

## Chapter I

### Introduction

Organizational scholars and management analysts believe that one of the basic differences between successful and unsuccessful organizations is leadership (Bass, 1985; Bennis, 1989; Burns, 1978; Drucker, 2001; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Hersey & Blanchard, 1993; Katz, 1955; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003; Spreitzer & Quinn, 2001). Engaging in behavior that effectively coordinates the work of others is an essential skill which must be learned and utilized by leaders to achieve desired organizational outcomes. Undeniably, one of the most important leadership behaviors is to lead organizational change. In fact, many scholars argue that the entire process of change is perhaps *the* focal activity of administrators through which organizational objectives are accomplished (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1984; Burke, 2002; DuBrin, 2005; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002).

Whether it is coordinating, directing, organizing, facilitating, implementing, strategizing or innovating, leading change is a rather complex process that requires administrators to engage in different kinds of political behavior (or influence tactics). Doing so provides a crucial path to success for any organization, especially in a politicized environment such as a community college (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981; Pusser, 2004; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974; Schriesheim & Neider, 2006; Vigoda, 2003). Not only must administrators embrace change, they also need to influence others to view and accept change as beneficial and worthwhile to pursue (Dubrin, 2005; Kotter, 2001; Yukl, 2002). As such, more and more administrators are expected to facilitate and implement change processes (and some simultaneously), including changes in leadership practices, technological advances, and shifting educational priorities (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974; Sashkin & Sashkin, 2004; Vigoda, 2003).

This is because administrators, particularly those in higher education, are facing (a) new pressures (e.g., stakeholders demanding greater accountability, critics expecting immediate results, and students demanding advanced educational technology), (b) escalating responsibilities (e.g., meeting the needs of those under-served populations, managing operations with ever-shrinking resources, and keeping costs low while providing quality education), and (c) unprecedented challenges (e.g., dealing with the effects and ramifications of an economic recession, addressing the emerging needs of encore career learners, and keeping the campus safe and secured) (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

From the time of Machiavelli, political behavior has come to be understood as part of the human conditions, a fundamental attribute shared by people at all levels in the organization (Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Kumar & Ghadially, 1989; Pfeffer, 1992; Porter, Allen & Angle, 1981). Although politics, conflicts, and resistance are pervasive features of organizational life, only a limited amount of attention has been paid to this research area since the 1970s (Cropanzano, Kacmar, & Bozeman, 1995; Farrell & Petersen, 1982; Madison et al., 1980). It was not until Victor Baldrige's groundbreaking book *Power and Conflict in the University* (1971) that scholars started to focus on some of the long standing challenges (e.g., dealing with protesters and rioters, addressing issues related to academic freedom, and resolving problems with the tenure process) administrators faced at various higher education institutions (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Cohen & March, 1983; Nordvall, 1982; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974).

Even so, there continues to be a lack of research on the political behavior of administrators in the community colleges (Roueche & Baker, 1987; Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989). This oversight is of great concern, particularly when today's community colleges are facing a wide array of leadership challenges, such as budget management, resource allocation, political pressures, and retirement ramifications (Alfred, 2005; Evelyn, 2004; Levine, 2004; Roueche, Roueche, & Johnson, 2002).

### The Community College

To provide readers with some contextual information, the next four sections will highlight the community college, challenges facing community colleges, community

college leadership, and challenges facing leaders. Community colleges are currently the largest and fastest-growing sector of higher education in the U.S. (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2008), there are now approximately 1,180 regionally accredited community colleges located throughout the country, serving more than 11.5 million students (approximately 46 percent of all U.S. undergraduates). Increasingly, community colleges are the gateway to higher education for a growing number of students (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). These colleges provide students with an opportunity to earn credits for the first two years of a four-year bachelor's degree at high-quality, accredited institutions. With their lower tuition costs, community colleges give students the means to save money while learning in a supportive environment. They also allow students to access training for associate-degree or non-degree careers, and they offer continuing education and personal development classes for the broad spectrum of adult learners (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

Most community colleges are operated either by special districts that draw property tax revenue from the local community, as a division of a state university, or as a sister institution within a statewide higher education system (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). In all cases, community colleges are governed by a board of trustees, elected from the community or appointed by the state governor. The board of trustees selects a president or chancellor to serve as the chief executive officer and the leader of numerous faculty, staff, and administrators (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

### Challenges Facing Community Colleges

Contemporary community colleges face a new reality in which the only predictable constant in their environment is change (Alfred, 2005; Fields, 2004; Romero, 2004; Roueche, Roueche, & Johnson, 2002). Therefore, initiating, communicating, and facilitating purposeful and meaningful change has become one of the most important functions of organizational leadership, especially given the challenges facing community colleges (Association of Governing Boards, 2006; Green & Hayward, 1997; Simon, 1997; U.S. Department of Education, 2006; Yukl, 2002).

Based on projected enrollment patterns, Boggs (2003) believes that community colleges will be “where the action is” (p. 17). Not only will more traditional-age students matriculate at our nation’s community colleges to pursue transfer education, an

increasing number of single parents, recent immigrants, international students, displaced workers, career changers, and senior citizens will also be turning to the “peoples’ college” to get the education that they need in order to reenter the workforce, earn a living wage, be more competitive, learn a new skill, pursue an encore career, and/or seek lifelong learning (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). With burgeoning enrollment, one of the major challenges would be to provide enough resources to serve the educational needs of all those walking through their doors (Boggs, 2003).

In addition to escalating enrollment, Fields (2004) and O’Banion (2007) warned that there will be troubling times in the years ahead because presidents and senior-level administrators are retiring at a steady rate. In fact, the second major challenge facing community colleges today is filling the leadership pipeline with qualified individuals who are prepared and have the skill sets for the presidency (American Association of Community Colleges, 2001). On the whole, community colleges are experiencing a leadership gap: Roughly 8 percent of presidents are now 50 years old or younger, and nearly 45 percent are expected to retire by 2010 (Shults, 2001). In a similar study, Weisman and Vaughan (2002) found that 79% of the presidents surveyed intended to retire by 2012. More recently, 84% of the respondents indicated that they would retire by 2016 (Weisman & Vaughan, 2007).

To further complicate this picture, recent research indicates that community colleges have not anticipated another leadership gap—the impending impact associated with the retirement of professionals in highly skilled and specialized positions such as deans of enrollment management, directors of financial aid, and registrars (Campbell, 2006). With major questions looming about the pipeline for leader preparation, AACC (the advocacy organization for community colleges) in the last few years launched a concerted effort to address the lack of leadership development programs for those who aspire to become presidents and vice presidents.

To make matters worse, community colleges (like many other public, private, and non-profit organizations) are built for stability or linear change, not “frame-breaking” change (Alfred, 2005). As such, the tendency for this kind of organizational behavior poses another major challenge: organizational inertia. According to Alfred (2005), not only must community colleges organize for constant change, they must be ready to

change frequently and quickly to keep pace with the external environment, to address competing demands, and to satisfy the ever-increasing needs and rising expectations of various constituent groups (e.g., board of trustees, faculty, parents, legislators, and students).

The unprecedented rise and popularity of the for-profit postsecondary institutions (e.g., University of Phoenix, Corinthian College, Inc., and DeVry, Inc.) pose another major challenge for community colleges. Recently, Stetson (2002) argued that community colleges need to create new energy for change in order to survive and thrive while being bombarded with stiff competition from these for-profit institutions. Faced with this unrelenting pressure, administrators (e.g., presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators) need to rethink how best to position their community colleges to stay competitive, flexible, responsive, and nimble. To this end, administrators need to carefully navigate the political terrain in order to successfully lead change efforts/initiatives (Maurer, 1996; Pfeffer, 1992; Simon, 1997; Yukl, 2002). After all, the ultimate goal for leading change is to achieve desired organizational outcomes (e.g., increased enrollment, enhanced reputation, and greater recognition). For the purpose of this study, achieving desired organizational outcomes implies that the administrator is able to get change done while satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process.

Given these five major challenges facing community colleges, administrators need to recognize that leading change is an essential part of their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. Simply put, they are expected to lead change and to be successful at it (Handy, 1995; Kotter, 1995). To be perceived as successful, administrators need to demonstrate that they can facilitate the change process and accomplish stated goals, objectives, and outcomes that will have a positive impact on the college and the community they serve (Walker, 1979; Whetten, 1984; Yukl, 2002). Engaging in political behavior is one means to this end.

#### Community College Leadership

The literature on community college leadership reveals that there is significant research examining presidents. For instance, Vaughan (1986) reports that the skills and

abilities associated with being a successful president include producing results, resolving conflicts, motivating others, analyzing and evaluating, relating, taking risks, and networking with peers. Roueche and Baker's (1987) findings on leadership suggest that an excellent president possesses three major categories of skills and behaviors: 1) Sense of direction; 2) Structure for implementation; and 3) Sense of personal commitment. Roueche, Baker, and Rose's (1989) *Shared Vision* study of 256 excellent presidents recognizes that the "proactive" president must attend to three stages of the change process: 1) Recognize the need for revitalization and new direction around the community college mission; 2) Create a new vision; and 3) Institutionalize change to accomplish the mission.

In light of these three seminal works on community college leadership, there is still a shortage of research concerning the leadership roles, behaviors, and self-perceptions of senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators (Boggs, 2003; Campbell, 2006; Sheldon, 2005; Vaughan & Weisman, 1998). This indicates a real need for more research on community college leadership—one that includes senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, not just presidents. All too often, administrators, especially mid-level administrators, get overlooked in many research studies but yet, they play an equally important role at the community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Levine, 2004; Sheldon, 2005).

#### Challenges Facing Leaders

Given the difficulties associated with the facilitation and implementation of various change initiatives, scholars note that numerous leaders, administrators, and managers are rushing into the multifaceted process of change without fully recognizing and understanding two critical realities: 1) The complexities associated with facilitating, implementing, and institutionalizing change (Burnes, 1992; Kezar, 2001; Walker, 1979); and 2) The political perspective that pervades organizational life (Baldrige, 1971; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). As a result, many change initiatives have failed despite good intentions, noble causes, and valiant efforts (Birnbaum, 1988; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Kotter, 1995).

Leading change is and continues to be a tremendous challenge because it is generally a very complex and dynamic process that involves many internal and external

members (Kotter, 1995). What makes it even more challenging is the fact that leading change can often be very political in the sense that different organizational members (or political actors) jockey for power, position, control, and recognition (Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). In order to move change along, administrators need to engage in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change because often times that is the only way to get change done (Lichtenberg, 1998). However, doing so could be somewhat challenging depending on the potential push back and resistance from various political actors (e.g., faculty, union leaders, other administrators, and board members) and constituent groups, such as the faculty union or academic senate (Lichtenberg, 1998; Pfeffer, 1992).

In fact, failure rates of institutional change efforts are not encouraging. For example, two independent studies in the early 1990s found that out of the hundreds of corporate total quality management programs studied, about two-thirds grind to a halt because of their failure to produce hoped-for results (Senge, 1999). Likewise, regional and multi-national re-engineering efforts have fared no better (Jick, 1993; Kanter, 1984; Kotter, 1995). Other studies, including some by Hammer and Champy (2003), place the failure rate somewhere around 70 percent. This leads Bennis and Nanus (1985) and Senge (1999) to conclude that schools, healthcare institutions, governmental, and nonprofit institutions still yet fare no better.

One of the underlying sources for such high failure rates is because many leaders do not fully understand that most organizations resist change and most employees fear the potential outcomes of the change (Cummings & Worley, 2001; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Eby et al., 2000). In response to change, a number of employees subsequently create patterns of behavior (e.g., delaying progress, creating roadblocks, and shooting down progressive ideas) to reduce stress and eliminate the unknown (Judson, 1991; Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Maurer, 1996). This is largely attributed to the fact that change creates uncertainty, stresses the culture, and alarms the culture keepers—those individuals who resist change at all costs (Baldrige, 1983; Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1995; Nutt, 1992). Therefore, it is the leader's responsibility to communicate the change and the need for the change in ways that would appeal to people so as to reduce

undue stress within the organization (Carnall, 1995; Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Kotter, 2001).

Due to changing operating dynamics in the colleges they lead, community college administrators are finding it more difficult to script the response of the institution to rapidly changing external conditions such as decreasing appropriations, increasing accountability, extraordinary technological advances, and unprecedented enrollment, to name a few (Alfred, 2007; Cohen & Brawer, 2003; O'Banion, 2007; Phelan, 2005; Roueche, Roueche, & Johnson, 2002). Hence, the behavior administrators employ during change becomes more crucial than ever (Baldrige, 1971; Dunphy & Stace, 1988; Handy, 1995; Mangham, 1979; Nadler & Tushman, 1989). In fact, an increasing number of leaders and managers believe that engaging in political behavior is the means to get change done (Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Kotter, 1995, 2001).

For example, in a study on community college leadership succession, Levin (1998) concluded that it is imperative for administrators to be more proactive when influencing others during change. Specifically, he noted that administrators need to consistently engage in those influence tactics that encourages others to agree with and/or support the proposed change ideas/initiatives. Locke and Guglielmino (2006) reached the same conclusion in their examination of how community college administrators went about influencing different constituents and sub-coalitions. They agree that the more administrators take the initiatives to rally other organizational members around their proposed change idea/initiative, the better the chances of pushing that idea/initiative forward and getting it implemented. This conclusion is similar to Weick's (2000) claim that American higher education institutions, such as community colleges, are loosely-coupled systems. As such, Weick argues that no one administrator can reasonably expect to successfully initiate, facilitate, and institutionalize change without others' involvement, support, and buy-in.

### The Problem

The problem examined in this study is self perceptions of political behavior in periods of planned organizational change among community college administrators. The approach in which community college leaders go about leading change and the contexts in which community colleges now operate are significantly



different than when most of them were founded in the 1960s (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). This suggests a potential challenge: Community college leaders might still be relying heavily on using their positional power and authority during the change process and engaging in behavior that ineffectively initiates and guides change (Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Ford, 2005; Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989). In the past, when the environment was much more stable and predictable, the use of these conventional, positional power tactics (e.g., sanctions, pressure, coercion, and blocking) resulted in some success (Patterson et al., 2008; Yukl & Chavez, 2002). However, in today's highly competitive, complex, and political environment, engaging in behavior that ineffectively initiates and guides change might engender more resistance, conflicts, and ill feelings throughout the change process (Mintzberg, 1983; Mowday, 1978; Nutt, 1992; Raven, 1990; Whetten, 1984). Therefore, today's administrators would benefit tremendously by gaining new insight into change management (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008; Patterson et al., 2008; Yukl & Chavez, 2002), particularly as it pertains to understanding what behavior effectively initiates and guides change.

In predicting the critical skills that will be needed in organizations in the future, Handy's (1995) findings center on one central theme: the ability to ally with others. In particular, key skills are (a) the ability to win friends and influence people at a personal level, (b) the ability to structure partnerships, and (c) the ability to negotiate and to find compromises. Handy (1995) concludes that one's personal and professional success in organizations requires skilled management of one's surroundings, not in the old top-down way, but from all directions. This is accomplished by employing political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change or influence tactic (a more neutral term that is commonly used). Bennis (1989) lends credibility and wisdom to the discussion by maintaining that leadership is largely a function of collaboration and coalition building.

Unfortunately, many authors, practitioners, and scholars (Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Kouzes & Posner, 2001; Lichtenberg, 1998; Mumford et al., 2000; Schriesheim & Neider, 2006) do not believe that leaders and managers are mastering these key skills nor are they getting the training to become even more adept at how best to allying with others to achieve desired organizational outcomes, especially during change. For example, Reardon (2004) argues that administrators tend to not make it their

priority to reflect on and examine their political behavior when assessing situations, overcoming conflicts, adapting to unexpected developments, and building strategic alliances. Because of Reardon's findings and others alike, this topic has generated interest as indicated in publications such as *Breaking Tradition* (Amey, 2006), *Why Leaders Can't Lead* (Bennis, 1989), *The Leadership Challenge* (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), and *The Transformational Leader* (Tichy & Devanna, 1986), to name a few.

### Significance of the Problem

Organizational change is complicated and dynamic. Successful change efforts usually mean the realignment of group behavior—often in response to a shift in internal and/or external conditions (Kotter, 1995; Yukl, 2002). To paraphrase Darwin's statement, it is not the strongest, fastest or even most intelligent species that survives the evolutionary process. It is the species that is most flexible, and therefore best able to adapt to changing contextual conditions that will meet the dawn of a new generation. From this perspective, it is more important than ever for college administrators to become change agents who can deftly adjust to the demands of the 21<sup>st</sup> century because doing so will ultimately help their colleges to maintain flexibility and ensure their survival (Alfred, 2005; Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

Since change has become the norm for many colleges, administrators are now responsible for driving the change efforts to accomplish desired organizational goals (Creamer & Creamer, 1988). Research indicates that those who were successful at initiating and guiding change were those who tended to have (a) decision-making and implementation styles that are in alignment with their organization's mission, vision, strategic plan, and culture, or (b) influence tactics that are versatile and can adapt to the preferred change methodology of their college (Alfred, 2005; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Hackman, 1990; Maurer, 1996). Those who were not as successful in initiating and guiding change tended to engender many negative ramifications such as low morale, diminishing productivity, and high turnover (Kotter, 1995; Eby et al., 2000).

This study was undertaken to help community college administrators to better understand the dynamics of change in response to changing societal demands and rising expectations (Kezar, 2001; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Lueddeke, 1999). The more administrators recognize both the purpose and process of change, the more equipped they

will be when initiating various change agendas, influencing their constituencies, selling the benefits of the change, building relationships, forming a guiding coalition, working to minimize the inevitable resistance, and institutionalizing the change (Carnall, 1995; Kotter, 1995, 2001; Nordvall, 1982; Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991). Additionally, the more they adapt their political behavior to leverage their influence, the more facility they will have to accomplish their desired goals, objectives, and outcomes (Judson, 1991; Kotter, 1995; Raven, 1990).

### Conceptual Framework

Now that the research problem has been identified and the significance of the problem has been highlighted, it is necessary to provide readers with the conceptual framework for this study. The researcher turned to two conceptual frameworks. The first framework is John Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change Model, which is a model of a change process. The second framework is that of a political perspective on change and the change process. Since the research question centered on administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change during change, the researcher reasoned that combining Kotter's model with a political perspective was a logical approach. The next section highlights these two conceptual frameworks.

*John Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change Model.* There are several change models such as Havelock's (1975) Linkage Model, Lindquist's Adaptive Development Model (1978), and Eckel and Kezar's Mobile Model (2003). Although these three models (and others alike) are descriptive and comprehensive in nature, there have been minimal applications and validations to determine their worthiness and utility in helping leaders facilitate change efforts. For that reason, a more practitioner-oriented model that has been tested in numerous organizations like Kotter's was needed for this study. John Kotter, an expert in leadership and change management, believes that organizational change typically fails because senior management commits one or more of the following fundamental errors (1995):

- 1) Not establishing a great enough sense of urgency
- 2) Not creating a powerful enough guiding coalition
- 3) Lacking a vision that guides the change process
- 4) Under-communicating the vision by a factor of ten

- 5) Not removing obstacles to the new vision
- 6) Not systematically planning for and creating short-term wins
- 7) Declaring victory too soon
- 8) Not anchoring changes in the organization's culture

After conducting interviews with over 100 organizations in the midst of large-scale change, Kotter (1995) proposed an eight step process for leading change (Table 1).

Table 1. John Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change Model

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | Establishing a sense of urgency                                  |
| Step 2 | Forming a powerful guiding coalition                             |
| Step 3 | Creating a vision to accomplish the desired end-result           |
| Step 4 | Communicating the vision through numerous communication channels |
| Step 5 | Empowering others to act on the vision                           |
| Step 6 | Planning for and creating short-term wins                        |
| Step 7 | Consolidating improvements and producing still more change       |
| Step 8 | Institutionalizing the new approaches                            |

Unlike Havelock's (1975) Linkage Model, Lindquist's Adaptive Development Model (1978), and Eckel and Kezar's Mobile Model (2003), Kotter's model is not diagnostic in orientation. Its application will not help managers diagnose *what* needs to be changed. Rather, this model is more like Lewin's (1951) force-field model of change in that it prescribes *how* managers should sequence or lead the change process (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). Also, these eight steps incorporates Lewin's model to some extent. The first four steps represent Lewin's "unfreezing" stage. Steps 5, 6, and 7 represent "changing," and step 8 corresponds to "refreezing" (Kotter, 1995).

The purpose of this relatively simple model is to provide a compelling, logical, and practical eight step plan of action for leading change that focuses on going beyond simply getting the change message across to truly changing peoples' behaviors and perceptions (refer to Appendix G for a more detailed description). In fact, each of Kotter's eight steps is associated with the eight fundamental errors. Kotter's basic premise is that (a) every organization must go through these eight steps in order to achieve its goals, (b) the change process usually requires a considerable length of time,

and (c) skipping steps creates only the illusion of speed and never produces a satisfying result. Moreover, Kotter (1995) warns that critical mistakes in any of the phases can have a devastating impact, therefore slowing down momentum and negating any hard-won gains.

According to Kotter (1995), these eight steps lead to highly successful change efforts because the “core of the matter is always about changing the behavior of people, and behavioral change happens in highly successful situations mostly by speaking to people’s feelings” (p. x). To achieve this outcome, Kotter (1995) emphasizes the application of human relations skills, which stems from the power-influence leadership school of thought (House, 1971), which in essence are political behavior—the means by which leaders leverage their bases of power to achieve desirable outcomes through their interactions with others (Baldrige, 1971; Pfeffer, 1992).

For the purposes of this research study and after reviewing other change models, the researcher believed that Kotter’s model was the most ideal one to use for the purpose of examining community college administrators’ perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change during the change process. The rationale was because Kotter’s model provides specific recommendations about behaviors that leaders and managers need to exhibit to successfully lead change (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). Furthermore, because of the multi-dimensional emphasis, useful applications, and research support, Kotter’s model appears to be a logical choice as one of the two conceptual frameworks used in this study.

*Political Perspective.* The second conceptual framework that was used to examine the political behavior of community college administrators is the political perspective (Baldrige, 1971; Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Cohen & March, 1983; Mintzberg, 1983). The rationale was because the community college (like many other complex organizations) can be seen as a shifting kaleidoscope of interest groups and coalitions competing for power, limited resources, and personal gain (Birnbaum, 1988; Chaffee, 1983). Although there are several conceptualizations of the political perspective, the central focus is on using influence tactics and proactive behaviors to get work done, win favors from others, build alliances, and achieve intended outcomes (Baldrige,

1971). Some of the important takeaways of the political perspective are presented in Table 2.

Before delving further into the reasons for choosing the political perspective, it would be helpful to note how the political perspective merges with Kotter’s change model to form a conceptual framework for this dissertation. For better or worse, political dynamics are inevitable under conditions most community college administrators face every day: ambiguity, diversity, and scarcity (Pfeffer, 1992). From this perspective, it seemed logical and prudent to utilize both Kotter’s (1995) leading change model and the political perspective (with an emphasis on power dynamics) as the two conceptual frameworks guiding this study. Furthermore, after reviewing the extensive literature on change and political behavior, it was reasonable to conclude that community college administrators (like other higher education, business, and non-profit leaders) are individual political actors who need to use political behavior, power bases, and administrative positions to facilitate the change process from Kotter’s (1995) step one (i.e., establishing a sense of urgency) to step eight (i.e., institutionalizing the new approaches). In sum, it is through engaging in numerous political behavior that community college administrators can get change done in a politicized environment (Pfeffer, 1992).

Table 2. Key Concepts of the Political Perspective

| Scholars                  | Key Concepts  |
|---------------------------|---|
| Victor Baldrige<br>(1971) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change is a result of clashing ideology or belief systems.</li> <li>• Conflict is an inherent attribute of human interaction.</li> <li>• Conflict increases as resources become scarce.</li> <li>• Change processes are considered to be predominantly bargaining, persuasion, influence and power, and social movements.</li> <li>• Participation is fluid as people move in and out of the decision-making process.</li> </ul> |
| Henry Mintzberg<br>(1983) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The behavior of organizations derives from a power game in which political actors use the means of influence to try to control the decisions and actions of others.</li> <li>• Political actors will seek to form coalitions to wield power that is available to them.</li> <li>• Their effectiveness as influencers depends upon their initial power bases.</li> </ul>  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Robert Birnbaum<br>(1988)                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Power and decision-making is diffused and decentralized, not concentrated.</li> <li>• Many individuals and groups have different sources of power in different situations.</li> <li>• Some groups are stronger than others and have more power, but no group is strong enough to dominate all the others all the time.</li> <li>• Most political communities are indifferent about most issues most of the time.</li> </ul> |
| Lee Bolman<br>& Terrence Deal<br>(2003)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organizations are living, screaming political arenas that host a complex web of individual and group interests.</li> <li>• There are enduring differences among coalition members in values, beliefs, information, interests, and perceptions of reality.</li> <li>• Goals and decisions emerge from bargaining, negotiation, and jockeying for position among competing stakeholders.</li> </ul>                           |
| Michael Cohen<br>& James March<br>(1983) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The image of a university is that of an organized anarchy.</li> <li>• The decision-making process in the university as the channeled confluence of four streams: problems, choices, solutions, and participants.</li> <li>• Every decision can become an opportunity to awaken dormant organizational issues and reintroduce them into a decision-making process.</li> </ul>  |

There were five reasons for choosing the political perspective as a conceptual framework for this study. First, as a political system, the community college in essence is a coalition composed of individuals and sub-coalitions who are interdependent, have divergent interests and preferences, and compete for influence and scarce resources (Birnbaum, 1988; Chaffee, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). Each sub-coalition is composed of interest groups that see at least some commonalities in their goals and work together to attempt to achieve them. This view implies the central idea of the political perspective: goals and agreements emerge out of a bargaining process among coalition members (Baldrige, 1971; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). In short, this view fits with how the administrators, as political actors, go about working with others to achieve their desired outcomes.

The second reason was that due to shrinking resources, increased demands, political struggles, and other unprecedented challenges, more and more administrators were engaging in various political behavior to find win-win solutions to complex problems in a manner that their constituents found acceptable (Baldrige, 1971; Burnes, 1992; Simon, 1997; Walker, 1979). Those administrators who ignored or dismissed how

important this critical skill was to their own personal success or professional image would do so at their own peril. In addition, administrators were engaging in constructive political behavior in order to recognize and understand ongoing and emerging political realities so that they could respond accordingly (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Hearn, 1996; Kezar, 2001; Morgan, 1986). Hence, from the perspective of trying to achieve desired organizational outcomes, Bolman and Deal (2003) and Whetten (1984) believe that administrators must spend time building positions that are supported by other groups as well. One of the underlying reasons for using the political perspective was to explore how the administrators go about positively influencing others.

The third reason for using the political perspective was to examine the specific kinds of political behavior used during change. Some scholars maintain that administrators need to be adept at exercising four key political skills or behaviors: agenda setting (Kanter, 1984; Pfeffer, 1992), mapping the political terrain (Kotter, 1995; Pfeffer, 1992); networking and forming coalitions (Kotter, 1995; Baldrige, 1971); and bargaining and negotiating (Fisher, Tack, & Wheeler, 1988; Walker, 1979). Employing this model/perspective enabled the researcher to determine whether administrators engaged in these four political behavior.

The fourth reason was that this political perspective allowed the researcher to assess how the administrators grappled with making difficult decisions/choices because competing interests abound and would only become more difficult and complex, not less (Bennis, 1989; Simon, 1997). Inevitably, organizational members will frequently disagree about which change initiatives are most important. And even those who agree on the initiative often disagree on how it can be achieved (Carnall, 1995). This inescapable (and sometimes frustrating) reality leads many scholars to conclude that if administrators are to be able to make a decision at all, they must rely on their political acumen, timing, delegation, and power bases (Birnbaum, 1988; Pfeffer, 1992).

The fifth reason was in regards to the power dynamics in work relationships. Pfeffer (1992) defines power as “the potential ability to influence behavior, to change the course of events, to overcome resistance, and to get people to do things they would not otherwise do” (p. 30). The critical issue is how administrators will work with different constituents (who may be more powerful and influential and sometimes intractable) to



agree on ways to collaborate with one another, divide power, and share resources. It is no wonder that political behavior involves acquiring, developing, and using power and influence to obtain desired outcomes, especially in those situations in which individuals and groups disagree. Consequently, administrative behavior concerning most, if not all, change decisions is primarily a political one of whom gets what, when, and how largely because of limited resources and power struggles (Chaffee, 1983).

In a democratic and pluralistic organization, engaging in various political processes are indeed appropriate, necessary, and effective means for resolving political issues (Chaffee, 1983; Simon, 1997; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980) because organizations are “political arenas” (Mintzberg, 1983). In brief, using the political perspective enabled the researcher to consider how power affected the administrator’s use of political behavior when influencing others during the change process.

#### Research Questions

The overarching research question that guided this study was “What are community college administrator perceptions of political behavior during planned organizational change?” Four sub-questions for research include:

- 1) What kinds of political behavior do administrators engage in when leading planned organizational change?
- 2) Do the kinds of political behavior used vary across administrative levels?
- 3) Do the types of change initiatives led vary across administrative levels?
- 4) Do administrators believe they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned organizational change?

Embedded in these five research questions were the following five assumptions:

Assumption #1: Community college administrators at different levels in the organization lead change initiatives.

Assumption #2: Presidents and senior-level administrators lead institution-wide change initiatives and mid-level administrators lead department-specific initiatives.

Assumption #3: The political behavior of community college administrators shape change initiatives both in process and outcome.

Assumption #4: Presidents and senior-level administrators engage in a wider range of political behavior because of their position in the hierarchy, prior experiences in leading change, and expectations of subordinates and staff.

Assumption #5: Mid-level administrators engage in a narrower range of political behavior because of their position in the hierarchy, inexperience in leading change, and limited spheres of influence.

#### Definition of Key Terms

To minimize any potential confusion and misunderstanding of the terminologies used in this study, it is necessary to highlight some of the key terms. The following ten terms are defined in the context in which they were used in this study:

- 1) Achieve Desired Organizational Outcome: The eventual goal by which the community college administrator was able to get the specific organizational change initiative implemented while satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process.
- 2) Community College: A public, two-year institution for post-secondary education that offers courses on a non-selective open admissions basis. The courses and curricula are designed to meet community needs and lead to Associates degrees and certificates in academic and vocational programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).
- 3) Influence: The power or capacity of causing an effect or effects in indirect or intangible ways (Cialdini, 2001).
- 4) Leadership: A process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008).
- 5) Mid-Level Administrator: An individual (e.g., director, assistant dean, and program administrator) who holds managerial positions but whose primary job responsibilities are to monitor activities of subordinates and to generate reports for senior-level administrators.
- 6) Planned Organizational Change (or Planned Change): Change that is brought about through the purposeful and intentional efforts of community college administrators to modify organizational goals, academic priorities, authority structures, and program activities, as opposed to change that is due to environmental or uncontrollable forces (Creamer & Creamer, 1988).
- 7) Political Actor: An individual who engages in various political behavior with the goal of influencing others when leading planned change. This includes senior-

level administrators, mid-level administrators, the president, board members, faculty, faculty union leaders, community members, and influential decision-makers.

- 8) Political Behavior (or Influence Tactic): Routinely occurring or episodic actions undertaken by community college administrators to influence the behavior and attitudes of others in a pre-determined direction. Examples include: agenda setting, bargaining, coalition forming, coercing, collaborating, communicating, co-opting, consulting, explaining, influencing, managing conflict, manipulating, mapping the political terrain, motivating, negotiating, networking, partnering, persuading, problem solving, relationship building, rewarding, and role modeling (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Yukl, 2002).
- 9) President: The chief executive officer of a community college or multi-college district who is appointed by and is responsible to the institution's chancellor or board of trustees and is entrusted with setting the direction and administration of the college's policies.
- 10) Senior-Level Administrator: An individual (e.g., vice president, provost, dean, and associate dean) who is at the highest level of organizational management and whose role is to oversee the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a division/unit.

#### Distinguishing Planned Change from Organizational Change

For clarity purposes, the aim of this section is to distinguish planned change from organizational change. Change is a phenomenon for which there is no agreed upon definition. Change can be defined as “any significant difference in the status quo usually intended to benefit the people involved” (Havelock, 1975, p. 4). Lindquist (1978) provides a more specific definition for organizational change: Change is “the modification of, deletion of, or addition to attitudes and behaviors existing in a person, group, organization, or larger system” (p. 1). Other scholars view organizational change as the process or condition of becoming different between time 1 and time 2 and the product of tensions between oppositions (Morgan, 1986). In one study by Van de Ven and Poole (1995), organizational change was expressed as “an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity” (p. 512). The entity may be an individual's job, a work group, an organizational strategy, a program, a product, or the overall organization. Organizational change has also been defined as an event that is frozen, unfrozen, and refrozen (Lewin, 1951). In many ways, these definitions are very fluid and appear to defy any rigid taxonomy, leading some

researchers to conclude that, “no single definition will travel well across all organizations” (Baum, 2002, p. 3).

Planned change is a subset of organizational change and is a more specific type of change. Planned change is an evolving concept which has been defined with increasing precision since the early 1960s (Creamer & Creamer, 1988). Bennis (1966) emphasizes the utilization perspective: Planned change is the “conscious, deliberate, and collaborative effort to improve the operation of a system through the utilization of scientific knowledge” (p. 3). Zaltman and Duncan (1977) incorporate the roles of change agent and change target in their view of planned change. Glover (1980) suggests that the reason leaders seek planned change is “to increase its effectiveness not merely to survive, but to achieve its goals, to satisfy its members and constituents, to adapt to changing environmental demands, and to gain autonomy in managing its dependence on the task environment” (p. 22).

Given that the focus of this dissertation was to explore administrator perceptions of behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, it seemed logical to utilize the planned change model so as to better understand the actions taken by administrators in achieving desired organizational outcomes. In contrast to unplanned change (i.e., change that is externally induced and originates from outside of the organization), planned change implies that there is some elements of managerial choice, degree of control, personal involvement, and self-determination during the change process (Cummings & Worley, 2001; Nordvall, 1982). Despite the different perspectives, scholars are in consensus that the key word is “planned,” suggesting that there are deliberate methods that are brought to bear on predetermined targets in order to accomplish certain goals (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Goodman & Kurke, 1982; Mangham, 1979). That is, the administrator has something to do with the process and outcome of the change initiative.

#### Delimitations

This study was delimited in its scope for 11 reasons. First, it focused on only one type of higher education institution—public community colleges. Choosing to focus on this one institutional type allowed the researcher to narrow the examination of the research questions and to explore similarities and differences within the sample. Second, this study focused on only three Michigan community colleges—thus making it suitable

for an exploratory study conducted by a single researcher. Any more than three colleges might have been difficult to manage given the amount of data to transcribe, code, and analyze. The third limitation was that these three Michigan community colleges were located in the same region. The rationale behind this regional selection was because the researcher wanted to discern whether the administrators engaged in different political behavior when faced with similar regional challenges associated with the downturn of the American automotive economy.

The fourth delimitation was the specific focus on the administrator perceptions of their political behavior when leading the planned change process, not other processes such as the interviewing/hiring process for new tenure-track faculty or the faculty evaluation/promotion process. The rationale for this delimitation was to adhere to the research questions as much as possible. The fifth delimitation was that the researcher approached this study using the political perspective, as opposed to the human resource, structural, and symbolic perspectives (Bolman & Deal, 2003) as the conceptual framework to provide a more specific context from which to analyze the data. By framing this study using one perspective instead of two or more perspectives, the researcher believed that this approach allowed for better understanding of how administrators utilize their political behavior within a political arena.

In the same vein, the sixth limitation had to do with the decision to narrow this study to examine planned change, as opposed to natural adaptation in particular or organizational change in general (Weick, 2000). The rationale was twofold. First, it provided a specific context from which to examine the political behavior of administrators. Instead of researching the administrators' political behavior in general, the researcher believed that focusing on a narrow slice of their political behavior provided more meaningful and richer data about this phenomenon. Second, planned change is "an intended, designed or purposive attempt by an individual, group, or organization, or larger social system to influence directly the status quo of itself, another organization, or a situation" (Lippitt, 1973, p. 37). As such, the planned change process requires a political perspective in viewing the organization and its political actors (Burnes, 1992; Eckel & Kezar, 2003). In short, adopting the planned change approach made sense for this study because it aligned with the research questions from the

viewpoint that the researcher wanted to know what have community college administrators “been doing” politically—their political behavior—to lead a planned change process, rather than what was “being done” to them.

Another delimitation of the study was the researcher’s interest to conduct interviews with three distinct groups in the organizational hierarchy (i.e., mid-level administrators, senior-level administrators, and presidents). Given that this was an exploratory study, it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to interview members from other groups (e.g., faculty, board members, and entry-level professionals) since their primary roles and functional responsibilities were generally outside the realm of leading planned change.

Similarly, the eighth limitation was that the researcher only conducted individual interviews with mid-level administrators, senior-level administrators, and presidents. No focus group interviews or town-hall style meetings were conducted. The rationale was that the researcher did not believe most of the administrators would have openly and honestly disclosed their perceptions of their own political behavior with and in front of their peers and colleagues. This may have been the case for those administrators who might have experienced some rather negative exchanges with a colleague or have strained relationships with others in the room. By conducting individual interviews, the researcher allowed each and every administrator to disclose their perceptions without having to worry about what his/her colleagues thought about his/her responses and/or censor his/her responses for fear of retribution.

An additional delimitation was the junior status of the researcher and the need to be careful during the interview process. In hopes of inviting the community college administrators to openly share their perceptions about their political behavior when leading change, the researcher focused more on listening and taking in the information that was disclosed, as opposed to challenging the administrators on their responses so as to avoid being perceived as perhaps confrontational, critical or difficult. Although the researcher asked follow-up questions, the purpose for doing so was to seek clarification, rather than to be a devil’s advocate.

Another important delimitation must be disclosed: This study did not focus on the *content* of the specific planned change, but rather on the *process* of leading planned

change within an educational organization. Generally, a study that focuses on content might be interested in determining the effectiveness of a specific change initiative and not so much on what transpired during the change process. This study used the various planned change initiatives (shared by the administrators) as pivotal points for studying the political dynamics of the change process, not for studying the impact or the effectiveness of the change content. As such, the researcher spent a significant amount of time analyzing the political behavior that took place during the change process (and less time on analyzing each and every change initiative).

Lastly, given that most people find the idea of engaging in political behavior objectionable (Lichtenberg, 1998; Reardon, 2004), the researcher decided to not explicitly use the term political behavior or other related words/phrases (e.g., politics, office politics, political tactics, and political activities). Instead, the concept of political behavior was described in a more neutral language to avoid confusion and minimize potential negative connotations, images or perceptions that often get associated with this rather visceral term. For example, the researcher asked the following question to get at the administrator perceptions of their political behavior: What kinds of influence tactics have you engaged in or utilized when leading change? Psychologically, the researcher believed using this alternative term encouraged the administrators to let down their guards, which allowed them to be more at ease when revealing their political behavior without explicitly talking about their political behavior.

#### Organization of the Study

This dissertation study is organized in the following manner. The first chapter provides an introduction to the study by offering context descriptions of the community college, challenges facing community colleges, community college leadership, and challenges facing and community college leaders. Next, it identifies the research problem, the significance of the problem, and the conceptual frameworks (i.e., Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change Model and the political perspective). The overarching research question, four sub-questions, five assumptions, and 11 definitions of key terms are subsequently presented. This chapter concludes by discussing the ten delimitations of the study.

The second chapter focuses on reviewing the literature. It begins by identifying five research gaps in the planned change and political behavior literatures. This is followed by a general discussion on organizational change, the four different approaches to studying organizational change, reasons why people resist change and strategies to manage resistance. Next is a focused analysis on the concept of planned change, planned change models, planned change research themes, and planned change in higher education. It then highlights the concept of leadership, discusses the conceptualization of the role of the college administrator, and reviews the ten administrative roles in organizational hierarchy. This chapter concludes with an in-depth look at the concept of political behavior, perceptions of political behavior, and the most widely reported tactics of downward, upward, and lateral influence in organizations.

The third chapter essentially outlines the research methods. It begins by noting the context of the study and reasons for the research design. It then discusses the population and sample, institutional overview, and research setting. What follows is a comprehensive review of the organization of the data, particularly data collection and analysis and steps to improve standards of quality issues (i.e., validity, reliability, and generalizability). This chapter ends by highlighting the role of the researcher and revealing the reasons for pursuing this study.

The fourth chapter provides a cross comparison of the three administrative levels to provide readers with a big picture overview of the findings. It commences by highlighting the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the administrators (i.e., presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators) engaged in and discussing the five major findings to provide scholars and practitioners with some new insight into change management. This is followed by a summary of the five core behaviors (i.e., get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research). This chapter concludes by noting the differences amongst the administrators' political behavior.

The focus of chapter five is on the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the three presidents engaged in during planned change. Selected quotes were included to illustrate how the presidents: 1) Press forward despite resistance; 2) Get buy-in; 3) Perform and fulfill the presidential role; 4) Encourage others to share



ideas; 5) Share information to educate others; 6) Respect others and their viewpoints; and 7) Communicate the vision.

Chapter six discusses the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the 27 senior-level administrators engaged in when leading change. Similar to chapter five, selected quotes were used to portray how the senior-level administrators: 1) Involve key players; 2) Pay attention to what's going on; 3) Build relationships to garner support; 4) Build a case by doing homework/research; 5) Get buy-in; 6) Listen and show respect; 7) Know when the timing is right; and 8) Make subtle, incremental changes.

