategies and best practices with the culture and traditions of public higher education and that there is a growing number of examples in higher education of succession planning initiatives (Neefe, 2009; Richards, 2009). The recommendation is to engage in succession planning – to realize the succession planning will create and maintain a system that focuses on preparedness, development, and potential which drives purpose, structure, and clarity (Rothwell, 2010). The question then is not why to engage in succession planning but rather *how* to engage in succession planning. This researcher's recommendations to engage includes: succession planning as part of strategic planning, adoption of a succession planning model or framework to guide efforts, succession planning as part of the culture of leadership, creating established succession planning measures for continuous improvement, and experiencing the benefits of succession planning to sustain efforts.

Succession planning as part of strategic planning. As evidenced in Neefe's (2009) study, there is strong positive correlation between succession planning and successful leadership development efforts when included in strategic planning. As noted in the research of this study, succession planning (as named) was not included in the strategic plans of the institutions within this research, however, elements of succession planning, such as evaluation and professional development, were. Inclusion in the strategic plan demonstrates a more strategic approach and comprehensive effort by the institution to identify and develop employees with potential which increases the availability of experienced, capable, motivated employees (Berchelman, 2005). Such an effort is deliberate and systematic and works to ensure continuity in key positions and develop intellectual capital for the institution, and in the case of this research, for the entire system (Rothwell, 2010). In Neefe's (2009) study, the data showed a strong positive correlation between colleges with a mature strategic planning process and those with a more mature succession planning process. This was supported in chapter four of this study as Henry spoke about the importance of using succession planning as part of the strategic plan. By including succession planning or its related activities into strategic college and departmental plans, this increases the priority of these activities and their likelihood of being accomplished. It also increases the likelihood of investment of resources (financial and human), something noted throughout this research as one of the largest challenges to succession planning adoption.

During high system-level and college presidential turnover, strategic planning also helps sustain the importance of efforts when clearly articulated and expected by the Board of Trustees. An additional recommendation would be to re-address this issue with the Board (as its membership has also changed) and current system-level leadership. Reaffirming high-level commitment to the importance of succession planning is critical to rebuilding efforts and mitigating the high impact of turnover.

Adopt a framework. To support succession planning as part of strategic planning, institutions should consider adoption of the modified framework (MnSCU, 2015) as one way to formalize succession planning. Preparing current and future leaders through development is a key component of succession planning in business models (Rothwell, 2010; SHRM, 2009) and in the modified framework adopted by the MnSCU system, thus I recommend the review and adoption of this framework (in whole or adapted form) to establish an expectation for each institution. The framework has clear outcomes, is a cycle of continuous improvement, and supports succession planning efforts and implementation with tools and resources.

Consider that all steps of the framework incorporate planning, implementation, and improvement. Step 1 of the modified Rothwell framework adopted by MnSCU (2015) specifically pushes institutions to articulate their purpose and write a charter to outline their plan, a perfect segway to inclusion in a strategic plan. Steps 2, 3, 4, and 5 focus on incorporating efforts and activities around leadership development into a larger succession planning strategy. This larger strategy can be incorporated at the system and institutional level. Step two focuses on defining the knowledge, skill, ability, and personal competencies associated with each linchpin position as identified by the institution to provide clarity around the expectations of roles and responsibilities within each position in order to assess high potential and high performing individuals to accelerate development (MnSCU, 2015). This step aligns well with Higher Learning Commission guidelines on valuing employees (AQIP category 3) and in preparing for continuity in operations.

Step three involves using documentation and data sources to assess employee performance and potential to prepare employees through a process of comprehensive evaluation (MnSCU, 2015). This again aligns with AQIP category 3 on valuing employees and helps institutions meet its state statute obligation to conduct annual evaluations on all its employees. Several union contracts also have required evaluation for pay increases or require annual professional development plans.