Chapter seven delineates the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the 18 mid-level administrators engaged in when leading planned change. Like chapters five and six, selected quotes were used to convey how the mid-level administrators: 1) Get buy-in by selling; 2) Involve others by incorporating their input; 3) Build relationships to garner support; 4) Explain to increase understanding; 5) Build a case by doing homework/research; 6) Align change with college's mission; 7) Collaborate to build consensus; and 8) Make subtle, incremental changes.

The final chapter begins by offering a summary of the major findings. The concept of politically perceptive is then introduced with its the three spheres—anticipatory thinking, calculated patience, and role acting. It is followed by a discussion on the implications for future research and practice. This chapter concludes by noting the nine limitations of the study.

## Chapter II

### Review of the Literature

The literature concerning organizational change and political behavior has matured significantly over the past several decades. The focus of this chapter is to review the literature specific to this study. To provide some context, the researcher begins this chapter by framing the five research gaps that led to this research undertaking. This is followed by discussing the concept of organizational change, the different approaches to studying organizational change, the reasons why people resist change, and the strategies for managing resistance. Planned change, a subset of organizational change, will also be discussed in depth. Specifically, three key topics will be addressed—planned change models, planned change research themes, and planned change in higher education. Next is an overview of administrative behavior in organizational hierarchy, a discussion of the conceptualization of the role of the college administrator, and an examination of the ten roles associated with being a political actor. This chapter concludes by examining the concept of political behavior, particularly the perceptions associated with political behavior and the various tactics of downward, upward, and lateral influence in organizations.

#### Research Gaps

A review of the literature on planned change and political behavior revealed five research gaps, therefore illustrating the need to undertake this research study to better understand community college administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading planned change. The first gap is that in the higher education arena, most research studies on planned change have focused on four-year institutions (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Glover, 1980; Waring, 1995). As a result, the study of planned change was not well understood from the community college perspective (Ellis, 2000; Ford, 2005; Nuske, 1993; Sheldon, 2005). Given that

community colleges educate 46 percent of today's college students, this critical postsecondary industry can no longer be overlooked by scholars, practitioners, policymakers, media, and the general public (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Along the same lines, planned change—a specific kind of organizational change that emphasizes managerial control and influence—in community colleges was not well recognized by scholars despite it being one of the most common types of change strategy (Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

Second, the literature on the political behavior of higher education administrators during planned change was virtually non-existent (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Ford, 2005; Sheldon, 2005). Although the literature on organizational change has flourished in the last two decades, most did not focus on both political behavior and community colleges. In fact, not a single study examined the political behavior of community college administrators during the planned change process (Cummings, 1999; Green & Hayward, 1997; Kezar, 2001; Lueddeke, 1999).

Third, there was a lack of research on whether being in different administrative positions shape the usage and selection of various political behavior (Simon, 1997; Walker, 1979). Put differently, there was scarce research on the use of political behavior across administrative levels. Although there were studies that focused on presidents, senior-level administrators, and to some degree, mid-level administrators, there was practically no research that collectively examined these three levels of administration within the same research design (Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Rosenzweig, 1998). Likewise, research on how community college administrators lead organizational change with the goal of achieving desired organizational outcomes was non-existent (Levine, 2004).

Fourth, the development of well-prepared leaders continues to be vital to the continued success of community colleges and their students (Ottenritter, 2006). In fact, this goal took on even greater urgency as the level of turnover among community college administrators escalated dramatically (Weisman & Vaughan, 2002). Because planned change presents a complex set of circumstances that required community college administrators and various constituents to rethink their mission, goals, and internal structures, it creates an atmosphere of tension and unrest for those involved (Baldrige,

1971; Eckel & Kezar, 2003). As such, higher education institutions will be more in need of politically adept administrators who know how to competently lead today's community colleges by purposefully facilitating successful planned change initiatives while thinking more strategically about the big picture (Alfred, 2005; Levine, 2004).

Lastly, perhaps most evident from the foregoing discussion is that the link between political behavior and planned change was sorely lacking largely because there was almost no overlap between these two bodies of literature (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Buchanan & Bedlam, 1999). In other words, it appeared that previous studies on planned change and political behavior, albeit scarce in the first place, have been conducted almost independently of each other. Therefore it was necessary to approach this literature review by examining four domains—organizational change, planned change, administrative leadership, and political behavior—to better integrate the aforementioned research gaps.

#### Organizational Change

Change is a phenomenon for which there is no agreed upon definition. Change can be defined as “any significant difference in the status quo usually intended to benefit the people involved” (Havelock, 1975, p. 4). Lindquist (1978) provides a more specific definition: Change is “the modification of, deletion of, or addition to attitudes and behaviors existing in a person, group, organization, or larger system” (p. 1). Other scholars view change as the process or condition of becoming different between time 1 and time 2 and the product of tensions between oppositions (Morgan, 1986). In one study by Van de Ven and Poole (1995), organizational change was expressed as “an empirical observation of difference in form, quality, or state over time in an organizational entity” (p. 512). The entity may be an individual's job, a work group, an organizational strategy, a program, a product, or the overall organization. Change has also been defined as an event that is frozen, unfrozen, and refrozen (Lewin, 1951). In many ways, these definitions are very fluid and appear to defy any rigid taxonomy, leading some researchers to conclude that, “no single definition will travel well across all organizations” (Baum, 2002, p. 3).

Similarly, innovation is a term that has become associated with organizational change (Frost & Egri, 1991; Kanter, 1984; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Levine, 1980).

Innovation has been described as “an entity, such as a new technology or idea that is introduced to potential users in the organization” (Lewis & Seibold, 1993, p. 323). From this perspective, change in organizations can take on numerous configurations and dimensions. However, the two common themes that underlie organizational change are that (a) change is a process that occurs over time, typically taking months and even years to get implemented and institutionalized, and (b) change does not take place in a vacuum because it involves real people who bring emotions, passions, hopes, and expectations with them (Kotter, 1995). Kotter adds that change requires creating a new system, which in turn always demands leadership. Therefore, change will only be successful if change agents, and the organizations they service, understand these critical components (Burke, 2002).

In this dissertation study, change is viewed as a “strategy of implementation” and as a “planned” process. As a strategy of implementation, change is accomplished by using appropriate leadership behaviors, roles, competencies, and skills to produce desired organizational outcomes (French & Bell, 1995; Wilson, 1992). Therefore, techniques and tactics that are geared toward achieving pre-determined objectives are seen as recipes for change, particularly for managing the process and behavior of individuals in the organizations (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). After all, the ultimate goal for using various persuasive techniques and influence tactics is to reduce resistance to change (Bennis, 1989; Kotter, 1995). From this perspective, individuals have opportunities to influence change in their organizations because change is voluntary and within the control of individuals (Gabarro, 1995; Wilson, 1992).

The literature notes that there are three major advances in the last two decades towards a better understanding of organizational change theories. First, there is a noticeable shift in viewing organizations as open systems (Heffron, 1989; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008; Yukl, 2002). Second, the theories have shifted our paradigm from purely rational notions of organizations (where decisions and structures occur for logical reasons alone) to what Cohen and March (1983) called bounded rational models (where structures and outcomes are frequently influenced by non-rational, even unpredictable forces (Burke, 2002; Carnall, 1995). The third advance has been a new recognition of the complexity of these organizations to look beyond the physical structures of the

organizations (Sheldon, 2005). In fact, much of the current research incorporates methods that examine normative aspects and resource dependency analysis into the equation (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). Also, scholars of contemporary organizational theories are taking into account the importance of external factors such as increasing competition, the impact of new technologies into organizations, and pre-existing political dynamics as influential forces of organizational change (Eby et al., 2008; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kotter, 2001; Patterson et al., 2008; Yukl, 2002). These conditions inevitably move research toward an open systems perspective, providing new avenues for the pursuit of knowledge about organizations, which did not previously exist (Baum, 2002; Sheldon, 2005).

### Approaches to Studying Organizational Change

There are many approaches to the study of organizational change and each approach provides a different lens for viewing the leading change process (Sheldon, 2005). Four approaches will be highlighted in the following paragraphs to provide greater understanding. The first approach is *structural*. The theoretical underpinnings of a structural approach are based on the premise that organizational change is best understood through a careful examination of existing organizational structures (Cohen & March, 1974; March, 1997; Olsen, 1983). These researchers believe that a systemic analysis of the interactions among organizational members, policies, routines, and the surrounding environment is the best method of understanding change. For example, March and Cohen (1974) state that most change in organizations results neither from extraordinary organizational processes nor forces, nor from uncommon imagination, persistence or skill, but from relatively stable, routine processes that relate organizations to their environments.

The second approach to examining organizational change is *normative*. Beginning in the 1970s some researchers (Clark, 1983; Masland, 1997; Schein, 1992; Tierney, 1988) began to look at normative elements (e.g., stories, myths, heroes, symbols, and artifacts) within organizations in an attempt to explain organizational change. Researchers who use a normative framework focus on the beliefs, attitudes, and dispositions of organizational members. According to Sheldon (2005), the normative approach improved our understanding of change in organizations in at least four ways: 1) It has promoted the

study of organizations over longer periods of time, which has resulted in a better understanding of organizational change over time; 2) It highlighted the importance of sensemaking as it relates to the daily work lives of individuals; 3) It resulted in the exploration of the uses of organizational stories in times of organizational change and crisis; and 4) It has provided a framework to scrutinize and better understand the use of symbols, stories, and metaphors to elicit particular organizational responses.

The third approach to understanding organizational change is *resource dependency* (otherwise known as the power model). This approach argues that power and the allocation of resources are the underlying forces that drive change in organizations (Hackman, 1985; Pfeffer & Moore, 1997; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974). Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue that the best way to observe change in organizations is to understand the goals and objectives of its leaders and to scrutinize the allocation of capital and resources. One of their conclusions from surveying college deans and department heads was that the more critical the resource was to the college or unit, the greater the power central administration had over that unit. The three key strengths of the resource dependency approach are: 1) It has a greater ability to quantify power within complex organizations like colleges and universities, which has aided our understanding of the drivers of organizational change; 2) It has improved our ability to understand changes within the particular unit, particularly organizations in higher education; and 3) It treats the institution as the prime shaper of the organization and lends tacit support to the importance of the interests and politics within organizations (Sheldon, 2005).

The fourth approach is the *political* model. The political approach combines a range of theoretical perspectives and brings them to bear on the study of organizational change by concentrating on the politics and policy making processes within higher education institutions (Johnson, 2001; Morgan, 1986). Put differently, the political approach is helpful in part because it combines many of the elements and strengths of the three previous models (i.e., structural, normative, and resource dependency) into one. This approach aids researchers by framing the external context and internal political dimensions of the organization, where outside forces exert powerful influences on the organization, resources are limited and competing values abound (Sheldon, 2005). Perhaps most importantly, this political approach views organizational players as the

central focus of study (Johnson, 2001; Morgan, 1986). As briefly described in the first chapter, scholars who have used a political approach included Baldrige (1971), Mintzberg (1983), Birnbaum (1988), Bolman and Deal (2003), and Cohen and March (1983). Given the study's purpose and goals, the researcher reasoned that the political approach is the most relevant frame to use because it best explains how political actors operate in a political arena.

### Resistance to Change

In studying the leading change process from a broader perspective, the works of several scholars frame the concept of organizational change in ways that are appropriate for the purposes of this study. For example, Kreitner and Kinicki (2008) posit that organizational change essentially represents a form of influence. That is, organizational change can be seen as management's attempt to get individuals to behave, think, or perform differently. Viewing change from this vantage point underscores the importance of utilizing different influence tactics to achieve desired outcomes (Cialdini, 2001; Lichtenberg, 1998; Reardon, 2000). However, the reality is that it generally is difficult for people to try new ways of doing things (Burke, 2002; Kotter, 1995).

Scholars (Kanter, 1984; Kumar & Thibodeaux, 1990) reason that it is precisely because of this basic human characteristic that most individuals do not have enthusiasm for change in the workplace. Therefore, it is important for leaders to learn to manage resistance because failed change efforts are costly (Kotter, 1995; Maurer, 1990). Costs include decreased employee loyalty, lowered probability of achieving organizational goals, a waste of money and resources, and difficulty in fixing the failed change effort. This next section examines why people resist change and ways of dealing with this pervasive problem.

While institutions of higher education are steeped in tradition, they are not immune to changes in their environment. Researchers have explored issues of change in higher education, such as sensemaking in the institution (Gioia & Thomas, 1996) and managerial aspects of change (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). As in other institutions, resistance to change is also commonplace in higher education (Kezar & Eckel, 2003). That is because, often times, organizational members resist change not because of the substance of the change, but rather because change is viewed as a threat to their personal well-being



and career ambitions (Baldrige, 1971; Kanter, 1984; Maurer, 1996). Put simply, resistance to change is an emotional/behavioral response to real or imagined threats to an established work routine (Judson, 1991; Marshak, 2006).

Resistance can take many forms: it can be as subtle as passive resignation and as covert as deliberate sabotage (Reardon, 2000). Research indicates that employees generally resist change based on the following 11 reasons: 1) An individual's predisposition toward change; 2) Surprise and fear of the unknown; 3) Climate of mistrust; 4) Fear of failure; 5) Loss of status or job security; 6) Peer pressure; 7) Disruption of cultural traditions or group relationships; 8) Personality conflicts; 9) Lack of tact or poor timing; 10) Non-reinforcing reward systems; and 11) Past success (Coch & French, 1948; Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Judge, et al., 1999). For these reasons, leaders need to learn to recognize the manifestations of resistance both in themselves and in others (Baldrige, 1971; Kanter, 1984).

The preceding research is based on the assumption that individuals directly or consciously resist change. Some experts (Eby et al., 2000; Kotter, 1995) contend that this is not the case. Rather, there is a growing belief that resistance to change really represents employees' responses to obstacles in the organization that prevent them from changing. For example, when Kotter (1995) studied more than 100 companies, he concluded that employees generally wanted to change but were unable to do so because of obstacles that prevented execution. In fact, Christensen, Marx, and Stevenson (2006) note that employees frequently resist change because management has not effectively communicated the rationale to support the change. From this perspective, more scholars are favoring the notion that people do not resist change to simply resist change, per se, but rather that individual's anti-change attitudes and behaviors are caused by obstacles within the work environment (Christensen, Marx, & Stevenson, 2006; Eby et al., 2000; Kotter, 1995).

According to Kotter and Schlesinger (1979), the following six strategies for overcoming resistance to change are worth pursuing because situational factors vary. Put differently, depending on the context leaders can utilize these any one of these six strategies (or a combination of strategies) as means to achieving desired organizational outcomes. As indicated in Table 3, each of the six strategies has its situational niche,

advantages, and drawbacks. As such, there is no universal strategy for overcoming resistance to change (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979). To be successful, leaders need to employ a complete repertoire of influence tactics.

Table 3. Six Strategies for Overcoming Resistance to Change

| Approach                     | Commonly Used in These Situations   | Advantages   | Drawbacks   |
|------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Education + Communication    | Where there is a lack of information or inaccurate information and analysis.  | Once persuaded, people will often help with the implementation of the change.  | Can be very time consuming if lots of people are involved.                          |
| Participation + Involvement  | Where the initiators do not have all the information they need to design the change and where others have considerable power to resist. | People who participate will be committed to implementing change, and any relevant information they have will be integrated into the change plan. | Can be very time consuming if participators design an inappropriate change.         |
| Facilitation + Support       | Where people are resisting because of adjustment problems.  | No other approach works as well with adjustment problems.  | Can be time consuming, expensive, and still fail.                                   |
| Negotiation + Agreement      | Where someone or some group will clearly lose out in a change and where that group has considerable power to resist.                    | Sometimes it is a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance.   | Can be too expensive in many cases if it alerts others to negotiate for compliance. |
| Manipulation + Co-optation   | Where other tactics will not work or are too expensive.   | It can be a relatively quick and inexpensive solution to resistance problems.  | Can lead to future problems if people feel manipulated.                             |
| Explicit + Implicit Coercion | Where speed is essential and where the change initiators possess considerable power.  | It is speedy and can overcome any kind of resistance.  | Can be risky if it leaves people mad at the initiators.                             |

## Planned Change Models

To advance planned change as a legitimate domain, scholars and practitioners (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1984; Carnall, 1995; Conger, Spreitzer, & Lawler, 1998; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992; Tichy & Devanna, 1986) in the last 30 years shifted their perspectives on change, favoring the notion that change is dynamic and complex, not static and predictable. In other words, scholars view organizational change as an intentional process unfolding in stages with the planning component being an essential early stage in the process (Kotter, 1995).

Most theories of planned change originated from the landmark work of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). In 1947, Lewin developed a three-stage model of planned change which explained how to initiate, manage, and stabilize the change process. The three stages of Lewin's force field theory are: 1) Unfreezing old behaviors, values, and attitudes; 2) Making changes; and 3) Freezing new behaviors, values, and attitudes. The assumptions underlying this model include: 1) The change process involves learning something new, as well as discontinuing current attitudes, behaviors, or organizational practices; 2) Change will not occur unless there is motivation to change; 3) People are the hub of all organizational changes; 4) Resistance to change is found even when the goals of change are highly desirable; and 5) Effective change requires reinforcing new behaviors, attitudes, and organizational practices (Schein, 1980). According to Lewin (1951), change may be achieved by two types of actions. One approach is to increase the "driving" forces towards change; the other is to reduce "restraining" forces that create resistance to change.

As a result of scholars building on Lewin's (1951) theory, there are now numerous multi-phase process models (e.g., Havelock's Linkage model, Lindquist's Adaptive Development model, and Eckel and Kezar's Mobile Model) designed to be followed by leaders when facilitating planned change. The next section highlights these three planned change models.

Havelock's (1975) Linkage model provides a first-of-its-kind general change model which joins previously separate planned change schools. Havelock identifies from his review of the literature seven key factors in successful change efforts: 1) Linking

faculty, administrators, students, and relevant outsiders to one another and to information; 2) Reaching out to new information and new people; 3) Organizing and following through on structures for research, planning, and implementation; 4) Providing skilled leadership and facilitation as well as adequate time and resources; 5) Using information and other resources in productive combinations; 6) Reworking change efforts at all stages of problem solving; and 7) Making numerous and varied change efforts. While no other model for planned change has emerged which is as comprehensive and promising (at that time), Lindquist (1978) suggests that the Linkage model has several obstacles between theory and practice: 1) It is too abstract to provide clues for implementation; 2) Its adaptability to a collegiate setting is questionable; and 3) It has not been tested in any multi-institutional, longitudinal study of just how planned change does occur.

Lindquist (1978) uses Havelock's synthesis as the conceptual framework for a four-year project on strategies for change. As a result, he conceptualizes the Adaptive Development model, which incorporates five factors: 1) An active and skillful *force* for change; 2) Strong *linkage* of change participants to one another and to other relevant knowledge resources; 3) Active *openness* of participants in reaching out to new ideas and sources of resistance to them; 4) Perceived *ownership* of change by those whose support is important to implementation; and 5) Intrinsic as well as extrinsic *rewards* for participating in the change. According to Lindquist (1978), the "key to success of each stage is interpersonal and informational linkage, active openness, facilitating as well as initiating leadership, ownership by those who can make implementation happen, and rewards both material and psychic" (p. 243). Lindquist urges that the Adaptive Development model be studied longitudinally in multiple higher education institutions in order to determine its utility for guiding successful planned change efforts. No such study has been undertaken.

Eckel and Kezar's (2003) book, *Taking the Reins* is based on a five-year research study involving twenty-three diverse institutions working on change. The Mobile Model is used as a metaphor for the interconnectedness and balance that is needed in a change process. Eckel and Kezar (2003) state that "only as a whole is the mobile functional; tipping any one part can upset the dynamic" (p. 148). The Mobile Model is built around five core strategies: flexible vision, senior administrative support, collaborative

leadership, visible action, and staff development. In brief, the Mobile Model is useful for four reasons: 1) The model is comprehensive in nature; 2) It integrates multiple elements from the other models reviewed; 3) It was developed within the context of higher education; and 4) It asserts that change is often complex, multilayered, and takes place in a unique culture (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). However, despite its comprehensive nature, the Mobile Model does not take into account how power, politics, political behavior, and conflicts affect the process of planned change nor does it examine the political dynamics that are inevitable in almost every planned change process. As such, this oversight poses considerable drawbacks, both in practice and in research. While as yet untested, this model has great potential to assist researchers to better understand how the overlapping core strategies shape how administrators approach change.

Since the researcher used Kotter's Eight Step for Leading Change Model (1995) as one of the two conceptual frameworks for this study, the next section highlights the eight steps to familiarize readers with the political behavior associated with each step. The first step is establishing a sense of urgency. The rationale is because people need to both know and feel the urgency of the crisis or problem at hand. Kotter (1995) reasons that people often lose direction and hope unless change agents are continually providing rational facts and emotional motivation to keep at the task(s). Moreover, when the urgency rate is not pumped up enough, the leading change process cannot succeed and the long-term future of the organization is put in jeopardy (Kotter, 1995).

The second step is forming a coalition of committed and influential people. The rationale is because unless the head of the organization is an active supporter, major change is often impossible. Kotter (1995) believes the following four characteristics are critical for coalition building: 1) Position power (i.e., having key players that occupy key positions); 2) Expertise (i.e., relevant to work experience and the issue at hand); 3) Credibility (i.e., the group participants need to have solid reputations if the coalition is to be taken seriously); and 4) Leadership (i.e., proven leaders to drive the change process).

The third step focuses on creating a vision and strategy. The underlying principle is that people have a need to know where they are going and how they will get there. The key is for the guiding coalition to develop a picture of the future that is relatively easy to communicate and appeals to a wide audience (Kotter, 1995). The six characteristics of a

compelling vision are: 1) Imaginable (i.e., paint a realistic picture of the future); 2) Desirable (i.e., appeals to peoples' interests); 3) Feasible (i.e., possible); 4) Focused (i.e., clear and provides guidance); 5) Flexible (i.e., allows for changing conditions); and 6) Communicable (i.e., can be explained in less than five minutes).

The fourth step involves communicating the change vision. Kotter (1995) argues that the change vision needs to be conveyed, restated, and reframed time and again using every possible channel to as many constituents as possible in order for the vision to be continually in the forefront of an organization. Leaders need to paint a picture or share a dream by using metaphors, analogies, and examples. Perhaps even more important, leaders must learn to "walk the talk" (Kotter, 1995).

The fifth step centers on empowering others. Kotter (1995) believes that in every organization both the people and the structures they work in need to be empowered in order to affect change. When people are empowered or perceived to be empowered, their productivity, morale, and loyalty increases. Kotter (1995) adds that empowering also requires the removal of obstacles.

The sixth step is generating short-term wins. Real change takes time, and a change effort risks losing momentum if there are no short-term goals to meet and celebrate. Kotter (1995) outlines the following benefits of short-term wins: 1) They provide evidence that sacrifices are worth it; 2) They reward change agents with a pat on the back; 3) They help fine-tune the vision and strategies; 4) They undermine cynics and self-serving resisters; 5) They keep bosses on board; and 6) They build momentum.

The seventh step is about consolidating gains and producing more change. Kotter (1995) finds that leaders of successful efforts use the credibility afforded by short-term wins to tackle even bigger problems. Also, Kotter (1995) states that change agents must be sensitive to the structure and interdependence in the systems they are serving. In systems with simple interdependent parts, moving one part will be more feasible than in complex interdependent systems, like higher education, where multiple parts will need to be aligned before a transition can take place.

The eighth step refers to institutionalizing the new approaches by linking the change efforts with organizational success. Kotter (1995) believes that unless there are intentional efforts to meld the change initiatives into the fabric of the organization, the

long-term impact of the change outcome may be short-lived. The first effort is making a conscious attempt to show people how the new approaches, behaviors, and attitudes have helped improve performance. The second effort is taking sufficient time to make sure that the next generation of top management really does personify the new approach.

In brief, the general precept drawn from Kotter's Eight Step Model and other planned change models includes the claim that if leaders do not follow a certain change process, there is a higher likelihood that resistance, denial, or lack of commitment will be evident among organizational members which might undermine the success of the change effort (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999). As such, scholars (Bennis & Nanus; 1985; Bennis & Neumann, 1993; Clark, 1998; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Walker, 1979) note that it is important to recognize the importance of each step/phase as well as the leadership behaviors needed to move the change process forward. In most cases, these leadership behaviors translate into political behavior—those that influence others to work towards achieving desired organizational outcomes.

#### Planned Change Research Themes

There are four research themes or issues that are common to all change efforts in the theoretical and empirical planned change literature (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Goodman & Kurke, 1982). The first research theme, dealing with *content* issues, largely focuses on the substance of change. Research in this category has typically attempted to define factors that comprise the targets of both successful and unsuccessful change efforts and how these factors relate to organizational effectiveness (French & Bell, 1995; Gumport, 1993). The second theme, dealing with *contextual* issues, principally focuses on forces or conditions existing in an organization's external and internal environments (Hearn, 1996; Sheldon, 2005). The third theme concerns the nature of *criterion* variables commonly assessed as outcomes in planned change, such as resistance (El Khawas, 1994; Waring, 1995). The fourth theme, dealing with *process* issues, generally addresses actions and strategies undertaken during planned change (which this study is based upon). Most of these studies seek to discern the actions and tactics taken by administrators to implement changes within organizations (Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Kotter, 1995; Lindquist, 1978) and the nature of members' responses to such efforts (Ellis, 2000; Ford, 2005; Nuske, 1993).

Without a doubt, the literature suggests that understanding planned change is a complicated, contextual, and confounding process that calls for a research method that accounts for these four interrelated themes/elements (Goodman & Kurke, 1982; Pettigrew, Ferlie, & McKee, 1992). Scholars (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Goodman & Kurke, 1982) agree that the case study methodology is arguably the best way to study a planned change process across various higher education institutional types. The rationale is that case studies are useful because they allow researchers to collect information from a variety of informants across the organization, therefore helping to form a complicated picture that allows for diverse and competing explanations of the phenomenon (Fisher et al., 1988; Robertson et al., 1993; Stake, 1995). Moreover, this method is most appropriate when three conditions are present: 1) The research questions being addressed are “how” and “why” questions; 2) Very little control exists over events; and 3) The focus are on real-life phenomenon in which context is important (Yin, 1994).

#### Planned Change in Higher Education

Although the literature on planned change has grown the last few years, a gap still exists when referencing specific change processes in higher education. The most obvious is that higher education is still treated as a whole, with little regard for the uniqueness of the different institutional types and contextual variables (Baldrige, 1983; Rosenzweig, 1998). Likewise, Eckel and Kezar (2003) argue that there appears to be at least three potential problems associated with planned change efforts in higher education: 1) Planned change is often viewed as a threatening process whereby organizational members feel as if they have little to no control over the powerful forces of change; 2) The planning and execution of change are often focused on the wrong priorities, with little attention to the human component; and 3) Often times no investigation of the effectiveness of change efforts occurs. Compounding these potential problems is the lack of specific empirical data concerning a planned change process as it actually occurs in higher education (Kezar, 2001; Sheldon, 2005; Waring, 2005). Together, these potential problems and the scarcity of research associated with planned change efforts in higher education suggest a need to view planned change as a complex process that consists of



three distinct yet highly related stages: formulation, execution and outcomes (Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

In terms of the complexities of planned change, it appears that one of the primary problems with leading planned change in higher education is that the focus for that change is on the content of the change, rather than on the people and relationships critical to the success of that change (Bennis, 1989; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Hackman, 1990; Kotter, 1995; Reardon, 2004). Typically, there is a strategic plan that moves the organization to the goal of the planned change initiatives. However, there is little thinking and shared communication about how best to help organizational members commit to and embrace the planned change as well as to correspondingly adjust their attitudes, values, and behaviors to align with the change (Hackman, 1990; Kotter, 1995; Whetten, 1984; Zaleznik, 1970).

The unfortunate outcome (and reality) is that no matter how intelligent, determined or motivated an individual leader might be he/she will unlikely be able to move an organization through sustained and meaningful change without the active involvement and support of many individuals within the organization (Kotter, 1995; Walker, 1989; Yukl, 2002). To increase the likelihood of success, administrators need guidance in leading the change process (Kotter, 1995, 2001) as well as increase understanding of the political perspective (Baldrige, 1971; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Mintzberg, 1984; Pfeffer, 1992). Ultimately, the purpose of engaging in political behavior is to bring about a desirable outcome for the organization.

A summary of the research on planned change suggests seven strategies as important: 1) A willing president or strong administrative leadership; 2) Leadership as a collaborative process; 3) Persuasive and effective communication; 4) A motivating vision; 5) Long-term orientation; 6) Rewards; and 7) Essential support structures (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). However, there is no agreement in the literature about which of the strategies were most commonly used by leaders or how they might work together. The researcher reasoned that this was because there were three general issues that pose considerable empirical concerns.

The first issue was that planned change strategies tended to be generalizations, such as the seven mentioned above (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). Suggestions such as

“improve communication” and “manage conflicts” provided little practical advice to leaders faced with implementing complex change initiatives (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980). The second issue was that the predominantly reflections of former college leaders which, although informative, tended not to be grounded in research outside their immediate experiences (Bennis, 1989; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Iosue, 1997; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Walker, 1979). The third issue was that much of the literature presented change strategies as isolated, distinct actions and did not offer systemic, concurrent, and interdependent strategies for institution-wide change (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Eckel & Kezar, 2003). In this light, scholars could attempt to rectify these issues by conducting more longitudinal, multi-dimensional, and multi-institutional case studies, similar to what Eckel and Kezar (2003) did.

#### Administrative Leadership

There is no commonly agreed upon definition of leadership because it can mean many things. In this study, leadership is defined as “the process in which an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal” (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008). First, it is important to note that leadership is a process, not a personal trait or characteristic of an individual. Second, leadership involves influence—it requires interactions and relationships among people. Third, leadership involves purpose—it helps organizations and the people affiliated with them move toward desired goals. This definition of leadership highlights the fact that leadership can be shared amongst multiple actors and relies on complex, organic interrelationships between leaders and followers (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008).

A review of the scholarly studies on leadership shows that there is a wide array of different theoretical approaches to explain the complexities of the leadership process. The common denominator is that leadership involves influencing others to achieve goals and objectives important to them and to the organization (Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002). It can be said that when leaders engage in leadership behaviors, people are more motivated and willing to want to contribute to the organization’s success, whether it is to embrace a planned change initiative or to work more interdependently (Kotter, 1995; Kreitner & Kinicki, 2008).

It needs to be noted that although leadership is a major function of management, it is not the same idea as management. To illustrate, Kotter (2001) argues that management copes with complexity, which requires preserving order and consistency. Leadership, in comparison, copes with change in a competitive, rapidly evolving world. Effective leaders deal with change by formulating a vision of the future, setting a direction for that vision, and compelling people to action. Another key distinction is that the central focus of leadership is “people,” (i.e., teamwork, relationships, values, and needs) as opposed to “things” (i.e., data, guidelines, processes, and structures) from a management viewpoint (Bennis & Nanus, 1985).

Leadership also implies being heavily involved in persuading, inspiring, and motivating others as well as spearheading useful, timely, and consequential changes to contribute to organizational effectiveness (DuBrin, 2005). From this perspective, a growing body of evidence supports the common-sense belief that leadership does matter (Bennis, 1989; Northouse, 2007). For example, a comprehensive study of organizations in different sectors concludes that incompetent leaders are responsible for billions of dollars of lost productivity each year (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Also, another study with 48 Fortune 500 firms finds that the presence of good leadership contributes to a firm’s net profit margin, particularly in an uncertain environment (Waldman et al., 2001). In the same vein, Ford (2005) concludes that it was the result of timely leadership behaviors that led to a successful organizational change process at a community college.

A logical approach to understanding leadership is to recognize the six different major perspectives. Some researchers conceptualize leadership from a personality perspective (Boyatzis, 1982; Stodgill, 1974), from a skills perspective (Fiedler, 1967; Katz, 1955), as an act or behavior (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Fleishman & Harris, 1962), as the focus of group processes (Hackman, 1990; Katzenbach & Smith, 1993), in terms of power relationships (House, 1971; Yukl & Falbe, 1990), or as a transformational process (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978). Despite the different schools of leadership thoughts, most leadership theorists agree that the role of leaders in advancing planned change in any setting can be crucial to the ultimate success of that change process (Burnes, 1978; Kotter, 2001; Yukl, 2002).

As noted earlier, definitions of leadership vary depending on the theoretical approach, era, context, and source. However, influencing others is a common theme in most definitions. A general definition is that leadership is the ability to inspire confidence and support among the people on whose competence and commitment performance depends (Kim & Marborgne, 1992; Northouse, 2007). Yukl (2002) takes into account several elements that determine the success of a collective effort by members of a group or organization to accomplish meaningful tasks by offering this definition: “Leadership is the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how it can be done effectively, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish the shared objectives” (p. 7).

Within the context of a community college setting, formal leadership positions generally exist at hierarchical levels ranging from the president to the senior-level administrators to mid-level administrators to frontline staff (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Taking this into consideration, Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) define leadership as “the ability to influence, shape, and embed values, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors consistent with increased staff and faculty commitment to the unique mission of the community college” (p. 18).

#### Conceptualizations of the Role of College Administrators

The three primary leadership roles that scholars conceptualize the college administrator are collaborator, facilitator, and team builder (Bennis & Nanus; 1985; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Clark, 1998; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Keller, 1983; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996; Walker, 1979). This next section will examine these three pivotal roles in more details.

*Collaborator.* Researchers and practitioners argue that planned change is most likely to be successful when it is a collaborative process involving the people who have the legitimate authority, those who recognize the need or problem, and those who have the knowledge and expertise to solve the problem (Association of Governing Boards, 2006; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). Because planned change is motivated by the salience of a need or problem, a collaborative process assumes that most people can make reasonably effective decisions if they are given adequate decision-making time, sufficient information, and

enough contact with the situation to know what is happening (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Nutt, 1992). Planned change, therefore, is much more effective when multiple perspectives are represented and valued (Association of Governing Boards, 2006; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Dickerson, 2000; Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

Moore (1991) reports that planned change without the opportunity for participative decision-making makes many administrators feel uncomfortable largely because they typically seek to maintain order, institutional stability, and the status quo. He identifies five obstacles a president must overcome in order to be successful in implementing change: a lack of ownership, a lack of consensus regarding the process to be used in implementing the change, a lack of clarity as to who is in charge, external pressures, and competing obligations and priorities. Scholars reason that to overcome these obstacles, presidents must demonstrate willingness to collaborate with diverse constituents, engage in relationship building to establish credibility to the change process, create a developmental environment, and move slowly (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Clark, 1998; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Moore, 1991).

After examining the leadership agendas of five presidents, Mott (1997) identifies three key principles to be critical during the process of planned change (all of which centers on collaboration or the lack of): 1) Sharing of power through such activities as collective decision-making; 2) Public rather than private problem solving; and 3) Open communication. Moreover, Perlmutter and Gummer (1994) argue that successful leader of planned change will have to be a person who understands the importance of initiative, risk taking, consensus building, and most importantly, successful change outcomes require collaboration.

*Facilitator.* Because higher education is often portrayed as a feudal institution that is resistant to change, administrators are expected to take the lead, set the course, and facilitate change (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). To a considerable extent, that is how they are evaluated, especially in hard times. Some scholars (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Bolman & Deal, 2003) downplay the charismatic and directive role of leaders and instead portray leaders as facilitators of ongoing activities rather than as architects of bold initiatives. This view of leadership is related to the anarchical (Cohen & March, 1983), democratic-political

(Walker, 1979), atomistic (Kerr & Gade, 1986), and cybernetic models of college leadership (Birnbaum, 1988). Rhoades (2000) argues that instead of trying to be “knightly crusaders,” administrators should be insightful observers and facilitators. As facilitators, the primary task at hand is to recognize the initiatives already being undertaken by many units, to support them, and to seed strategic efforts elsewhere through selective and gentle persuasion (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Keller, 1983; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996). Simply put, the key is to recognize and build on the ability of others to get it right.

Much is written about how administrators must earn the trust of the faculty because some faculty members tend to view administrators as having “gone to the dark side” (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Clark, 1998). Julius, Baldrige, and Pfeffer (1999) provide some thoughtful advice to presidents, senior administrators, and faculty leaders who would seek change by offering key insights and tried-and-true patterns of political behavior to facilitate the change process, such as: build a team, know when to engage conflict, use committees effectively, and use the formal system. Like Machiavelli, their focus is on guiding administrators who, in seeking to transcend the status quo will be met with opposition (Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999).

By interviewing the presidents of Georgetown, Stanford, and Brown on how they promoted student public service activity and facilitated this process, Waring (1995) finds that presidents can be more successful if they stick to the institution’s mission and values, if they avoid positions that force people with different values to align against them, and if they are successful in attracting sufficient resources to create the change but not so many resources that others feel threatened. Also, Waring (1995) notes that promoting change in times of abundant organizational resources eases the planned change process, which many scholars agree (Baldrige, 1971; Birnbaum, 1988; Chaffee, 1983; Mintzberg, 1983).

*Team Builder.* Although the study of leadership has traditionally focused on leaders and managers’ traits, behaviors, and skills, there is now considerable interest in looking at leadership not as a “one-person act” but as a collaborative endeavor (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Mott, 1997; Tierney, 1998; Warrick, 1994). In a series of interviews with presidents and vice presidents about how they lead teams, Bensimon and

Neumann (1993) suggest that “teams that are complex—functionally and cognitively—are more likely to respond to various political situations with sensitivity and understanding than simple teams” (p. 137). They believe that “the administrator of the future will be someone who knows how to find and bring together diverse minds...The ideal administrator will be less an ‘expert’ at some task than an orchestrator of multiple complex tasks” (p. 1). This portrayal implies that as the world becomes more complex, we will begin to think of it in its collective form: leadership as occurring among and through a group of people who think and act together. Hence, Bensimon and Neumann (1993) warn that administrators need to consider how their approach to “doing administration” responds to the changing context of the academy as well to acquire a multidimensional view of what they are doing to others outside their leadership circle. Other scholars and practitioners (Association of Governing Boards, 2006; Bennis, 1989; Gabarro, 1987; Kotter, 2001) agree.

Similarly, Eisenstat and Cohen (1990) argue that executive officers are more apt to support organizational decisions that they have played a role in shaping. In a study comparing successful and unsuccessful administrators, Gabarro (1987) concludes that the failure to form cohesive executive teams may be related to the presence of leaders who are overly hierarchical, formal, and task-oriented. Such administrators are likely to feel uncomfortable in the often political and chaotic atmosphere of groups and in sessions that are rife with human emotion. An increasing number of scholars and administrators are noting that team-based leadership is apt to be more understanding, talented, efficient, and supportive than leadership by just one person (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Eisenstat & Cohen, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1987; Mott, 1997; Rhoades, 2000; Tierney, 1998; Warrick, 1994).

To make the planned change process more calculated and less chaotic, Creamer and Creamer (1988) believe that managers at all levels must be leaders, and leaders must be able to manage. This position suggests that leaders of the planned change process must respond to many internal and external pressures and handle political situations while continuing to implement the change initiative (Herriott & Gross, 1979; Rosenzweig, 1998). Also, leadership refers to actions of “change masters,” who focus energy and resources within the organization toward the design or implementation of the idea on a

continuing basis, including processing and acting on new information gained through feedback and monitoring of the change (Bennis, 1989; Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Mazzoni, 1991). Moreover, leaders are called on to function across the planned change process by taking proactive, preventive, reactive, and motivational measures (Association of Governing Boards, 2006; Creamer & Creamer, 1988; Herriott & Gross, 1979).

#### Administrative Roles in Organizational Hierarchy

One of the key functions of a leader is to serve in an administrative/executive capacity (Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002). The literature conceptualizes college administrators to be versatile and influential. Kerr (1963) characterizes the roles of a president as:

...leader, educator, creator, initiator, wielder of power, pump; he is also office holder, caretaker, inheritor, consensus seeker, persuader, bottleneck. But he is mostly a mediator. The first task of the mediator is peace...peace within the student body, the faculty, the trustees; and peace between and among them” (p. 36).

Almost half a century later, Kerr’s depictions of the various administrative roles—many of which are political in nature—still ring true, especially in today’s complex and hierarchical organizations (Bennis, 1989; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). Given the increasingly politicized environment in our nation’s higher education institutions, it is not surprising that scholars took great interests in examining the political roles of college administrators to better understand the scope of their responsibilities and their time spent engaging in these roles (Bennis, 1989; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999). The next section will focus on the ten administrative roles (i.e., change agent, coalition builder, leader, mediator, negotiator, policy maker, power broker, problem solver, resource allocator, and strategist/tactician) that best describe administrators as political actors today.

*Change Agent.* The literature shows that administrators are seen as the key change agents on campus (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Herriott & Gross, 1979; Walker, 1979). A successful change agent is someone who recognizes that change is as much a function of influencing behavior as it is the strategies, structures, and systems introduced (Goshal & Bartlett, 1996). An early, fundamental assumption of the change agent (a role that evolved from activist to disseminator to helper of planned change) was that the “target



audience” was passive, and that the environment was always rational and nonpolitical, which is no longer accurate in today’s political environment (Baldrige & Deal, 1975; Pusser, 2004; Raisman, 1994).

Typically, change agents design and plan what changes need to be made in the organizational structure or processes in order to move the organization closer to the goal of the change initiative (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Gabarro, 1987). However, scholars (Marienau, 1982; Pollicita, 1984; Sheldon, 2005) argue that change agents tend to overlook the importance of: 1) Sharing the vision of the change initiative across the institution; 2) Thinking about what actions and behaviors should be planned to help members commit to and embrace the change initiative; and 3) Adjusting their attitudes, values, and behaviors to align with the change. The unfortunate reality is that no matter how strong a change agent (or a group of change agents) might be they will never be able to move an organization through sustained change without the active involvement and support of many individuals within the organization (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Rhoades, 2000; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984). Senge (1999) notes that shared commitment to change develop only with collective capability to build shared aspirations.

*Coalition Builder.* Since all political behavior in organizations is negotiated, much of it is marked by coalitions and alliances, however temporary (Baldrige, 1971; Van de Ven & Walker, 1984). Building coalitions means collaborating with political actors over shared and divergent goals. Tierney (1998) finds that “even those leaders at the very top of the governance hierarchy must build coalitions with administrative and faculty leaders in order to implement change successfully” (p. 101). Hence, administrators need to pay attention to various political actors who could be potential friends or opponents.

In trying to identify presidential skills, scholars (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Romero, Vaughan, ) find that the politically adept administrator understands and works effectively with internal and external political leaders to build bridges; works effectively in the political arena by being an effective lobbyist; lives with ambiguity; moves with the political flow as long as that flow is in concert with the college’s mission; and goes against the flow when necessary but in a way that does not alienate the college’s political supporters. Similarly, Walker (1979) believes that the effective administrator defines and

understands the political issues that have the potential of influencing the college's mission and works diligently to build coalitions across campus.

Scholars agree that coalition building is a commonly used power tactic in peer relations. For example, Fairholm (1993) finds that those with little time in their work unit use coalition building more than any other tactic. Most theories of coalition building presume that political actors have well-defined preferences; that they enter into coalitions to satisfy those preferences; and the actors are assumed to do the best they can, given the rules of the game and the demands of other participants (Blocker, Bender, & Martorana, 1975; Kelley, 1970; Kipnis et al., 1980; March, 1994). Bennis and Nanus (1985) illustrate that time spent accumulating "credits" (e.g., fulfilling the expectations of constituents) can lead to positive outcomes. For instance, change and departure from established patterns were tolerated because of the safety zone of goodwill the president had created (Baldrige, 1971; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993). This finding implies that presidential success is related to gaining acceptance and respect from key constituents through low-key, pleasant, and non-controversial actions early in the presidential term (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; McCorkle & Archibald, 1982).

*Leader.* Most of the earlier studies portray leaders as the pivotal force behind successful organizations and change efforts (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Fisher, 1988; Nuske, 1993; Sheldon, 2005). Invoking the great college presidents of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Keller (1983) maintains that change is dependent on "a single authority...authorized to initiate, plan, decide, manage, and monitor its members" (p. 35). He also argues that as the designated leader, "a college president must be a manager of change, a navigator who steers his or her institution...The president must give direction to the college and devise the strategies, make the hard decisions, and allocate the resources that will support movement in that direction" (Keller, 1983, pp. 123). In *Leaders: Strategies for Taking Charge*, Bennis and Nanus (1985) reason that leaders are critical to help organizations develop a new vision of what they can be and to mobilize the organization to change toward the new vision. Other scholars (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Leslie & Fretwell, 1996) suggest a far less heavy-handed, top-down model, yet it still depicts central administrators as catalysts for initiating, coordinating, and converging on solutions.

Some scholars view effective leadership as catalytic (Dalton, 1967; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Whetten, 1984). Catalytic leaders concentrate on building support from constituents, on establishing jointly supported objectives, and on fostering respect among all interest groups (Greiner & Schein, 1988; Whetten, 1984). They rely on diplomacy and persuasion; they are willing to compromise on means but unwilling to compromise on ends (Birnbaum, 1988; Walker, 1979). Schon (1963) argues that “champions of change” can expect to encounter resistance to new ideas, and that political behavior is by implication desirable.

*Mediator.* The president is a mediator between shifting power blocs (Baldrige, 1971). The president must “assemble a winning or dominant coalition that will support proposed actions—as one would in a parliamentary form of government” (Whetten, 1984, p. 40). In a case study of the politics and governance at the University of California, Pusser (2004) examines the administration of the UC Office of the President (UCOP) as an interest group. After interviewing UC Regents and chancellors as well as UCOP administrators, he notes that “...institutional leaders in higher education are certainly called upon to mediate and articulate competing interests and demands” (p. 212). In short, this case study illustrates that administrators need to be exceptional mediators because in general higher education institutions are like political arenas. Also, Bensimon and Neumann (1993) focus their qualitative study on leadership teams by interviewing presidents and their executive officers on how they lead change and mediate conflicts, especially when there is strong interest group pressure from external and internal coalitions.

Because change, conflict, power, and political behavior can bring out the darker side of human nature, negative aspects of change should not be ignored by administrators because they constitute the major reasons change is resisted (Dunphy & Stace, 1988; Egan, 1994). Unless they can be muted or overcome, change will likely not occur; if it does, its costs may outweigh its benefits (Egan, 1994). Scholars (Baldrige, 1971; Birnbaum, 1988; Grimes, 1978; Julius et al., 1999) argue that in order for all members of an organization to fully participate in solving the many issues facing higher education, administrators need to mediate effectively between opposing actors and coalitions while

demonstrating a strong, positive commitment to the process of planned change (Baldrige, 1971; Birnbaum, 1988).

*Negotiator.* Bolman and Deal (2003) argue that to be successful, administrators must demonstrate competencies in negotiating the two sides of organizational politics: organizations are both *arenas* for internal politics and *agents* with their own agendas, resources, and strategies. Bolman and Deal (2003) writes, “As arenas, organizations house contests and offer a setting for the ongoing interplay of divergent interests and agendas...As agents, administrators need to recognize that organizations are tools for achieving the purposes of whoever controls them” (p. 238). In a political arena, administrators often need to serve as a negotiator when they experience “managerial dilemma”—how to establish a common direction and coordinate common activity in the face of extraordinary academic diversity and among extremely independent, even isolated academic units and faculty members (Rugg, Warren, & Carpenter, 1981). For instance, although there are multiple vice presidents and deans who are responsible for the institution’s distinct missions, the incentive structure that each of them establishes may not be consistent with one another (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Therefore, it is common for presidents and provosts to negotiate between the political terrain and to deal with various political and professional pressures and may change their message in response to shifting conditions (Rugg, Warren, & Carpenter, 1981; Whetten, 1984).

*Policy Maker.* In higher education, planned change occurs by way of policy creation. In essence, policy making attempts to mitigate the negative effects of conflict through a political process (Baldrige, 1971). He characterizes this activity as the legislative stage, a time when leaders attempt to negotiate policy compliance with their organization members. A policy-making process seeks to balance the interests of individuals and the interests of groups in an attempt to minimize the perceived cost to the organization as a whole. March (1994) cautions that, while this is the goal, agreement is temporary, signaling only the formal end of the issues because virtually all issues resurface.

Since some people find establishing policy an unrewarding activity, policy-making is usually left to administrators (Baldrige, 1971; Bensimon et al., 1989). This leads Clark (1998) to suggest forming a “steering core” whose primary function is to

serve as the decision-making hub of coordinated activities. Bolman and Deal (2003) reason that presidents who use a political frame are sensitive to external interest groups and their strong influence over the policy-making process. March (1994) shows that leaders attempted to control the policy process either overtly, by using their formal authority, or by controlling all prerequisite activities in formal decision-making processes. Also, March (1994) suggests that leaders use these policy processes to legitimize their choices, the choosers, and the organization as a whole. In nearly all cases, leaders attempt to demonstrate that the choices were made intelligently, with planning and sensitivity to the stakeholders' concerns (March, 1994).

*Power Broker.* In *Organizational Power Politics*, Fairholm (1993) pulls together some of the research about power and the specific tactics administrators use, or can use, as a power broker. However, because of a small sample size, these data need to be confirmed and enlarged by further research. Yukl and Tracey (1992) argue that leadership is inherently political and a subset of power, and that the usage of political power is to initiate change by focusing on either accomplishing the will of the leader or the will of the followers. Dalton (1967) provides examples of the informal nature of power relations between line and staff, and suggests that change can only occur when either a new set of actors gains power or it is in the interest of those in power to alter the organization's goals. When leadership in higher education is viewed through the political frame, the leader's power is based on the control of information and manipulation of expertise rather than on official position within a hierarchical structure (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Eckel & Kezar, 2003).

Scholars (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Kellerman, 1987; McClelland & Burnham, 1995; Mintzberg, 1994; Mott, 1997; Pfeffer, 1992) argue that presidents need to learn how to share power. The reason sharing power is important is because the president is no longer the most powerful person on campus all the time on every issue to every political actor and coalition (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Pfeffer, 1992). Although the president can accumulate and exert power by controlling access to information, controlling the budgetary process, allocating resources to preferred projects, and assessing major faculty and administrative appointments, the presence of other sources of power—the trustees' power to make policy and the faculty's professional

authority—seriously limits the president’s discretionary control of organizational activities (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Pfeffer, 1992). As such, it is important for presidents and other administrators to adopt a “power equalization” influence strategy rather than a top-down influence strategy because this shared power strategy increases the understanding of and commitment to the changes, improve the quality of the changes, and encourage democracy in the workplace (Heffron, 1989; Rosenzweig, 1998).

*Problem Solver.* Walker’s (1979) highly personalized observations about presidential leadership incorporate political elements of this complex organization. As such, his observations and comments have an interpretive quality that go beyond the mere recollection of anecdotes. In Walker’s (1979) democratic-political model of leadership, presidents are problem solvers rather than bureaucratic decision makers. The difference is that decision makers see themselves as single-handedly making tough choices, whereas problem solvers see themselves as presiding over a process that involves negotiating, interpreting, and compromising with many powerful individuals over many potentially good solutions. The problem solving style requires that administrators be open and communicative so that all parties have access to the same information, that they consult the people closest to the problem, and that they avoid committing themselves irrevocably or too early to a preferred solution that may undermine the emergence of more plausible options (Walker, 1979; Whetten, 1984). Similar to Bensimon and Neumann’s (1993) conception of leadership, administrators who adhere to this style should be sensitive to giving and sharing credit with others, value patience, and maintain fairness (Whetten, 1984).

*Resource Allocator.* At the institutional level, the most readily available pressure point that administrators have is in the budget process—reallocating resources and restructuring activities, units, and faculty work to address new realities (Chaffee, 1983; Rhoades, 2000). Resources may be salaries, promotion opportunities, capital expenditure, new technology or equipment, or control over people, information, access, or new innovative areas. In a qualitative study based on interviewing forty department heads at four public research universities that had established institution-wide initiatives promoting change in the academic colleges and departments, Rhoades (2000) focuses on how administrators establish clear, fair, and rational criteria for allocating monies to

prioritized activities in a highly variable and politicized environment. A major finding is that in each of the universities, provosts and some deans had pursued a path that was much more linear than interactive, more divisive than collaborative (Rhoades, 2000). In other words, administrators tend to be territorial and keenly focused on acquiring more resources for their own divisions/units, rather than looking to share resources with other units. Chaffee (1983) indicates that resource allocation remains a critical problem because the existing distribution of power is always an important factor in determining who will gain a disproportionate share of new resources as these become available. Also, Baldrige (1971) and Chaffee (1983) argue that as long as organizations continue to share scarce resources, political behavior will occur. As such, administrators must be adept and strategic about allocating scarce resources.

*Strategist/Tactician.* Generally, political behavior within organizations is about control and authority as well as about particular solutions to particular problems. Dimock (1952) sees the president as a tactician who views his/her role as the hand moving the chess pieces, not the chess piece itself. Strauss (1962) uncovers “office politics” and “bureaucratic gamesmanship” and discusses tactics to stay one step ahead of other political actors. Dutton and Walton (1966) examine the tactical-instrumental approach to political behavior and provide recommendations in the area of interdepartmental conflict and collaboration.

In a case study involving the movement of an academic advisement center from Student Affairs to Academic Affairs, Ellis (2000) confirms that having influence on a college-wide committee meant having influence over the planned change and that committee members’ ability to seek and build allies is key to successful participation. Although his research implications are based on a participative model, the political reality of organizations is that those members most influential within the organization will have the most influence in designing and implementing change. Hence, administrators need to be strategic and deliberate when appointing committee members who have relative power and influence (Ellis, 2000).

#### Political Behavior

As expected, the aforementioned ten roles are becoming increasingly more complex and interconnected. Moreover, administrators are expected to become even

more versatile and influential (Kerr, 1963; Walker, 1979). Given that the role of higher education administrators has shifted from that of a traditional bureaucrat to a collaborative politician who needs to make decisive decisions (Association of Governing Board, 2006), having an informed understanding of the kinds of political behavior that lead to desired planned change outcomes is invaluable (Cropanzano, Kacmar, & Bozeman, 1995; Kotter, 1995; Kumar & Thibodeaux, 1990). This next section examines the concept of political behavior.

Virtually everyone who has ever worked in an organization “knows” about or has experienced office politics to some extent (Cropanzano, Kacmar, & Bozeman, 1995; Crowley & Elster, 2006; Drory & Romm, 1990; Lichtenberg, 1998; Zaleznik, 1970). Office politics are the activities and games that people play in order to benefit them and/or the organization. For simplicity purposes, office politics is akin to political behavior in this study. That is, when people engage in office politics, they essentially engage in political behavior with organizational members from all levels (including external constituents) with the aim of influencing them in some capacity, particularly during a planned change process. To this end, administrators must be politically adept at turning individual agendas into common goals because getting work done in any organization, to put it bluntly, is really about playing office politics, such as using personal appeals, doing favors, and ingratiating.

Lichtenberg (1998) argues that since we constantly interact with co-workers and these people might affect our work performance, we should hone our abilities to accurately predict and manage the kinds of interactions that typically occur in a work environment because this is “the essence of good politics: negotiating individual agendas so the work can get done” (p. xiv). Increasingly, this line of reasoning is widely shared by practitioners and scholars (Baldrige, 1971, 1983; Grimes, 1978; Jick, 1993; Pfeffer, 1981, 1992; Reardon, 2004; Schriesheim & Neider, 2006; Zaleznik, 1970).

The political behavior literature is saturated with prescriptive lists of influence tactics, proactive behaviors, and power strategies which are embedded in the political model. Essentially, the political model assumes that competing and shared interests can be identified, that power and authority can directly influence outcomes, and that conflicts will decide winners and losers. Moreover, when people enjoy their stature and power in



organizations, they have self-interests they want to protect. When those interests are threatened or perceived to be threatened, they form coalitions with like-minded political actors to render an outcome that they find suitable for their interests (Beer, 1988; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999).

Recently, scholars are recognizing these four undeniable political realities: 1) Diversity of opinions, values, beliefs, interpretations, and goals in the context of planned change inevitably triggers political behavior (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Warrick, 1994); 2) Change and uncertainty heighten the intensity of political behavior (Pfeffer, 1981, 1992); 3) Political behavior stimulate creativity and debates (Frost & Egri, 1991; Heffron, 1989); and 4) Political behavior can be learned (Newman, 1991; Warrick, 1994). Hence, administrators are advised to be aware of these political realities.

A challenge in understanding power, politics, and influence in organizations is that the terms appear close in meaning. *Power* is the potential or ability to influence decisions and control resources. The predominant view of power is that it is the influence over others' actions, thoughts, and outcomes. Many definitions of power center on the ability of a person to overcome resistance in achieving a result. Some researchers suggest that power lies in the potential, while others focus on use. *Politics* is a way of achieving power. As defined by Pfeffer (1981), "Political behavior involves those activities taken in organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one's preferred outcomes in a situation in which there is uncertainty or disagreement about choices" (p.7). From this angle, political behavior refers to informal approaches to gaining power through means other than merit or luck. *Influence* is close in meaning to power. Influence is also the ability to change behavior, but it tends to be more subtle and indirect than power. Power indicates the ability to affect outcomes with greater facility and ease than influence. Therefore, the exercise of leadership essentially involves the use of power *and* influence—over subordinates as well as superiors—to accomplish their work (Pfeffer, 1981; Yukl, 2002).

#### Perceptions of Political Behavior

Although political behavior has been of interest to organizational scholars for quite some time, there continues to be diverse notions about the construct. In general, two perspectives prevail: one describes the dark side of politics, and the other takes a more

neutral view of politics as a means of facilitating desirable outcomes (Ferris & King, 1991). Multiple perspectives have resulted in multiple definitions being proposed, but a common theme is evident in a number of explanations of politics. This common theme suggests a concern with behavior, primarily interpersonal influence attempts, that is not formally recognized, officially certified, or explicitly accepted by the organization, yet explains much about the intricacies and dynamics of behavior within firms (Mintzberg, 1983).

Such behavior is potentially divisive and can produce conflict, with individuals and/or groups pitted against each other, or against the formal authority structure of the organization. From the self-serving perspective of politics, political behavior are considered in terms of efforts to maximize self-interest, perhaps at the expense of others and/or the organization. On the other hand, Pfeffer (1981, 1992) argues that politics is a natural and pervasive part of organizational life, and has adopted the more neutral view that politics should not be viewed as necessarily negative for organizations. Instead, politics can be positive, and is probably necessary for the survival of organizations and those who operate within them. With this in mind, the definition of political behavior used in this study basically reflects Pfeffer's notions of political behavior—potentially (but not necessarily) negative, yet a pervasive and natural element in organizations.

Since the concept of political behavior tends to be perceived in a rather negative light—some view it as manipulation, coercion, backstabbing, and/or lying—scholars have used different but similar terminologies to get around this sensitive topic by referring to it in a more “neutral” manner, such as proactive behavior (Bateman & Crant, 1993; Grant & Ashford, 2007), persuasion (Kerbel, 1991; Mills, 2000), negotiation (Fisher & Ury, 1991; Kellerman & Cole, 1994; Reardon, 2004), citizenship behavior (Organ, 1988), and most commonly, influence tactics (Cialdini, 2001; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Mowday, 1978; Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). Moreover, existing research provides extensive evidence of the different ways in which organizational members express their political behavior, including taking charge (Crowley & Elster, 2006; Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996; Kouzes & Posner, 2002), predicting others' behaviors (Sashkin & Sashkin, 2003; Van Fleet, 1992), acting in advance to influence individuals and groups (Lichtenberg, 1998; Kipnis & Schmidt,

1988), building social networks (Carmeli & Tishler, 2006; Morrison, 2002), and breaking rules to increase effectiveness (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Morrison, 2006).

In various literatures, the notion of political behavior is often equated with being devious, cunning, and manipulative (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Kakabadse & Parker, 1984). Just as there are scholars who view political behavior in a negative light (Ferris & King, 1991; Lichtenberg, 1998; Reardon, 2004; Van Fleet, 1992), there are scholars (Burnes, 1992; Fairholm, 1993; Kellerman & Cole, 1994; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Madison et al., 1980; Van Wart, 2005; Vigoda, 2003) who indicate that political behavior provides a critical dynamic for planned change. Since the late 1970s, researchers have begun to examine the specific types of behavior used to exercise influence rather than focusing exclusively on power as a source of potential influence (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999). For example, DuBrin (2005) argues that organizational members must be aware of specific power influence tactics when utilizing various political behavior. As such, he provides twelve tactics, with the first eight being most ethical (i.e., develop power contacts through networking; manage your impression; control vital information; keep informed; be courteous, pleasant, and positive; ask influential people to contact your supervisor; avoid political blunders; sincere flattery) and the last four mostly unethical (i.e., backstabbing; embrace-or-demolish; stealing credit; territorial games).

Research indicates that the five most fundamental reasons for why political behavior exists and will probably not go away are: 1) The political nature of organizations; 2) The hierarchical, or pyramid, structure of organizations; 3) The reality of downsizing or restructuring; 4) Peoples' need for power; and 5) Machiavellianism, a tendency to manipulate others for personal gain (DuBrin, 2005). Given that politics permeate all organizational action, many researchers and practitioners are increasingly looking at the college as a political system and less as a collegial environment (Baldrige, 1971; Birnbaum, 1988; Bolman & Deal, 2003; Pfeffer, 1981) because the underlying assumption is that every organizational member and leader can be seen as a political actor who can affect the planned change process and outcome. From this perspective, Clark (1998) suggests that planned change should be viewed as a dynamic process of goal

formation and implementation, with the input of several political actors from different organizational levels.

#### Tactics of Downward, Upward, and Lateral Influence

A survey of studies on political strategies and influence tactics indicates that a number of overlapping tactics are found in the literature (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Mowday, 1978; Porter et al., 1981; Yukl & Falbe, 1990). The research studies conducted by Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson (1980) remains the most precise, detailed, and often-quoted analysis (despite being one of the earliest studies on this topic). They outline eight proactive influence tactics that have proven important in illuminating its operative use (Appendix D). Culled from other studies that followed the Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson (1980) taxonomy, Yukl (2002) provides a revised set of eleven proactive influence tactics that could be used as part of an administrator's repertoire of political behavior (Appendix E), Fairholm (1993) offers twenty-two power tactics to influence others (Appendix F), and Van Wart (2005) defines some terms of people-oriented and organizational-oriented behaviors (Appendix G) for administrators to put into practice when leading and implementing change.

Given the comprehensiveness based on extensive research, the researcher turned to four lists (i.e., Appendix D, E, F, and G) of most commonly used influence tactics (which were not exhaustive by any means) as guides to better understand the range of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change and their perceptions of these political behavior. The next section highlights nine of the most widely reported tactics of downward, upward, and lateral influence in organizations.

- 1) Assertiveness: This involves demanding, telling a person to comply, expressing anger verbally, pointing out rules, or becoming a nuisance. Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson (1980) and Mowday (1978) find a greater use of these tactics in influencing persons at all levels—superiors, co-workers, and subordinates.
- 2) Coalition/Forming Alliances with Others: This involves such things as the use of steady pressure for compliance by “obtaining the support of co-workers” and/or by “obtaining the support of subordinates” (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). This technique is more often used to influence superiors than to influence subordinates or colleagues.

- 3) Exchange of Benefits: This strategy is used by managers with superiors, peers and subordinates to get their work done. It involves such things as “offering an exchange” or “offering to make personal sacrifices.” Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson (1980) and Mowday (1978) mention the use of this strategy in organizational change.
- 4) Ingratiation: This involves making the other person feel important, inflating the importance of a request, showing a need, asking politely, acting friendly or humbly, or pretending that the other person is really going to make the decision. It is used to get one’s way with the boss as well as to persuade co-workers and subordinates to act in specific ways (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980).
- 5) Manipulation: Informing or arguing in such a way the recipient is not aware that he/she is being influenced is termed “manipulation” (Mowday, 1978; Porter et al., 1981). This is a common method of upward influence. Allen et al. (1979) point out that this category of tactics involves withholding, distorting the information, or overwhelming the target with too much information.
- 6) Reasoning/Persuasive Arguments/Rationality: Writing detailed plans, explaining the reason for a request, writing memos, and giving facts and data are all tactics involving rationality. This tactic is used most often and most effectively to influence superiors at all levels of the organization. When they are presented with documents or logical arguments, superiors appear to pay more attention to requests.
- 7) Threats or Defiance: This strategy implies that negative consequences will occur if the agent’s plan is not accepted. It can be used at both levels, that is, to influence superiors (defiance) and subordinates (threats).
- 8) Upward Appeal: This involves bringing additional pressure for conformity on the target of influence by calling a person at a higher level in the organization to help. Included in this strategy are such tactics as “making a formal appeal to higher levels” or “obtaining the informal support of higher-ups.”
- 9) Use of Sanctions: The use of sanctions draws upon organizational rewards and punishments. It includes both informal exchange, such as promoting interpersonal attraction by praising the superior (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980) and formal exchange, such as rewarding (Porter et al., 1981).

Scholars (Allen et al., 1979) reason that leaders and managers are unlikely to use all the aforementioned influence tactics in a given situation. Instead, they choose an influence tactic that fits the demands and needs of the circumstance or in the moment.

Many agree that those leaders who tend to be most successful know when and how to adjust their tactics to the type of environment, the participants who take part in the political game, the type of interface they use, and other contextual conditions (Allen et al., 1979; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Mowday, 1978). Yukl and Tracey (1992) find support for this conclusion in a study with 120 managers, along with about 1,200 subordinates, peers, and superiors. They conclude that an effective influence tactic is one that leads to task commitment and is used by managers who were perceived to be effective by the various raters. The results suggest that the most effective tactics are rational persuasion, inspirational appeal, and consultation. In contrast, the least effective influence tactics are pressure, coalition formation, and appealing to legitimate authority. Yukl and Tracey (1992) note that any influence tactic can trigger resistance if it is inappropriate for the situation or is applied unskillfully. Not surprisingly, tact, diplomacy, and insight are required for effective application of influence tactics.

Recognizing this, scholars (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Kellerman, 1987; McClelland & Burnham, 1995; Mintzberg, 1993; Pfeffer, 1992) argue that college administrators, especially presidents, need to learn how to share power. The reason sharing power is important is because the president is no longer always the most powerful person on campus on every issue and to every political actor and coalition (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Pfeffer, 1992). As such, it would be important for presidents and other administrators to adopt a “power equalization” influence strategy rather than a top-down influence strategy because this shared power strategy increases the understanding of and commitment to the changes, improves the quality of the changes, and encourages democracy in the workplace (Heffron, 1989; Rosenzweig, 1998).

The guiding philosophy seems to be that seasoned administrators know how to lead the process of planned change and are equally competent in gaining the trust and support needed during change implementation and institutionalization. Literature, however, suggests that mid-level administrators, senior-level administrators, and even presidents are using positional power tactics rather than proactive influence tactics or constructive political behavior to achieve desired organizational outcomes. Even so, the verdict is still out as to what kinds of political behavior (e.g., collaborating, relationship building, negotiating, coalition forming, bargaining) community college administrators

are really engaging in to influence others. Because organizations are social entities that involve a struggle for resources, personal conflicts, and a variety of influence tactics executed by individuals and groups to obtain benefits and goals in different ways (Molm, 1997), more qualitative studies on this topic are needed. This is one of the impetuses for proposing this study—to explore and understand what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change.

However, there are three major obstacles to studying political behavior: 1) The ambiguity and pervasiveness of the issue; 2) The relatively recent interest in this phenomenon (started since the early 1980s); and 3) The methodological difficulties that arise in empirical quantitative research of this kind (Vigoda, 2003, p. 186). To overcome these obstacles, more empirical efforts to illuminate this phenomenon are needed. Specifically, studies need to adopt a sophisticated research design that takes into account participants' self-reflections, perceptions, and behaviors. Examples of such research approaches might include: 1) Commitment for the independence of the study from higher levels in the organization; 2) A guarantee to participant of its confidentiality; and 3) Creating a high level of confidence between the researcher and the participants. For these reasons, Vigoda (2003) believes that the best way of overcoming obstacles in any study of political behavior may be the use of interviews as a means to build greater confidence and openness between the researcher and the participants.

### Conclusion

As suggested by Ferris et al. (1996), “there is a vast area of social and political dynamics in organizations that remains largely unexplored.” (p. 262). With that in mind, the research gap that this study addressed focused on increasing understanding of community college administrator perceptions of the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading planned change. The aim of this chapter was to review relevant literature as a means to familiarize readers with a broader understanding of four domains—organizational change, planned change, administrative leadership, and political behavior. The rationales for choosing these four domains are as follows.

First, it is important to understand the context of this study by recognizing the concept of organizational change because community college administrators are expected to be able to lead various change efforts/initiatives and achieve desired organizational

outcomes. Given the complexity of organizational change, it behooves administrators to have a firm grasp of the knowledge and theories associated with this dynamic process. Second, administrators need to recognize the specific context of leading planned change. Because community colleges, by their nature, constantly make and remake themselves for strategic purposes (Alfred, 2005), engaging the faculty, staff, and administrators in the planned change process is an ongoing requirement and expectation for the leaders of these institutions in order to sustain the colleges' viability across changing conditions.

Third, it is important to be familiar with the concept of leadership and the administrative behaviors associated with being a leader. With this understanding, readers will then be able to better recognize how the role of the college administrator was conceptualized as well as to distinguish the ten administrative roles in organizational hierarchy because these roles to a large extent shape the political behavior of community college administrators (Northouse, 2007; Yukl, 2002). After examining the administrative roles, the next step is to comprehend the political perspective that shapes how administrators go about influencing others to work towards achieving desired organizational outcomes



### Chapter III

#### Research Methods

The focus of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology inherent in this study. To examine what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change, the researcher begins this chapter by laying out the context of the study and explaining the research design. This is followed by highlighting the population and sample as well as the institutional overview and research setting. The organization of the data is then explained in depth, particularly with data collection and analysis and the standards of quality issues (i.e., internal validity, external validity, and reliability). The chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the role of the researcher and what was done to correct researcher bias.

#### Context of the Study

To increase understanding of what kinds of political behavior community college administrators engaged in when leading planned change, the researcher employed a qualitative case study approach. The rationale was twofold: 1) Unlike quantitative methods, qualitative inquiry requires a data collection instrument that is sensitive to underlying meanings when gathering and interpreting data about self-perceptions and reflections; and 2) The case study method “helps us to understand processes of events in ways that are more in depth” (Merriam, 1998, p. 1). Similarly, Yin (1994) adds that research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspectives of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making significant contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education. For that reason, the researcher gathered the data by means of conducting individual interviews with 48 community college administrators.

The two “variables” (the term variable was used for proxy purposes only) that the researcher examined in this study were *the political behavior that effectively initiates and*

*guides change and achieve desired organizational outcome.* The underlying interest was to explore how engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change relates to the outcomes of planned change. In other words, the researcher was interested in understanding the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the community college administrators utilized throughout the planned change process to achieve their desired organizational outcomes. The endpoint would be whether the administrators were successful in accomplishing the intended organizational goals or objectives, not whether the change itself was effective or whether the administrators were effective. In this light, community college administrators who managed to achieve their desired outcomes may be perceived as having greater success during planned change than those who fell short of reaching their end goals.

Although it was beyond the scope of this study to examine the effectiveness element of change leadership, the effectiveness of various political behavior, or the effectiveness of various change outcomes, it was difficult to ignore or overlook the notion of effectiveness entirely, particularly when there are robust research studies claiming that there are significant differences between effective and ineffective change leadership (Bennis, 1989; Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Kotter, 2001; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; Walker, 1979). As such, the researcher took into consideration that political behavior were used by both effective and ineffective community college administrators when he collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data. Similarly, the researcher recognized that some political behavior were probably more effective than others when trying to influence others, overcome obstacles, and achieve desired outcomes. However, the researcher did not intend to draw any conclusions about what traits, characteristics, qualities or behaviors will make someone an effective or ineffective administrator nor about the effectiveness of various planned change process and outcomes and the impact they have on the institutions.

Instead, it was the researcher's intent to explore and understand: 1) The political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the community college administrators engaged in to achieve desired organizational outcomes; 2) Whether the use of political behavior varied across the three administrative levels; 3) Whether types of the change initiatives varied across administrative levels; and 4) Whether the administrators

believed they achieved their desired organizational outcomes. To do so, the researcher needed a conceptual framework to provide some context to understand what the administrators did during the planned change process. Hence, this was the underlying reason for using Kotter's (1995, 2001) Eight Steps for Leading Change Model. Similar to the point that was made earlier, the researcher surmised that community college administrators who were more successful during planned change tended to engage in each of the eight steps. Those who did not recognize the need to take into account each of the eight steps when leading change or choose to ignore or skip any of the eight steps may be less successful (Kotter, 1995).

### Research Design

To examine what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in, the researcher incorporated a case study of an administrative situation written by the Harvard School of Education (Appendix C) to get the administrators to start talking about what they would have done in that administrative situation as a means to elicit their responses about the topic at hand—their political behavior. The rationale for using a case study was because the purpose of case studies, in general, involves an in-depth examination of a single instance or event. In this particular case study, the examination was that of an administrative situation at a fictitious higher education institution that many administrators can identify with and relate to.

There were several reasons for choosing this research design to be that of a qualitative case study approach. First, understanding both the perceptions of the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was a complicated, contextual, and confounding process that called for a comprehensive method that accounts for these interrelated elements (Goodman & Kurke, 1982; Pettigrew & Whipp, 1991). From this perspective, the case study approach was particularly relevant and necessary because of the complex and overlapping perspectives, concepts, and experiences inherent in engaging in different kinds of political behavior when leading planned change (Patton, 2002). Second, the case study approach was particularly useful in studying loosely-coupled systems such as educational institutions (Weick, 2000) because exploration of the perceptions related to planned change within such systems required flexibility,

openness to unanticipated insights, and the ability to fully capture the “native’s point of view” (Weiss, 1994).

Also, case studies are useful because they allow researchers to collect information from a variety of informants across the organization, helping to form a complicated picture that allows for diverse and competing explanations of the phenomenon for deeper understanding (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Stake, 1995). Moreover, the case study methodology has come under increasing acceptance as a research strategy that complements other scientific approaches (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1995). Lastly, this methodology is most appropriate when the research interest is embedded within a context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002). For these reasons, scholars agree that the case study methodology is the best way to study a planned change process within higher education institutional (Armenakis & Bedein, 1999; Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Eckel & Kezar, 2003; Goodman & Kurke, 1982).

After delineating the case study as the overarching research design, it was important to recognize that there are many different features associated with qualitative case studies, two of which will be highlighted (Stake, 1995). First, in terms of overall intent, this particular study was largely *descriptive* because the goal was to present a detailed account of the phenomenon—community college administrator perceptions of their own political behavior during the planned change process. To some extent, this study was also *interpretive* in the sense that the researcher had developed conceptual categories to theorize this phenomenon. Second, since the data was collected and analyzed from three administrative levels at three community colleges, this research consisted of three case studies—for the three administrative levels—rather than one big aggregate case study of all 48 administrators. By disaggregating the data, the researcher acknowledged the differences that exist across the three administrative levels in terms of position, power, and influence as well as perhaps the use of various political behavior. In brief, this was the reason that made this study unique—it explored the political behavior of presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators as three separate groups.

## Population and Sample

There are 28 public community colleges in Michigan and three were included in the study based on the following three criteria. Given that the context of this research focused on the process of leading planned change (which could take a considerable amount of time), it seemed logical to interview those community college presidents and administrators who have served in their current positions for at least a year—the first criterion. The rationale was that the researcher wanted the administrators to discuss what political behavior they have engaged in at their respective institutions, not what they did elsewhere many years ago because the environments during that time period could have been drastically different. By asking the administrators to discuss a recent change experience, the researcher reasoned that this particular change process may still be fresh in their minds.

Considering also that the focus was to explore what kinds of political behavior community college administrators engaged in within the context of planned change, the researcher was mindful to not conduct interviews at institutions that recently experienced a highly volatile situation or crisis—the second criterion. The rationale was that it might have been more difficult to access and interview administrators at institutions that may be mired with intense internal politics (e.g., faculty voting no confidence in the president, impasse in contract negotiation, and trustee micromanagement). Hence, if the researcher was to interview them he doubted that he would have gotten their honest and unfiltered responses.

Moreover, since the purpose of this study was to explore what kinds of political behavior engaged in when leading planned change, the researcher selected those community colleges that were categorically similar to one another—the third criterion. Doing so allowed the researcher to better frame this study within a more specific context, particularly during data analysis and interpretation. The next section provides an institutional overview of the three community colleges.

## Institutional Overview

Community colleges are an absolutely vital component to Michigan's higher education and play a primary role in the state's economic development. The pattern of coordination for most community colleges in Michigan is that of local system

coordination, as opposed to state controlled. That is, such coordination—which can be described as collaborative service delivery—has in the past been the result of local initiatives rather than of federal requirements or state policies (Cohen & Brawer 2003). As a result of this local system pattern of coordination, it can be said that Michigan community college administrators and their boards of trustees do in fact have a fair amount of autonomy and control over how key decisions are made (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). That is, decisions concerning articulation agreements, program reviews, campus policies, and administration and governance are generally made at the institutional level.

The three suburban, comprehensive, multi-campus community colleges in this study are located in three different counties and share the following characteristics in common:

- 1) Located in cities with a population of 100,000+ people;
- 2) Publicly funded and community-based institution of higher education that focuses on transfer education, career preparation, learning outreach, student and community enrichment, economic and workforce development, and student success services;
- 3) Students take classes at the main campus, satellite campuses, and extension centers;
- 4) A seven-member elected Board of Trustees governs the college;
- 5) The president has served in his current position for at least three years;
- 6) Serve 20,000 credit students and 8,000 non-credit students annually;
- 7) Offer 100+ credit programs in business, health and public service, humanities and social science, math and natural sciences, and technology;
- 8) Grant certificates and degrees to over 1,400 students annually;
- 9) Offer an increasing number of distance learning courses;
- 10) Have an active and strong faculty union;
- 11) Employ more part-time faculty than full-time faculty (approximately 2:1 ratio);
- 12) Employ more than 400 full-time employees with at least three bargaining units; and
- 13) Have an annual budget of at least \$50,000,000.

The robust sample of 48 community college administrators included three presidents, 27 senior-level administrators, and 18 mid-level administrators (Table 4). This breakdown is as follows:

Table 4: Sample of Community College Administrators

|                             | Institution A | Institution B | Institution C |
|-----------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Presidents                  | 1             | 1             | 1             |
| Senior-Level Administrators | 11            | 7             | 9             |
| Mid-Level Administrators    | 5             | 9             | 4             |
| Total                       | 17            | 17            | 14            |

To identify senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, the researcher used an updated organizational chart. Senior-level administrators were those who reported directly to the president and/or were members of the executive cabinet, heads of divisions, and/or academic deans. Mid-level administrators were those who were two to three levels below the president, who directed/oversaw department(s), and/or are members of the president’s administrative staff. In hopes of interviewing a diverse group of administrators, the researcher used random sampling to identify potential participants by considering (a) the administrators’ functional roles in order to have as many departments/divisions/units represented as possible, (b) geographic worksite in order to include those who work at a satellite campus, and (c) willingness to participate in the study.

For each institution, the researcher identified 20-21 administrators with the hope of getting 15 per institution (or a 75% response rate). Fortunately, given the overwhelming interest to participate in this study, he interviewed every administrator who agreed to be interviewed. In fact, the researcher interviewed three more administrators that he had originally anticipated. Only full-time employees were interviewed because generally speaking they were most directly involved with leading planned change efforts and also were most likely to use their power and political behavior to influence others during the change process.

To be brief, the main reason for choosing to narrow the focus on the three administrative groups instead of including other stakeholders (e.g., trustees, faculty, and

support staff) was because the researcher wanted to explore and better understand the political behavior of those who were actually leading the planned change process. On the whole in terms of functional responsibilities, trustees govern and approve budgets, faculty members teach and design curriculum, and support staff aids in carrying out different aspects of the planned change. Collectively, these three groups typically were not designated to lead the change process largely because of the nature of their day-to-day roles and responsibilities.

### Research Setting

Of the four major Carnegie institutional types—research universities, regional universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges—in the U.S., the researcher chose the latter for five reasons. The first reason is that community colleges as a whole are fairly young postsecondary institutions. In fact, most of them were founded in the 1960s to keep up with the demand for access to college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Although most community colleges have successfully carried out its diverse missions (i.e., provide transfer education, vocational education, remedial education, community education, community service, and workforce development) in the last five decades, an increasing number of community colleges are now experiencing some “growing pains” in terms of how best to juggle competing priorities during these difficult times.

The second reason is that community colleges are expected to be responsive to the needs of the community, particularly with changes in the economy and the demographics (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). It would be an understatement to say that today’s community colleges have done a terrific job remaking themselves to keep pace with public demands and increasing competition, especially from the for-profit postsecondary institutions. Whether community colleges could continue to quickly respond to a changing landscape and keep their competitive edge is still to be determined. The third reason is that a fair number of those working at today’s community colleges tend to have been employed there for a very long time. With an aging workforce that is perhaps entrenched in conventional ways of doing business, there are growing concerns that some organizational members may exert a certain level of resistance to change and innovative practices (Boggs, 2003).



The fourth reason is that generally speaking, most community colleges are smaller in size than regional and research universities in terms of number of employees, enrollment, resources, and physical setting. Therefore, decision-making tends to be more centralized with fewer administrators (as compared to most research and regional universities) and with the chief executive officer being involved in many more facets (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Given its smaller size, the fifth reason is that many community college faculty and faculty unions desire and expect a more collegial decision-making process. That is, they often insist that administration engages in process consultation when proposing a change idea or pursuing a certain course of action. Depending on the history of the institution and who “runs the college,” the community college environment can be quite politicized (Boggs, 2003).

It was because of the interconnections of these five dimensions that piqued the researcher’s interest in exploring how administrators would go about utilizing political behavior when leading planned change. Put differently, there is a paradox in the sense that community colleges are fairly young institutions that have an aging, entrenched workforce that might potentially be resistant to change. How each college’s president, senior-level administrator, and mid-level administrator go about working with their faculty and faculty union could determine whether any planned change effort/initiative would come to fruition (Boggs, 2003). Like Julius, Baldrige and Pfeffer (1999), the researcher believe that this “delicate line” that the administrators need to walk along has everything to do with the political behavior that they employ in order to move change forward and get change done. According to Lichtenberg (1998) and Reardon (2004), it is by utilizing the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that allows the administrators to quickly respond to the changing landscape, manage the increasing pressure to be “all things to all people,” and deal with potential resisters.