Step four focuses on identifying and communicating with the employees about development opportunities and confirming their interest and ability along with building a communication plan discussing effort of succession planning with stakeholders (MnSCU, 2015). According to Steele (2006) formalized succession plans include specific objectives, definitions, procedures, policies, and implementation strategies that also help organization clearly communicate succession planning activities in an accessible way to its stakeholders. Ongoing communication also supports efforts that are transparent and known which help ensure fairness and an environment free of bias (Kotter, 2007; Rothwell, 2010). I believe this is a key step in building the structure needed to support a diverse, strong talent pool. Going back to the finding from Neefe's (2009) study, these steps or communications may assist colleges in creating equitable opportunities for development. Time spent in this step could reduce the impact of Neefe's (2009) findings in regard to differences in career development opportunities based on gender, geographic region, career stage, and non-traditional career paths on talent development and retention.

Finally, step five uses the assessment from previous steps to build an accelerated individual development plan for the employee to address gaps in knowledge, skills, or experience to better prepare them for opportunities (MnSCU, 2015). This step supports designing and implementing intentionality and equitability into the process of development. Recall the strategies and techniques identified by Luzbetak (2010) like mentoring, collaboration, and internal career paths that align with this step. Each supports this step of the framework and also could support reducing the disparity Luzbetak (2010) found in use, application and impact of these techniques across gender, or from a broader view to other diverse leaders.

Steps 6 and 7 address the sustainability of succession planning within the institution. Establishing the resources needed to support efforts, utilizing the systems or processes established, and actually experiencing the results of succession planning over time help institutionalize succession planning. The final steps support both process improvement and capacity building which celebrating the successes (MnSCU, 2015). The utilization of this framework supports the planning and continuous improvement elements noted in the previous recommendation on strategic planning and reflects the type of system or process that demonstrates commitment to a culture of leadership that can meet evolving current and future institutional needs as articulated in the next recommendation (Neefe 2009; Rothwell, 2010).

Succession planning as part of the culture of leadership. Succession planning is a commitment to the human resources of an institution and creating a culture of leadership requires consistent demonstration of this commitment to develop people (Kotter, 2007). Succession planning relies heavily on current leaders to establish a culture of growth and development with emphasis on developing the next generation of leaders (Austin, 2015). Thus, current leaders can take responsibility for creating a culture where people value strong leadership and strive to create it (Kotter, 2007). These same current leaders are the ones who must develop and formalize ways to build talent to meet current and future workforce demands in higher education (Davies & Davies, 2010; Feeney, 2003). Here lies the problem.

Current leaders are not developing or formalizing ways to build talent and not taking responsibility for creating a culture where people value strong leadership and strive to create it. Results from this study indicate the philosophy of executive leadership teams and the ability of the institution to tie succession planning to strategy impact whether and how much the institution engaged in succession planning. Participants of this study acknowledged the importance of preparing the current leadership team to learn about succession planning, engage in discussion around succession planning, and to facilitate support within the campus community to build a spirit collaboration and teamwork. Although noted as important, it was not prioritized by current leadership teams.

Creating a culture of development requires a change in priority. Consider how effort in communication, commitment, and continuous improvement within a succession plan establish and support a culture within an organization that increases intellectual capital. I believe value placed on the human talent in an institution is a direct reflection of culture. People reflect the competencies, values, and mission of the institution, thus how these are developed and supported create a culture that reflects this. It is the leadership's responsibility to do this – to create a culture of leadership by consistently demonstrating the commitment to develop people into leaders (Kotter, 2007). Although prioritization of succession planning is the responsibility of current leadership, the impact of succession planning is felt throughout the organization, thus open, ongoing, and transparent communication, particularly in a union environment, is critical to success.

Establishing succession planning measures as part of continuous improvement. Measuring succession planning is not a simple ROI calculation. In fact, like many things in higher education, measures to determine success, resource allocation, and accountability are difficult to determine (Runestead, 2014). Preparing future leaders for our institutions requires significant effort and resources. The results are better prepared, more productive, accomplished leaders who are ready to meet the challenges of the institutions in which they work or will work. Higher education can use succession planning to fill its pipeline with talented, capable leaders who will serve students for years to come, but only if the institutions are willing to commit the information, human, and financial resources needed. As noted in chapter four, participants of this study agreed that both financial and human (time) resources were in limited supply and voiced frustration about how to move efforts in succession planning forward. In a situation of limited resources and competing priorities, committing these resources should require evidence to support the value of succession planning.