Having discussed the reasons for choosing the community college as the research setting, the next section focuses on why the researcher chose the three community colleges in the sample for this study. There were two reasons. The primary reason was attributed to regional purposes given that the context in which these three organizations operated was similar in nature. A case in point was that the state of Michigan was undergoing unprecedented changes at the time of the study, especially in trying to

revitalize and sustain its economic workforce and development. While other states were negatively impacted, Michigan was perhaps hit hardest of all because of unprecedented job cuts, plant closings, and/or outsourcing associated with the American auto industry. Consequently, community colleges (known for their open access and comprehensive services) were expected to quickly adapt and respond to a variety of complex challenges within their environment because they had the following conditions in common (Cohen & Brawer, 2003):

- 1) Continuing scarcity of resources
- 2) Changing student and staff demographics
- 3) Shifting emphasis from teaching to student learning and outcomes assessment
- 4) Developing technology that absorbs an increasing proportion of the operating budget and challenges traditional instructional delivery methods
- 5) Increasing regulation by external agencies
- 6) Competition from private sector providers of high-quality training
- 7) Blurring of service boundaries as a result of distance learning and internet use
- 8) Reduced emphasis on degree completion and growing interest in other forms of credentialing
- 9) An unimaginable barrage of information.

Indeed, these three community colleges were grappling with some, if not all, of these challenges. Hence, how community college administrators responded to these challenges in a politicized environment will largely determine which political behavior to engage in when leading planned change, whether or not to continue utilizing certain political behavior, and the outcomes of their change efforts.

The second intention for choosing these three community colleges was because of convenience. Without any personal or professional connections, the researcher reasoned that he might potentially experience more difficulty gaining access if he was to attempt to interview community college administrators from other states. Given that there are 28 Michigan community colleges to choose from, the researcher felt that he should utilize his networks in the local community college system to create more buy-in for his research study, to increase his chances of getting more participants, and to gather richer data.

## Data Collection

To get at what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change, the researcher developed a carefully woven semi-structured interview protocol (Appendix D). To assure that the questions would be clearly understood and yield meaningful data related to administrators' political behavior, the researcher tested the interview protocol with a president, a vice president, and a dean at another Michigan community college. This proved to be invaluable because they offered tremendous insights on how to tweak the research questions, rethink the interview protocol sequences, rephrase the responses to be more concise, and approach the interviews. Based on their recommendations, the initial protocol questions were modified for clarity and a few were omitted to avoid placing participants in a judgmental or defensive role.

The first step in gaining access was to get buy-in from the three presidents. Since the researcher already knew President A, he got President A on board first. He then asked President A if he could ask President B to be a part of the study. After the researcher briefed President B over the telephone about the purpose of the study, he also got on board. Similarly, as a result of Dr. Richard Alfred's connection with President C, the researcher now had the support from all three presidents. The researcher then e-mailed the presidents (and subsequently their administrators) an invitation letter along (Appendix A) with a consent form (Appendix B), a brief description of the study (Appendix C), the interview protocol (Appendix D), and a Harvard case study (Appendix E) so that they would be able to review them in advance. Also, the researcher asked the presidents to inform their respective administrators of the study (which they did) and to encourage them to volunteer to be interviewed.

The researcher worked with two presidents' administrative assistants and one vice president's administrative assistant to schedule the campus visits by providing them with some available dates. Subsequently, the administrative assistants then scheduled the interviews with various senior-level and mid-level administrators' administrative assistants. After the interviews have been scheduled, the researcher sent a reminder e-mail to the administrators. In total, the researcher made a total of ten campus visits from October to December 2007: four to Institution A, four to Institution B, and three to Institution C. With the exception of one telephone interview in a conference room with a

mid-level administrator at Institution B, the other interviews were all face-to-face in a conference room or in the administrators' offices.

The data consisted of individual interviews (lasting approximately 60 minutes) with the 48 community college administrators (see Appendix F). With the participant's consent (they all consented), the researcher used a digital recorder to record every interview as the primary means of data collection. To avoid potential incidents of low battery or malfunction, an extra digital recorder was brought to each interview. Also with the administrator's consent, the researcher took handwritten notes to capture notable references, key points, nonverbal communication, and/or overall impressions for field note purposes.

To get the community college administrators to warm up to the idea of discussing their political behavior during the interviews, the researcher decided to do two things to minimize analytic chaos and avoid positive biases. First, he was mindful to not use the term political behavior (both orally and in written communications) or other related words/phrases (e.g., politics, office politics, political tactics, and political activities) because some people naturally viewed political behavior in a rather negative light (Lichtenberg, 1998; Reardon, 2004). Instead, he used a similar, yet neutral term—*influence tactic*—largely to avoid potential negative bias and initial resistance associated with disclosing sensitive information about what the administrators have done (directly or indirectly, with good or ill intent, for personal gain or organizational benefit) to influence others politically.

Accordingly, since the primary research question was to examine what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change, using the term *influence tactics* allowed me to capture a broader range of responses because this term was easier to understand and more palatable than the term political behavior. Moreover, the term political behavior was perhaps more confusing than *influence tactic* (upon hearing it) because the administrators needed to first interpret what political behavior meant and then maybe having to pick and choose which political behavior(s) they wanted to disclose or discuss.

Second, the researcher asked them (via e-mail after they have agreed to be interviewed) to read and reflect on a case study (written by the Harvard School of

Education) about an administrative situation at a higher education institution as a springboard for discussion *before* he met with them individually. Since the case study was four pages long, having the administrators read it beforehand allowed them to be familiar with the case study and to have thought through their reactions and responses as well as to make better use of the interview time with them (five administrators typed up their responses). This decision proved to be a good one because not only were the administrators prepared to share their thoughts and comments at the start of their interviews, they were equally ready to discuss their own influence tactics and what they have learned from engaging in these political behavior. Similarly, the researcher believed using this case study helped tremendously in terms of providing a good foundation to ground his examination and analysis of the administrator perceptions of their political behavior.

The researcher started each semi-structured interview by casually getting to know the participants, explaining the purpose of the research study, and giving them an opportunity to ask me questions. Next, the researcher shared the following preliminary information with every participant: 1) Describe the study and review assurances stated in the IRB application; 2) Request permission to digitally record and take notes during the interview; and 3) Reinforce the need for candor in presenting both positive and negative experiences and perceptions of the change process. The researcher then reviewed the consent form, asked the participant to sign two copies, and gave him/her a copy for his/her record. Moreover, the participants were advised that they could freely decline to answer any question if they so choose.

After attempting to create a “safe space,” the researcher invited the participants to share their thoughts and reactions about the Harvard School of Education case study, specifically how they would have approached the change scenario (Appendix D). The rationale for including a case study was threefold: 1) To minimize analytic chaos; 2) To avoid positive bias; and 3) To provide a common context to understand community college administrators’ political behavior.

After the community college administrators had a chance to discuss the case study (and indirectly sharing their personal views, preferences, and biases in terms of influence tactics and decision making), the researcher proceeded to ask them general questions

about their current functional responsibilities to get them to open up, such as “Tell me more about your current roles and responsibilities.” Subsequently, he asked them to reflect on the planned change initiatives that they have led, how they overcame resistance, what they have learned, and their insights on change management. Based on their responses and how the interview was flowing, the researcher asked follow-up probing questions to ascertain what kinds of political behavior they have engaged in to achieve desired organizational outcomes.

In brief, asking questions in this format yielded more varied responses because this prompted the community college administrators to discuss their political behavior without the researcher’s direct priming. In the same vein, following this protocol alleviated some of the initial concerns about potentially getting their “official” interpretations of what actions (or lack of actions) were considered political behavior rather than what really happened when they engaged in political behavior during the change process.

To express appreciation for their willingness to be interviewed, the researcher sent every administrator a handwritten thank you card immediately after each campus visit. Also, after he has completed all the interviews at each campus, he e-mailed the three presidents to thank them again for participating in his study and for encouraging their administrators to participate as well. Likewise, the researcher sent a handwritten thank you card to the respective administrative assistants who helped coordinate the interview schedules.

The community college administrators’ identities and campus affiliations were kept confidential at all times. As such, only the researcher would know the complete list of participants and be able to decipher the codes associated with each transcript (Appendix F). Recorded interview data were transcribed as soon as possible following each campus visit and the transcriptions were kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher’s office drawer. Included in each transcript were field notes of the participants’ verbal comments (not captured on the digital recorder), nonverbal communication such as body language, voice inflections, unusual intensity and expressions as well as the researcher’s impressions and reactions. At the conclusion of the study, the researcher deleted the digital recordings and shredded the transcripts.

Given the interest in examining what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change, this study did not include participant observations and document reviews because these two data collection tools did not apply. Not only would it have been impossible to capture each community college administrators' political behavior during the various planned change processes, it would have been equally unattainable to cull information about their self-perceptions of their political behavior by means of gathering various documents because this information was unlikely to be shared publicly in the first place, especially to the media or in any document for that matter.

### Data Analysis

Since the primary research question was to examine what kinds of political behavior administrators engaged in when leading planned change, the primary focus was on the three administrative levels, not the three community colleges per se. In other words, findings associated with what presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators—as three distinctive groups—believed were the political behavior that they engaged in when leading planned change will be discussed. Put differently, it was the aggregate findings of all three presidents, all 27 senior-level administrators, and all 18 mid-level administrators that were at the heart of this study, **not** the aggregate findings of the administrators at each of the three community colleges.

The interview transcripts represented a significant body of raw data to be analyzed to detect important patterns, categories, and experiences regarding the political behavior of community college administrators during planned change. Therefore, only data that reflected or provided insights regarding the political behavior that community college administrators engaged in when leading planned change were highlighted, coded, and analyzed. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, the researcher used deductive coding procedures to make meaning of the interview transcriptions (Creswell, 2003).

Using the constant comparative method, the researcher started the first phase of data analysis during the data collection process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As perceptions and experiences were disclosed during the interviews and preliminary patterns and categories began to emerge, the researcher frequently reviewed the body of

data to identify, highlight, and note those data that might be consistent or inconsistent with the emerging categories. In addition to jotting down notes and comments in the analytic memo, the researcher often thought about what the data was telling him, what it was saying. At the same time he suspended judgment so that he can take in all the data, not simply the ones that he liked or wanted to discuss.

Having had prior experience in coding and analyzing qualitative data, the researcher took the following approach to conducting a more thorough data analysis for this project. Before he did any coding, he read Charmaz (2006) and reread Straus and Corbin (1990) to solidify his understanding of qualitative data analysis and determine which steps he needed to take for this project (recognizing that this was not an ethnographic or grounded theory study). Also, the researcher read every transcript for two purposes: 1) To get a general sense of what every administrator discussed in terms of their political behavior; and 2) To formulate initial thoughts about the collective interview data. Since the researcher read every transcript as soon as it was transcribed, he ended up reading the transcripts from Institution A, B, and C in that order largely because he conducted the campus interviews first with Institution A, then B and C.

After the researcher printed out the transcripts (with the text on the left side of the page), he started line-by-line coding by writing down the initial open codes on the right side of the page. Following the completion of coding all 48 transcripts line-by-line, the researcher reread each transcript and the open codes to confirm that the codes match the data (they all seemed to match pretty well). He then attentively highlighted the data (which essentially became the quotes that he used to illustrate specific political behavior in subsequent chapters) that corresponded with the open codes. In total, there were 1961 open codes: 318 for presidents, 636 for senior-level administrators and 1007 for mid-level administrators. The 1961 open codes were eventually collapsed into 85 selective codes.

As a side note, the researcher did give serious consideration to using coding software but decided against it largely because he was not convinced that he needed to use it for this project after having used it on another team project. The main reason was because the coding software produced more confusion and chaos during the data



deduction process—one that could be avoided by manually coding line-by-line on the printouts.

For organizational purposes, the researcher created 48 Excel files—each file contained all the respective open codes for that one administrator. To keep track of repeated open codes, the researcher logged that information in a different column within the same Excel file. For example, if an open code “build relationships with faculty” appeared five times in a transcript, he noted the number five next to it. As expected, there were some repeated open codes throughout each transcript and across all the 48 transcripts. Some of the common ones included: aligning change with mission; selling benefits; collecting data; creating a business plan; identifying key players; involving others in decision making; recognizing that change was slow; making incremental changes; getting supervisor’s support; and knowing the president’s style.

Subsequently, to better manage the huge volume of data, the researcher carefully sorted every open code into selective codes with the intent of clustering the codes into like categories. During this sorting process, he started to piece together what the data was telling him and took notice of how the codes were converging. At the same time, he continued to be open and reflective so that he could accurately portray the evidence gleaned from the extraordinary amount of data. Eventually, he grouped the open and selective codes into three Word documents—one for each of the three administrative groups. In total, there were 85 selective codes for the 1961 open codes: 27 for presidents (Appendix L), 29 for senior-level administrators (Appendix M), and 29 for mid-level administrators (Appendix N).

Next, the researcher evaluated every selective code to determine the 23 axial codes (i.e., seven for presidents, eight for senior-level administrators, and eight for mid-level administrators) that best captured the various political behavior when leading planned change for each of the three administrative levels. Given that the codes were now more organized and classified, he began to interpret and make sense of the key ideas and central concepts associated with what were the core political behavior. At this junction, he delicately juggled between suspending his judgment (to allow for new information, thoughts, and ideas to seep in) and making meaning of this dynamic topic to capture

significant insights. When certain ideas were illuminated or when the researcher had an “aha moment,” he wrote them down in his analytic memo.

After a thorough analysis of the codes, reanalysis of the categories, and interpretation of the findings, the researcher was able to infer the community college administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (the 23 axial codes) when leading planned change. Next, he reviewed the transcripts to select those quotes that delineated the axial codes to present as evidence and illustrate as examples. In total, 520 quotes were selected: 47 from the presidents, 222 from senior-level administrators, and 251 from mid-level administrators. For obvious reasons, the researcher will not include all 520 quotes in the subsequent chapters. Rather, he will include those quotes that best exemplified the kinds of political behavior community college administrators engaged in when leading planned change.

#### Standards of Quality

All research is concerned with producing valid and reliable knowledge in an ethical manner (Merriam, 1998, p. 198). In other words, if the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, how can we be sure the researcher is a valid and reliable instrument? In designing this study, factors such as validity, reliability, and generalizability were carefully considered with two goals in mind: 1) To produce a robust study that was rigorously conducted; and 2) To present insights and conclusions that ring true to readers, educators, and other researchers (Merriam, 1998, p. 199). To this end, every effort was made by the researcher to examine the research problem from multiple perspectives in order to compare findings. For example, the researcher identified and re-examined individual data elements that seemed inconsistent with the body of data collected. Also, he was mindful to proceed in a careful and thoughtful manner to ensure objectivity and accuracy throughout every step. As such, he incorporated some deliberate and specific checks-and-balances into the data analysis process to minimize research biases as much as possible. This next section will discuss the steps that the researcher has taken to improve the standards of quality issues.

*Internal Validity.* Internal validity deals with the question of how research findings match reality. Put another way, do the findings capture what is really there? Ratcliffe (1983) noted that “since data do not speak for themselves, there is always an

interpreter or a translator” (p. 149). The researcher addressed the issue of internal validity by taking the following six action steps. First, he conducted all 48 individual interviews in a three-month period—from October to December 2007. Doing so enabled him to concentrate on the interviews, processed what was taking place more intently, and paid close attention to what the data was saying.

Second, to capture the participants’ constructions of reality (that is, how they understand the world), the researcher used a Harvard School of Education case study to ground the analysis of the kinds of political behavior. By doing so in this type of research, he was able to understand the perspectives of those involved in the leading change phenomenon, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what happened (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The third step was to conduct member checking of transcripts with selected participants (by e-mailing them individually and attaching their transcripts) from all three colleges immediately after he finished transcribing the interviews to ensure that the data accurately reflected the participants’ meaning and intent. Out of the nine participants (three participants per college), only one responded with the request to make very slight changes to the words and phrases, not to the meaning, that this informant used during the interview. Also, the researcher has taken tentative interpretation back to a participant from whom he derived the data from and asked him if the results were plausible. The participant told the researcher that, indeed, the findings are congruent with reality.

Also, the findings of this study were cross-checked for accuracy by conducting a second round of member checking. The researcher e-mailed nine participants (i.e., three from each community college), attached a five-page executive summary of the findings (Appendix P), and asked them to share their feedback. The rationale for sharing an executive summary instead of the 150+ pages of findings in Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven was purely due to length: reading five pages was much more amenable given their busy schedules. In the administrators’ e-mail response, they indicated that they found the findings to be interesting and expressed enthusiasm in receiving a copy of the final dissertation draft. They did not express any concerns about internal validity issues.

In addition, peer examination was employed to enhance internal validity. Specifically, the researcher asked three doctoral colleagues (who had varying degree of coding experience) to code two transcripts each (six total, two per administrative level) and to comment on the findings as they emerged. Subsequently, the researcher and his colleagues compared notes to ensure that the codes and categories were well-founded and suitable to the interview data—which they were.

Lastly, the researcher not only paid close attention to what Merriam (1998) called researcher bias by clarifying his assumptions, worldview, and theoretical orientation at the outset of the study, he also disclosed researcher bias. By being aware of these biases, for example, presidents are more influential than senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, the researcher did his best to keep them at bay.

*External Validity.* External validity is concerned with the extent to which the findings of one study can be applied to other situations. That is, how generalizable are the results of this research study? Merriam (1998) asserts that when qualitative research is used in its basic design there should be no expectation to be able to generalize findings (despite the fact that this study had a robust sample size of 48 administrators). Instead, this original qualitative study would be better served as a foundation from which to form unique descriptions and interpretations of how community college administrators used their political behavior when leading planned change. For that reason, it would be misguided to apply the specific results of this research to other community colleges or higher education institutions without more extensive studies, albeit there are some analogous and useful findings that one can draw from this study. Having said this, the identified categories and patterns of community college administrators' political behavior during planned change should lend themselves well to serving as the initial premises for additional follow-up research on this topic.

*Reliability.* Reliability refers to the extent to which research findings can be replicated. In other words, if the study is repeated will it yield the same results? Realistically, a qualitative study by its design and structure cannot be replicated (nor would it yield the same results if it were to be replicated) largely because human behavior is never static and the phenomenon being studied is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual (Merriam, 1998). Recognizing this inherent concern, two

precautions were built into this research to explain how the researcher has arrived at his findings in order to make this study as consistent and dependable as possible. The first precaution was to explain (in Chapters 1 and 2) the assumptions and theory behind this study, the researcher's position vis-à-vis the three administrative groups being studied, the basis for selecting the informants, and the social context from which data were collected (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). By clearly identifying and discussing the researcher's perspectives, conceptual framework, and/or other biases that might have influenced the study, the researcher hopes that readers could concur that, given the data collected, the results made sense. And second, he created an audit trail (in the form of an analytic memo) by documenting and explicitly detailing all decisions made throughout the data collection, analysis, and reporting phases (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1994).

In brief, since the researcher was the primary instrument for gathering, transcribing, coding, and analyzing data for this qualitative study, he was especially mindful of the following counsel to maximize opportunities for collecting and producing meaningful information: 1) Develop an enormous tolerance for ambiguity; 2) Be highly intuitive to the context and all the variables within it; 3) Be sensitive to the data during collection because that there are multiple interpretations of reality; 4) Be sensitive to the biases inherent in this type of research; and 5) Be a good communicator who empathizes with respondents, establishes rapport, asks good questions, and listens intently (Merriam, 1998). Having a background in counselor education, the researcher paid even more attention to these time-honored interviewing behaviors. In fact, he was very mindful to be as responsive as possible when they emailed him, as honest as possible when they asked him questions about the research study, and as affable as possible to encourage disclosure throughout the interview.

#### Role of the Researcher

More likely than not, every researcher had a reason and/or purpose for pursuing his/her research interests. In the next section, this researcher disclosed seven reasons for choosing this research topic. The first reason was tied to his life's purpose in wanting to be a change agent for those who might not have the access, resources, and/or opportunities to pursue their educational goals. Because he cared about transforming peoples' lives in our knowledge-driven economy, he was determined to do whatever it

takes to initiate and facilitate as many planned change initiatives as necessary to better prepare a diverse group of students to become self-motivated learners. The researcher believed that when students become self-motivated learners, they then become more empowered to take action to be successful in life.

The second reason for pursuing this research was the researcher's familiarity with the history, mission, and current challenges facing today's community colleges. In brief, having this knowledge was especially helpful when analyzing and interpreting the data and generating the research and practice implications. Similarly, the third reason was because he had a strong preference to continue his professional services in our nation's community colleges. The thinking was that since community colleges were often viewed as the "peoples' colleges" (Cohen & Braver, 2003), he wanted to continue to champion this central message and educate others about the services that community colleges provide and the benefits of attending community colleges.

The fourth reason was tied to the researcher's belief that since community colleges, like other complex organizations, were political arenas, he wanted to equip himself with the knowledge of how administrators operated in this politicized environment. Specifically, the researcher wanted to have an informed understanding of the kinds of political behavior administrators (and faculty and trustees alike) engaged in during the planned change process so that he can be more ready to collaborate, negotiate, overcome resistance, and build mutually beneficial relationships with them.

Further stimulating the researcher's focus on the political behavior of administrators was his employment as a mid-level administrator at a Michigan community college and subsequently as a senior-level administrator at a California community college. Not only did he engage in various political behavior (e.g., building a compelling case, involving the faculty to give them ownership, sharing information to sell ideas, and discerning others' personal agendas) with stakeholders (e.g., faculty, board members, staff, peers, and supervisors) when leading change, he also applied his learning from the interviews to better position himself to achieve desired organizational outcomes.

Additionally, as an instructor of several courses (i.e., Leadership Theory, Organizational Communication, Business Communication, and Leading Change in Organizations), the researcher approached this research topic with a deep knowledge of

leadership behaviors, particularly from a political perspective. This background knowledge and informed understanding, developed over a 12-year career in several higher education institutions, was very beneficial in designing and researching this study. In other words, pursuing this research study was an opportunity for him to acquire new insight into change management and organizational development.

Moreover, the researcher's mentoring relationships with two community college presidents and one vice president have been and will continue to be invaluable as he continues to learn from them in hopes of becoming even more adept at engaging in a range of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. Believing that he can avoid some common mistakes that might have doomed other administrators, the researcher continued to share his experiences with his mentors and took note of the countless wisdom and insights gleaned from seasoned administrators.

#### Removing Investigative Bias

In the absence of a detailed review by a secondary analyst (another investigator with responsibility for examining the data and the researcher's interpretation of it), it is virtually impossible to remove investigator bias. As such, the researcher may have been able to remove some of the bias, but by no means all of it. In this section, the researcher will discuss steps that should have been taken (and were not) to limit investigator bias. First and foremost, a secondary reviewer should have been factored into the qualitative methodology for the purpose of reviewing the researcher's interpretation of the data methodology. Without a second reviewer, there was no way to assess the accuracy of the data and confirm the findings. Second, the researcher could have discussed the emerging findings with his dissertation committee as he was trying to make sense of the mountain of data. In other words, he could have presented some transcriptions (and the codes that he came up with) and shared his thoughts with his committee and check in with them throughout the data analysis and interpretation process. Similarly, another step that the researcher could have taken was to reach out to a few of his informants to solicit their input so as to validate the findings. If there were discrepancies, the researcher could have then engaged in a discussion about what might have accounted for the discrepancies and how that needed to be rectified.

Fourth, it would have been a good idea for the researcher to have worked more closely with his dissertation chair as to how best to present the findings and discuss the similarities and differences in political behavior employed by the administrative levels. A more measured approach to delineating the administrators' perceptions of their political behavior would have made the findings more refined and robust. In the same vein, another step that the researcher could have taken was to turn to a committee member who is an expert in qualitative methodology to examine and critique how the researcher was going about adhering to quality of standard issues. Without this committee member's thorough involvement and direct feedback, the researcher acknowledged that the rigor involved in a qualitative study may have been compromised. Another step that could have been taken was for the researcher to consult with his doctoral and professional colleagues about the findings and whether they would have reached a similar conclusion. By doing so, the researcher would have benefitted from listening to different perspectives about a complex human behavior. In sum, there were some missed opportunities that could have and should have been taken by the researcher to limit investigator bias. As such, readers should use caution when interpreting the results of this study.

#### Conclusion

This chapter discussed what the researcher did to address his research methodology. He provided rationales for the research design, commented on the population and sample, gave an institutional overview, mentioned the research setting, discussed data collection and analysis, addressed standards of quality issues, and highlighted the steps he took to correct researcher bias. By doing so, the researcher reinforced the importance of taking the necessary steps when conducting a qualitative research utilizing a case study approach.



## Chapter IV

### Cross Comparison of the Three Administrative Levels

The aim of this chapter is to provide cross comparison findings of the three administrative levels. This chapter (a) identifies the administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, (b) summarizes five major findings supporting the research questions, and (c) discusses the differences amongst the three administrative levels.

#### Perceptions of Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

When leading planned change, the 48 administrators believed that employing the following political behavior often led to achieving desired organizational outcomes:

Table 5: Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |
| 5--Share information to educate others       | 5--Get buy-in                              | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research     |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints       | 6--Listen and show respect                 | 6--Align change with college's mission         |
| 7--Communicate the vision                    | 7--Know when the timing is right           | 7--Collaborate to build consensus              |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes            |

Before discussing the similarities and differences of behaviors across administrative levels, it would be important to note how these behaviors were chosen. The following considerations were taken to arrive at the three sets of political behavior that the administrators viewed or believed to be effective when initiating and guiding change. First, every administrator needed to convey that he/she employed that particular political behavior when leading change. Second, in terms of frequency, each specific political behavior needed to be mentioned explicitly at least five times throughout the interview. Moreover, each specific political behavior needed to be coded at least ten times throughout every transcript. After fulfilling these three considerations, each political behavior was then further examined so as to identify the major axial codes. As a result of this deductive process, the political behavior that most often were mentioned ended up being on a short list.

The ranked order of the political behavior was based on which behavior was the most salient, not necessarily the most important, for each group of administrators. The more salient the political behavior, the higher that behavior was ranked. For instance, the political behavior that was most frequently mentioned by the senior-level administrators was to “involve key players.” As such, this behavior was ranked number one, followed by “pay attention to what is going on,” “build relationships to garner support,” and so forth. It is important to note that the researcher based his conclusions heavily on the data when choosing which political behavior should be on the final list, as opposed to arbitrarily selecting a set of political behavior that sounded good.

There are two distinctive reasons why these behaviors were political in nature. The first reason stems from how the term “political” is defined. According to the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2006), political is defined as “of or relating to one’s views about social relationships involving authority or power.” From the perspective that every organization is a political arena (Bolman & Deal, 2003), it stands to reason that when individuals interact with one another and seek to influence others mainly to increase their sources of power (Raven, 1990), they are by default engaging in political behavior. This line of reasoning is similar to Pfeffer’s (1981) when he posited that “political behavior involves those activities taken in organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a situation in

which there is uncertainty or disagreement about choices” (p.7). From this angle, political behavior refers to informal approaches to gaining power through means other than merit or luck.

Likewise, the second reason has to do with the fact that these administrators had to take on the role of a political actor (Mintzberg, 1983) in order to move change forward. Given the nature of change, there usually is a certain level of resistance whether the change is perceived to be positive or negative. Anytime a leader or administrator asks people to do something differently from the way they are currently doing it, there is going to be some resistance until some level of understanding and agreement can be reached. The difficulty is showing people how the change improves what they do or improves the quality of service and outcome for the people they serve in common. As such, despite wearing many different hats the administrators knew that they had to put on their political hat on a daily basis and in almost every interaction.

It is important to note that these core behaviors are more political in nature than other kinds of behavior (e.g., motivating, social, or teambuilding) because the ultimate reason for engaging in these political behavior (i.e., getting buy-in, building relationships, involving others, listening and showing respect, and doing homework/research) was to successfully lead planned change in a politicized environment. In order to do so, each administrator had to navigate through a potentially tumultuous political terrain, which is often inherent in almost every complex organization (Lichtenberg, 1998). Therefore, to achieve desired organizational outcomes, the administrators had to rely on their political acumen and engage in a myriad of political tactics. Although some of the behaviors can be seen as motivating behaviors (or other kinds of behaviors), the behaviors found in this study best capture what the administrators had to do politically in a political arena.

### Major Findings

The five major findings that emerged from this original study have the potential to provide scholars and practitioners with some new insights into change management. Since change management is a phenomenon that is both complex and universal (Herriot & Gross, 1979; Jick, 1993), being familiar with these findings can provide some guidance in terms of how best to lead various stakeholders in a variety of settings during the change process. These conclusions are a result of analyzing a collection of common

threads heard throughout all 48 interviews. The more administrators can understand both the process of change management and how to ensure that change efforts lead to desired organizational outcomes, the better they will be able to facilitate the necessary planned change initiatives with various internal and external stakeholders. The next section will examine these five major findings.

Finding #1: The administrators engaged in a myriad of political behavior when leading planned change. Some of the political behavior include, but are not limited to: building a compelling case; involving the faculty to give them ownership; sharing information to sell an idea; discerning others' personal agendas; not burning bridges; aligning goals/initiatives with institutional mission, values, and vision; noticing political landmines and treading carefully; appealing to the president and/or the board; identifying change champions and key players early on; and recognizing timing. For a complete list of political behavior, reference Appendix L, M, and N.

Not only did the administrators use a wide array of influence tactics when leading change, they appeared to be intentional about when to engage in what political behavior and with whom because they recognized that they needed to influence every individual differently. Knowing that every organizational member had unique needs, interests, and levels of commitment, the administrators understood that they had to engage in a variety of political behavior that consistently won people over. Moreover, they carefully considered how best to approach each political actor and/or group to best meet and address the needs of these stakeholders.

This finding is largely consistent with the studies conducted by Kipnis, Schmidt, and Wilkinson (1980) on the original set of proactive influence tactics (Appendix H), by Yukl (2002) on the revised set of proactive influence tactics (Appendix I), by Fairholm (1993) on the power tactics to influence others (Appendix J), and by Van Wart (2005) on people-oriented and organizational-oriented behaviors (Appendix K). Collectively, these earlier studies focused on exploring the tactics managers engaged in when trying to influence upwards, downwards, and sideways. However, unlike these four quantitative studies that focused primarily on non-higher education leaders and managers, the data gleaned from this research resulted from conducting interviews with community college

administrators about their perceptions of their political behavior (Table 5). As a result, this study yielded comparable, yet different political behavior.

In addition to the finding that the three administrative levels employed a myriad of political behavior, there were eight similarities across the three levels. The first similarity was that the administrators engaged in political behavior for instrumental purposes. For the presidents, the instrumental goal was to leave some kind of legacy; for senior-level administrators, it was to enact the presidents' change agenda. And for mid-level administrators, it was to increase one's chances of getting promoted. Put it bluntly, the administrators knew that they had a job to do and it was their responsibility to get it done in a reasonable timeframe. After all, as administrators they were expected to initiate and guide change as well as to produce results that would benefit the college. Regardless of what drove the administrators to execute their functional responsibilities, every administrator was motivated to do a good job when facilitating change in order to achieve various accomplishments as well as their own instrumental goals.

The second similarity was that the administrators knew that at a community college, change can be slow at times and there will be obstacles along the way. As such, they had to not only find ways to get some traction from the very beginning in order to keep the momentum going, they also had to work with others who may not be as supportive or have competing interests. Having said this, the administrators had little choice but to deliberately utilize a range of political behavior with various organizational members to move change forward in order to achieve their desired outcomes. Furthermore, the administrators knew that using a collegial, consultative style (as opposed to a top-down approach) was more suitable in a community college environment, especially when working with faculty and faculty unions.

The third similarity was that the three administrative levels sought to actively get buy-in from as many key players and constituent groups as possible. Getting buy-in was ranked first by mid-level administrators, second by presidents, and fifth by senior-level administrators (Table 5). They all recognized that getting buy-in was paramount to them being successful in getting change done. Without getting others' buy-in, one can reason that an administrator, regardless of his/her position, would have a more difficult time initiating and guiding change because there might not be enough traction and momentum

to sustain the change idea/effort. Even the presidents, who occupy the highest executive position, acknowledged that they needed to get buy-in from their cabinet and board members in order to move change forward. Mid-level administrators, on the other hand, commented that they needed to work very hard at getting buy-in from their supervisors and colleagues in order to achieve small wins. This recognition by mid-level administrators may not be surprising in a complex organization because of their limited authority and power bases to influence others.

The fourth similarity in political behavior was the importance of getting others involved. Although this political behavior was phrased slightly differently in Table 5 (“involving key players” [ranked first] by senior-level administrators, “involve others by incorporating their input” [ranked second] by mid-level administrators, and “encourage others to share ideas” [ranked fourth] by presidents), it was essentially the same idea. Knowing that there were much to be gained, personally and professionally, by utilizing this political behavior, the administrators sought to include key individuals throughout the change process so as to garner their support. Since doing so often resulted in a smoother process when enacting change, the administrators worked diligently to win people over with the hope of developing a cadre of support campus-wide. Not surprising, those who have assembled a strong coalition of support tended to encounter less resistance because they have sought others’ input and made them felt heard. In short, the administrators recognized this human need and did what they could to develop a genuine sense of connection with key individuals.

In the same vein, building relationships to garner support was another similarity in political behavior (ranked third for both the mid-level and senior-level administrators). Although this behavior was not ranked in the top seven for the presidents, there was little doubt that the presidents often engaged in this important political behavior. All the administrators expressed a strong desire to build relationships because they believed that relationships are the foundation of trust for without trust, there was no lasting relationship. One reason to explain why this political behavior was often mentioned by mid-level and senior-level administrators was probably due to the fact that with their limited sphere of influence within the organizational structure, they had to build relationships with others. Failing to do would only hamper their ability to get change

done. Since the presidents had more clout and a wider circle of influence, they did not necessarily have to build relationships (especially with other mid-level administrators) unless they wanted to. Likewise, given the presidents' positional power it would be plausible to conclude that the presidents could expect support from mid-level and senior-level administrators even if no relationships were built. This was not the case for mid-level and senior-level administrators—they needed to garner support, not expect it, particularly from their peers and supervisors.

The sixth similarity was that the administrators put in a fair amount of time and effort to build a case by doing their homework/research. This political behavior was ranked fourth for mid-level and fifth for senior-level administrators. Although this behavior was not ranked in the top seven for presidents, there was considerable evidence that they dutifully engaged in this political behavior on a regular basis. The bottom line for utilizing this political behavior was to be as knowledgeable as possible so that one could be prepared to convince others or field questions about issues related to a change initiative. From their years of experience, the one preventable mistake that the administrators do not wish to make is to be perceived as lacking evidence/data to back up a request, plan or proposal. As a result of working in a data-driven organization, the administrators recognized how important it was to appear prepared with facts and figures as well as to be able to sell their ideas in a way that would be well-received.

The seventh similarity was that the mid-level administrators and senior-level administrators explicitly emphasized the importance of making subtle, incremental changes, whereas the presidents were more implicit about utilizing this political behavior. Perhaps the reason why the mid-level and senior-level administrators tended to be more explicit was because they were intentional to avoid drawing the ire of potential critics and resisters (and perhaps their supervisors), especially if they were leading a controversial change initiative. The presidents, on the other hand, might have been more implicit about this political behavior because they recognized that although their preference was to make subtle, incremental changes, there will be times that an immediate and large-scale change tactic/strategic would be more suitable. Collectively, the administrators knew from experience that organizational members were more likely to embrace change if the change was gradual, as opposed to one that was sudden and potentially disruptive. As

such, they all favored this subtle, incremental approach because it enabled them to do the necessary work behind-the-scenes without attracting much fanfare and more importantly, potential resistance. In the context of leading change, this under-the-radar approach often resulted in greater success and fewer headaches in the long run.

The eighth similarity was the emphasis on respecting and listening to others as a political behavior. This behavior was ranked sixth for both the presidents and senior-level administrators. One potential explanation for why this political behavior was so salient for the presidents and senior-level administrators was because at their level, they were expected to interact with a broader audience on a regular basis, whether it was to give a speech to a community organization or to attend a college fundraising event. Given that they often came in contact with both internal and external stakeholders on a casual, meet-and-greet level, they were even more mindful to make as favorable an impression as possible in a limited timeframe. From this perspective, showing respect and listening to others and their viewpoints could be considered a sensible political behavior to employ in every occasion. Despite it not being in the top eight (Table 5), the mid-level administrators expressed that they often engaged in this political behavior because they recognized that in order to be seen in a positive light by their peers and other senior-level administrators, they needed to show respect and listen to what others were telling them.

Finding #2: The kinds of political behavior used varied across administrative levels. When comparing the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change for all three administrative levels there were some differences across administrative levels, especially as to which political behavior was utilized more often. This section will describe in some detail the reasons that might account for and the implications of group differences.

As indicated in Table 5, the three administrative levels engaged in noticeably different political behavior. The researcher believed that if there were to be one political behavior that best defined what every administrator from the three levels did when leading change it would be the political behavior that was ranked first in the three respective lists. For the presidents, it appeared as if they had to charge forward despite whatever resistance they might have experienced. They spoke at length about being persistent, sticking with their plan, making unpopular decisions, and doing what's best



for their college. Because they had a strong sense of conviction and commitment to being good stewards, they gave every indication that they were going to do whatever it took to see things through. For the senior-level administrators, the centerpiece of their political behavior was to identify influential key supporters and get them as involved as possible so that they would be able to directly influence the change process and outcome. The senior-level administrators knew that they were able to enlist their colleagues' support, the change process was generally smoother and the outcome more aligned with what their intentions. As for the mid-level administrators, their predominant political behavior was heavily focused on getting buy-in, especially from their supervisors and other mid-level administrators. Since their sphere of influence tended to be more limited, engaging in this pivotal political behavior could significantly give them more clout when pushing their change initiative forward.

*Presidents.* When analyzing the presidents' political behavior, five conclusions can be drawn that distinguished what they did versus what the senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators did. First, it is worthwhile to note that the three presidents commanded respect and were held in high regard, and therefore had perceived and actual power and influence. Although they wielded several power sources—positional, reward, expert, and connective—they preferred to use their referent power (French & Bell, 1995) to leverage their influence when initiating and guiding change. Notwithstanding, there were times when they had to exert their positional power to move change forward.

One instance was when a president did not like the approach that one department was taking when communicating and handling a new protocol. When he heard complaints about how poorly students were treated as a result of this new way of doing business, he assumed his authoritative role to address his concerns and express his disapproval to the administrators of that department. Also, he demanded a different course of action to be taken immediately. As president, he could certainly engage in this political behavior because he had the authority to do so. At the same time, he recognized that potential danger associated with over-employing his authoritative role.

Sometimes you have to take on that authoritative role. You have to be willing to do that and understand that everybody is different. You have to pick and choose so it's more an art form. Yes, sometimes I have to become very authoritative, very

rarely but it's not a bad thing that I do that. It's just knowing when to do it, and when not to. It doesn't mean that I'm always right. (P3)

In the above example, it seemed justifiable for the president to exert his power by using a top-down approach to immediately rectify a situation. However, it would not be judicious for mid-level administrators (and sometimes senior-level administrators) to do what the president did for it would not only cast that mid-level administrator as demanding and rash, it also could backfire in unimaginable ways. Having said this, mid-level administrators need to recognize that one of the best ways to increase their power and influence is to take a collegial and collaborative, not authoritative, approach when addressing a concern or problem, especially one that is pressing and potentially volatile. Moreover, mid-level administrators should be cognizant of the fact that they need to respect the organizational structure and hierarchy. Although the presidents could choose to exert their power and influence on any organizational member at any point in time, other administrators may not have that authority and therefore should restrain themselves from taking any action that might be perceived as out-of-line and inappropriate.

In the same vein, the second difference was that the presidents clearly understood how critical it was to perform and fulfill their presidential role (ranked third) as a political behavior. Being the most visible and highly recognized spokesperson for their respective colleges, the presidents were much more mindful of the status of their role and the privilege and pressure that came with it. This is not to say that the senior-level and mid-level administrators were not cognizant of their role and the pressures they faced—they were, but not to the extent as the presidents. Rather, the presidents seemed to firmly grasp and accept this everyday reality (and the stressors associated with the presidency) so that they could conduct themselves accordingly. For instance, the presidents recognized that different people will have different expectations of what the presidents ought to be doing for them, for students, for faculty, and for the community. As much as the presidents would like to meet these expectations (e.g., providing adult education, building a new building, and starting a new program) they may not be able to because of limited resources, competing interests, and/or lack of board support.

Every individual, whether they're a community member, or student, employee, every one of them will have a different expectation of the role of the president. Now I can't fulfill every single one of them... The better I understand what the

expectations are and how I can fulfill those functions, the more successful I'll be in my role as president. (P3)

Moreover, as compared to mid-level and senior-level administrators, the presidents were fully aware of the fact that they had to deal with a broader spectrum of issues from more political actors and coalitions. Although mid-level and senior-level administrators also had to deal with some pressure and demand from different organizational members, the presidents in many ways were under the microscope more often and judged more critically. Therefore, they had to develop greater sensitivity when employing this political behavior for they must not take it lightly or overlook the significance of performing and fulfilling the presidential role. This means that the presidents had little choice but to make serious calculations of each and every decision and action and to assess both short and long-term risks, benefits, and opportunities. Ultimately, the presidents would be held accountable for their decisions and actions so it would behoove them to get them right in the first place, if possible. On the other hand, mid-level and senior-level administrators could somewhat afford the luxury of consulting with their supervisors and seeking their approval and support on major change initiatives before moving forward. They would still be held accountable but may not be entirely at fault should there be negative ramifications because the final decision may not be theirs alone.

The third difference was that the presidents spent a considerable amount of time pressing forward despite resistance. The presidents spoke about this political behavior extensively throughout the interview for they had to deal with numerous passive and active resisters on a regular basis, whether they wanted to or not. Because they occupy the presidency, they automatically became an easy target for critics who took issues with what the college did or did not do. Knowing that they had to somehow deal with resisting forces, the presidents sought creative ways to press forward without getting bogged down, sidetracked or detracted.

When dealing with resisting forces, you do the best you can with what you have. You try to always out-think them, out-smart them, and out-run them...I give it my best and do the right things first. (P2)

It should be noted that the presidents did not have an issue with people being critical as long as they (the critics) kept their comments at a professional level and not sunk down to personal character attacks. Although the mid-level administrators could have also been easy targets for critics, they generally were spared some of the harsh criticisms that were thrown at the presidents (and sometimes senior-level administrators). On the flip side, the mid-level administrators tended to encounter more challenges (which could lead to resistance) in trying to initiate and guide change than the presidents and senior-level administrators because of their limited authority, sphere of influence, and/or lack of experience. On this note, the mid-level administrators had to press forward the best they could to keep the change momentum going.

The distinction here is that when presidents encountered resistance, the resistance tended to be on a larger scale, coming from many different directions and many more vocal critics. For mid-level administrators, the resistance tended to come from their immediate supervisors, jealous colleagues, and/or difficult staff members. Hence, when mid-level administrators had to deal with these smaller scale personnel issues, they took a more collegial and consultative approach as a means to reason with their supervisors, colleagues, and staff. For presidents, they needed to go beyond the collegial tactic when pressing forward and had to consider using all their power bases simultaneously to get change done in a reasonable timeframe.

The fourth difference was that the presidents seemed to have placed great emphasis on being respectful to everybody in every exchange. From a social psychology perspective, being respectful goes a long way when trying to make a good impression (Cialdini, 2001; Reardon, 2003). Although the mid-level and senior-level administrators also expressed how important it was to show respect, the presidents appeared to heavily rely on this human connection gesture as a means to get to know people and their feelings and ideas. Put differently, for the presidents showing respect was an extension of who they are and how they wanted to be treated. For the mid-level and senior-level administrators, showing respect was a political behavior for instrumental purposes—to influence others and win them over.

It really goes back to a very basic principle and that's respect. No matter what position you're in, you have to respect the people you're working with. (P3)

One reason for this finding is that the presidents wanted to listen more than they speak. In many ways, listening (without interrupting) to what others were saying was a means of being respectful. By employing this simple, yet powerful gesture, the presidents were able to process what others were telling them, determine if they needed to take action, buy some time to move their change initiatives forward, and/or work to oppose and/or terminate a change initiative that they were not in favor of. Another plausible reason for this finding is that the presidents rather err on the side of saying too little, as opposed to saying too much. The rationale is that the presidents could not control how others will hear and/or interpret his message. Knowing this, the presidents made every attempt to keep their messages brief and to the point so as to minimize potential confusion and misinterpretation. As for the mid-level and senior-level administrators, it appeared as if they had to do more of the talking in order to educate others, especially their supervisors, about what they were trying to (or hoping to) do. In this context, it was not so much that mid-level and senior-level administrators were not showing respect by listening. Rather, it was a matter of them needing to seize the few opportunities they had with their supervisors and other organizational members to drum up support for their change initiative. And they had to do so by juggling both the need to listen and the need to pitch their ideas without coming across as too abrupt, demanding, and/or off-based.

The fifth difference was that the presidents appeared to have spent more time communicating the vision for the change they wish to see happening with a broader audience. Although the senior-level and mid-level administrators spent considerable time talking about and selling their change initiatives, it was not comparable to what the presidents had to do to move change forward. In most instances, a mid-level administrator simply needed to get his/her supervisor's approval to continue onward with the change effort. Although the presidents could have taken the approach of "I'm the president and everything I say goes," they much rather round up the troops, share the vision, keep them updated, and seek some degree of consensus before moving forward. For example, this president knew what he had to do to convince his Board so as to garner their support and endorsement.

Typically I would go through the same steps—basically explaining to the Board how I got to this point and what I did before I came to see them...Boards and bosses quite frankly do not like making decisions for you, that's your job. The

thing is to make it clear to them that you have done all the legwork here. You know the answers to the questions and this is a well-thought out proposal, not something that is spur of the moment. (P1)

Moreover, the presidents knew that in order for a message to be heard and processed by those in the audience (particularly if the message centered around the president's vision), they adopted a three-step process: 1) Tell the audience the message/idea they will be hearing; 2) Tell them the message/idea; and 3) Tell them what message/idea they just heard. In short, the presidents made it a high priority to share the message of change using every possible channel because they recognized the importance of getting the word out so that the idea of the proposed change will not be seen as ill-conceived or threatening. Rather, they constantly emphasized the benefits associated with the proposed change and expressed great enthusiasm for the work that lay ahead. Although the mid-level and senior-level administrators also emphasized the benefits and expressed enthusiasm, they more often than not had to adjust their vision, plans, and timetable accordingly so as to align them with that of their supervisor's and/or the president's.

*Senior-Level Administrators.* After analyzing the senior-level administrators' political behavior when initiating and guiding change, the researcher reached four conclusions about their political behavior that distinguished them from the presidents and mid-level administrators. First, the senior-level administrators seemed to have paid a considerable amount of attention to what was going on in and around the organization. They appeared to have a constant need to stay on top of everything that was going on (or in the pipeline) so as to not be in the dark about important matters that may or may not involve them. Also, to stay updated and in-the-loop, they often made time to check in with their confidants, meet with their colleagues over lunch or coffee, and keep a pulse on how their staff members were doing.

At my level, I take the time to meet with all the mid-level managers and chat with them and let them know who I am and where I want to go and all that. Then it's sitting back and watching. (SLA8)

Upon closer examination, employing this political behavior could be seen as very instrumental—in order to be successful in their roles as a senior-level administrator, they needed to operate this way in a political arena. Failing to do so may result in them feeling

out-of-touch with their colleagues and supervisors as well as being disconnected with those in the inner circle. Obviously, this undesirable situation was to be avoided at all costs. Therefore the senior-level administrators sought to take every measure to be included in important conversations and meetings so that they could continue to keep abreast of current events happening on campus. That is because they recognized that information was a great source of power—the more knowledgeable they were about certain things, the better. For instance, the senior-level administrators (more so than the mid-level administrators) were attentive to the presidents' goals and priorities so that they could better align what they needed to do in order to fit with their president's agenda. Also, they talked about being observant, particularly when it came to who was having lunch with whom, who was perceived to be influential (or not), what people said, how they were being treated, and how decisions were made, to name a few.

The second difference was that the senior-level administrators believed that timing was extremely critical to being successful when initiating and guiding change. In fact, the one lesson that every senior-level administrator learned when leading change was to take into account the timing of certain decisions and actions—when to float an idea, when to be vocal, when to be take action, and when to wait. Although the presidents and mid-level administrators raised the importance of timing, the senior-level administrators seemed to factor in timing into every decision. It appeared as if they had experienced the ramifications and consequences of good and poor timing from previous experiences, and knew better what to do and not to do the next time around when faced with a similar situation.

If there is no support on campus for this idea, then sometimes you just have to give up. Sometimes you just have to say, “Yeah, this might have been a great idea. Maybe the timing isn't right or maybe under the current administration it's not right.” (SLA5)

Clearly the senior-level administrators were very deliberate, intentional, and thoughtful when faced with having to decide when would be the best time to engage in different types of political behavior. In many ways, because of the positions they occupied they had little choice but to calculate the timing of their decisions and actions. For instance, a senior-level administrator wanted to adopt a new business model for his division but the former president was against this idea because he thought that it was too

expensive at the time to change to a new model. So this senior-level administrator relented, knowing that the former president was not interested in starting something new since he was on his way out in less than a year. When the current president came on board, this senior-level administrator pitched the idea again and was told that he needed some time to think about the proposed business model. After a few months has passed, this senior-level administrator approached the current president again, only to be told that he was not ready to take this on and to continue business as usual. As a result of these failed attempts, this senior-level administrator recognized that the chances of putting a new model in place were slim to none because timing was not in his favor—with an outgoing president who had little interest and a new president who had other priorities. So he decided to shelf his idea for now so as to avoid being perceived in a negative light by the president.

The third difference was that the senior-level administrators (more so than the presidents and mid-level administrators) spent a considerable amount of time doing their homework/research for the purpose of building a strong case for their proposed change initiatives and/or getting the buy-in they needed to advance the change effort. One plausible reason for why senior-level administrators spent more time engaging in this political behavior might be because they have been in a data-driven culture and working for a data-minded president for a much longer time than the mid-level administrators. As such, it was instilled in the senior-level administrators to have the necessary information backed up by research and facts.

I would never make a decision unless I have researched it thoroughly...I can make a decision but I will only do it if I know that's the right thing to do. It's not that I'm free from mistakes, but I'm able to go back and say, "The reason it didn't work is that I had this assumption and this assumption was based on the following research. And now in practical application at this college, it has proven not to work, and I believe it was for this reason." (SLA11)

Consistently in every interview, the senior-level administrators mentioned how critical it was to have the necessary facts and data to support their ideas and proposals. If they did not, they made sure that they did before presenting it to the president or to their colleagues. One explanation for this commitment to be data-driven could be largely due to their beliefs and sense of pride that they did not want to be perceived as not being



prepared or knowledgeable, especially about their division. Along the same line, the senior-level administrators seemed to value the need to provide others—especially the president—with facts, data, patterns, trends, and reports as a means to influence them to agree with or accept the proposed change.

The fourth difference was that the senior-level administrators made it a high priority to build relationships to garner support. Although the mid-level administrators expressed the importance of utilizing this political behavior, the senior-level administrators tended to make more time in executing this behavior as if it was a daily ritual. The presidents, on the other hand, did not convey much about this political behavior. One explanation is that the presidents did not have to put themselves out there to build relationships with organizational members due to a lack of time, interest, or urgency. That is because in the context of relationship building, it is generally the mid-level and senior-level administrators who actively seek to develop rapport and/or build a relationship with the president.

Unanimously, every senior-level administrator acknowledged that they engaged in this political behavior on a regular basis. They reasoned that doing so not only made it easier for them to work with other organizational members (because they knew who they were dealing with), it also broadened their circle of influence. Moreover, the senior-level administrators seemed to enjoy doing this kind of political hobnobbing.

You build good relationships through hundreds of transactions every day by saying hello to people, by depositing into the emotional bank accounts. You're listening to people, asking about how they're doing, things like that. It really pays to be more alert and aware and to acknowledge people because people get things done. You can't get very far on your own so I do think there's a huge value on having good relationships. (SLA5)

Another explanation for why the senior-level administrators were keen on employing this political behavior is attributed to the fact that some of them wanted to advance their career. By building strong relationships with key individuals and constituent groups, it would be plausible to assume that they were looking out for themselves and the next big opportunity. By establishing their credentials over time and strengthening their credibility with internal and external members, the senior-level administrators not only put themselves in a favorable situation to eventually get

promoted, it also could open some doors for them at another institution should their first or second choice opportunity not come to fruition.

*Mid-Level Administrators.* There were four noticeable differences in terms of mid-level administrators' political behavior when they led planned change. First, the mid-level administrators focused heavily on getting buy-in throughout the change process. Although the presidents and senior-level administrators also engaged in this political behavior, the mid-level administrators appeared to be in agreement that getting buy-in was a must-do. Since engaging in this political behavior was a high priority, they used various channels with as many political actors as possible, especially with potential change champions and their supervisors.

The first thing I'd do is to get my immediate supervisor and the vice president on board. I could not go to upper management without their support because I respect the chain of command and because immediately upper management will say "do you have the support of your supervisor and this vice president?"  
(MLA1)

The mid-level administrators knew that without getting their supervisor's buy-in, there would be little chance of future success. This could be explained by the fact that mid-level administrators generally occupied positions lower in the organizational hierarchy. As such, they needed to employ a political behavior that was going to give them some much-needed leverage, and getting buy-in was one of the most reliable means to an end. Unlike senior-level administrators and presidents who could have used their positional power and elevated status to get people on board, the mid-level administrators had to employ this political behavior every chance they got. Moreover, the mid-level administrators recognized that they might be encountering more resistance had there not been enough buy-in. So they did the smart thing—talked to as many people as possible about the benefits of the proposed change and addressed any and all potential concerns associated with the change early on in the process.

The second difference was the mid-level administrators overwhelmingly preferred the idea of involving others as much as possible to participate in decision-making so as to make more informed decisions that would have broad support. In every interview, it was evident that the mid-level administrators heeded the advice of involving others and getting key individuals at the table. Not only did they reach out across the campus to

invite others, they were also conscientious to ask others for their input and opinions. In fact, every one of the mid-level administrators acknowledged that had they not invited some key individuals to be a part of their change process, they probably would not have been able to do what they were able to do. Knowing this, the mid-level administrators sought various opportunities to get as many influential people on board as possible to increase their chances for success.

By keeping people informed and seeking peoples' input, you make better decisions, more informed decisions... There is no way that I can know everything about everything... Getting people on board is very important—that is the key to everything. (MLA5)

The presidents and senior-level administrators engaged in this political behavior as well, however, the mid-level administrators appeared to be more attuned to utilizing this political behavior to advance their goals. One reason to perhaps explain why the presidents did not convey using this political behavior as often as the mid-level administrators was because the presidents could pick-and-choose who they would like to involve in key decision-making. Put differently, the presidents might not be as excited to have a lot of people involved when making key decisions. However, the mid-level administrators would be thrilled to have a key individual or change champion (or two) present in various meetings.

Along the same line, the third distinction was that the mid-level administrators had a strong proclivity towards collaborating to build consensus. This was evident in their emphasis on creating positive working relationships with faculty, senior-level administrators, other mid-level administrators, board members, and the president to come up with what team/group thought was in the best interest of students, the college, and the community. From this perspective, the mid-level administrators tended to favor and sought to engage in participatory decision-making. One plausible reason may be due to the fact that they have experienced much success by engaging in this political behavior in the past. Since this approach seemed to have worked relatively well, they continued to seek out opportunities for further collaboration as a means to build mutually supportive relationships.

We all had to collaborate, give and take...If you can do that, it's a lot more palatable and the buy-in is there. So collaboration is a biggie...you cannot work in isolation and just think "well, when this is done kudos to me." (MLA16)

Although the presidents and senior-level administrators stressed the importance of collaborating with others, the mid-level administrators appeared to have taken this advice one step further. One possible explanation for why the presidents did not often mention collaboration as a political behavior was because collaboration takes time and they might not have the luxury of time, especially if they expect results in a short period of time. Besides, the presidents could reason that they did not necessarily have to collaborate with others if they chose not to. As for the senior-level administrators, they still need to collaborate with key individuals and constituent groups to the extent that they could derive benefits from these relationships. If there is not much to be gained, it seems plausible to conclude that the senior-level administrators could also pick-and-choose who they wish to collaborate with.

The fourth difference was that, unlike the senior-level administrators and presidents, the mid-level administrators spent a tremendous amount of time explaining to others (especially their supervisor, peers, and faculty) what they were doing so as to increase understanding. It appeared as if the mid-level administrators needed to take time out of their schedule to not only educate others of their change ideas and progress, they also had to convince those they were meeting with the reasons why their proposed change was a good idea and should be supported. In fact, the mid-level administrators seemed to enjoy engaging in this political behavior because it afforded them more opportunities to meet with and get to know their colleagues and supervisors. Doing so might also give the mid-level administrators more chances to make a favorable impression, which could result in getting the necessary buy-in and support. All in all, mid-level administrators have much to gain by utilizing this political behavior, particularly with those who may be unfamiliar with the proposed change.

It appeared that the presidents spent little time *explaining* their positions or change initiatives to others. Rather, the presidents tended to take the approach of *informing* others as a means of educating or updating them. In other words, the presidents did not feel the need to have to provide the details about the why, but the mid-level

administrators felt that they were obligated to explain the why in order to make their case for their proposed change more compelling. This is a plausible explanation given the fact that those who occupy positions lower in an organizational are expected to make a case for what they are doing, whereas those who occupy higher level positions are minimally expected to keep others informed. As for the senior-level administrators, they tended to do more explaining with the presidents and other senior-level administrators and more information-sharing with their staff. One sensible reason to explain this tendency is that the senior-level administrators still need to seek the approval and endorsement of their presidents and peers (and not necessarily from their direct reports). As such, they needed to utilize this political behavior.

Despite the differences in administrator perceptions of which political behavior effectively initiates and guides change, the three administrative groups shared a common denominator—the need to engage in a range of political behavior in order to move their change ideas/initiatives forward, and not just rely on one or two political behavior. Depending on their positions and the leverage that they had with various political actors and constituent groups, the administrators did what was necessary to move change forward and to get change done. Over time, they knew which political behavior worked and which did not. As such, it made logical and practical sense to employ a range of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that would consistently help them achieve their desired organizational outcomes (Table 5).

Moreover, despite the differences, when it came to influencing others during planned change, the three administrative levels appeared to have engaged in a similar set of political behavior—the core political behavior (i.e., get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, do homework/research). For example, it appeared that the 27 senior-level administrators employed the core political behavior just as much as the 18 mid-level administrators, and vice versa. It should be noted that the three presidents engaged in these core political behavior as well. However, the difference was that the presidents were more deliberate (and to some extent were expected) to educate their respective boards of trustees (in addition to other internal and external constituents) about their goals, directions, and visions for the college.

Likewise, there were certain political behavior (e.g., agenda setting, intervening, and coercing) that were not utilized or used infrequently by all three groups of administrators. Having said this, it does not mean that the administrators did not engage in these “power” tactics. It simply means that in general, they did not disclose whether or not they have employed these power tactics when leading planned change. Readers should not assume that the three groups of administrators only engaged in what is perceived to be “positive” political behavior (e.g., involving others, building trust, and collaborating) and refrained from engaging in “negative” political behavior (e.g., pressuring, manipulating, and dictating). However, it is safe to say that the administrators tended to favor engaging in positive political behavior because these behaviors often led to achieving desired organizational outcomes.

Another related finding is that the three groups of administrators engaged in political behavior on a consistent basis and with every individual they interacted with. For example, when administrators took the time to build relationships, they built these relationships with various stakeholders, not just with one group. Collectively, they recognized that the more relationships they built over time, the more they could rely on these individuals to support their change ideas/initiatives and potentially become a change champion from the start. With this line of thinking, the administrators were intentional about engaging in political behavior that had the broadest appeal to various political actors and constituent groups—therefore leading to greater chances of being successful at achieving desired organizational outcomes.

The findings from this study are in agreement with the seminal work concerning community college leadership by Vaughan (1986) and Roueche and Baker (1987). For example, Vaughan (1986) reports that the skills and abilities associated with being a successful president are producing results, selecting people, resolving conflicts, possessing communication skills, motivating others, relating, knowing the community, and managing information, to name a few. Although this study did not directly examine the skills and abilities of successful presidents as did the original, it did explore the presidents’ political behavior. From this perspective, one can extract valuable information from this study in terms of what presidents need to do to be perceived as successful in pressing forward, getting buy-in, knowing when the timing is right, listening and sharing

information, and encouraging others. Since the presidents' political behavior are similar to senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, the findings are applicable to all three levels.

Finding #3: Change initiatives varied across administrative levels. In this study, the mid-level administrators implemented department-specific change initiatives whereas the senior-level administrators and presidents facilitated institution-wide change efforts (see Tables 6, 7, and 8). This conclusion may not be too surprising given the fact that presidents and senior-level administrators, for example, were expected to lead the entire organization given the scope of their functional responsibilities and therefore, were much more concerned with the big picture. Mid-level administrators, on the other hand, were primarily responsible for their respective units/departments and therefore not expected to facilitate campus-wide change initiatives (unless they were called upon to do so). It is important to note that although a few mid-level administrators were given the opportunity to facilitate institutional initiatives (e.g., re-examining the class schedule format, transitioning to online registration, redesigning a program), they still had to align their change efforts with what their supervisors and presidents wanted them to do.

Since the administrators were asked to discuss a recent change initiative that they led, the data indicated that no two administrators discussed leading the same change initiative. Also, the length and depth of their discussions and reflections varied—some spent 15 minutes, others spent 45 (during their one-hour interview); and some provided great details, others were somewhat vague. Moreover, some administrators expressed that they were intimately involved throughout the change process; others took a more casual approach. What can be said though about all the administrators are the following: 1) They played an instrumental role when facilitating the change; 2) They led several change initiatives at a time; 3) They enlisted others' support to help them achieve desired organizational outcomes; and 4) They learned valuable insights from their involvement. The administrators' change initiatives are indicated in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Table 6. Change Initiatives That the Presidents Led

| Administrators | Change Initiatives  |
|----------------|---|
| P1             | Instituted a systems thinking approach throughout the college                               |
| P2             | Negotiated with campus stakeholders to address workers' compensation                        |
| P3             | Communicated the values of respect, collaboration, and communication throughout the college |

Table 7. Change Initiatives That the Senior-Level Administrators Led

| Administrators | Change Initiatives  |
|----------------|---|
| SLA1           | Addressed issues relating to employee motivation and organizational development       |
| SLA2           | Instituted a new strategic planning model to be more data-driven                      |
| SLA3           | Implemented an electronic time-in-attendance system                                   |
| SLA4           | Instituted faculty professional development initiatives                               |
| SLA5           | Promoted establishing a popular program on campus                                     |
| SLA6           | Persuaded faculty who taught credit and non-credit courses to collaborate on projects |
| SLA7           | Initiated dual enrollment programs  |
| SLA8           | Instituted a different approach to scheduling classes                                 |
| SLA9           | Expanded educational programs and new courses   |
| SLA10          | Created a strategic plan to promote outreach  |
| SLA11          | Redesigned the curriculum system and programs   |
| SLA12          | Implemented some organizational development initiatives                               |
| SLA13          | Negotiated employment-related issues with key stakeholders                            |
| SLA14          | Aligned curriculum with four-year institutions to facilitate student transfer         |
| SLA15          | Developed non-degree credit programs to expand outreach                               |
| SLA16          | Built and strengthened partnerships with local businesses                             |
| SLA17          | Promoted the concept of collegial consultation  |
| SLA18          | Collaborated with new administrator on college-wide initiatives                       |
| SLA19          | Created a more positive and supportive working environment                            |



|       |   |
|-------|---|
| SLA20 | Conducted divisional self-study to make continuous improvement        |
| SLA21 | Directed off-site centers to meet escalating needs                    |
| SLA22 | Directed efforts to reach an articulation agreement                   |
| SLA23 | Restructured a department to provide better customer service          |
| SLA24 | Created block schedules to increase flexibility for part-time faculty |
| SLA25 | Redesigned the curriculum to increase success rate                    |
| SLA26 | Facilitated the application and implementation of technology          |
| SLA27 | Collaborated with faculty to create a new educational program         |

Table 8. Change Initiatives That the Mid-Level Administrators Led

| Administrators | Change Initiatives   |
|----------------|--|
| MLA1           | Advocated for improvement of existing facilities                   |
| MLA2           | Initiated recognition programs                                     |
| MLA3           | Established new educational programs                               |
| MLA4           | Strengthened relationships with key stakeholders                   |
| MLA5           | Initiated the open entry/open exit program                         |
| MLA6           | Created a different format and layout of the schedule of classes   |
| MLA7           | Installed and implemented integrated systems                       |
| MLA8           | Convinced staff to adopt a different approach to reduce redundancy |
| MLA9           | Initiated a new program for employees                              |
| MLA10          | Promoted the college and built relationships with key stakeholders |
| MLA11          | Worked with a department to improve its customer service approach  |
| MLA12          | Created programs and services for a target population              |
| MLA13          | Created long-term institutional planning model for a division      |
| MLA14          | Initiated a college-wide customer service initiative               |
| MLA15          | Created a new model to improve operations                          |
| MLA16          | Implemented an integrated computer system for a department         |
| MLA17          | Facilitated the expansion of existing facility                     |
| MLA18          | Spearheaded efforts to use technology for various online services  |

Finding #4: Administrators believed that they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change. Regardless of the variety of change initiatives, the administrators were able to get their planned change initiatives implemented while satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process. Although a handful of administrators expressed that some of their outcomes were not what they originally had in mind, they were in general satisfied with what they did to enact the changes that needed to take place and were pleased that the eventual outcomes were better than expected. To achieve the desired outcomes, the administrators were heavily involved in persuading and motivating others as well as spearheading timely and consequential changes that contributed to organizational success.

Due to the fact that no administrator admitted that they did not achieve their desired outcomes, it is important to note that to some extent the administrators collectively committed positive bias as well as self-affirmation bias when concluding that they had achieved their desired organizational outcomes, which may have been inherent in this kind of self-perception studies. Since the administrators were encouraged to discuss what they had done to lead a change effort, there was some degree of portraying themselves in the best possible light, especially to an interviewer/researcher. However, readers should not readily assume that the administrators were being untruthful. Rather, readers should acknowledge this potential positive bias with a grain of salt for the researcher believed that the administrators were rather honest when reflecting on their experiences, disclosing the extent of their involvement, and opening up about their political behavior.

The findings from this study (Table 5) resonate with other seminal work on community college leadership by Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) who recognized that the proactive leader must attend to three stages of the change process: 1) Recognize the need for revitalization and new direction around the community college mission; 2) Create a new vision; and 3) Institutionalize change to accomplish the mission. Specifically, this study implies that the administrators took steps to proactively influence others and were fairly intentional about what kinds of political behavior to engage in during the change process. Also, this study adds weight to the literature by inferring that

community college leaders communicate the vision, develop strategic plans, and align college resources to implement and institutionalize various change initiatives.

Finding #5: Five core behaviors were typical of all administrators when leading planned change: get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research. When analyzing the political behavior of presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators, there were five core behaviors that they all had in common. In other words, these five overarching behaviors resonated in every interview. Every administrator recognized that in order for them to be successful in achieving their desired organizational outcomes, they needed to engage in these five high leverage political behavior. Simply put, these five political behavior were the bedrock of their success as an administrator, especially within the context of them leading planned change.

To reinforce an earlier point on why these behaviors were political (as opposed to motivating or teambuilding behaviors, for example), it is important to point out that due to the political nature of these three community colleges, the administrators had little choice but to engage in various political behavior to influence others in order to get change done. Collectively, they recognized that they were political actors in a political arena. Not surprisingly, some administrators embraced the necessity of being a political actor, others preferred not to be caught up in the messiness associated with organizational politics. However, every administrator recognized that they could not ignore the fact that organizational politics abound, and that engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was to be expected to move change forward.

In many ways, the findings from this study parallel the five themes (i.e., vision, influence orientation, people orientation, motivational orientation, and values orientation) proposed by Roueche, Baker, and Rose (1989) and the six principles (i.e., consensus/social proof, commitment/consistency, reciprocity, scarcity, liking, and authority) presented by Cialdini (2001) in the sense that engaging in these five core behaviors were critical to the administrators' success in leading and influencing others. The following paragraphs will highlight these five core behaviors.

## Five Core Behaviors

After a deductive process to determine the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (indicated in Table 5) that the presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators engaged in, the researcher delve further to capture the essence of all the political behavior to better grasp what they all had in common. This resulted in the identification of five “core” political behavior. Similar to the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (in Table 5), the core political behavior were those high leverage tried-and-true behaviors that all the administrators consistently employed because doing often led to achieving desired organizational outcomes. Put differently, the core political behavior are the common denominators (or a subset) of all the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. The next section highlights the five core behaviors.

*Get Buy-In.* First and foremost, the community college administrators knew that they had to have sufficient buy-in from key political actors and constituent groups to move their change efforts forward. They comprehended that not every organizational member had to be on board; rather, they had to get a critical mass of supporters and potential supporters to push the proposed change initiatives forward. To do so, the administrators focused their attention and expended considerable energy on those who were most receptive and willing to listen and therefore less resistant to the proposed change. Also, the administrators made intentional decisions to spend less time with resisters, especially the “active” resisters—those who had a political agenda to squash the proposed change idea/initiative. Nonetheless, the administrators seldom overlooked this group because they recognized that this small pocket of dissenters could pose major short-term and long-term obstacles if not addressed adeptly.

The key is buy-in. It’s having that plan and proposal, having that back-up plan. If you have to take somebody to lunch, if you have to give them chocolate to kind of win them over, do it. It’s listening and letting people come to the table. When you don’t include individuals up front, that’s bad. (SLA8)

*Build Relationships.* Second, the administrators purposefully built relationships with as many internal and external stakeholders as possible to garner support for the change initiative. They went beyond developing rapport to truly investing in maintaining meaningful and mutually supportive relationships. Many administrators reasoned that

relationships were the key ingredient to every successful change process because ultimately, being able to influence others to act on their own volition came down to whether the administrators had built and developed positive working relationships with those they needed to convince or work with.

When you have the relationships, the trust, and the credibility, that's what influences people and that's what sells things. Influencing is really based on relationships and credibility and that takes time. That's probably why change takes time—you got to build credibility, you got to have relationships with folks. (MLA4)

*Involve Others.* Third, the administrators actively sought to involve others, especially key political actors and constituent groups, as much as reasonably possible to participate in collective decision making. Involving others meant more than simply having people at the table; it required a sincere outreach to those key players whose involvement and support could enable the change initiatives to materialize. To get the most mileage out of this crucial political behavior, the administrators intentionally involved others by (a) inviting them to partake in discussions early rather than late, (b) encouraging people to openly share their ideas, and (c) considering and incorporating their input and recommendations. Moreover, the administrators comprehended that it was a good idea to also invite and involve those organizational members (internal and external) who tended to be critics because these potential resistors could become ardent supporters once they believed in the project, as opposed to excluding this small but potentially vocal group at the outset.

When I work with faculty, I keep them in the loop and I involve them...I don't see them as just talking heads. When they give you all these inputs and you don't ever use any of it, then you're done, you are absolutely done...It's not all that painful to implement some things as long as you are involving the people who are going to be affected. (MLA5)

*Listen and Show Respect.* Another high-leverage core political behavior was to listen attentively and respect others regardless of their roles and/or viewpoints. The administrators understood that the most fundamental element of every human interaction boils down to respecting others by means of listening to what people had to say, even if they were to fervently disagree because of divergent interests or dissimilar positions. Because the administrators work in a highly unionized environment, they truly grasped

this key principle. They understood that for them to successfully lead, implement, and institutionalize change in a political organization, they had to continually demonstrate their commitment, willingness, and professionalism in order to agree to disagree on many contentious issues. In working with their faculty colleagues, the administrators recognized that they needed to respect the role of faculty and faculty unions. More importantly, they needed to demonstrate respect for the faculty in their everyday interactions. In this light, action spoke louder than words.

The biggest thing that has worked for me is to be a participative kind of administrator. You don't get very far in a unionized environment being a dictator. When you are, there's more conflict. The reason that I've been able to work very successfully in a unionized environment is because I'm a good listener. When I listened to the faculty and showed them respect, I certainly gained more insight. I've learned a lot about how to work with them. (SLA14)

*Do Homework/Research.* Lastly, the administrators grasped that in order to be influential when trying to sell their ideas, share their visions, and/or communicate the benefits associated with the proposed change, they needed to have diligently done their homework or research. For the senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, they often assembled a solid proposal that resembled a business plan before they pitched it upward. As for the presidents, they knew that they had to appeal to and convince the board of their visions and strategic initiatives with the aim of garnering their support. In fact, doing homework and gathering research data was almost second nature to many administrators because they were fully aware that building a case with supporting evidence (e.g., patterns, trends, and projections) was a requisite. Given the reality of limited resources and competing priorities within the organization, the administrators often turned to numbers and figures to present a more compelling illustration of unmet needs for their proposed change initiatives. This was particularly true because the presidents and board members relied heavily on these data when making critical decisions.

Being political is part of influencing people—there's just no question about it. Every executive has a different style. We all have different backgrounds and strengths...My influence is relationship-based but I always make sure that my influence on a relationship basis is backed up firmly by research, logic, and solid arguments...I do not as an individual, as a professional wish to be accused of being unsure. I want to be more than somebody that spews rhetoric. I need to

understand what I'm spewing rhetoric about. It makes me more effective, and it leaves me less subject to challenge. (SLA11)

In sum, the administrators engaged in these five high-leverage core political behavior on a regular basis and with other political actors and constituent groups. When administrators engaged in these five quintessential political behavior they were often successful in leading change at their respective community colleges. Likewise, when the administrators encountered resistance or potential resistance throughout the change process, they engaged in these political behavior to deal with both passive and active resisters.

### Summary

In conclusion, this chapter provided readers with the key findings of the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the three groups of administrators employed when leading planned change. It is important to note that the identified political behavior were those that the administrators perceived to be critical to their success in achieving desired organizational outcomes. In other words, these were not just any political behavior; rather, they were the tried-and-true ones that enabled the presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators to positively influence others and facilitate getting change done.

Included in this chapter was a discussion on the five other major findings: 1) The administrators engaged in a myriad of political behavior (e.g., building a compelling case, involving the faculty to give them ownership, sharing information to sell ideas, and discerning others' personal agendas) when leading planned change; 2) The kinds of political behavior used to lead planned change did vary across administrative levels; 3) Change initiatives varied across administrative levels; 4) Administrators believed that they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change; and 5) Five core behaviors were typical of all administrators when leading change: get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research. This chapter concluded with an analysis of the differences amongst the administrators' political behavior.

Chapter V  
Presidents

The president, the chief executive officer of a community college, is appointed by and is responsible to the institution’s chancellor or board of trustees, and is entrusted with setting the direction and administration of the college’s policies. The three presidents interviewed for this study consistently engaged in the following political behavior to achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change (see Table 5). The rationale for identifying the presidents’ political behavior will be highlighted in this chapter.

Table 5: Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |
| 5--Share information to educate others       | 5--Get buy-in                              | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research     |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints       | 6--Listen and show respect                 | 6--Align change with college’s mission         |
| 7--Communicate the vision                    | 7--Know when the timing is right           | 7--Collaborate to build consensus              |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes            |



## Press Forward Despite Resistance

Leading change was indeed a momentous challenge for the presidents in this study. Nonetheless, they embraced the challenges, dealt with them the best they could, and pressed forward despite the resistance they often encountered. There were many reasons why pressing forward was deemed a political behavior, all of which had to do with the fact that the presidents tactically engaged in this political behavior and were successful at moving their change agenda forward. The presidents often gauged what they needed to do, when to take action, and how to keep the momentum going so that their change ideas did not wither and fail. The next section illustrates this political behavior in more detail.

This notion of pressing forward was undeniably an important political behavior in a unionized environment because the presidents tended to have different perspectives than the faculty and faculty union on what would be best for the college, such as the institutional priorities, role of faculty, and decision-making process. The presidents understood that regardless of which change initiatives they wished to pursue and implement that might have an impact on faculty, some resistance was to be expected.

Everything that goes on here is filtered through at least two or three unions before we can get it into action. So I think what you're going to find is a kind of frustration. While the ideas are embraced, trying to get something as simple as a job description modification takes weeks and months of processing through collective bargaining. It's difficult but we found a way to do it. (P2)

Moreover, when presidents were met with resistance they became even more resilient and pressed forward with greater determination to get change done because they viewed the change initiative as both necessary and urgent. In their minds, they were attentive to always do what was in the college's best interest, whether it was to position the college to stay competitive, to improve student success rates, or to respond to the needs of the community. No matter how slow the pace was or how many obstacles stood in their way, they continued to make steady progress because they firmly believed that the change outcome will better their college.

It's not a matter of winning and losing, it's a matter of progress and can you get there...Picture an ox carrying a cart of boulders. If you took some of the boulders out, the ox could probably go a little faster. (P2)

Metaphorically, the boulders in the above quote can be seen as the resisters and the president as the ox. No matter how much and how fast each president wanted to move forward with their change initiatives, they had to deal with those resisters in some capacity to the best of their abilities—there was no other way around this reality. However, before they engaged in a certain political behavior, they first needed to discern whether they were dealing with an active or passive resistor. The rationale was that each type of resistor required a different approach and tactic for they had varying points of contention and degrees of willingness to resist the president or the specific change initiative.

If it is simply affective coloring, I just leave it alone. If it is a concerted effort to derail or put an end to my change initiatives, then I derail them. I would add one more element to that. If the person is actively working against what you're doing, I would go for the removal. It is when they work at stopping something that I feel that gives me permission to work at stopping them. But absent that, I wouldn't do anything. I wouldn't take any hostile action against people that are general naysayers... We all know people who are down in the mouth about everything and you just pass it, skip by it. (P1)

Indeed, the presidents had to think long and hard about how best to press forward when they were faced with resistance, especially when dealing with active resisters that they consistently had to work with. They also knew it was important to tread delicately to avoid eroding their relationships with these resisters and made every effort to avoid burning any bridges. Instead, the presidents were intentional in terms of how best to advance their goals.

When dealing with resisting forces, you do the best you can with what you have. You try to always out-think them, out-smart them, out-run them, you do something. The battle is always there to try to reconcile the wrong measures with the right outcomes. What do I do about it? I give it my best and do the right things first. (P2)

Furthermore, when the presidents had to deal with active resisters the pervasive question then became whether to continue to engage in dialogue with them because doing so have often been rather frustrating. Often times, the presidents reasoned that it was better use of time and energy to create a critical mass among the supporters because they were more willing to listen, to get on board, and to advocate for the change.

When you do anything new here there can be resistance. You have to make the decision of whether you want to address the resistance. The question is do you want to invest in trying to change a resistor versus create a critical mass among the believers so that the resistors are then no longer relevant. I tend to drift toward the latter. Obviously there are some efforts you want to put into changing “no” votes—you have to listen to their arguments. When you get the “yes but” argument...that person becomes a bad investment in time and energy. (P1)

Knowing that some political actors will not like the idea nor will ever be happy with change in general the presidents accepted this reality because they recognized the many difficulties associated with change. From the presidents’ experiences, some people did not understand the complexity of the change, particularly those organizational members who had been at the college for a considerable amount of time and had been successful at their jobs. One president discussed the inevitable collateral resistance and the importance of pressing forward:

I’m undergoing an organizational change now. It is very difficult because it’s complex. It requires a lot of new thinking on the part of people because people who are successful are very difficult to change, especially those who have been on the job for 20-30 years. They see no reason to change their styles of doing things. You often think about people who are resistant to change as being naysayers but those very successful people are naysayers too. Getting people to grasp the systems thinking approach to running an organization takes monumental effort because the more independent you are, the less system we have. (P1)

As much as the presidents had the vision for the change and/or led the change process, it was the levels below that had to implement what needed to get done as they saw fit. One of the more frustrating elements associated with the change process was the fact that resistors sought to criticize and/or discourage those implementing the change on behalf of the president, from doing their work.

The reality of everyday is that there are so many good ideas coming from the trenches. But you have so many alligators and rattlesnakes that try to take a bite at you every minute of the day that I just feel bad for the people in the trenches who tries to make things work, who wants to make things work. (P2)

Knowing that some resistors will at some point in time give up their efforts, take a wait-and-see approach, and/or eventually join the bandwagon, the presidents had to tread carefully when pressing forward with this somewhat fickle group. The presidents knew that they had to be sensitive and more importantly, they knew that they had to provide

logical reasons to continue to convince the resisters that it was a good idea to get on board.

After awhile people do come along, even the resisters. Things start to move and they'll join the crowd after all. They'll be the first to abandon ship by the way if there's anything that goes wrong but hopefully that doesn't occur. (P1)

In brief, the presidents believed that to get any meaningful change done, they had to take calculated steps to press forward despite resistance. By doing so, they were able to generate forward progress, achieve small wins along the way, and eventually institutionalize the change. Moreover, they recognized that they had to become even more persistent and focused on how best to navigate around the political terrain, especially when faced with both big and small obstacles at almost every turn.

#### Get Buy-in

Getting buy-in was another political behavior that the presidents engaged in to influence others. The more the presidents got buy-in from others, the more the presidents leveraged their influence in a political environment. Without a critical mass of people buying into the presidents' change ideas/initiatives, progress tended to be slow and commitment tended to wane. The next section details how this political behavior was used.

Even as the chief executive officer, the presidents had to work at getting buy-in from key political actors and constituent groups. In other words, some organizational members were not quick to readily accept the presidents' messages or ideas, let alone buy into the presidents' vision for change. As such, the presidents preferred to get buy-in by seeking consensus.

One of the first things I do to convey the message of change is to bring people together. I can't force the message on them. I have to let them see for themselves and get them to feel comfortable with what we need to do. So a lot of times you'll hear when I talk with the Executive Committee or anybody, I don't ask for votes. Do you feel comfortable? That's a key one. Do you feel comfortable with the direction we're going? And that's a different thing. That's more of a consensus rather than a yes-no or a win-lose. (P3)

Since all three community college environments were unionized, the presidents revealed that organizational members often times questioned the impetus for every change initiative, played devil's advocate, and challenged any ideas that appeared to be

top-down. Faced with this political landscape, the presidents sought ways to get the necessary buy-in by offering different organizational members some added benefits.

Another part of getting things to work smoothly is to make sure that as many people as possible get something out of it. All of the inter-office politics, the divisional politics, everybody has to see an avenue of gain in the project. That's a lot of what you work on strategically behind the scenes. (P1)

Similarly, the presidents, if they could, gave people what they wanted to get their buy-in. However, this win-win tactic was anchored in the fact that the presidents were interested in making sure everybody felt like they had won something out of the process so that nobody felt they did not gain something.