One step to providing this evidence is to create clear measures related to succession planning to establish its qualitative and quantitative value. As presented in chapter four, data such as separation analysis (including reason and associated cost of turnover) and retention strategies (promotions, position changes, stretch assignments, mentoring activities, etc.) can be calculated. Other measures such as evaluative data on individuals in linchpin positions, objective performance measures, ROI of leadership development activities, employee satisfaction surveys, and forecasting for future position needs can also be assessed. The question of how to measure these in an effective way is more elusive. Runestad (2014) voiced this same concern noting that as institutions proceed with efforts they spend little time evaluating the ROI or assessing the effectiveness of efforts.

To create a system to assess the effectiveness of succession planning, institutions or systems can set clear goals with objectives and measures to support. The measures themselves can be both qualitative and quantitative to provide a comprehensive picture of progress. I would propose that the same principles used to develop effective assessment of curriculum in teaching and learning, can be applied to a succession planning initiative. In his 2007 white paper, Nicol outlined ten effective assessment practices, several of which can be applied. For example, Nicol (2007) contends that assessment helps clarify what good performance is with goals, criteria, and standards. In succession planning, this could be applied as part of step two in the modified succession planning framework to define what competencies are needed in a particular position, how these competencies are measured, and what development opportunities can be provided to achieve these desired competencies. Recall that Claire had begun a project to create position roadmaps for each linchpin position with defined behavioral and technical competencies to give employees a visual outline (map) of what was needed in a particular position. The position roadmaps were then used to identify ways to pursue a particular position through development strategies specific to the competencies of that position. These same roadmaps could also be used to evaluate performance in positions, thus closing the loop of assessment. To help colleges begin this process of assessment, the succession planning toolkit has example outcomes, tools, and resources. The largest hurdle to the implementation of assessment is simply time.

In the case of this study, the system office and talent management team can also provide additional guidance and support regarding assessment. Currently the success of the development programs conducted by the system are measured in terms of employee progress (promotion, transfer, and placement within and outside system). Could similar measures for employees not taking part in these programs also be measured within the entire system? Could data on employee retention and turnover be made available to colleges? Can employee satisfaction data from the system be translated into a series of recommendations for campuses to review and implement? With in-field experts and a system research staff, establishing a set of ongoing, transparent, measures, similar to what is done in academic and student affairs divisions, could be accomplished by human resources to further support succession planning initiatives.

Experience the benefits of succession planning. Consider the long list of benefits and opportunities presented to institutions from succession planning: developed processes, increased flexibility, preparedness for turnover, capacity building, talent building for the institution or system (development, retention, and promotion), support systems for training, and data measures to evidence success. My final recommendation is to experience these benefits and the short-term wins that accompany them. Over time, these wins will build credibility for succession planning. Credibility builds success and increases momentum, thus establishing the value of succession planning and creating a desire to continue efforts. Continued efforts lead to more wins, more success, and a sustainable practice that becomes part of the institutions culture.

If we walk through on short example this becomes more evident. Imagine an institution begins to engage in succession planning by training its leadership team on the principles and strategies to deploy a risk assessment of key linchpin positions. One leader, the CIO, takes this strategy to his/her department and examines the risk factors associated with several linchpin positions. As a result, he/she begins to understand the fragility of some areas and works with employees to cross train, document processes, and sends employees to additional certification training. Six months later, a key linchpin position is unpredictably vacated. Because of the previous efforts, service continuity, data security, and key responsibilities are covered. The CIO has time to reevaluate current employees, assess departmental needs, and provide new opportunities for development and advancement. This is a win! The CIO shares this with the CFO who has not done this and is having operational difficulty because of a recent termination. The CFO further understand the need for preparation and planning and now begins the process in his/her own department. The practice becomes standard throughout leadership because of the positive impact it had. Benefits from succession planning are experienced and the next success only adds credibility and builds momentum. Over time, because of the short-term gains, long-term plans are implemented and practices become institutionalized. It's not fast, but arguably nothing in higher education practice is fast. Instead this is a realistic, manageable, and practical way to approach institutional change.