It's quid pro quo, like labor negotiations. What can happen here that would make your life easier? You have to work hard at trying to give people what they want without hurting yourself. That works most of the time...Everybody must get the feeling that they've won something out of the process—that's what you work hard to do. The losers will stay on your back forever. You'll be repaying that same debt...you don't want to have people out there with a sense of being a loser. (P1)

A critical aspect of getting buy-in was to be able to sell ideas in a sincere manner. The presidents engaged in the practice of selling each and every day because that was what they needed to do to get buy-in. They reasoned that the best way was to have honest dialogues with people that focused on shared values, common goals, and authenticity, not posturing, game playing, and/or personal agendas.

No matter what job you had, it doesn't matter if you're the most technical person, you're going to have to learn how to sell ideas. Selling is not a negative term. It's how to communicate to individuals in the format that they understand. Selling is not trying to trick anybody—it's an honest dialogue with individuals. Sincerity is the key to selling. If you don't sincerely believe in something, you can't sell something. (P3)

When leading planned change, the presidents recognized that they needed to give their senior-level administrators responsibility to carry out their change initiatives. Since the presidents had positional power, they were cognizant to distribute as much power and authority as possible.

You have to give people authority when you give them responsibility. I'm going to give you the authority to do the job in the manner you think it has to be done given the values of the organization and the timelines that we talked about. I can't be stepping in and managing day-to-day operations. You have the right and authority to do things, but here are the upper and lower limits. If you stay within

that, OK. But if you go out of it, then let's start checking one way or the other. (P3)

The presidents also recognized that they had to trust their administrators—and they did—to do what needed to get done and to refrain from interfering, intervening, micromanaging, and/or presenting untimely and unnecessary obstacles. Likewise, the presidents knew they had to create healthy parameters and reasonable expectations for their administrators as a means to hold them accountable.

I have to trust that every one of my executive officers is going to do their jobs. Is that clearly defined? No. But there are certain expectations. I also have to be at a point where if I have to step in, then I have to do that. But there is no scientific thing. It's more of a have you thought of this or consider that? And maybe it's just a check in, maybe there was a misinterpretation. (P3)

One other crucial way to get buy-in was for the presidents to demonstrate a track record of success, which they all did. Actions did speak louder than words when the presidents did what they said they were going to do and did those things well. Not only did more organizational members listen to the presidents, they also believed in what the presidents were saying. This was also the case for other administrators in leadership positions.

One of the things that is helpful is a track record...I think it has been easier for me as time has passed and I've had a few successes under my belt to have people listen. I think that's also true for people who are reporting to me or mid-managers. Once they have demonstrated that they have some capacities, it becomes easier for them to have influence on an organization because they have a track record for success. (P2)

In short, the presidents sought every opportunity to get buy-in when leading change. They made every effort to appeal to others with the aim of getting people on board. When they encountered roadblocks along the way, they pursued other action steps to achieve their desired outcomes. However, they also knew that some individuals and groups were unlikely to be convinced. Therefore, they chose to spend little time with these resistors and instead redirected their energy and attention on those that they could influence to get change done. Put differently, the presidents only needed to get a critical mass of supporters to buy into their change ideas/initiatives and they did.

## Perform and Fulfill the Presidential Role

Another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the presidents engaged in was to perform and fulfill the presidential role. Put simply, the presidents had to act, behave, and conduct themselves in a “presidential” manner largely because others expected them to do what presidents, generally speaking, were expected to do—communicate the vision, provide the leadership, attend and speak at various functions/events, and serve as responsible public stewards for the college and the community. Indeed, the presidency was a political role—one that the presidents relished and enjoyed. The next section further discusses illustrates this political behavior with specific examples.

Central to being a good president was the presidents’ understanding that different political actors and stakeholder groups have different expectations of them. Therefore, the presidents had to make conscientious efforts to comprehend what the myriad of expectations were and to fulfill those expectations to the best of their abilities if they were reasonable and vital to the presidency.

Every role has different expectations. So it’s always finding out what are the expectations of that role...The better I understand what the expectations are and how I can fulfill those functions, the more successful I’ll be in my role as president. (P3)

The three presidents recognized the importance of being seen in the community because as presidents, they had to be visible to various community members and students. More importantly, they needed to listen to what people were saying and to listen attentively to various concerns and complaints. Besides, the more constituent groups the presidents met with and befriended, the more the presidents were able to resonate the message that they were interested in working with students and the community. This one president discussed his willingness to have open forums as a means to encourage others to ask questions and raise concerns:

When you get to this role, you have to be working and gaining the respect throughout the whole community...I have open forums for students. They can ask any questions, make any statement they want, if they have concerns or complaints they can share that. I’ll have many of the managers and supervisors there so that the students can ask anything they want. It goes back to the fact that you have a right to ask questions of me because this is your college...If you have problem with financial aid, I’m concerned that there are problems with financial aid...You

have every right to ask those things and you have every right to expect that we'd do something with it. (P3)

The presidents over the course of their presidency or tenure have had to make countless difficult decisions and pursue unpopular actions. They did not make any decisions lightly—every one of them gave serious considerations as to what was the right or best decision in each situation because they knew that inevitably somebody would be upset. The one common element in their decision making was the focus on sustainability, not simply merit. In other words, the presidents were thoughtful about the change idea/initiative and wanted to ensure that the proposal would provide long-lasting impact and value-added benefits to the population being served. One president reinforced the idea of looking at the big picture and thinking long-term:

Even if I fell in love with an idea, I really have to soul search and ask, “Can we really do this, do it well, and do it sustainably?” One of the bad things that we do in education is we launch a program that has merit but we don't have a vision for sustainability. And then we disappoint our constituency a few years down the line. I don't like that. A lot of institutions do that sometimes because it's a publicity grabber—announce some program for some population but haven't got a clue of how to sustain it down the line. (P2)

The presidents also had to be outspoken about what their visions and priorities were for their respective colleges. Since they were the spokespersons and figureheads, they knew that they had to take control and exert some influence in order to shape their colleges' future. This was particularly the case during the early months of first transitioning to the presidency.

I've been here a long time and a lot of [name of college] represented my thinking. A lot of the corporate culture reflected my values so that was not a new task for me. What was a new task is becoming president and asserting a new set of priorities. (P1)

In brief, the importance of fulfilling and performing the presidential role cannot be overstated. The presidents were fully aware of others' expectations of them, especially the board of trustees, and sought to do everything they could to exceed those expectations. By recognizing the levity of the presidency, it can be said that the presidents were “on” every day in every meeting/interaction trying to do what was best for the institution and serving as a good steward of the college's resources.



## Encourage Others to Share Ideas

Encouraging others to share ideas was another political behavior that the presidents engaged in. This behavior was deemed political largely because doing so conveyed the message that the presidents valued collegiality, especially when they expressed a strong interest in promoting open communication through the sharing of ideas. The presidents were willing to listen to new ideas even when they felt strongly about certain issues, had already made up their minds, or had taken a different position. The presidents provided some concrete examples of how they employed this political behavior.

By engaging in this political behavior, the presidents conveyed the message that they were open-minded, reasonable, and not authoritative. Moreover, the presidents reasoned that it was better to allow people to have an outlet to share their ideas because this encouraged original thinking and innovative practices that could potentially benefit the college in countless ways.

I would certainly listen attentively and no matter what I think, I would thank people for thinking of new ideas for the institution. I wouldn't ever want to discourage people from coming to talk to me...I want them to walk out the door feeling that the next time they have an idea, it's worth coming back...Institutions thrive on innovation and new ideas so no matter what, even if I had to say no, I wouldn't want people to leave feeling discouraged about having raised the idea. (P2)

A key element of encouraging staff to share ideas was for the president to seriously consider the ideas, not simply be at meetings and nod inattentively. Even when the presidents were pensive about an idea, they made it clear to others that by no means were they in full agreement, intend to take action (immediately or in due time), and/or would create a task force/committee to look into designing or implementing the change proposal.

I hope everyone on my staff would feel that there's an openness to seriously consider the idea no matter how outlandish the idea appears to be. I would also hope they wouldn't have an automatic expectation that because I'm in love with the institution, that I better do something about it. It's like saying, "I'll hear your complaint but that does not automatically mean I will do something to address it." I mean they should get an attentive ear but sometimes their ideas are not something that we should be doing. (P2)

It was evident that the presidents placed a high value on getting their key administrators to openly express their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions. Regardless of how outrageous or conflicting the comments may have been, the presidents wanted to hear them and when appropriate, discussed the merits. They believed that by engaging in honest dialogue, the diversity of opinions often times led to better change processes and outcomes, especially when dealing with the complexity of planned change. One president illustrated the reasoning behind the practice of encouraging others to exercise their voices:

The only way that we can go forward in an organization is for people to openly express their thoughts. The thing that I value most is that my Executive Committee will stand up and argue and say, “No, I don’t believe that’s true, I don’t agree with that.” I think the nice thing is that when you have that, you have an organization that can examine itself, talk about things. That to me is the most valuable thing that I have with my EC—they will express openly and to each other, to each of us, what they feel on any topic. (P3)

A central theme in this political behavior was the notion of assuming the best in people. Simply put, this meant that the presidents went into every interaction and discussion believing that the other party was mutually interested in doing what was best for the college. Their ideas and suggestions were with purest intentions and meant to move the college forward. Furthermore, they gave people the benefit of the doubt, trusted others, and had faith in others to act in a principled manner. The presidents believed that adopting this mindset was crucial to getting off on the right footing, especially with active resisters. By assuming the best in people and communicating this frame of mind to others, the presidents were intentional to do what they could in order to maximize their interactions with others.

I come out of the blocks assuming the best in people and it’s up to them to prove me wrong. Have I been proven wrong? I don’t think I’ve ever been hurt by it. (P2)

Undeniably, the presidents were intentional to encourage others to share their ideas and suggestions because they wanted to listen to what others had to say. This political behavior was heavily employed for it allowed the presidents to have a better understanding of what the concerns and issues were, and how they might go about addressing them. By demonstrating sincerity when engaging in this political behavior, the

presidents came across as being reasonable, understanding, and more importantly, collegial.

### Share Information to Educate Others

Sharing information to educate others was another political behavior that they presidents engaged in when leading planned change. Categorically, the presidents understood that one of their roles as a political actor was to be the “information sharer.” The more information they shared with various constituent groups, the more these stakeholders knew what was going on, what to expect, and what was expected of them. The presidents seemed instinctively to know what information to share, when and how to share them, and with whom to share them with. The next section illuminates this political behavior in more detail.

The presidents were intentional about articulating the message of change and repeating that message as often as possible to not only prepare organizational members to recognize the current realities and challenges facing the college but to also educate them about the necessary action steps that need to be taken to overcome those challenges. In other words, the presidents seized every opportunity to predispose others to the idea of change in hopes of trying to minimize potential resistance to change.

I don't think there is a talk that I've given that doesn't address the nature of change, the community we're serving, the circumstances in higher education, the economic and population considerations, all this stuff. I'm constantly trying to acquaint the college community with the nature of change in the world surrounding us as well as the nature of things within our organization, how well we're doing or maybe where we can do better. Within this environment, that has generally helped to get people moving toward where I think they should be before we even have to start talking about strategies. (P2)

Correspondingly, the presidents solicited others' ideas as a means to generate momentum to create excitement about the idea of change, the benefits of the change initiative, and the boundless possibilities that change can bring in terms of improvement, ease, convenience, and/or reputation. By soliciting ideas, the presidents did more than simply educating others—they actively encouraged and promoted the sharing of information across the entire campus, not simply one-way and top-down. When this happened, the presidents were able to empower organizational members to play an integral role during the change process by means of taking a more active role to make the

change work for them, as opposed to being just a bystander of change. Also, when organizational members started to take an active role in support of a change initiative, their involvement, support, and leadership inevitably spoke volumes, especially to other organizational members who continued to be reluctant of the change, the change message, or the change agent(s).

Before a single brick is laid [to build a new facility] people are approaching me about additions and modifications because they've taken what we said and they've ran with it...I usually tell people to put it down on a piece of paper and show me. If we can get critical mass, then we'll do it. I have the advantage of a history with these folks. If I say we will do it, then it will occur. I think that's what makes that process look a lot smoother than it is because what I'm trying to generate is momentum. It's just not me doing the pushing—I've got a 100 people doing the pushing. (P1)

While attempting to educate others, the presidents believed that it was essential to openly share information with everyone and to provide the same amount of information. The rationale for this was that when people are provided with as much information as possible about something, they “should” reach the same conclusions about what to do, how to do it, and the whys behind the decisions. Besides, when the presidents practiced information transparency, they felt that organizational members were more receptive, knowledgeable, and empowered when it came to making “intelligent” decisions.

I believe that well-intentioned people—when given the same amount of information—will generally come up with the same conclusions. One of the reasons we disagree is because we maybe don't have the same level of understanding about what it is we're discussing. So one of my change strategies is to provide people with as much information, maybe call it intelligence, about the circumstances as possible...I'm hopeful that they'll begin to move toward where I would like them to go based on their own volition because of their own understanding. (P2)

The presidents knew that the more information they shared with others, the higher the likelihood that others will arrive at similar conclusions. Specifically, the presidents emphasized the values, beliefs, and standards that mattered most to the college, to the students, and one another. By centering discussions, especially the difficult ones, around institutional values, shared goals, and agreed-upon priorities, it encouraged those at the table to move forward as productively as possible. One president captured the essence of getting people to come to the same conclusion:

I think in many cases when we get to the point of announcing a proposed initiative, we've already pre-disposed many members of the college community toward understanding the inherent wisdom of doing it. It's based on the belief that people are good... So when bargaining, I don't do main table bargaining anymore. I do a lot of away-from-the-table conversations with leaders. I'm constantly trying to talk about what are our standards, what are we trying to do, what's happening at other institutions, and what are the challenges we're all facing. (P2)

When differences surfaced and disagreements abounded, the presidents recognized that engaging in this fifth influence tactic of sharing information to educate others, became even more compulsory. In the end, it was about the college's mission and purpose—that was what brought people together. As presidents, they had to bring the conversations back to the mission and purpose of the college to resolve differences because doing so softened the tone, encouraged participation, and increased the chances of arriving at the same conclusions.

#### Respect Others and Their Viewpoints

The presidents believed that another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was to respect others regardless of their roles and positions and their viewpoints no matter how different they were. Although this behavior appeared to be rather simplistic and mundane, it was indeed a very political one largely because the presidents gained a tremendous amount of support simply by engaging in this political behavior. The next section details how this political behavior was used.

The concept of respect was a pervasive one that they all shared as a president and as a human being. That was because the presidents recognized that without giving respect, they would not get respect in return. Correspondingly, they recognized that although they occupy the presidency, their role was to ultimately serve others, to be accountable to others, and to help others be successful.

I think it really goes back to a very basic principle and that's respect. No matter what position you're in, you have to respect the people you're working with. In this position at this level, people will always say, "Well, isn't it great that people work for you?" And my view is that I work for everybody. I am accountable to everybody. My job is to make sure that I'm doing the things that help people be successful in their roles and their positions within the organization. (P3)

The presidents were cognizant of the fact that respecting others meant they had to check and remove their own biases as well as to not rebuke, humiliate or shun others for

having different opinions or for taking a contrasting position. They reasoned that a far better approach was to accept the reality that in every political organization, different people will invariably have differing viewpoints. They needed to accept this and to talk about the differences instead of viewing those with differing opinions in a negative light or harboring ill feelings toward them.

I respect people and respect that we'll have our differences. So from that point of view, we can talk and I'm not going to chastise you or have you think it's anything wrong. It's a difference of opinions and we need to talk about it. (P3)

Respecting others also meant that the presidents avoided being revengeful. They noted that it would have been pointless to attack someone simply because that individual made a remark or did something that was hurtful or damaging to the presidents' image, ego, or reputation. Moreover, they knew better than to disgrace the presidency by retaliating or being disrespectful to their critics even when provoked. One president shared the wisdom of not taking things personally:

Everybody has a right to have different opinions and say what they want to say. If they disagree with me, I don't take it personally. What I do take personally is if they do lie, sometimes they do. The other thing is I don't take on a position of revenge. If somebody is out attacking me, I'm not going to be revengeful. In an organization you can't, and in a leadership position you can't become that revengeful person. It can't be about retaliating. It's disrespectful to me in this position when people are telling falsehoods. But it's not one that I'm going to be revengeful of. But what we need to do is to eventually get out what the facts are. Sometimes you just have to let it go. (P3)

The notion of respecting others also implied that it would be iniquitous for presidents to ask or coerce a staff member to do something illegal, unethical, and/or unprofessional. Certainly engaging in these backdoor manipulation schemes would severely taint the presidents' character because these kinds of behaviors would be perceived as disrespectful. A much better approach was to put more trust in people that they will make sound judgments when faced with an ethical decision or dilemma to do what was best for the college. The presidents, as a result of having developed relationships with various organizational members, learned to trust various individuals and relied on their professional evaluations when making decisions.

I will not knowingly ask somebody to go against their ethics or morals. I'm not going to force somebody to do anything. In fact, what I want are individuals to

abide by their ethics whatever they are and the values of the organization. You have to rely on each individual to interpret on their own what's right and wrong. (P3)

Indeed, the presidents were mindful to demonstrate that they respected others and their viewpoints. By showing respect in a genuine manner in every interaction, the presidents earned the respect of others. More often than not, the presidents were able to mend differences and find common ground by showing respect.

#### Communicate the Vision

Lastly, communicating the vision was another successful important political behavior. When the presidents communicated their visions, they also indirectly conveyed their agendas and priorities which were often laced with political implications. Not surprisingly, the presidents knew that they had to provide some compelling vision in order to move the college forward in a turbulent, ever-changing environment. Moreover, they recognized that coming up with a vision was merely the first of many steps in the context of vision and leadership. The next section examines this political behavior in greater depth.

To get buy-in, the presidents had to communicate their vision for a better college with as many people as possible and as often as was necessary. They had to articulate it in such a way that was convincing and powerful. After all, they had to sell their vision to garner critical support for their change initiatives or else they knew that they could face considerable difficulties along the way.

The phrase “sharing the vision” at its most fundamental level is to have people see what you see. You’re painting a picture by having them visualize the kinds of things that are going to go on with a new facility or with a new program... For faculty it makes no difference whether if you teach in the older building or the newer building, you will have the newest equipment there is. This approach buys a lot of cooperation and support. These are the kind of things you want to spread the word about for people to see. “Everything will be new and top quality—what will you do with it?” (P1)

Not only were the presidents expected to communicate their vision to faculty, staff, and administrators, they had to first share it with the board of trustees. Clearly, without the board's support and endorsement, the presidents cannot move forward with their change initiatives unless they wanted to jeopardize their relationships with their

“bosses.” To convince the board the proposed vision was worth pursuing, the presidents presented a well-thought out plan that addressed the potential costs and benefits involved, and if necessary, how the change initiative would have been sustained. By having a business plan, the presidents came across as having done their homework/research and were knowledgeable about the ins-and-outs of the proposed plan/initiative.

Typically I would go through the same steps—basically explaining to the Board how I got to this point and what I did before I came to see them...Boards and bosses quite frankly do not like making decisions for you, that’s your job. The thing is to make it clear to them that you have done all the legwork here. You know the answers to the questions and this is a well-thought out proposal, not something that is spur of the moment. (P1)

Often times communicating the vision meant that the presidents had to align their change initiatives with the college’s mission, vision, and values. By doing so, the presidents strategically positioned themselves to get at the core of what the change initiative was about. In most community colleges, it was about improving teaching and learning. Needless to say, pitching and selling the change initiative this way resulted in getting more buy-in because it would have been rare and surprising for anyone to take the opposite argument—to not improve teaching and learning—to simply be in favor of status quo.

I think we’re doing the peoples’ work. I’m not a missionary here but we’re doing the right things, and I think we’re doing it for the right reasons. You have to get back to teaching and students, outcomes, mission, purpose and community benefits. (P2)

Communicating the vision also implied that the presidents had to spend a significant amount of time convincing internal and external stakeholders. Increasingly, the presidents spent countless hours doing public relations work in order to share their visions and persuade others to also embrace their vision. In fact, the presidents recognized that the more compelling the vision, the more interest it would generate. As such, the presidents were intentional about stretching others’ thinking to consider the possibilities of what can be done for the betterment of the college.

The three presidents spent countless hours leading institution-wide change efforts and worked diligently to do the right things for their respective institutions. More than anything, leading planned change efforts that best serve the students and community was



the impetus for them working hard each and every day. As a result, the presidents were successful at achieving their desired outcomes.

I have spent a lot of my life convincing people of things, which they didn't think of before or didn't want to do or were afraid to do. That's the nature of the task, it was that way before I became president and it is even more so now. (P1)

In short, by being good stewards, the presidents managed to garner campus-wide support for their change initiatives, albeit they knew that there were and will always be pockets of resistance. By demonstrating a track record of successfully leading various change initiatives, they proved to different stakeholders that they cared about the institution and the direction it was moving in. Also, the presidents constantly looked for opportunities to make college-wide improvements because their collective perspectives were to leave the college in better shape than when they came into the presidency.

#### Summary

As discussed throughout this chapter, the three presidents certainly played a central and instrumental role in leading the planned change process. Without a doubt, when faced with this complex task, they employed political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change to address the challenges that stood in their way. Since they were ultimately responsible for the overall operation of their institutions and the various planned change initiatives that they and their administrators chose to pursue, the presidents tended to be change-oriented and results-focused.

Recognizing that leading planned change was a momentous challenge, the presidents believed that it was important to engage in the following political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. Despite whatever resistance they encountered, the first political behavior was to press forward. This notion of pressing forward was undeniably an essential political behavior, especially in a unionized environment where various political actors will exert pressures on the president to get their needs met. The second political behavior was to get buy-in as early and as often as possible. Even as the chief executive officer, the presidents had to make time and worked at getting buy-in from various political actors and constituent groups.

The third political behavior was to perform and fulfill the presidential role. The presidents understood that they had to act, behave, and conduct themselves in a

“presidential” manner largely because others expected them to do what presidents, generally speaking, were expected to do—to communicate vision, to provide leadership, to attend and speak at various functions/events, and to serve as responsible public stewards for the college and the community. Encouraging others to share ideas was the fourth political behavior. By doing so, the presidents conveyed a strong interest in wanting to listen to others and their suggestions and recommendations. They were willing to consider new ideas and be persuaded, even if they had already made up their minds or had taken a different position. By engaging in this political behavior, the presidents wanted people to know that they were open-minded, reasonable, and not authoritative.

Sharing information to educate others was the fifth political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. Categorically, the presidents understood that one of their roles was to be “information sharer.” The presidents reasoned that the more information they shared with various political actors and constituent groups, the more they knew what was going on, what to expect, and what was expected of them. The sixth political behavior was to respect others regardless of their roles and viewpoints. By doing so in a sincere manner, the presidents were able to gain more credibility, trust, and support from numerous organizational members, even those who might have had a contrasting opinion or position. The presidents recognized that without showing respect, they would not have gotten respect in return.

The seventh political behavior was to communicate the vision for the change. The presidents knew that they had to provide some compelling vision in order to move the college forward in a turbulent, ever-changing environment. Moreover, they recognized that coming up with a vision was merely the first of many steps as the chief executive officer. To get the necessary buy-in, each president had to communicate his vision with as many internal and external stakeholders as possible and as often as was necessary.

Chapter VI  
Senior-Level Administrators

The senior-level administrators (e.g., vice presidents, provost, and deans) were part of a team of individuals at the highest level of organizational management who had the day-to-day responsibilities of managing a division/unit. Based on interview findings, the 27 senior-level administrators identified the following political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (noted in the shaded column in Table 5). This chapter will highlight the reasons behind engaging in the identified set of political behavior (along with examples of each) and how each political behavior was utilized to achieve desired organizational outcomes.

Table 5: Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |
| 5--Share information to educate others       | 5--Get buy-in                              | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research     |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints       | 6--Listen and show respect                 | 6--Align change with college's mission         |
| 7--Communicate the vision                    | 7--Know when the timing is right           | 7--Collaborate to build consensus              |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes            |

## Involve Key Players

The one political behavior that every senior-level administrator believed yielded the most success was to involve key players and engage their participation throughout the change process as much as possible. To influence others in a positive way, the senior-level administrators first needed to identify key individuals who believed in the same mission and shared the same vision as they did. Specifically, they needed to ask themselves some questions at the start to get the right people on board. For example, they asked themselves, who is comfortable with risk taking, and who are the people that can deal with change and see it as a good thing? The senior-level administrators then needed to invite others to be a part of the discussion, action meeting, ad hoc committee, or advisory board during the change process. The next section illustrates how mid-level administrators utilized this political behavior.

This gesture of genuinely involving others conveyed to the invitees that they were valued members of the team and/or the organization and that their opinions mattered. Moreover, this gesture not only sent a powerful message of inclusion it also communicated to internal and external stakeholders that the senior-level administrators were not dictators and were truly interested in getting others' opinions.

It's important to bring people together for meetings to discuss some common goals and tasks that needed to be accomplished and decisions that needed to be made. I did that by bringing my entire divisional faculty together so everyone had an opportunity for input...to be a part of decision-making. I remember at one point in time, one of the faculty saying, "I don't fully agree with the decision that we reached but I agree with the way we reached it and I will support it." So they had gotten to know each other a little bit better even if some of the deeply embedded beliefs and dislikes for each other weren't going to go away. (SLA27)

Equally important was for administrators to communicate a message that the faculty and other administrators were equal partners in the change process and that the change idea was a shared initiative. One senior-level administrator highlighted the same idea of involving others but with an emphasis on getting senior-level administrators on board as well:

I don't look at this change initiative as my project. I've enlisted the support of a lot of people on campus. I've built an implementation team that included a significant number of faculty and administrators. This is a shared initiative, not

administration telling faculty what to do. It's a lot of listening and modifying the plan if it's not working. (SLA10)

When the senior-level administrators wanted to incorporate change or pursued innovation at the organizational level, they sought out change agents because they knew that they could not go at it alone. The more these change agents—early supporters, would-be critics, president's inner circle—were involved, the more success the senior-level administrators experienced because of the political capital that came with having these key players “on the team.” One senior-level administrator reinforced the significance of getting his colleagues on board because they too played a vital role in shaping the direction of the change process:

We had our administrative team involved all along the way. We had them involved in setting the top priorities and periodic sessions for feedback. I'd say, “Here's where we are at the bargaining table, what do you think? Should we agree to this, should we not agree to that?” In the end, we came up with some creative suggestions and solutions that people were willing to accept. (SLA13)

Indeed, it was a good idea to involve others. However, it was a more prudent idea to involve key players largely because they played a very influential role in moving the change process forward should there have been any obstacles or missteps. In more ways than one, key players used their positional power, authority, and connections to wield the results they liked to see happen and to mitigate or put an end to any resistance they encountered. Moreover, involving key players gave the senior-level administrator who was leading the change effort the added advantage of having an additional cadre of supporters in his/her court.

It's important to know who the key players are, who the stakeholders are, get them all at the table, and get everybody's input. You have to obviously get the right people on board. We had the people who were going to be responsible for this new building and I asked them to come up with new creative ideas and how to improve upon the operation we have, not just move the existing operation forward. (SLA3)

In the end, involving key players was about increasing one's political capital. The more political capital the senior-level administrator had built up over time with various individuals and coalitions throughout the organization, the more leverage he/she had

when leading planned change and were able to tap into this reserve when necessary. This was especially true when the key player was known to be in the president's inner circle.

Individuals who are politically astute in their network tend to be influential on campus. If you look at the people who can make the wheels go round, they're likely going to have an audience with key decision makers. So if you have them on your side from a political standpoint, you'll probably have them on your side to help you spread the word. People will recognize their individual leadership or the leadership that they exercise by virtue of the fact that they have a relationship with the president. (SLA11)

Senior-level administrators learned after years of experience in their positions that involving key players was a smart move. Equally important though was to consider who might be potential resistors—those likely to oppose the change efforts later on had they not been invited to the discussion table at the outset. The senior-level administrators noted that it was common sense to involve key players who were the early supporters. However, some went a step further to invite those “would-be critics” to the discussion table. The administrators' intent was to encourage them to share their thoughts and ideas in hopes of easing any fears associated with the change, as well as to recruit them. Doing so undoubtedly paved the way for a smoother change process for they reported experiencing fewer potholes and roadblocks during the change process.

I asked some faculty because I knew they would be front-runners, they were colleagues of mine in previous jobs that I had here. Others were people that I thought we might have more difficulty with so I asked them to come on first. That's another strategy that I've learned along the way: you don't want all ‘yes people’ in the room with you when you're doing a project. You want a mix of people who are supportive, and people who may have some questions about it. If you don't have them at the table at the beginning, whatever system you design isn't going to address their issues and concerns. (SLA10)

Likewise, another element to this political behavior was for the senior-level administrators to involve the faculty union leaders during the change process. Not only was this a gesture of goodwill, it also evoked the notion that faculty and senior-level administrators, regardless of their differences, can work together collaboratively and purposefully.

I asked the faculty forum president and vice president for recommendations. So from a political standpoint, keeping the connection with our faculty union has been helpful in this situation. (SLA10)

Furthermore, the senior-level administrators recognized that people in general had good reasons for resisting change, as arbitrary and irrational as the reason appeared to them. Hence, the senior-level administrators gave serious considerations to the resisters' perspectives and unspoken concerns. Why were they opposed to this idea? What was the source of their fears? What could be done to minimize those fears? The senior-level administrators gave serious thoughts to these questions (and others alike) and looked for ways to find common ground in order to work towards consensus-building.

If I accept that people don't like change but find that change is necessary or believe it to be necessary, then I have to make the effective argument to convince that anti-change person to be on board or I'm doomed...It's true in every environment. Change is very difficult and it can be scuttled very quickly if you don't take time to consider the opposition...you have to incorporate them into what you're doing. If you're able to get them to come on board, your product is better. Then you both own it moving forward. (SLA11)

In brief, the senior-level administrators accepted the fact that most people had their reasons for resisting change. People did not resist simply to resist—they tended to have some merits behind their positions. Knowing this, the senior-level administrators worked hard at involving key players throughout the change process, especially at the beginning. Furthermore, the senior-level administrators made every effort to get people on board whether they were in agreement or resistant to the change idea. By doing so, they were able to minimize potential resistance from various political actors and coalitions.

#### Pay Attention to What Is Going On

Another political behavior that the senior-level administrators engaged in was to pay attention to what was going on in order to discern the political context. Which political actor was perceived to be influential and who was cast in a negative light? Who was talking with whom and how might one describe their interactions? Who had a personal agenda and what were those agendas? Undoubtedly, these questions were on the senior-level administrators' radar screens because they needed this body of knowledge (and the like) to be able to determine what decisions they had to make and what actions were necessary. The next section discusses how this political behavior was used.

The senior-level administrators recognized that they had to get out of their offices to talk to others and attend various events/functions in order to get a sense of what was going on around campus and what people were talking about. Being in-the-dark and out-of-the-loop was not desirable because this implied that administrators were out of touch with current issues and hot-button topics.

If I sat in my office all the time and never went to the cafeteria to see who's having lunch with whom. If I never went to this presentation or gone to this invitation, then I will not know who's going and see who sits with whom, who's talking with whom. (SLA8)

Likewise, engaging in this political behavior also required the senior-level administrators to get out of their offices to be seen and make their presence known, whether it was to meet with others over coffee/lunch or to attend various meetings, functions, and events on and off-campus. As a result of being visible and taken notice of, the senior-level administrators reinforced the notion that they were “out there with the community.”

You have to go out to lunch and you have to talk to people and find out who they are. I don't mean you have to get into their business but you know where they want to go. So at my level, I take the time to meet with all the mid-level managers and chat with them and let them know who I am and where I want to go and all that. Then it's sitting back and watching. (SLA8)

Ultimately, in order for the senior-level administrators to achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change, they essentially had to be aware of the political landscape and to try to be very sensitive to it at all times because of the context in which they needed to operate. This senior-level administrator recognized that politics exist and that it is expected in any organizational setting:

It's hard because every place has different politics. Some people are really good at it and some don't know how to use it. One of the things you don't want to do is you don't want to alienate yourself from anybody within the institution. You don't have to like the people you work with but what you have to do is to work with people. “We” have to make what we're trying to achieve happen. So regardless of personalities, if you don't like me, I'll be okay. Sometimes that is very hard—you just clash. So what do you do to make it work so you don't clash? That's politics. Politics is huge...talk about ego and all that stuff. I think you have to be sensitive to that. (SLA8)



For those senior-level administrators who were new to an organization, paying attention to what was going on paid dividends in terms of getting off to a good start, making good first impressions, and avoiding stepping on potential landmines. Simply by observing and noticing social cues, the senior-level administrators picked up a wealth of information about unspoken expectations, implicit norms, underlying meanings, and unfettered messages.

When I first came here, I kind of watched. I didn't like having three meetings for one thing but I had to learn some patience...I needed to understand why these things happen and not consider it to be a waste of time because if you don't have the patience or understanding, you consider things that are not common to you to be a waste of time instead of trying to figure out how to use that time. So I start to figure out how to use this time, what's going on in these meetings and these places. Is this dialogue the same all the time, where do my words fit? Do I speak first, do I speak last? It's who's in the room and what's going on. I have to figure that out in order to affect some change. (SLA18)

Speaking of communication, paying attention to when to exercise one's voice was a critical decision for the senior-level administrators. There were perils to using too much air time (e.g., being perceived as an attention hog) as well as being too reticent (e.g., being perceived as disinterested or disengaged). The balance that the senior-level administrators had to strike was to communicate often enough to assert themselves and articulate their perspectives while paying attention to what the other political actors were saying so that when it was their turn to speak again, they would be taken more seriously.

If you're very silent, you're going to be seen as a retard or very intelligent. In other words, try to limit your comments so they have some effect, and time them well. Because if at the starting block, you're yappity, yappity, yappity, you've used all your ammunition—they're gone. Somebody else is sitting there keeping his powder dry and will be taken more seriously. (SLA23)

In addition to recognizing when to speak up, the senior-level administrators also paid attention to their priorities and how best to get them addressed and implemented knowing full well there are competing priorities at any given time. There were times that the senior-level administrators had to seize the opportunity to push forward their agendas or else they would have stalled. At the same time, there were occasions that

they had to push back or downgrade their priorities because of the political dynamics in the meeting room or in the larger campus landscape.

You've got to prioritize. When you're in a meeting, you have to know what counts and what doesn't count. In other words, don't get sidelined on something that ultimately doesn't count all that much when you're really after something bigger. (SLA23)

Paying attention also meant being able to recognize what was important to others, otherwise known as the “what's in it for me” mentality that many organizational actors adopt, particularly in a politicized environment. The more senior-level administrators articulated the small wins or personal advantages to be gained from the change, appealed to both the rational and emotional realms, and/or demonstrated the benefits associated with supporting the change efforts, the more appealing the change became on both personal and professional levels.

When you're influencing people that are going to have to be involved in doing the project like the faculty, you need to show them how it's going to benefit them personally, how is it going to be helpful for them in addition to how it serves the community and the mission. (SLA15)

At times senior-level administrators needed to pay attention to different personality types and how best to deal with them. From this perspective, it was important to know peoples' tendencies and speak their language because this knowledge was extremely helpful in persuading others to accept the change, get on board, and perhaps be actively involved in the change process. This senior-level administrator discussed the importance of knowing what made people tick:

I'm patient and try to do things subtly. If you know that you're talking to a 'why' person, then you really need to anticipate some 'why' answers. For those who want to know 'how' are we going to do that, 'how' are you going to move this, then you need to be thinking of those 'how' answers. And there are those 'what' people—'what' impact, 'what' is this is going to do—so you've got to think about the 'what' answers. Most people have certain patterns of dialogue...If you get a sense of what's going on, you can probably read most people. (SLA6)

Undoubtedly, it behooved the senior-level administrators to pay attention to what was going on in the political arena. Paying attention to what was going on certainly helped the senior-level administrators build on and rely upon their network of supporters and change champions, especially when they had to enlist their supporters'

participation at a later time. By doing so, they were far more attentive to subtle social cues and nonverbal communication. More importantly, the senior-level administrators were able to glean invaluable information from various stakeholders in order to know what was on their minds so that they (the senior-level administrators) could position themselves to address these issues and concerns.

### Build Relationships to Garner Support

Building relationships to garner support was another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the senior-level administrators employed. This indeed was a political move because they attributed much of their success when leading change to being able to establish positive working relationships with both internal and external stakeholders. In brief, building relationships was a must. The next section illustrates this political behavior with specific examples.

The senior-level administrators comprehended the magnitude of building relationships when leading planned change. Recognizing that office politics were ubiquitous, the senior-level administrators were attentive, willing, and committed to engaging in this political behavior on a regular basis because the political capital to be gained was immeasurable. Moreover, to leverage their influence, the senior-level administrators worked at building relationships early and often with various political actors before they needed buy-in or to turn to those same people for subsequent favors.

You build good relationships through hundreds of transactions every day by saying hello to people, by depositing into the emotional bank accounts. You're listening to people, asking about how they're doing, things like that. It really pays to be more alert and aware and to acknowledge people because people get things done. You can't get very far on your own so I do think there's a huge value on having good relationships. (SLA5)

One impetus for doing so was that nobody liked to be told what to do, especially if the senior-level administrators were trying to influence sideways with their peers. The following suggestion conveyed the need to be seen as one who cared about relationship building:

I'm a big advocate of taking people out for a cup of coffee or going to lunch with them to find out who they are and what they want. My management style is to call somebody up and chat with them for awhile. After I get to know them, they always wondered why did she call, what did she want? It was more to build my base so that when I did need them in the future I would be comfortable just calling

them and talking with them and saying, “I need your help on this.” And that’s been very effective—building that base before you need it instead of going in there gangbusters to do that. (SLA6)

The same administrator captured the idea of knowing what others liked and their preferences when trying to build relationships with them:

I know who on campus like chocolates or fresh fruit because I have relationships with them. When I really need something, I would bring them some chocolates or whatever. Or I’ll take them out to lunch or send them a card or something like that. Is it a bribe? It makes life a lot easier and I do tend to get along with some of the more difficult people on campus because we have good relationships. (SLA6)

To garner support, the senior-level administrators recognized that they needed to present themselves differently to various people because there was no one-size-fits-all approach to building relationships. As such, the senior-level administrators adapted their styles to those they were trying to influence by trying to “speak their language.”

Everybody is different and I try to look at which approach works with them...It’s just adapting my style as a manager to the person and what they need. I get the results I want but it’s making sure I adapt to their styles because that’s what they’re most used to. Some of them are all about family and they just want to chat about this and that and that’s fine. Other people don’t want to engage in small talk at all. (SLA6)

In some instances, the process of building relationships took months and years—much longer than the senior-level administrators anticipated. This was the case with those who the senior-level administrators have had minimal interactions with or those critics/resistors that simply did not listen or were unreceptive to listening. Regardless, the idea behind this political behavior was the same—to garner support. To truly be able to build relationships with various constituent groups, the senior-level administrators knew they needed to build a case to get others to want to engage and invest in these relationships in the first place.

Building relationships is how I drive my decision-making process. Almost always relationships result in activities and businesses for the college. For a recent project, I built my case carefully over a period of four years with research to have enough evidence so that it would be a worthwhile project. Then we spent nine months holding focus groups with key stakeholders to get a real sense of what it would take to make this work. Now I’m fully prepared to make my argument. (SLA11)

The senior-level administrators agreed that relationship building was a must do. Without established relationships, consensus seeking posed a real challenge for many senior-level administrators regardless of the proposed change initiative, particularly if it involved faculty. Knowing this, the senior-level administrators made extra efforts to get to know faculty on a personal level because doing so made an enormous impact on how faculty perceived the senior-level administrator's intentions and actions. Besides, befriending a faculty member was necessary because that was the best means to build trust and credibility over time. One senior-level administrator emphasized the importance of working towards a collegial relationship with faculty:

I learned that the more you know the faculty one-on-one, the more you will have a collegial relationship with them. And the more they'll come to you as opposed to going to the union when there's a problem. They will solve the problem with you or give you information that helps you know a problem is brewing. (SLA1)

One key element of relationship building was to have positive working relationships with everyone. No matter how difficult it was to work with somebody, the rule of thumb was to always be cordial, professional, and respectful towards that person. Failing to do so would have caused some problems later on when the administrators had to work with those individuals again. Given that the senior-level administrators' reputation was at stake in every interaction, they knew that it was not worth having their reputations come into question as a result of some ill-advised behaviors in the past with individuals who tended to hold grudges or were bitterly resentful.

Sometimes you don't get what you want or what you hope to accomplish—it's not going to happen for whatever reason. You may not agree with the reason but there's not a lot you can do about it...there's no reason to be nasty or confrontational with people. I just don't think you accomplish anything that way. If you were to create an unpleasant relationship how would you go back to that person in another situation and ask for something else? You've burned your bridges and when you need to deal with people across the campus, that's not a good thing to do. (SLA22)

To further bolster support, some senior-level administrators took initiatives to build relationships with the president's inner circle. By befriending a key ally of the president or someone that the president turned to, the greater the likelihood the administrators would get support for their change initiative. As different senior-level administrators attempted to exert greater influence in a political arena, having an inside

track to the president made things easier in terms of getting the president's attention and potential support.