Limitations

Limitations within this study are similar to those in rooted in qualitative research including validity, reliability, generalizability, and researcher bias. Because qualitative research is so dependent on the participants of the study, limitations also emerged with regard to participant knowledge about succession planning and the conditions within their respective institutions during the course of this research.

The question of validity in qualitative research is related to the authenticity of findings are they trustworthy, for example, and the ability to generalize these findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) use an open concept of validity, noting that it refers to the truth or correctness of the research and depends on whether it investigates what it is supposed to investigate (p. 246). Kvale and Brinkman (2009) contend that reliability also pertains to the trustworthiness of the research and is dependent on its consistency with other findings and the consistency of response by participants during the interview process (p. 245). It also involves interviewer/researcher reliability during the interview and coding processes. To increase reliability and validity in the research, the researcher engaged in practices outlined in chapter three with focus on conceptualization, data collection, analysis and interpretation, depiction of detail, and the utilization of developed standards throughout the process (Merriam, 2009). The results of these efforts produced findings that were consistent among respondents from the same institution, from multiple institutions, and with conditions outlined in the literature review. However, there is no way to verify the results as they were based on the participants own experiences and perspectives. These results are thus subjective and difficult to replicate.

The sample size of the study provides a limitation to the generalizability of the study, as do the conditions in which the sample colleges operate as part of a larger state system. Five of the original six colleges who participated in the system led pilot program responded to this study. Eight interviews were conducted from participants who work(ed) at these colleges. Even with this high participation rate, the ability to broadly generalize the findings of this study are low. The findings could be used to predict the ability of a college to engage in succession planning or to measure the success of a succession plan. However, the parameters in which these five colleges operate as part of a statewide system in a union environment may limit the generalizability of the study to those colleges who operate in similar environments.

Succession planning is not a stand-alone process but rather part of a larger effort to manage talent. The process for developing talent to meet current and future workforce needs requires building leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities with intentionality to add stability (Runestad, 2014). However stability became an issue, even during the course of this study. During the course of this research and analysis alone (approximately 18 months), three of the five institutions experienced presidential turnover (the other two experienced within the previous 18 months), three of five experienced CAO/CSAO turnover, and all experienced turnover in at least one c-suite position. During the course of this research, three participants themselves also left institutions for other opportunities. This turnover may have limited the ability of the participants to accurately answer questions or impacted how they responded (led to brevity or underdeveloped responses or increased their willingness to share information regarding their experiences).

As is the nature of qualitative research, this was a time-consuming process. The researcher was able to conduct interviews, transcribe and code research, and analyze results within approximately one year. During this timeframe additional considerations, experiences, or external factors that might impact the study could have occurred which may add to the body of research presented in this study.

A final limitation is the researcher. As the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, I strove to design and implement an unbiased study using strong documentation and verification techniques. However, the nature of my involvement in succession planning initiatives at the institutional and system level as described in the delimitations and positioning section of chapter one may cause readers to question my ability to remain unbiased throughout the duration of this study.

Future Research

A thorough search of existing research on succession planning in the two year college environment had limited findings, thus one of the main purposes of this study was to expand on the research available on succession planning in higher education. This research adds to the small body of research that exists in regard to the use of succession planning in higher education, particularly in a two-year or community college environment. Because the existing body of research was informed primarily by broader topics related to elements of succession planning such as; performance review and leadership development, succession planning in industry, for specific positions or with specific populations, there are many additional research questions that can be explored with qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods studies (Neefe, 2009; Richards, 2012). The following paragraphs highlight areas of possible future research.