Every organization is political in nature and presidents have a structure that is both official and unofficial. Our president has his staff, his direct reports and so on, but he also has people on campus who are his eyes and ears—those former affiliations that he has come to trust for input. I would make sure that I have those individuals on my side and that they understood what it is that I want to approach the president about because the president is likely going to turn to his confidants. (SLA11)

In brief, organizational members have engaged in relationship building many centuries ago. Without a doubt, this tried-and-true political behavior will continue to be a part of everyday life because it is perhaps one of the most successful means to garner support with various political actors. In other words, not building relationships was a no-win situation for the senior-level administrators.

#### Build a Case by Doing Homework/Research

Another political behavior that the senior-level administrators engaged in was to build a strong case for their proposed change initiative. As a political actor, the senior-level administrators believed that the more they could make their case compelling, the more they could convince, persuade, influence and/or change peoples' minds and win them over. They believed it all started with doing one's homework and researching relevant information. The next section discusses this political behavior in greater depth.

The senior-level administrators reasoned that when they equipped themselves with the necessary knowledge associated with the issue(s) at hand, they were able to better position themselves to be even more successful when pitching the change idea and trying to get buy-in. Moreover, having a solid proposal/plan suggested to other political actors that the senior-level administrators had done their homework, were organized, and were capable of having intelligent conversations about critical issues.

I would never make a decision unless I have researched it thoroughly...I can make a decision but I will only do it if I know that's the right thing to do. It's not that I'm free from mistakes, but I'm able to go back and say, "The reason it didn't work is that I had this assumption and this assumption was based on the following research. And now in practical application at this college, it has proven not to work, and I believe it was for this reason." That's different from saying, "Oh well, I thought it would work but it just didn't." You have to protect yourself and you have to protect the institution from assertions that it expends

resources without thought, even if there's a failure. And failures do occur. (SLA11)

Indeed, the motivation for doing one's homework when building a case was to be prepared so as to avoid being caught off-guard. By being prepared, the senior-level administrators would come across as knowledgeable, intelligent, and ready to field potential questions.

You have to have all of your bases covered. You can't walk into a situation without having done that homework, especially if you're proposing something new and different for the institution. (SLA8)

A common theme that resonated in the interviews was the notion of self-awareness. That is, when the senior-level administrators recognized their strengths and talents, they utilized their skills to make stronger cases for their proposed change initiative. This in turn gave the impression to other organizational members that they knew what they were talking about and that they had done their homework and should be taken seriously.

When people are totally resistant to something that I think is logical or rational, I first start to wonder is there something else going on... So I'm looking for what is it that I might be able to work with them on because you have to be able to work with that person if that person is what you would consider a barrier or obstacle to some degree. You have to figure out how to get them to let you go through and that takes a little patience. Then I start to look for little strands of connection. Sometimes I found that being direct to people who are resistant is probably the best way. I just ask the question straight out, "Tell me why so I can understand, tell me what you're not going to do, tell me why you're not going to do it and tell me what little bit you will do." (SLA18)

Additionally, the senior-level administrators worked hard to build a case to get the necessary buy-in and support of key individuals. Put differently, they tended to not approach a change initiative/project without first building a campaign that got people excited, educated, and involved. They gave considerable thought to how best to build a case and took deliberate steps to achieve their desired outcomes.

I do my homework to build a case to get agreement and I will consciously identify the landscape: Who is it that I have to influence? What shareholders do I have? Who's invested in what I'm going to do or could be invested? How do I articulate that? There's nothing scientific about how I begin to approach people—it's really by relationship and feel. If I look at the individuals I need to speak with, certain ones are more critical than others so those are the ones I need

to meet with first. Or I might choose a person that I can predict to be a significant opponent and try to hold him to the side long enough for me to at least get him to agree with me, or extract from him his opposition and then respond to it...So while I'm addressing the concerns, I'm now talking to other people and I have a small window of opportunity to build my case before my opponents aggressively engage in opposition fight. (SLA11)

Similarly, engaging in this influence tactic required that the senior-level administrators assess the political dynamics and continually reassess how things were going, where they were going, and if necessary, what changes needed to be made. By doing their homework/research, the senior-level administrators were more prepared to make better decisions and take appropriate actions to do what was best for the organization, even if they were to encounter resistance.

I have to build my case to get people to agree with me. I have to do the research, I have to present to the faculty and staff what the facts are. If they're really resistant to it, I try to do all the research to know what the facts are. Then what I try to do is to bring it down to who do we really work for. We do work for the students here, we work for the community. It is our mission to make sure that given these facts that we do something about it—that's what the mission of the community college is about. (SLA14)

Predictably, the stakes were higher when trying to build a case to get the president on board with a change initiative. Unless the president was fully supportive, the senior-level administrators had to seriously reconsider if the change initiative was really worth pursuing. Therefore it was critical to have a solid proposal or business plan when meeting with the president because the senior-level administrators knew that they might not have a second chance to impress upon the president that the proposed change was in fact timely and necessary.

I know here at this institution, we have to make sure that our president understands our ideas or is fully on board or we don't go ahead. When I have an idea, I have the whole plan. I would go to the president with a well thought-out plan. I don't take a half-baked idea to him. (SLA3)

Along the same lines, the senior-level administrators recognized that they needed to anticipate questions from their presidents in order to be ready to answer them. The same administrator reinforced the importance of having a well-conceived proposal before going to the president by taking into consideration some key questions:



I think about how is it going to benefit the college? How is this going to benefit the community? What's it going to cost? Are we going to break even? Even if it's a break even initiative, it's worthwhile if it's going to benefit the community and serve your mission. (SLA3)

In many instances, presenting data, facts, patterns, trends, etc. as evidence for their cases was the primary means to convince the president of the matter at hand. Depending on the president's preferences, the senior-level administrators needed to discern whether to pitch an idea softly or more directly because the president could respond differently to the proposed change and the presentation itself.

I would try to pitch an idea softly to the president and say, "This is an idea, perhaps we could develop it, or we could start a small group." I would never go to the president without data. I would have had some data and statistics to back up the idea, my plan. That is what appeals to this president...I know that here having data is really critical. (SLA5)

To achieve success when engaging in this political behavior, the senior-level administrators expressed the need to embrace change, to take calculated risks, and to make decisions and stand by them, especially when faced with opposition and/or uncertainty. Moreover, they knew that they could not wallow in indecisiveness or the comfort of doing the same old thing because that it was safe. In short, they were able to successfully lead change because they often did their homework/research to build a strong and compelling case.

#### Get Buy-In

One more political behavior that the senior-level administrators engaged in was to get buy-in from as many political actors and coalitions as possible in order to garner as much support as possible. Politically-speaking, this was a given—no buy-in equals little or no support. The senior-level administrators understood this. Hence, they worked hard at selling their ideas on a regular basis to appeal to those that they needed to influence. After all, the intent of this political behavior was to convey a willingness to listen as well as an eagerness to seriously consider others' ideas and recommendations. The next section illuminates this political behavior with specific examples.

The senior-level administrators unanimously agreed that it was essential to get buy-in from key individuals, early adopters, change champions, influential decision-makers, and/or powerful coalitions. In the context of leading successful change efforts,

getting buy-in became ever more of an essential necessity. Once a senior-level administrator had gotten “enough” buy-in, there was little doubt that the change initiative would be accomplished.

You must get buy-in first! Change cannot be forced and change must be asked for and supported by the stakeholders and the power brokers. (SLA25)

Getting buy-in is a fundamental must-do in any complex organization, especially in community colleges, because politics is pervasive. In order to lead others, to advance change, and to achieve desired outcomes, the senior-level administrators worked with one another and more importantly, created positive working relationships through collaboration and cooperation.

No one does anything alone in this environment—it’s a matter of gathering support. That’s certainly true working with faculty, and working with other administrators and with people above me. We’re all working in an environment where decision-making is for the most part shared and collaborative. (SLA27)

However, from a return-on-investment perspective, the senior-level administrators did not believe they had to get buy-in from every organizational member because that was unrealistic and would be a rather lengthy process. Besides, it was not necessary to expend an enormous amount of energy on those who were active resisters—those who were unwilling to listen and dialogue and/or those who were likely to have created adverse or hostile working relationships with others because of previous “bad blood.” Nonetheless, it was crucial to get buy-in.

You can’t bring everybody in your community to talk about initiatives, especially if you know these people aren’t getting along with these people. What you have to do is work in small buckets, small groups. Say to them, “I have an idea, these are my plans. Here’s my outline, this is what I’m thinking about.” (SLA8)

In short, getting buy-in was tireless work—one that required senior-level administrators to spend an incredible amount of hours dialoguing with and listening to others. The next four quotes reflect the different approaches used to getting buy-in. One administrator emphasized the importance of providing a rational appeal:

I never tried to rule through fear and intimidation. I tried to put forth a reason for our existence and ways and means of how we can accomplish our goals and to provide them with the support. (SLA9)

Another administrator drew attention to building trust by being straightforward as a means to get buy-in and trust from superiors, peers, and supervisees:

I don't play games at all and I don't deceive people. Everyone knows they can trust me and I think that's very important. If I tell them I'm going to do something for them, I do it and I follow through. I don't get them to do something in a deceptive fashion. They know I'm very straightforward and they can believe me. That's not only with my superiors and my peers but also for the people who work for me. (SLA3)

Some senior-level administrators used data and logic to appeal to others, particularly the president in hopes of getting his buy-in:

In order to convince the president, he's got to see the benefits, the value added. It needs to be data driven and it needs to have the support of the faculty. (SLA4)

Sometimes one of the most crucial means for getting buy-in was to incorporate others' input in the decision-making process. Obviously not every input could be incorporated. However, the mere act of soliciting input with the intention to incorporate sent a strong message that others' opinions did matter.

As you break down the barriers and gain support for what you're doing, you make changes. If somebody makes the suggestion and you incorporate it into your proposal, you got them...you have to incorporate because that helps to break down some of those barriers. (SLA8)

In brief, the aim of getting buy-in was to increase others' level of acceptance and support of the change idea/effort so as to minimize potential resistance. To get the most mileage from engaging in this political behavior, the senior-level administrators had to not only understand the politics and the relationships that existed within the institution, they also had to successfully navigate through the political landscape to appeal to a diverse group of political actors who had competing interests.

#### Listen and Show Respect

Listening attentively to what others were sharing and showing respect was another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the senior-level administrators often utilized. The pivotal reason that this simple, yet powerful behavior was deemed to be political in nature was because it had an incalculable impact on how others viewed the senior-level administrators. Needless to say, people tended to have favorable impressions and perceptions of administrators that exhibited good listening

skills and demonstrated genuine respect towards others. The senior-level administrators provided some concrete examples of how they best used this political behavior.

The senior-level administrators noted that it was human nature for people to want to communicate to others what they were thinking, believing, and feeling so why not spend some time listening to those who wanted to exercise their voice. Not only did they listen to their constituencies, they were also very conscientious to try to integrate the different ideas in order to work towards consensus building.

Administrators have to have excellent rapport with people they're working with. I pride myself on that because it's one of my strengths. I'm able to sit down and work with people to decide what is the issue, how could we fix that, or how could we get others on board. I try to listen to both sides to get all the information I can get and try to meld our ideas together. And it does work. I'm not a dictator of any sort. I try to empower people to make their own decisions. (SLA14)

Unquestionably, listening was the key to being a successful senior-level administrator, especially in a unionized environment. The senior-level administrators admitted that they were viewed more favorably when others perceived them to be good at listening and were seen as having a participatory leadership style.

You can't force people to do their role. If you just think you're going to just push people to make that happen, that's not change. You have to be willing to listen to people. You have to have an understanding of human dynamics, the Xs and Os of people, personalities of people. Then you have to have enough patience to put them in your timeline. Just because I expect it to happen, wish it to happen, want it to happen or it's the right thing to happen, it's probably not going to happen. Understanding time and listening are the two things that I think needs to go together. It takes time to listen, to hear what may have been said, and maybe what was not said. (SLA18)

Moreover, in a unionized environment, engaging in this political behavior was expected. The senior-level administrators knew that they had to be willing to listen and show respect, regardless of what was being said, who was speaking, and how much they disagreed with the person or the ideas. Those who were good at listening and showing respect tended to encounter less resistance—active or passive.

I've learned how to deal with resistance when I negotiated contracts, labor agreements, and grievances. You really do have to be willing to listen to the other side so you don't respond overly negative to what they're saying, otherwise you don't get anywhere...Change can be very difficult because it [the

contract] is written down and who's responsible to do certain jobs so there is not much flexibility there. (SLA13)

Active listening enabled the senior-level administrators to recognize the perspectives people held, and their values and needs. Since no two individuals and no two constituent groups shared the exact same mentalities, attitudes, and preferences, it was evident that the senior-level administrators needed to recognize what was important to each and every political actor. Doing so allowed them to adapt their human relations skills to maximize their abilities to influence a wide audience. One administrator captured the essence of identifying something that was of value or benefit to the listener:

Every individual and every group is unique so it's important to understand where they are coming from and what's important for them. If you can identify something that's of benefit to them through the change process, that's always advantageous in accomplishing change. (SLA27)

Along the same lines of active listening, the senior-level administrators needed to demonstrate that they respected what others were saying because showing respect and listening went hand-in-hand. In other words, the senior-level administrators did not have to necessarily agree with the speaker but they had to show respect towards the speaker and not debase the speaker indirectly or directly, in a subtle or callous way, personally or professionally.

You don't get anywhere with confrontation...you need to show a sense of respect for your colleagues and their opinions whether they are the ones you want to hear or not. You need to be willing to listen but then you also need to be the facilitator to make things happen within those collaborative groups. (SLA22)

Similarly, the senior-level administrators knew that they did not necessarily need to have the answers to every issue raised. However, they needed to be receptive to others' concerns because generally speaking, people want to be heard. Knowing this, the senior-level administrators made time and encouraged others to speak freely and openly as they wished. In the end, if and when others felt that they were being heard, then they were much more willing to go along with the change initiative, albeit it may not have been something that they wanted to do in the first place.

People need to be heard. If they are confident that you will listen to them and that they can at least tell you what they feel, what they think—whether they are trying to come forth with a strategy that will help the organization or when trying to

explain a mistake—as long as you’re willing to listen and you’re fair, they can deal with the outcome. (SLA9)

The power of listening and showing respect also worked with an unruly individual or a hostile audience as well.

When you’re dealing with a hostile audience, one good strategy is to help them know that you understand their points of view before you present yours. The first step is to really understand your audience, to really know what they believe and think. Not so you can trick them but for you to honestly respond, build on their beliefs, and somehow nudge them a little...it’s the genuine willingness to respond to feedback and authentic interaction with others. (SLA16)

In short, the senior-level administrators heavily engaged in this political behavior because they often experienced a tremendous amount of success. Not only were they able to glean a wealth of information, they also made positive impressions simply by practicing the art of active listening. As such, it was not surprising to note that the senior-level administrators employed this political behavior on a regular basis to attempt to win more people over, especially those who appeared a hostile audience.

#### Know When the Timing is Right

Another political behavior that the senior-level administrators employed was to discern when the timing was right to propose, facilitate, and/or implement change. They recognized that the timing of certain decisions and actions was critical in a politicized environment largely for the reason being that when it was “good” timing, pushing certain change initiatives forward was met with less resistance. However, when the timing was “bad,” it was nearly impossible to move ahead in significant ways. The next section explores this political behavior in more detail.

The senior-level administrators acknowledged that it was imperative to recognize the importance of timing and equally critical was to factor in the timeline involved when leading planned change. In other words, how much time will one have to bring about this change, and is this timeline reasonable? Taking this into account shed light on possible directions the senior-level administrators could take in implementing change or to solidify for them the reality that the timing was simply not right. In such a case, it was best to plant a seed in hopes that the change idea will bloom at another time.

I’ve always tried to make sure that I understood what I had to work with. Then I wanted to understand who I had to work with, and then I wanted to understand the

time I had to work with this because my timeline may not be their timeline. (SLA18)

If the timing simply was not right, the senior-level administrators knew that it was not a good idea to vigorously push the change idea forward too quickly or to force it to happen without much support. They explained that doing so could reawaken ill-feelings, engender stronger resistance, and crush the change initiative instantly. In a political environment, the senior-level administrators spent a significant amount of time giving rise to a change initiative so that it could percolate in people's minds. Once the idea had the chance to seep into people's thought process, it could then be embraced and supported if and when the timing was right. Ignoring or overlooking this reality was of grave concern because making political mistakes (even small ones) can often shorten or derail an administrator's career path if he/she is not careful or mindful of the political traps associated with bad timing. Therefore, it was wise for the senior-level administrators to take notice of when it was a good time to push a change agenda forward.

You have to recognize that there are these "opportunity times." There are other things going on and you have to be aware of those other things. You know that at this time, there's nothing that's going to get it approved. So I use a method that I call "planting the seed." I just put it over there and then I'll water it every now and then. I'm two years down the road, I know this is going to take two years, I know my passion wants it to happen now but I know it's going to take awhile. I have to know that and I have to have some patience. (SLA18)

As difficult as it was to wrestle with the notion of abandoning an idea, the senior-level administrators were able to strategically let go of their fervor to push a change idea forward. When the contextual conditions were not favorable or when key political actors were not amenable or supportive, it was judicious to do the right thing—which was to do what was in the best interest of the organization.

If there is no support on campus for this idea, then sometimes you just have to give up. Sometimes you just have to say, "Yeah, this might have been a great idea. Maybe the timing isn't right or maybe under the current administration it's not right." You have to think of ways you could bring this to fruition without having it be something that the institution has to take on as a role of the institution. (SLA5)

The one constant that the senior-level administrators always considered was whether the change idea aligned with the organization's mission, values, and priorities at the time. If the alignment was there, it was an easier sell, although it may not necessarily have been fully embraced. However, if the alignment was not in step with the current realities of the college, the senior-level administrators figured the best thing to do was to let it go before it created a lot of problems for the board and unions. One senior-level administrator alluded to this life lesson by stating the following:

I've had a lot of positive reactions from people. As they see that things are working out, that helps your credibility. And you're able to get a lot less resistance further down the line...But if it's not in keeping with the institution's mission, values, vision, all those things, you have to know when to let go and give it up. (SLA5)

Given the potential setbacks and negative ramifications of moving a change initiative forward before it was an ideal time, the senior-level administrators needed to calculate these factors into their timetable. In addition, they also needed to consider their positions and how others viewed them and the roles they occupied. At times, being in certain positions and occupying certain roles might have made a difference while at other times, it was not worth the risk to jeopardize one's position or role to forge ahead when the outlook appeared to be bleak.

I think that certain positions provide you with opportunities that you don't have so that might help you go about things differently. You might have wanted to use the same strategy when you're in a different position but you didn't have the opportunity to do it, or you weren't at the right place at the right time to do it. (SLA10)

Not surprisingly, every senior-level administrator tried to be attuned to the president's wants, wishes, and desires as well as the president's vision and priorities. Failing to do so was a colossal mistake—one to be avoided at all costs. The rationale was that the president was often times the most important person to persuade to get the necessary buy-in. Without the president's blessing to move ahead with a change idea and his continued backing, the senior-level administrators knew that they would not have gotten very far. Therefore, it was essential to pay attention to where the president was focusing his attention and where he was allocating the college's resources to determine if



the timing was right to approach him about a new change initiative or to reconsider a previous one.

Not too long ago I asked the president if he'd be willing to entertain this idea to resurrect this proposal. He was a little more amenable to it because some of the folks who were strongly opposed to this proposal initially have left or retired. (SLA5)

As much as a senior-level administrator disagreed with the president, there was little to be gained by opposing the president or deviating from the president's priorities or strategic plan to pursue one's personal agenda. Not only would this decision have been perceived as hostile insubordination, taking this course of action was not the best way to get buy-in from the top when trying to lead any planned change effort. For both short and long-term benefits, the senior-level administrators knew that they would be better off if they aligned their change initiatives as closely as possible to what the president deemed to be important and worthwhile.

You really have to see it as the institution's mission and vision. If the president is saying to you, "This is what we're doing. Your ideas are over here. If that's the case, you're going to have to abandon this idea. It's just not going to fit under this umbrella." When you finally get an understanding of that, then that helps with your decision making. The president is clarifying what's important to us and the institution that we are. (SLA5)

In sum, the senior-level administrators spent a considerable amount of time assessing the political environment with the goal of figuring out when the timing was right to convey relevant messages of change, engage in win-win political behavior, and/or pursue necessary action steps. After all, taking into account timing often led the senior-level administrators to become far more successful when leading planned change due to the fact that they were able to think more like a strategic chess player, as opposed to being an impulsive bargain shopper.

#### Make Subtle, Incremental Changes

Making subtle, incremental changes was another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change the senior-level administrators engaged in when leading planned change. According to the senior-level administrators, any kind of large-scale, revolutionary, and/or spur-of-the-moment change simply does not work largely because of the unionized environment where change was often met with strong

resistance. However, if the senior-level administrators were to approach change in a subtle and indiscreet manner, the likelihood of success was much greater. Here are some explanations.

The senior-level administrators realized that as leaders, they needed to take small steps to the extent that those steps were “invisible” to most people other than those they were trying to influence. The more noise the administrators made about a change initiative, the more it was on others’ radar screens, the more they paid attention to it, expressed their opinions about it, and/or formed a coalition with others to squash the change idea or sabotage the change process.

You have to chop it up into smaller digestible pieces that are affordable, both in terms of money and manpower, that can be measured, that takes you to the next step and so on. You might have in your mind a complete and total transformation, but if you have an institution that is objecting to change or slow to change, you have to make it look like it’s not changing much. Eventually you roll it up into a larger program. (SLA11)

The wisdom of starting small and building it up into something bigger resonated with the senior-level administrators. Equally important was to be able to connect the change initiative to an existing idea, program, or service function that others might already know about or had a favorable opinion of because it was something that the college was already doing. By intentionally aligning the proposed change to something that was already in place or to perhaps enhance something that was in existence, the proposed change was less likely to be attacked or rejected altogether. The key here was to present the proposed change as something that the college needed to consider doing to carry out its mission and vision, for example, to advance teaching and learning. Putting it this way removed any insinuation that the proposed change was an administrative agenda to tell faculty what they had not done and/or what they needed to do differently.

I never truly wanted to create anything new because life is kind of connected to something. So when you present something new, you probably will get a ‘no’ because it’s new. I’ve always tried to find opportunities to connect newly developed concepts or expand a concept and think about how can this fit to move change along and to do it incrementally. So I try to find a way to bridge across that gap and to not make it so new that you have to spend an awful lot of time trying to convince people. (SLA18)

It is common for people to resist change because the uncertainty of change, in general, provokes a sense of discomfort, vulnerability, and suspicion. Across the three community colleges, the one group that was most resistant to change was the faculty union. In many cases, a proposed change by senior-level administrators was perceived to be “them telling us what to do” and often resisted simply because of who was proposing this change. Needless to say, unless the proposed change was met with a lukewarm reaction and/or the faculty members were involved in the change process, it did not go very far. Here is a glimpse as to why this might have been the case:

I’ve had some resistance from the unions. Approaches that feel different to people are unsettling because it takes time to establish trust. People think if you have a different approach to something that there are reasons to be suspicious. The unions here don’t like change, most unions don’t. (SLA1)

In brief, the senior-level administrators had to be patient and persistent when making subtle, incremental changes. Sometimes it took a lot longer than anticipated because people were not initially interested in the change idea because (a) they did not think it was important and/or urgent, (b) they doubted it will make much of a difference, and (c) they had other priorities and commitment to attend to. Other times, there simply were not enough resources (i.e., monetary and personnel) to jumpstart the proposed change initiative. Nevertheless, the senior-level administrators invested their time and energy to do what they could do to move the change forward step-by-step, day-after-day. As a result of their commitment towards progress and relentless focus on the desired outcomes, change did occur, albeit at times it was slow, frustrating, and fraught with doubt.

#### Summary

For the most part, the 27 senior-level administrators planned, directed, and implemented institution-wide change initiatives and were successful in achieving their desired organizational outcomes. Like the presidents, the change initiatives that the senior-level administrators undertook affected the institution in a positive way. Every senior-level administrator expressed having positive working relationships with their presidents/supervisors and receiving adequate support from them during the planned change process. However, there were a few who conveyed having differences of opinions with their presidents/supervisors. Regardless, they recognized that they were

hired to perform their roles and responsibilities, not to be vocal critics. They also knew that they had the choice to leave, but they chose to stay instead to work on various institutional initiatives to better their divisions and the college as a whole.

The senior-level administrators believed the following political behavior were critical to engage in when leading planned change. The first political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was to involve others as early and as often as was necessary so as to engage their participation throughout the change process. By identifying and recruiting key individuals (e.g., early adopters, change champions, and influential decision-makers), the senior-level administrators were subsequently able to rely on them to help move the change process. The second political behavior was to pay attention to what was going on in order to discern the political landscape. To achieve desired organizational outcomes, senior-level administrators had to be aware of office politics at all times so that they could avoid stumbling on various political pitfalls. Indeed, the senior-level administrators were particularly sensitive to others' political agendas and tried to manage them the best they could.

Building relationships was the third political behavior. The senior-level administrators noted that this political behavior was perhaps the best means to garner widespread support because relationships are central to being influential when leading planned change. Recognizing that office politics were ubiquitous, they were attentive, eager, and committed to employ this political behavior on a regular basis because the political capital to be gained was immeasurable. The fourth political behavior was to build a strong case for the proposed planned change initiative. The senior-level administrators believed that the more they could make their case compelling, the greater the likelihood of them being able to materialize the change. By making time to do their homework and research relevant information, they could be even more prepared and informed about how best to address the issues at hand and lend credibility during the planned change process.

The fifth political behavior was to get buy-in from as many political actors and constituent groups as possible. Once a senior-level administrator had gotten "enough" buy-in from key individuals, there was little doubt that the proposed change idea/initiative will be accomplished. Recognizing the immeasurable impact that this

political behavior had on the change process, the senior-level administrators made time every day to get more and more buy-in. Listening attentively to what others were sharing and expressing was the sixth political behavior. The senior-level administrators commented that it was remarkable how much information they gleaned and learned by practicing the art of active listening. The more the senior-level administrators listened, the more others opened up and shared invaluable information that they might not have otherwise shared.

Knowing when the timing was right to propose, facilitate, and implement change was the seventh political behavior. The more attention paid to timing, the more the senior-level administrators were able to make informed decisions about when to push a proposed change forward, when to simply float a change idea, when to let go of a desired change, and when to pitch it again. The ability to discern timing was critical when assessing when to take certain actions and when not to. The eighth political behavior was to make subtle, incremental changes. In a unionized environment, the senior-level administrators tended to be cautious when pursuing large-scale, revolutionary, or spur-of-the-moment changes because these changes were often met with strong resistance. For this reason, the senior-level administrators tended to approach the planned change process in a more subtle and indiscreet manner.

Chapter VII  
Mid-Level Administrators

The mid-level administrators (e.g., directors, assistant deans, program administrators) were individuals who held managerial positions and whose primary job responsibilities were to monitor activities of subordinates and to generate reports for senior-level administrators. According to the 18 mid-level administrators interviewed, the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides are noted in the shaded column below (Table 5). This chapter will provide readers with a better understanding of the reasons for the political behavior used by the mid-level administrators to achieve desired organizational outcomes.

Table 5: Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |
| 5--Share information to educate others       | 5--Get buy-in                              | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research     |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints       | 6--Listen and show respect                 | 6--Align change with college's mission         |
| 7--Communicate the vision                    | 7--Know when the timing is right           | 7--Collaborate to build consensus              |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes            |

## Get Buy-In by Selling

Unanimously, the mid-level administrators believed that the most successful political behavior was to get buy-in from key political actors and constituent groups (e.g., senior-level administrators, other mid-level administrators, faculty, faculty unions, and the president) early on in the change process by actively selling their change ideas/initiatives. Without buy-in from key individuals, the mid-level administrators worried about whether or not their change ideas would generate enough momentum and traction to be sustainable throughout the change process. For this reason, the mid-level administrators—knowing that they generally occupied positions lower in the organizational hierarchy—spent a significant amount of time engaging in this political behavior to push their change initiatives forward. The next section illustrates this political behavior in greater depth.

The mid-level administrators reasoned that getting buy-in from numerous change champions and getting them on board as quickly as possible made a significant difference in terms of trying to convince others of their proposed change initiatives. They realized that the more their change messages stuck, the better their chances of materializing their ideas into desired organizational outcomes.

We did a lot of baseline research to help us move this idea forward. We conducted student focus groups, we met with faculty, and we went to various student services departments to get their feedback. I then talked with a vice president and got him on board because he has positional power...I don't think we could have achieved the ultimate outcome without his support. It was much easier to have him be the champion of the initiative than for me to come forward and say "we need to do this and here's why." (MLA6)

Getting faculty buy-in was another crucial step to convince other faculty members to tacitly support or openly endorse a mid-level administrator's change initiative. Had the mid-level administrators not put forth the effort to patiently sell their ideas, they admitted that trying to get faculty to consider taking a different or unfamiliar approach would have been like trying to "roll a boulder uphill." After trying to get faculty to do things differently, this mid-level administrator illustrated the importance of this influence tactic:

I pay attention to what other people [at other community colleges] are doing, see how successful things were with them, and notice any barriers they might have encountered so that I can provide a perspective to our faculty that this isn't just my crazy idea—other people are doing this too. So I showed our faculty some

websites of how others had done it and solicited their feedback because I want them to know that there are tons of people out there with really great ideas that we can borrow...so we picked different pieces to create ours but it was their [the faculty] ideas that I brought back to them. So it doesn't necessarily have to be about reinventing the wheel as long as we take what someone else has done and tweak it to fit our environment. (MLA11)

Similarly, getting buy-in from supervisors was equally important from a political perspective because not only was this the right thing to do, it was also a way for mid-level administrators to move the change initiatives forward.

The first thing I'd do is to get my immediate supervisor and the vice president on board. I could not go to upper management without their support because I respect the chain of command and because immediately upper management will say "do you have the support of your supervisor and this vice president?" (MLA1)

Additionally, the mid-level administrators needed to get buy-in from the staff they supervised because this group was often affected by the change initiative. As such, mid-level administrators needed to sell their ideas and/or sometimes upper management's ideas to their staff to get them on board.

I want everybody to own what I called the strategic vision. I said to my staff, "This is the list of stuff that we can do. We obviously can't do this all in one year. We probably can't do it in two years so let's prioritize it." So we prioritized what we felt we could get done in terms of available resources, money, and technology...We prioritized and tried to define the scope of each of these initiatives and then defined a list of here's what we can do, here's what we can't. (MLA8)

Getting buy-in was not necessarily an easy thing to do because it took a significant amount of time, effort, and commitment on the mid-level administrator's part to willingly, frequently, and tactfully engage in this political behavior. Adding to this challenge was the reality that many political actors and coalitions had their own agendas and generally did what was in their best interests. Nonetheless, every mid-level administrator recognized the importance of getting buy-in and therefore conscientiously sought to covertly and/or overtly convince others to get on board with the change proposal/initiative.

If you can develop a rapport with the unions, it generally keeps the conflict to a minimum. Whereas with faculty, you're talking to people who totally do not think like an administrator. So dealing with faculty I find it to be far more



challenging and really makes me have to be much more persuasive than I ever was in the past... That was quite a revelation for me because I spent ten years trying to get people to buy into my ideas. And I'm getting better at it. (MLA11)

Indeed, faculty and mid-level administrators had different views on change, particularly the purpose of the change and the change process. This was not surprising considering that faculty and mid-level administrators performed very different roles and espoused divergent interests because of their functional responsibilities. Regardless, mid-level administrators needed to accept the fact that these contrasting viewpoints were to be expected once the notion of change was introduced and discussed. More importantly, mid-level administrators found ways to somehow get others to see the potential benefits associated with the proposed change so as to minimize resistance along the way.

Given the nature of change in general, there's always going to be a certain level of resistance whether the change is positive or negative. Anytime you ask people to do something differently from the way they are currently doing it, there's going to be some resistance until you can have some level of understanding. At the end of the day, the difficulty is showing people how the change improves what they do or improves the quality of service and outcome for the people you serve in common. (MLA12)

In addition to showing internal and external stakeholders the small wins they could benefit from, the mid-level administrators noted that it was equally imperative to make the change process as painless as possible for those involved and/or affected. Indeed, doing so got more people to go along with the change initiative.

We have to come up with a process, not only in the new way but we have to come up with a transition process that's efficient, doesn't cause people grief, doesn't cause them to do or engage in unnecessary activity, and gives them the confidence they can do the new job. Again, we had to sit down and say, "I'm going to take responsibility for changing your life." If somebody doesn't see that there's something in their best interest in that change, or something fulfilling, or they're not going to get recognition on it any way for expending that effort, there's no reason for them to get on board. (MLA1)

Ultimately, to get the most buy-in from individual political actors, coalitions or sub-coalitions, the mid-level administrators had to carefully craft the change idea for the intended audience, pitch it gingerly, address how the uncertainty, inconvenience, and

pain (or perceived pain) associated with the change will be lessened or removed, and convey the benefits as much as possible.

To get buy-in, I couched my proposal in some cases by saying “doing it this way, you won’t have to worry about doing these other things. You can concentrate on what you do best and that’s this.” The reason I’m saying this is because at that point, I was building consensus in that group that this new organizational structure could work and that I could come in as leader without destroying the organization. And also without sweeping with a new broom because in a unionized environment, you just can’t come in and do that. It’s not a free-will employment situation...I had to assign people to where I felt they were going to best serve. (MLA13)

Indeed, the mid-level administrators had to work hard at getting buy-in from as many key political actors as possible. They realized that not doing so or not getting enough buy-in made it that much more difficult to lead planned change. Moreover, they accepted the fact that they had to work with the cards that they were dealt and push forward diligently as best as they could because it was not usually an easy feat to achieve their desired organizational outcomes.

#### Involve Others by Incorporating Their Input

Similar to getting buy-in, involving others by incorporating their input was another political behavior that the mid-level administrators employed. By making the efforts to get others involved during the change process, the mid-level administrators demonstrated that they valued collegial consultation as a means to getting things done. Moreover, when the mid-level administrators appeared to be willing to listen to the input and suggestions put forth by other administrators and faculty members, they tended to be viewed in a more favorable light—as collegial, congenial, and sensible. This can only help the mid-level administrators to increase their political capital. This next section illustrates how mid-level administrators utilized this political behavior.

The mid-level administrators understood that when people were involved (or somewhat involved) in various aspects of the change process, they naturally felt less threatened by the idea of change because they had a stake in designing and/or implementing the change initiative. One mid-level administrator illustrated the importance of involving others to get their buy-in:

I made sure that people feel involved in the process by keeping them informed at staff meetings, e-mails, memos, anything to say this is where we are, this is what

we're doing, what do you think about this? We could've just sat in our little cubby-holes and not talked to each other. What do you think would've happened? Probably not a lot of buy-in! You're going to have a lot more buy-in if you keep people involved or keep them in the loop. And it doesn't have to be a lot of involvement, just enough so they feel like they're included. (MLA16)

The other point that the mid-level administrators kept in mind was that involving others meant including them in the decision-making process to foster a sense of participatory decision-making. It was through participating in decision making that others felt that their involvement or presence mattered (or appeared to matter).

People don't like change and the wall starts going up. It's like we've always done it this way, this works the best for us. That was a challenge for me. What you don't want to do as a leader is to intimidate people, make them think you know what you're doing and what they're doing is wrong. There has to be a trust factor so that people feel included in the decision-making process. (MLA16)

The mid-level administrators favored the idea of involving faculty as much as possible to the extent that their involvement aided the change process and added to the overall productivity. The bottom line was that not much would get done without faculty involvement, particularly when the change initiative was not faculty-driven. In short, faculty involvement was crucial to the success of the eventual outcome. Therefore, to get faculty buy-in, the mid-level administrators worked to actively seek ways to somehow involve them throughout the change process.

If you want buy-in from faculty, you have to honestly ask them what they would like and then throughout the project discuss it with them. Let them know that "we understand what your wish list is but here are the realities of what we can afford." And then you make intelligent decisions as to what is most essential and what can be left to the side or put off for another day. And I think if you do, my experience is you get a pretty positive reaction in the end because they feel they had a real role in the project. (MLA17)

In addition to involving faculty, it was also imperative to not only seek faculty input but to incorporate them to the extent that it would be logical, practical, and beneficial during the ongoing change process and eventual change outcome. Not only did mid-level administrators demonstrate sincere interest in seeking faculty input, they also gave serious considerations to the ideas and suggestions put forward. Doing so formed the impression that the opinions of faculty did matter. According to one administrator, an example of getting more faculty members involved was to recognize the work that they

did by putting the spotlight on them. Not only did this produce a win-win scenario, it also engendered a sense of respect and goodwill.

To gain respect from faculty, it's a good idea to provide opportunities for them to showcase what they do. If they can get the recognition, if they can be spotlighted in some way in terms of their contributions, I think that does a lot in terms of their relationship with you individually as well as with the institution. (MLA6)

The mid-level administrators also involved faculty union leadership in the planned change process because the faculty union could pose some serious challenges and roadblocks to any administrative change initiative. One mid-level administrator brought to light the need to keep the faculty union in mind because they play and will continue to play a central role during the planned change process:

We have a very strong faculty union. If the faculty union leaders decide they're not going to do something, it's pretty darn tough to make them do it. So you have to figure out how to recruit them and get them in the process and quickly identify what are the benefits to them and what are the benefits to our students...But if you are going to send out an email saying, "Well from now on you will do this, you will, you will, you will." Then they will respond with, "Well, guess what, no I won't. And what are you going to do to me?" I have heard that response. (MLA5)

Regardless of whose input the mid-level administrators sought and incorporated, the mid-level administrators knew that they would be held responsible by their direct supervisors for outcome of the change initiative. Nonetheless, it was critical to seek input because doing so enabled the mid-level administrators to consider multiple perspectives about the matter at hand. This ability to gather input, consider the input, and integrate the input when necessary was especially critical to being able to move change along in a positive direction.

I might make the final decision by myself but I would certainly want to gather input from the people around me as to what they thought, how they felt, what their perspectives were, that kind of thing before I really made any kind of commitment. (MLA2)

At the end of the day, involving others came down to intentionally communicating this very important political behavior on a regular basis. When others were informed about the change throughout the process, they were more likely to not feel

as vulnerable to the winds of change and the uncertainties that came with perhaps having to change.

Communication is the key—that is absolutely the key. By keeping people informed and seeking peoples' input, you make better decisions, more informed decisions. Now obviously some decisions have to be made in a vacuum, like emergency situations. There is no way that I can know everything about everything. And although I have a lot of experience here at the campus, things change all the time. So seeking input is very important—that is the key to everything. (MLA5)

Irrefutably, the decision to involve others was a political one. The mid-level administrators recognized that getting others involved yielded considerable benefits to getting change done for they knew that they needed to enlist as many cheerleaders as possible throughout the change process. Moreover, by seriously considering and incorporating others' input, the mid-level administrators were able to make use of the ideas or suggestions when considering the best course of action. They understood that it is human nature to want to be included and to be heard, especially in the context of change and the uncertainties surrounding the change process itself.

#### Build Relationships to Garner Support

Indisputably, building relationships was another political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the mid-level administrators utilized, especially when people were resistant to change or appeared to be resistant. The mid-level administrators knew that the more relationships they built over time with internal and external stakeholders, the more they could turn to these political actors to garner their support. Not only did this increase their political capital, it also made a noticeable difference in how the mid-level administrators were able to lead planned change. The next section provides greater details about this political behavior.

The mid-level administrators, similar to the senior-level administrators and presidents, believed that it was through developing and maintaining relationships that progress was made and work got accomplished. Since building relationships took a considerable amount of time and energy, the mid-level administrators made time to cultivate their relationships with key individuals. Honesty and open communication were at the heart of relationship building.

I expect my staff, if they're having issues, to bring them up. Don't surprise me later on. That's my role with my vice president. I feel obligated to keep her informed as to what's going on, not about the minutiae but "you need to be aware that we're having problems in this area and we're doing OK, we're ahead of schedule or whatever." That's leadership—no hidden agendas. There are going to be people who'll play games with you and I'm not a game player. I'll put the cards on the table and let's go. (MLA7)

The mid-level administrators were serious about building relationships and were sincere in their efforts. They had to be because people could tell if they were being disingenuous, hesitant or disinterested. Besides, engaging in this political behavior took a significant amount of investment for it needed to be sustained over a period of time. Moreover, the mid-level administrators recognized how crucial it was to not only continue to build more relationships, but to also nurture those existing relationships by being personally committed to turn all their relationships into meaningful and productive ones.

Building relationships is about being genuine. I enjoy being with people, I enjoy interacting with people which is probably a good thing in the line of work I'm in. I think people appreciate that. When I'm with you, I'm with you. I'm engaged, I'm interacting with you, I'm not thinking about what I got to do later today. (MLA4)

The mid-level administrators believed that having positive relationships made it easier for them to dialogue with other organizational members because of their familiarity with each other, stemming from having had previous interactions and perhaps common interests and shared beliefs. Moreover, having an established relationship made it easier to have tough conversations later on when disagreement began to surface. Many mid-level administrators believed that it was a lot harder to have those tough conversations when they did not have a relationship with a potential dissenter, active resistor, or critic.