Measuring the ROI of succession planning remains challenging but is a factor in its acceptance and adoption. Additional studies could focus on researching what measures can be used to make the case for succession planning. Could a quantitative tool be developed and tested to validate the results of succession planning implementation at a college or within a system? Could research tie succession planning to tangible factors to establish is value? Can measurable outcomes be developed and utilized to add an additional level of accountability? How can measures can be developed and tested that allow value to be assessed?

Expanding understanding of why institutions of higher education, particularly public higher education, are not engaging in succession planning was part of the purpose of this study. Further research on the barriers to implementation can be explored to provide increased understanding of the issues that arise and how they are managed, how specific barriers impact implementation, and what the impact is when efforts are sustained. Using an example from this research, one might explore if succession planning initiatives can really be implemented and become part of a college's culture of sustainability in a mandatory union state versus a right to work state. Another example might include testing the usability of the Rothwell framework in a modified/adapted state, along with its specific steps, at one institution over an extended period of time to produce a rich case study with increased depth.

A final example might be to consider a longitudinal study. Since the timeline of this study was less than two years, the actual impact of implementation is difficult to discern. Colleges began the process with varying levels of knowledge, support, and engagement and took varied paths during their time the pilot and in utilizing the framework. A longitudinal study of succession planning in higher education (or a specific environment within higher education) could give more insight into what practices work, how colleges manage through issues as they are presented, and tie succession planning to benefits outlined in this study.

Each of these suggested areas of research would contribute to the study of succession planning in the higher education environment. They include a variety of methodological approaches, which collectively would further the case for adoption of succession planning in higher education. These suggestions for future research support an environment of employee development and retention, transparency, and sustainability with measureable outcomes and accountability.

Summary

The results of this study suggest there is much room for higher education to utilize succession planning as part of it efforts to prepare for leadership challenges. The results from the research provide new knowledge to inform the existing body of research, provides information about the impact of succession planning, and gives guidance on the design and implementation of succession planning. From a general perspective, higher education can seek to better understand the impact of succession planning on its colleges and universities and utilize the framework and strategies presented in this study to enhance its efforts in talent management in preparation for (or to mitigate the consequences of) the leadership crisis.

For those colleges and universities that exist as part of a system, there can be many benefits and opportunities to succession planning. A system can offer an organized, integrated, research based approach for colleges to utilize. In the case of this study, the system offered a pilot program with support, tools and resources, and extensive training and development opportunities. Verbal support for succession planning was voiced by the Board of Trustees, Chancellor, Vice Chancellors, and Talent Management staff to college Presidents, CHRO's, and other key leaders. These efforts have and continue to train and develop a system-wide pipeline of mid and high level leaders for positions, build a network of knowledge, create new opportunities for employees across the state, retain high performance employees, and support a culture of leadership. Yet, the system office itself and the colleges and universities involved in the pilot have not successfully integrated succession planning into their planning and operations.

From an individual institution perspective the benefits are vast. Imagine a qualified pipeline of prepared, motivated, employees who are able to hit the ground running in a new position. Institutional history is preserved, operational gaps are limited, service to students is uninterrupted, employees are intrinsically and extrinsically motivated by strategic development, and the investment in the institutions greatest resource, its people, is demonstrated and integrated into its culture. Turnover no longer has to be a concern but rather it is a prepared for, normal occurrence in the life cycle of the institution. This takes active support from existing leadership, allocated resources, and a continued commitment to succession planning and all its related components that reflect itself in the culture and present itself in the strategic plan of the organization.

To accomplish these results, however, takes *time*, and right now this is the one resource higher education does not possess. Time spent in planning, developing, and managing succession planning is an investment in the future. However, when pressing items create so many distractions, long-term planning and investment sometimes takes a back seat. To overcome this issue of time, leadership must buy-in to the value of its greatest asset – its employees. Such a level of buy-in can be reflected in many ways: inclusion in strategic, operational, and tactical planning within the organization; allocation of resources (time, financial, and informational) to support employees; development of policies and processes that align efforts and create an equitable environment; and establishing measures to gauge progress and continually improve efforts.

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Appendix A: Leadership Competency Comparison

SHRM's succession planning competencies (2015)	**Transformational Leadership Practices** (Northouse, 2013)	**Servant Leader Behaviors** (Northouse, 2013)	**Skills Approach Competencies** (Northouse 2013)	**AACC Competencies** (American Association of Community Colleges, 2013)	**MnSCU Competencies** (Minnesota State Colleges and Universities, 2013)
Leadership	Idealized influence	Conceptualizing	Problem-solving skills	Organizational strategy	Leader of self: Understands self and others, Acts with integrity
Initiative	Charisma	Emotional healing	Social judgment skills	Institutional finance	Leader as Relationship Builder: Values diversity, Communicates effectively, Builds trust
Judgment	Inspirational motivation	Putting followers first	Knowledge	Institutional research	Leader as Manager: Customer service, Builds organizational talent, Demonstrates good stewardship
Planning and organizing	Intellectual stimulation	Helping followers grow and succeed	General and crystallized cognitive ability	Fundraising	Leader as innovator: Articulates vision and mission, Builds organizational capacity to meet future challenges, Demonstrates effective decision-making
Teamwork	Individualized consideration	Ethical behavior	Motivation, Personality	Resource management	
Commitment		Empowering	Performance	Communication	
Political savvy		Creating value for the community		Collaboration	
				Community and college advocacy	

Appendix B: Informed Consent

Building the Case for Succession Planning in Higher Education: A Study of Succession Planning Pilots within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System

You are invited to participate in a qualitative research study that focuses on succession planning in colleges in the Minnesota State Colleges and University (MnSCU) system. The research project is being conducted by Kristina Keller, a doctoral student in the School of Education at St. Cloud State University.

Background Information and Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to capture the experiences of colleges during a succession planning pilot in a two-year union environment that is part of the fifth largest higher education system in the United States. The research aims to understand how colleges engage in succession planning efforts and to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the talent opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. By investigating the relationship between the use of succession planning at two-year colleges and the institutions connection to a larger system, the study will also seek to understand the college and system's ability to adopt and sustain succession planning principles.

Procedures

If you decided to participant in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to conduct an interview(s) regarding you/your college's efforts as part of the succession planning pilot in the MnSCU system. The purpose of the interview is to gather empirical data related to the research questions of this study. The initial interview will last for approximately one-hour. However, if more time is needed, or additional interviews are required, they can be scheduled at your convenience. Your responses will be recorded, but only so the researcher may transcribe your responses as accurately as possible for exact representation of the conversation. The participant, the researcher, and the researcher's professor will be the only people to have privilege to these interviews. The only alternative for which the recordings may be heard by anyone other than those listed is by written permission from you, the participant.

Risks and Benefits

Little or no potential risks are identified. The benefits would include personal growth for each participant through opportunities for reflection and dialogue about their experience.

Confidentiality

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, your name will not be disclosed nor will identified direct quotes be used. During the interview you may refuse to answer any questions.

After the completion of the interviews, you will receive your transcribed interviews. At this point, if you wish to expand responses or note omissions to the transcription, you may.

Research Results

Results of this study will be published at the St. Cloud State University Repository or you are welcome to contact me (320-380-5538 or kkeller@sctcc.edu) to request study results.

Contact Information

I truly appreciate your participation in this research. I want you to be as comfortable as possible. Please feel free to talk to me about any concern you might have. My phone number is 320-380-5538 and email is kkeller@sctcc.edu.

This project has been submitted for guidance and approval by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at St. Cloud State University. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the IRB representative, 320-308-4932 or the advisor of this dissertation, Dr. Steven McCullar at 320-308-4727.

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal

Participation is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with St. Cloud State University, the researcher, or MnSCU. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without penalty.

Acceptance to Participate

Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, you have read the information provided above, and you have consented to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty after signing this form

Participant's Name____Date___________________

Researcher's Name____Date___________________

Appendix C: Interview Question Guide

- Interview Question 1. Why did your campus select to be a part of the pilot program?
- Interview Question 2: How have you engaged in succession planning on your campus so far? How have you/your institution applied the steps in the succession planning framework?
- Interview Question 3. What are the benefits or opportunities you/your institution has experienced by engaging in succession planning? In what ways does (do you anticipate) succession planning add value or resolve problems presented by the leadership crisis in higher education?
- Interview Question 4. What are the challenges or roadblocks have you/your institution experienced to applying the modified Rothwell model of succession planning/implementing succession planning on your campus?
- Interview Question 5. What resource investments (human, information, financial) have been made (or not made) in developing leaders within your campus as a result of succession planning?
- Interview Question 6. What are you next steps in succession planning? Short and long term goals?
- Interview Question 7. What advice would you give to other colleges embarking on a succession planning initiative? What lessons have you learned throughout the process that you would share with others?

Appendix D: IRB Approval

ST. CLOUD STATE
UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION FOR LIFE.

Institutional Review Board Protocol
For
Conduct of Research Involving Human Subjects

Miller Center, Room 204M/204K

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Project Title: **Building the Case for Succession Planning in Higher Education: A Study of Succession Planning Pilots within the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System**

Project Summary (3-5 sentences, include method of data gathering): **This qualitative study is designed to capture the experiences of colleges during a succession planning pilot in a two-year union environment that is part of a higher education system. The data collection techniques of this qualitative study will include interviews, document analysis, and direct and participant observation to produce a holistic understanding of the succession planning efforts being studied. The research aims to understand how colleges engage in succession planning efforts and to identify the challenges that prevent campuses from succession planning, tie pipeline issues and their resolution to succession planning practices, and provide recommendations on how to capitalize on the talent opportunities presented through succession planning initiatives. By investigating the relationship between the use of succession planning at two-year colleges and the institutions connection to a larger system, the study will also seek to understand the college and system's ability to adopt and sustain succession planning principles.**

Data Collection (note: must be a future date and allows sufficient time for IRB review)

Start Date: : **September 1, 2016** Ending Date: **December 31, 2016**

Location of the Research: **Two year Minnesota State Colleges**

☒ Yes, I have reviewed the **IRB Tutorial of Common Questions and Errors** posted on the IRB webpage: http://www.stcloudstate.edu/irb/application/default.asp.

RESEARCHERS

Principal Investigator and Primary Contact (PI): **Kristina Keller**

Type of Research: ☐ faculty/staff ☐ undergraduate ☐ graduate masters ☒ graduate doctoral

Mailing Address: **2427 Stearns Way**

Telephone: **218-280-1543** Email: **kkeller001@yahoo.com, kekr0601@stcloudstate.edu**

Advisor or Course Instructor (if PI is a student): **Dr. Steven McCullar**

Co-PIs or Other Investigators:

If you collaborate with an individual from another institution, we may be able to use an Authorization Agreement to rely on our or their review. Contact the IRB Administrator for more information.

SPONSORS

Is there potential or confirmed external funding source(s) for this research project? ☒No

☐Yes and ATTACH COPY OF THE GRANT NARRATIVE, TIMELINE, ETC.
Funding Agency Account #

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT

The undersigned acknowledge: 1) protocol represents a complete and accurate description of the proposed research, 2) research will be conducted in compliance with IRB recommendations and requirements, 3) research will not begin until IRB approval received, 4) modifications will not be made prior to obtaining IRB approval, 5) PI responsible for reporting to the IRB any adverse or unexpected events, 6) PI to report to IRB any significant new findings which develop during the course of the study or increase the risk to participants and 7) expedited or full IRB approval in effect for up to one year and PI is responsible to request continuing review or file final report (exempt review approval is exempt from the continuing review/final report process).