The nice thing is that when you do have a relationship with someone, you got that common ground. Having that ability to sit down as friends...you can probably have a conversation that you wouldn't be able to have otherwise. There's trust, there's the ability to be open and honest. I think a lot of times you can get down to the issues and see what you can work out...You're not going to win every fight, but certainly having relationships and having the ability to have tough conversations is important. And when you don't have relationships with somebody, it's a lot harder to have these conversations. (MLA4)

Relationships were the foundation from which goodwill was deposited and mutual respect was established. This mid-level administrator used the “chips” analogy about building relationships:

You get a certain number of chips that you get to play with. You either earn more of them or burn them. When you gather more, you can turn those in when you need them. But when you're out, you're out and there's no going back. So you can only burn so many bridges, you can't repair them. This is just who I am—I build relationships. That's just how I want to live. It's not a game to me. (MLA4)

Another common relationship building analogy was to avoid burning bridges because doing so could deteriorate or ruin the relationship. One mid-level administrator pointed out that, “When you burn the bridge, it's burnt. It's really hard to get that back. So I've tried to be very careful about respecting other people's opinions.” Many mid-level administrators recognized this implicit “rule to live by,” especially in the political arena. It was not just that relationships would become potentially unsalvageable, it was the unintended costs of future relationships—from which success is heavily built upon—that was perhaps far more likely political suicide. To avoid being in such unfavorable situations, mid-level administrators engaged in relationship building tactics to convey the message that they cared about the person with whom they were seeking to influence.

I'm going to think about you. I'll try to be fully present with the people that I'm with. A lot of people that I have relationships with are the people whose influence I need. It really is about attracting more flies with honey and I do have that ability. I think that probably has been the key to my success—being able to build those kinds of relationships that have turned out to be strategic. (MLA15)

In many ways, engaging in political behavior started with developing personal relationships and building on those connections, which later became invaluable political capital. The mid-level administrators reported that it never ceased to amaze them what they could not get done with the people they engaged with. Indeed, relationships influenced the change process and outcome because they played a pivotal role in getting others to view the change in a favorable light.

Influencing change at the very base level is about relationships. Until you have some type of relationship or some base level of communication that involves mutual understanding, I think it's difficult to influence change. Once you get beyond that base level, there may be a number of tactics that you might employ to sort of influence change. (MLA12)

Another key element to relationship building was to identify change champions early on in the change process and to get them on board to enlist their support. Not only was this influence tactic used to increase political capital, it also encouraged the change champions to be spokespersons for the specific change initiative. One mid-level administrator emphasized the importance of building relationships with early adopters:

I identify those early adopters and change champions. When you have those folks who do understand and who do see the big picture, you work with those individuals to identify resources that allow you to experiment. I think that makes a big difference because if you just walk into a room and say “here’s the data, here’s what we need to do, let’s do it” you are not going to get a lot of supporters. (MLA12)

In brief, many mid-level administrators viewed relationships as the foundation for them being able to successfully achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change. As such, it behooved the mid-level administrators to make it a high priority to build relationships with key political actors so that they could garner widespread support for their change ideas/initiatives. Engaging in this political behavior not only yielded a cache of supporters and change champions, it also helped the mid-level administrators to expand their network and circle of influence.

#### Explain to Increase Understanding

The fourth most common political behavior used by mid-level administrators was explaining to increase understanding. The mid-level administrators were aware that communicating by telling was simply not enough to influence others to go along with the change. It was by taking the time to explain to various constituents the rationale for the change (e.g., purpose, need, and objective) and how the change would benefit them that they would hopefully understand why the proposed change initiative at this point in time was necessary. The next section details how this political behavior was used.

Many mid-level administrators believed that a single, isolated explanation was not enough to educate others and subsequently get their buy-in. However, when a mid-level administrator invested considerable time and effort to explain (and explain some more) using personally meaningful stories and compelling evidence, only then did the



change message become more real and urgent. When a message was repeated and reinforced, people then began to make sense of it and took action.

People have to understand where you're coming from and why you think it's important. Frankly, they have to understand what's in it for them. That's the reality of our society today. You have to educate them on what you want to accomplish. Make sure that if there are any barriers that could have an impact, that those are addressed upfront. If you want to influence people to think that this is the way this project needs to go, you need to educate them on what it's going to accomplish, how do you think you'll get there, and what obstacles you are going to face. (MLA16)

The time involved in explaining to others was taxing but that was to be expected. The mid-level administrators reminded themselves that despite the length of time it took, the benefits did outweigh the costs and that the rewards were incalculable, especially when the change initiative had the potential to really benefit the organization and the people involved.

The best way to get people involved is to talk to them, explain your ideas, and get them to be part of the process. One of the things with leading change is that you cannot lead change and then remove yourself from the change itself. (MLA14)

The mid-level administrators learned that it was never too late to inform and explain to others what a new initiative was about because there was a good chance that although others may have heard about it before, they may not have remembered or comprehended what it was about. Readers might want to take this mid-level administrator's advice:

You have to convince and educate the whole college about what you've done. Most recently I did that with a new program. I had a "program launch" for the college. I had a launch meeting that took two hours and included everybody who's anybody and that's been helpful. As the program has evolved, there are some changes. So I made sure to keep informing the key constituents about the changes. (MLA3)

Sometimes it was not enough to repeatedly explain what needed to get done because others would expect the person who was doing the explaining to do all the work. Therefore, in an organizational setting, the mid-level administrators recognized that it was equally important to give ownership to those involved and hold them accountable as well. Doing so created the mindset of "we are in this together" which in

many ways was a very crucial influence tactic to draw others in and to turn to them for solutions.

We have a responsibility to show people this is how we help students and this is why we make students do what they do so that people at least have an appreciation for what our office does...The ground rules now is if you're going to bring up a concern, then collectively you need to help us come up with a solution on how we can educate the college on what we do...So we kind of went on a PR campaign, we did interest sessions, we did presentations to departments, we let them understand what we do. I think it really worked. (MLA16)

To achieve desired outcomes, the mid-level administrators adapted the change message to their audience, emphasized different "talking points," and used different approaches, albeit the content of the message was the same. This one mid-level administrator was particularly mindful of the significance of crafting the message differently:

The first thing I did was to start having informational sessions to educate the people whose lives I was going to change. I did it at a less technical level and told them here's what we're up against. I didn't use it as a scare tactic but I did want to impress upon them that there was something that we all have to do to make this change occur. I put myself in the position of what the managers of those groups need to know, what do the supervisors need to know, what do the staff need to know? (MLA1)

For whatever reason, there were times that people simply did not want to hear explanations for the change initiative. When people were adamantly opposed to the idea of change and/or believed that their self-esteem has been, is being or will be tarnished, the mid-level administrators concluded that it was probably futile to engage in this political behavior. Nonetheless, the mid-level administrators often used their professional judgment to discern the sources of such resistance and moved forward.

You talk to people and try to explain to them every chance you get. There are some people that will never ever accept your explanation. You cannot get caught up in those individuals who are not receptive to your explanations. At the end of the day, it's got to move forward because it's the right thing to do on so many levels. (MLA14)

In short, explaining to increase understanding was a critical and political behavior for the mid-level administrators to have engaged in. The more people were familiar with the mid-level administrators' change ideas/initiatives, the better because this meant that

their message was beginning to stick. Besides, changes message tended to be well-received after others have heard it multiple times. Therefore, engaging in this political behavior became more essential for the mid-level administrators because the more often they communicate, convey, and share their message with a broad audience, the more they were able to get the word out.

#### Build a Case by Doing Homework/Research

Building a case by doing homework was another political behavior that the mid-level administrators used. The mid-level administrators needed to be able to put together a solid proposal or business plan that clearly addressed the needs, purposes, and goals of the change as well as the costs, risks, and resources involved to make the sales pitch for the intended change more palatable. By presenting a compelling case for a proposed change, the mid-level administrators would only increase their political capital. The next section further discusses illustrates this political behavior with specific examples.

When the mid-level administrators did the necessary homework/research, they were more prepared and equipped to make a stronger case for pursuing (or intending to pursue) their targeted change initiative. Take a step further—by being prepared they were preparing themselves to be even more successful when leading planned change. This one mid-level administrator expressed the need to build a case before bringing an idea forward in particular to faculty:

I always give faculty an out so to speak because they're not always wow about my crazy ideas. I feel like a lawyer sometimes—I'm always building a case before I bring any idea forward. I learned from an early age to build my case and I do that a lot here. When I'm working with staff and faculty, I try to do my homework. And faculty is the hardest sell. (MLA11)

An essential aspect of building as strong a case as possible was to know what was important to the various political actors and coalitions (e.g., senior-level administrators, president, board members, faculty, faculty unions, and community members). By doing so, the mid-level administrators were more knowledgeable about how to tailor their change message to have it resonate more convincingly with their intended audience.

When I want to I influence somebody, first I have to find out what's important to them. From an organizational standpoint, I try to find out what's important not only to upper management but to all levels of management because I want to

be able to tie the success of my project to the success of those goals and values. (MLA1)

Part of the reason for building a case was to gain the reputation as being a credible person—one who took the time to do his/her research in order to prepare supporting evidence when trying to get buy-in. Obviously, it took a long time to earn such a reputation which was why it was imperative to take heed of this political behavior.

Over time I have garnered respect from my peers. They know that when I suggest something, or want to do something that it's probably not a half-baked idea. I do my homework, I do my research. I come to meetings prepared and I try to think things through. (MLA2)

Likewise, when the mid-level administrators were trying to influence others, particularly the president, they spent more time doing the necessary research in order to have more evidence when building their case. Undoubtedly, having more data, statistics, and comparative analysis made the mid-level administrator's proposal far more compelling. It also provided other political actors some basis from which to be familiar with the change initiative as well as to assess the needs, capabilities, and available resources.

The more planning you do the better. When I'm thinking things through, I usually have a project plan worksheet and an executive summary and would bring these two documents when I meet with the president. I would also reiterate to him how this idea ties in beautifully to his priorities and gently remind him that this endeavor reaffirms the college's commitment to the community. (MLA3)

Not only was it important to do the necessary homework associated with collecting data and evidence, the mid-level administrators also had to determine which individuals to bring on board to implement the change initiative. So doing homework as to who to befriend and turn to was equally important.

I need to have done my homework which I did. And I've always in my life surrounded myself with bright people—the best minds—in my personal life and in my professional life. (MLA15)

Convincingly, building a case by doing homework/research proved to have been critical to the mid-level administrators' success during the planned change process. To be specific, they came across as knowledgeable and resourceful, which gave levity to their

arguments for the proposed changes. More importantly, they were taken seriously because others knew that they did their homework/research, as opposed to simply spewing incoherent or unrealistic notions of change.

### Align Change With College's Mission

Another political behavior that the mid-level administrators engaged in was to align their change ideas/initiatives with the college's mission and the president's priorities, visions, and goals. In other words, the mid-level administrators intentionally placed themselves in favorable positions (e.g., building a positive relationship, having a track record of success, and have widespread support) to get more buy-in from the president and other administrators by aligning their change ideas/initiatives to fit with the institution's current priorities and strategic plans. This was indeed a political decision for it was largely intended to curry more political capital as will be shown in the following section.

The ultimate aim behind this political behavior was to facilitate the change ideas/initiatives in ways that would directly benefit the organization and members of the organization. The mid-level administrators reasoned that it made little sense to go against the grain.

It's important to consider the institutional guiding principles, mission, vision, values, and strategic initiatives. Does this change idea fit? Does it make sense? Is it where we're trying to go? I think strategic planning is crucial. That's the mindset I have when I think about what I want to do. (MLA6)

However, to be able to know how to align their change ideas/initiatives with what the organization might need or want, the mid-level administrators must first have done their homework and research. This helped them determine specifically how their proposed change ideas/initiatives would fit in with everything else that is currently in existence—current programs, services, office structure, personnel, and budget. Therefore, the mid-level administrators had to not only anticipate questions about their proposed change ideas/initiatives, they also had to have compelling responses in order to convince others that their proposals did indeed align with the college's mission. In fact, doing so made a huge difference when the mid-level administrators sought to garner support for their change ideas/initiatives.

I always try to give due diligence in analyzing the problem and prepare answers ahead of time. So when I go to the level above me, I anticipate the questions they are going to ask. They have to be confident in me that I've done my research. If I can align it with the goal or mission of the college and I can show that it's in their best interest, then they can see that change as a welcomed change, not something to resist. (MLA1)

The mid-level administrators knew that every organization was comprised of numerous actors, entities, and coalitions. Therefore, they had to spend time thinking about and listening to diverse constituents who may at times espoused divergent perspectives from one another. Consistently, the mid-level administrators paid attention to their constituencies and their needs as a means to recognize the competing interests, viewpoints, and agendas. Doing so allowed the administrators to be more aware of various underlying issues and concerns as well as to make more intelligent, informed decisions—at the individual, group, departmental or institutional level—that would best serve the organization and the constituents' needs.

What I always try to do is to look at my constituencies. If there is an idea or an initiative or an issue that needs to be resolved, who does it affect and who may it affect in the future? So it might be internal staff, it might be specific department staff, it might be leaders within the institution, it might be board members, it might be the community, it might be employer groups, community agencies, it's all those constituency groups that we serve as a community college and that's usually the first place that I start. Who does this touch? (MLA6)

On top of being in touch all constituent groups, it was also important for the mid-level administrators to align the proposed change idea/initiative with the president's agenda. After all, if a new proposal was not being supported by one's immediate supervisor and was not in congruence with or made sense intuitively or from a practical perspective to the president's, there was little chance that the proposed change idea/initiative would receive any support from the president. One mid-level administrator discussed the need to think about connecting a change idea/initiative with available college resources:

I want my supervisor's endorsement, especially before going to meet with the president. I want to be sure that I am in the right direction because I don't want to expend resources that I don't necessarily have in the direction that the institution doesn't want to go. (MLA5)

Knowing that leading change can be a rather difficult process, the mid-level administrators took deliberate steps to align their change ideas/initiatives with the college's mission and the president's priorities to increase the chances of them achieving desired organizational outcomes. By engaging in this political behavior, the mid-level administrators put themselves in favorable positions to go with the flow, as opposed to being perceived by other administrators and faculty as someone who was difficult to work with.

### Collaborate to Build Consensus

Collaborating to build consensus was another successful and beneficial political behavior mid-level administrators consistently used because doing so tended to produce win-win situations for everyone involved. Simply put, collaborating to build consensus, especially in a complex organization with limited resources, yielded more favorable impressions and positive outcomes for the mid-level administrators—therefore increasing their political capital. The next section illustrates this political behavior in more detail.

The notion of collaboration seemed to be a big buzzword in contemporary and complex organizations. It was no wonder that the mid-level administrators spoke often of this political behavior and the need to work together as much as possible. One central element to collaboration was to work on mutually desirable goals, with the understanding that there will be times for giving and taking in order to contribute to the organizational goals.

We all had to collaborate, give and take, sacrifice... You might have to give this up and might lose this functionality but you might gain this in return. If something has to be sacrificed by one entity, see if you can gain something for them in some other way. If you can do that, it's a lot more palatable and the buy-in is there. So collaboration is a biggie—communicating often. You've got to keep people in the loop. You cannot work in isolation and just think "well, when this is done kudos to me." (MLA16)

The essence of collaboration was to demonstrate to others the importance of coming together, working together, and succeeding together. Perhaps the best avenue to demonstrate one's willingness and commitment to work with others was to communicate openly and often to keep others informed and updated. In an information-driven society, today's organizational members expect their leaders to provide more transparent

information and in a timely fashion. Generally speaking, people do not need to know everything about something; rather, they expected to be kept informed so that they could be somewhat knowledgeable about what is going on within the organization that might affect their work and their livelihood.

To really collaborate, make sure that you keep your staff informed, communicate with them, and make sure you involve them in your discussions. They'll understand that you have a vision; they'll believe in you; they'll feel that they can trust you, and that you are not going to hang them out to dry. That's what it's all about. (MLA5)

Given that one of the purposes of collaboration was to build consensus, it was vitally important to listen attentively to what others were saying, to understand their spoken and unspoken concerns, and to check in every so often to keep them informed so as to avoid any misunderstandings later. The mid-level administrators acknowledged that collaborating to build consensus was a solid approach to address organizational concerns, the collaborative process did take a tremendous amount of time, energy, and commitment from those involved to make it work.

I listen and I try to interpret as best I can given the physical constraints, budget limitations and so forth. More importantly, I try to ferret out the difference between a wish and a need...And once I do that, I can make some interpretations and then I begin to build consensus because I always go back and touch base again and say "I heard you said this, is this correct?" And that's pretty much how I've always worked as a consensus builder. I'm not a dictator. (MLA13)

Collaborating involved bringing different organizational actors together in hopes of collectively working to achieve mutually shared goals. Not surprisingly, collaborating by consensus-building was difficult for mid-level administrators at times for numerous reasons. One of the main reasons was that unless the leader himself/herself truly believed in building consensus and conveyed the message that this fundamental "activity" was part-and-parcel to the leading change process, it was difficult to convince others to see the value in consensus building. Put simply, organizational members were not interested in fully investing or expending their efforts if they perceived their leaders to be simply talking superficially about consensus building, rather than actually doing the work.

I feel that the strongest way to lead change is really through consensus. You've got to first of all believe in what you're doing, I feel strongly about that. You have to believe it wholeheartedly that it's important enough to take people away from



what they already do and bring them into your world and say to them here's why we need to change. (MLA15)

Unanimously, the mid-level administrators engaged in collaborative efforts with numerous political actors because it simply was the modus operandi for getting change done in a politicized environment. Other than the fact that the collaborative process was generally more time consuming, engaging in this political behavior tended to produce win-win scenarios for everyone involved. Not surprisingly, every mid-level administrator took deliberate measures to consult, partner, and collaborate throughout the change process.

#### Make Subtle, Incremental Changes

The last political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the mid-level administrators consistently engaged in was to make subtle, incremental changes. This was particularly true in the context of leading planned change. Given the complexities involved during the change process and the political arena in which the mid-level administrators needed to successfully navigate, it became evident that the best approach to getting change done was to take small, yet deliberate steps toward the intended outcomes. This next section illustrates how mid-level administrators utilized this political behavior.

The mid-level administrators seemed to agree that the more the change was subtle and incremental, the better. The rationale was that most organizational members were generally skeptical of changes in the first place. Therefore, to minimize the skepticisms and diffuse potential resisting forces, the mid-level administrators were conscientious to avoid making splashy announcements about the change idea/initiative, attracting too much attention (positive or negative), and to keep focus on moving the change idea/initiative forward without any (or much) fanfare. By not attracting unwanted or negative attention, the mid-level administrators were able to sustain the momentum for the change idea/initiative—thus allowing for it to take shape and run its course. Often times, mid-level administrators were deliberate to only share information with those individuals who need to know and/or the people on their bandwagon. Additionally, incremental changes were perceived to be less threatening and more accepting.

I believe that the most effective change is incremental. I've learned that the hard way at times. I think it's difficult to radically change an institution. I think people are a lot more accepting of incremental change. (MLA17)

Building on the notion that people are more accepting of incremental changes, the mid-level administrators also recognized the importance of not pursuing revolutionary or radical changes because these types of changes often created anxiety and uncertainty throughout the entire organization, especially those who had no part in designing or implementing the change. In fact, the mid-level administrators believed that they garnered more buy-in and long-term success when they pursued incremental changes.

I think people who come in with a vision of radical change are much less likely to succeed in changing an institution to their vision. You just have to realize that there are certain existing forces. You have an existing faculty and you have to convince them that what you want to do is in the best interest of the students and the institution. And if you're proposing a radical change, you almost inevitably set up a great deal of resistance. On the other hand, if you're willing to go at it incrementally over time you're going to get more buy-in and more long-term success. (MLA17)

Sometimes the mid-level administrators had to be careful when trying to push a change idea/initiative forward. They knew that they could not push it too quickly because one of the consequences of doing so was resistance from within the organization. The key to engaging in this influence tactic was to be patient. The more patient, the better, especially because making subtle, incremental changes took a lot longer time than many mid-level administrators had anticipated. Moreover, they had learned to accept the fact that they needed to keep pushing forward towards their goals by taking one small step after another.

If you know an idea is a good one and you know it's going to best serve the stakeholders or the mission or the vision of the institution, then you have to just be patient. Even if it's small, incremental steps toward that, you got to keep pushing forward. Be patient and keep towards that goal. (MLA6)

In sum, the mid-level administrators recognized that they could only do so much to effect change at their respective institutions. Knowing that their colleges were complex organizations that could not move as fast as they would have liked and recognizing that some issues/resistance were heavily entrenched, the mid-level administrators had to keep

things in perspective when leading change. One of those things was to make subtle, incremental changes along the way, as opposed to attracting unwanted attention and fanfare which could often impede or halt their progress.

#### Summary

In general, the 18 mid-level administrators designed, facilitated, and implemented department specific change initiatives. In other words, these change initiatives tended to be within their department/unit and therefore were smaller in scale as opposed to institution-wide initiatives tackled by senior-level administrators and the president. Nonetheless, these department specific change efforts in many ways benefitted the entire college because they still were in alignment with the college's goals, visions, and strategic plans.

More importantly, the mid-level administrators were successful in achieving their organizational desired outcomes. That is, they were able to get change done while satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process. This is because to a large extent, the mid-level administrators were given the authority and responsibility to carry out their change initiatives the way they saw fit. They all felt that they received adequate support from their immediate supervisor(s) and their respective presidents during the planned change process. No one expressed any concerns regarding being micromanaged nor did they express being stifled in their roles.

The mid-level administrators consistently engaged in the following political behavior when leading planned change. The first political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was to get buy-in from key political actors (e.g., change champions, supervisors, other mid-level administrators, and the president) and constituent groups (e.g., faculty, union leaders, and staff members) early on in the change process and as often as was necessary. Similar to getting buy-in, the second political behavior was to involve others, especially key individuals, by incorporating their input. Recognizing the context of change and the uncertainties surrounding the change process itself, the senior-level administrators sought every opportunity to include those who needed to be included.

The third political behavior was to build relationships not only with those who were supportive, but also with those who were resistant or appeared to be resistant to the proposed change idea/initiative. The more relationships (with internal and external stakeholders) the mid-level administrators built over time, the more they could rely on these individuals to support the change effort/initiative. Explaining to increase understanding was the fourth political behavior. The mid-level administrators recognized that they had to take the time to explain and clarify to various political actors and constituent groups the rationale for the proposed change and how it would benefit them personally. The more the mid-level administrators helped others to recognize the importance and benefits associated with the change initiative the easier it was to convince others to get on board.

Building a compelling case by doing homework/research was the fifth political behavior that the mid-level administrators consistently employed. By doing the necessary homework/research and having a solid business plan/proposal, the mid-level administrators were more prepared and equipped to make a stronger case for pursuing their change initiatives. The sixth political behavior was to align the change with the college's mission and the president's vision and goals. Since the mid-level administrators generally occupied positions that were lower in the organizational hierarchy, they recognized that in order to move change forward they had to astutely align their change ideas/initiatives to fit with the institutional priorities and strategic plan.

The seventh political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change was to collaborating to build consensus. Doing so tended to produce win-win situations for those involved. In order to move the change idea/initiative forward and to contribute to the organizational goals, the mid-level administrators sought to collaborate with key stakeholders as often as was necessary to work on mutually desirable goals. Making subtle, incremental change was the eighth political behavior. The mid-level administrators agreed that the more the change was subtle and incremental, the better because the change was less likely to be perceived as threatening, especially if they were the ones pushing the proposed change idea/initiative forward.

## Chapter VIII

### Conclusions, Limitations, and Implications for Research and Practice

The purpose of this last chapter is to: 1) Provide a summary of the findings; 2) Introduce the concept of politically perceptive and its three spheres (i.e., anticipatory thinking, calculated patience, and role acting); 3) Discuss ten implications and future directions for research; 4) Consider 15 implications on practice by reviewing the five research assumptions; and 5) Examine nine limitations associated with the study. Also, concluding remarks will be made at the end of the chapter.

#### Summary of Findings

The political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the administrators often engaged in when leading planned change are listed in Table 5 (below). These behaviors were deemed to be successful because engaging in them led the administrators to achieve desired organizational outcome. That is, the administrators were able to get the specific planned change initiative implemented while satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process.

Table 5: Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |

|  |                                     |  |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|
| 5--Share information to educate others | 5--Get buy-in                       | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints | 6--Listen and show respect          | 6--Align change with college's mission     |
| 7--Communicate the vision              | 7--Know when the timing is right    | 7--Collaborate to build consensus          |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        |

As discussed in chapter four, five other major findings that emerged from this original study have the potential to offer some new insights into change management to scholars and practitioners. In brief, the findings were: 1) The administrators engaged in a myriad of political behavior (e.g., building a compelling case, involving the faculty to give them ownership, not burning bridges, sharing information to sell ideas, and discerning others' personal agendas) when leading planned change; 2) The kinds of political behavior used to lead planned change did vary across administrative levels; 3) Change initiatives varied across administrative levels; 4) Administrators believed that they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change; and 5) Five core behaviors were typical of all administrators when leading planned change: getting buy-in, building relationships, involving others, listening and showing respect, and doing homework/research.

In addition to the findings about the administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change and the five core behaviors, the concept of being "politically perceptive" emerged. This concept, along with its three spheres (i.e., anticipatory thinking, calculated patience and role acting) will be discussed in the next section.

#### Politically Perceptive

A concept that emerged from this study that has not been discussed much in previous organizational leadership and community college literatures is the description of someone who is engaging in behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. In fact, some scholars and authors have sought to distinguish and characterize these individuals using various terminologies, such as: "true political player" (Reardon, 2000);

“salespeople” (Gladwell, 2000); “effective executive” (Drucker, 2001); “positive energizer” (Baker, 2003); and “influencer” (Patterson et al., 2008). The two common threads in these descriptions are that these individuals (a) possess the awareness, knowledge, and familiarity with a range of political behavior and (b) know how to navigate in and around the political arena for personal and/or organizational gains (Crowley & Elster, 2006; Lichtenberg, 1998; Van Fleet, 1992). In brief, these scholars believe that there are some individuals who appeared to be more knowledgeable and skilled than others at employing political behavior when influencing others.

After spending hours transcribing, analyzing, and interpreting the data, the researcher arrived at the same conclusion: many of the community college administrators (based on their interview responses) appeared to have been “successful” when leading planned change. Success in this context basically means that these administrators believed they (a) often engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change and (b) achieved desired organizational outcomes (which is defined by satisfying the needs of diverse constituents, generating minimal resistance, gaining trust and commitment, and producing generally positive feelings throughout the change process). Having said this, it should be noted that there is a big difference between the administrator’s belief and actuality. Since almost every administrator claimed that they achieved their desired outcome, the researcher accepted their conclusions at face value. Since the researcher did not challenge or question the administrators on what basis they were successful, readers need to keep in mind the administrators’ perceptions that they were successful may not be matched by the reality of success.

When analyzing the data, the researcher detected that there was something distinct about most of the administrators: they seemed to know what they were doing, almost every step of the way. That is, they gave the impression that they possessed the awareness, knowledge, and skills to be successful when engaging in a range of political behavior. Collectively, they favored and relied on employing political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change to positively influence others and get change done. For instance, when communicating the message of change, some administrators appeared to have a good grasp of knowing (a) what to say to convincingly sell their change ideas/initiatives, (b) who they were dealing with, (c) how best to articulate the ideas to

these political actors, (d) where and when to pitch their ideas, and (e) why they chose to engage in various political behavior. The next section begins to illuminate the concept of being “politically perceptive” (Table 9).

Table 9. Politically Perceptive Matrix

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Did Not Engage in Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change</li> <li>➤ Achieved Desired Organizational Outcomes</li> </ul>        | <p style="text-align: center;">“Politically Perceptive”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engaged in Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change</li> <li>➤ Achieved Desired Organizational Outcomes</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Did Not Engage in Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change</li> <li>➤ Did Not Achieve Desired Organizational Outcomes</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Engaged in Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change</li> <li>➤ Did Not Achieve Desired Organizational Outcomes</li> </ul>  |

The goal of this section is to provide an overview of the term “politically perceptive.” Once readers are familiar with this concept, concrete illustrations of politically perceptive will be provided in the subsequent section. The term ‘perceptive’ was selected because it best captured the essence of being keenly discerning of office and organizational politics. According to the *Random House Unabridged Dictionary* (2006), perceptive means “having the ability to perceive or understand; keen in discernment.” Based on this definition, the researcher reasoned that those who were politically perceptive tended to have the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action. Specifically, politically perceptive individuals (a) exhibited a high level of awareness of workplace politics, (b) recognized how to manage their relationships with other organizational members in a socio-political environment, and (c) considered timing when taking action.

In brief, administrators who employed politically perceptive administrative behavior were those that met two criteria: 1) Engaged in political behavior that



effectively initiates and guides change, and 2) Achieved desired organizational outcomes. The researcher found that a majority of the administrators interviewed believed they were politically perceptive therefore, utilized both political behavior and reached their desired organizational outcomes.

For those few administrators who did not convey that they engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, the researcher surmised that it was largely attributed to the fact that they chose not to discuss it or gave vague responses about what they did during the change process. It does not mean that they did not engage in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, rather, it simply means that these few administrators did not provide clear indications of their specific roles and levels of involvement. Likewise, for the handful of administrators who expressed that they did not achieve their desired outcomes, the researcher believed that was a result of them (a) being honest, and/or (b) wishing that they would have approached the specific change process differently. Since the researcher did not delve into the reasons behind these responses (primarily not to digress too much from the research questions) with these two groups of administrators, it remains unclear whether these administrators could also be perceived as politically perceptive.

All three groups of administrators exhibited the spirit of being politically perceptive but to varying degrees (concrete illustrations are provided on pages 195-211). On the whole, the three presidents were the most politically perceptive. This conclusion was reached based on the fact that they were acutely aware of every decision that they made or were about to make because almost every presidential decision or action were perceived to be political in nature and most had ramifications. Generally speaking, most of the senior-level administrators were politically perceptive. They knew that they served at the discretion of the president and worked hard to perform their functional responsibilities the best they could. As for the mid-level administrators, most of them were politically perceptive but to a lesser degree. The ones that were not as politically perceptive were those who expressed a dislike for office politics and/or were not as aware of the benefits of engaging in political behavior when leading intended change initiatives.

Collectively, there were some administrators (regardless of their administrative levels) who clearly and intentionally employed political behavior that effectively initiates

and guides change in their daily interactions and knew the purposes for engaging in these high-leverage behaviors. On the other hand, there were some who engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change because they had to in order to move their change ideas/initiatives forward. It can be said that the first group engaged in the political behavior “by choice,” whereas the second group utilized these behaviors “by necessity.” Those who chose to engage by choice tended to view themselves as a political actor—as someone who played an instrumental role in getting change done. Conversely, those who chose to engage by necessity tended to see themselves not as a political actor but as an organizational member who happened to occupy a leadership position and recognized that they just did what needed to get done when leading planned change.

The researcher also acknowledged that there was a third group of administrators who engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change “by choice and by necessity.” In fact, the researcher believed that most of the administrators engaged in politically perceptive administrative behavior and therefore fell into this third category—they *chose to* and they *had to* employ political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change to get change done. The more that the administrators engaged by choice and by necessity, the more they paid attention to how best to influence others and overcome resistance so that they could move change along at a faster pace. As a result of recognizing the importance of engaging in political behavior by choice and by necessity, the administrators positioned themselves to be politically perceptive.

#### Politically Perceptive Administrative Behavior

In this next section, 20 quotes that best captured the concept of politically perceptive will be highlighted and discussed. The first six quotes take into account the six key components associated with being politically perceptive. The first component to being politically perceptive was intentionality—the more intentional, the better. As such, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior admitted that they were not interested in engaging in some purposeless act (when leading change) but intentionally wanted to take action for the right reasons. This led the administrators to recognize that being the first to do something was not necessarily the best course of action.

I'll give you a metaphor: "It's the second mouse that gets the cheese—the first one died." Most people go with the little cliché statement about the early bird gets the worm—you want to be first. But have you taken the time to understand what you want to be first at! People who are sometimes second on the list when adopting something or making a move in some area do it better and do it in a more substantial fashion than the first people. (P1)

The second component to being politically perceptive is awareness—the greater the awareness, the better. When administrators paid attention to how they were behaving and were perceived by others, they were able to monitor, adjust and/or modify their behaviors and demeanors appropriately so as to make the best impression each and every time. This means that administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tried to avoid doing anything that might be perceived as embarrassing, improper, and/or insensitive because doing so might have been costly and regrettable.

The higher you get in administration, the more you have to be political and sensitive to the bigger picture. If this is what you're hired to do, then they can't be a bull in a china shop. (SLA6)

Professionalism is the third component to being politically perceptive. Every time that an administrator made a decision to conduct himself/herself in a professional and respectable manner, he/she was making a commitment to himself/herself to act with integrity and not betray the trust of his/her colleagues, direct reports, and/or supervisors. This means that administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior recognized that when faced with a workplace dilemma, they needed to accept, respect, and honor the collective decision(s) of the group/team and put their personal opinions and interests aside to the best of their abilities.

The one thing you don't want to do is to talk outside of a meeting about an agreed upon decision. If you come to a decision as a group, don't go around afterwards saying, "I was opposed to that decision—that was not my vote." You have to leave the meeting united. (SLA26)

Maturity is the fourth component to being politically perceptive. Those administrators who exhibited maturity in their thinking appeared to be rather poised when leading the change process, especially in regards to timing. This can be attributed to the fact that these administrators had been battle-tested in the political arena. Put differently,

administrators with a mature perspective regarding their roles and responsibilities tended to have a better sense of timing when it came down to when to act, when to slow down, when to pause, and when to let go of a change idea. By paying attention to timing, administrators used this knowledge to discern how best to get change done because they understood that not everything will work out as they had originally planned.

If it's not time for that idea to ripen and become a reality at your institution, regardless of whether it is well-thought out, well researched, or in sync with the strategic plan, it just will not fly. It takes some maturity and judgment to figure that out and to accept it and to work around it. (MLA18)

Discernment is the fifth component to being politically perceptive. When an administrator was able to discern a political actor's personal agenda, that administrator inevitably became more cognizant of what mattered to that political actor and how best to work with him/her. In conjunction, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tended to be able to discern the mood in the room and accurately read between the lines. By doing so, they tended to be more attuned to the implicit messages, unspoken norms, and/or underlying tensions inherent in that group's dynamics.

People have told me that I read people well...a lot of times you have to listen and let people talk and process what they're saying and get a read on the room or a read on your audience before you go too far in depth with what you're trying to accomplish. Because if they're totally going this way and not happy with what you're remotely proposing, it's going to change what you say. (MLA11)

The sixth component to being politically perceptive is sound judgment. Administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior noted that they had to carefully and wisely gauge their priorities, needs, and wants because they knew that not everything needed to get done immediately and the manner in which they envisioned, particularly those change ideas/initiatives that were likely to engender the greatest amount of resistance. In the same vein, administrators had to use sound judgment when picking their battles because they recognized that they could not win every battle. By assessing what was ultimately the most important ones to fight for, administrators used sound judgment when making better critical short-term and long-term decisions.

You can't fight every battle. You just have to know the ones that are important and the ones that aren't important to win. You have to know mentally the priorities that need to get accomplished in a certain time frame. I won't fight every single battle unless I'm willing to fight it and it's something that strikes within me and whether I see it as important in my work. (MLA14)

In review, the six components to being politically perceptive are: intentionality, awareness, professionalism, maturity, discernment, and sound judgment. Administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior not only possessed these six components, they also often exhibited them when engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. By doing so, these administrators were able to better position themselves to achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change.

To further illuminate the concept of politically perceptive, the next five quotes capture the essence of what it means to be politically perceptive. For instance, this one administrator took into account how the unions would react as well as how the board members might respond to a collective bargaining proposal and/or decision. By being thoughtful about these key stakeholders' concerns and carefully considering their perspectives, this administrator demonstrated his awareness of the fact that most organizational decisions tended to be political in nature. Therefore, he needed to contemplate on what would be the best course of action when addressing their concerns and trying to satisfy their potentially divergent needs.

We have a very pro-labor governing board and many unions. There isn't a decision we make here that isn't somewhat filtered through a collective bargaining lens. I often think about what should we be doing and how will the unions react. Every union has a set of officers that monitor everything that goes on here. (P2)

Administrators who engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change also understood that if their goals were to create long-lasting changes that would have a positive impact, then they needed to continually convene groups of stakeholders throughout the decision-making process to educate them about what was going on and solicit their opinions.

In higher education what will not work is telling people what to do... You've got to build awareness of what the problem is and get a group together. Telling

people what to do is just a bad idea if you really want systemic, sustained change. (SLA17)

Moreover, those administrators who were politically perceptive appeared to express genuine enthusiasm for their change initiatives and the change process itself. Their approach was to keep stressing the positives and to have the stakeholders come up with solutions as opposed to telling them what to do because that would only make the stakeholders more resistant.

I would always talk about change as something exciting. To me, it's an opportunity, an adventure—it's not a negative thing. I know there are many people who do feel that way. Whenever I talk about a project or a topic, I'm very optimistic and I point out all the advantages to this college and benefits to the employees. (SLA3)

Those administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior also recognized that they had to understand the political game and to be careful not to become mired with the messiness associated with office politics. By recognizing how best to respond to various political actors and diffusing potential conflicts, these administrators sought to reframe differences by focusing more on coming up with new and viable solutions, not rehashing existing problems.

I try to be friendly and unwavering at points, not in a pushy way...I try to be pretty good at not taking their indifference or anger the wrong way. I have had to work on this personally: When someone is very confrontational to you, to not back down because that's what they want to do to you, to shut you down. So I keep plugging forward and ask, "What problems will it cause? Is there another way where we can maybe do it? If your way is better, let's do it your way." The political game here...you have to be careful. It takes a long time to be that way. (MLA11)

Although administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior recognized that there was no encompassing answer to being influential; they knew that they had to genuinely demonstrate good faith efforts to hear what others had to say, address their concerns, and respond in a way that was respectful and professional. When necessary, the administrators took the time to address the dissenters' concerns on a regular basis as a means to minimize perceived fears and erase doubts.

We bring it back to the committee once a month. I let them all into the [sample] course to review and critique it, to add any input, and make any changes they wanted so that they can see they're all going to get a chance to teach it if they want. I'm trying to make it as friendly as I can to the students, the staff, and to the faculty. (MLA11)

As illuminated by the previous five quotes, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior exhibited keen acumen during the planned change process. Moreover, when attempting to overcome resistance, these administrators gave the impression that they were masterful at building trust, getting people to the table, getting buy-in, generating interest and excitement, and preparing people for the change.

To further illustrate this politically perceptive concept, the next four quotes draw attention to how administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior utilized their influence to come up with creative solutions to mend differences and address workplace conflicts. This one administrator understood that managing others often depended on the circumstances and the importance of what was taking place at the college. It also depended on the individual and on their past performances. As such, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior gave serious thought about their current reality, when to take the necessary action steps, and how best to achieve certain desired outcomes without engendering or fueling any potentially volatile and/or divisive interpersonal conflicts.

Sometimes you have to take on that authoritative role. You have to be willing to do that and understand that everybody is different. You have to pick and choose so it's more an art form. Yes, sometimes I have to become very authoritative, very rarely but it's not a bad thing that I do that. It's just knowing when to do it, and when not to. It doesn't mean that I'm always right. (P3)

Administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior also recognized that in most, if not all political environments, there inevitably will be situations where various political actors will experience less-than-favorable encounters with one another. In such instances, these administrators deliberately tried to help these political actors put those bad experiences behind them by conveying the importance of coming together to work towards positive outcomes for students and for the institution.

Working with any union contract means understanding what the rules and requirements are and generally trying to respect them in all instances. By and large, they usually aren't that difficult to respect. How have I worked with them? I

try to build relationships with people, help them to see that I'm not working against them, that I am honest with them. (SLA27)

Moreover, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior knew that sometimes the best way to move forward was to make it a priority to have honest conversations with those individuals who were contributing to the organizational inertia. Doing so in a professional, respectful, and tactful manner benefited the institution in many ways. One of which was to generate positive energy within the organization so as to signal that every member was expected to contribute in ways that would positively benefit the institution.

In some cases, it did involve me individually talking to folks and saying to them, "You need to go because things are going to change and you're just not where we need you to be." They were cancers in this organization in terms of their negativity. (SLA1)

Additionally, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior were dutiful at doing their homework before bringing up a change idea. Often times these administrators helped others flush out their ideas and work with them to materialize those ideas. They spent considerable time and effort figuring out what more could be done and what could be done better, as well as working closely with their staff before bringing the ideas/proposals up with the faculty.

When I propose a new idea to faculty, my philosophy is "will this work and do we think this will work?" When we do adopt something and the faculty is not really 100% on board, I'll say, "If it doesn't work, we won't do it anymore. Let's just try it, what's the worst that'll happen?" (MLA11)

As indicated in the aforementioned four quotes, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior appeared to have a rather clear understanding of what they needed to do to deal with and overcome potential barriers and resistance. That is, they worked hard at building trust, getting others involved, preparing people for the change, and removing obstacles as best as they could. Moreover, when leading change in general, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior seemed to have a penchant for being able to articulate a compelling vision, recruit change champions, garner widespread support, incite action, and lead by example.



The next five quotes further expand on the politically perceptive concept for the purpose of increasing reader's understanding. This one administrator was aware of the fact that when he took the time to talk to people (regardless of their positions), showed them respect, and sincerely listened to them, he tended to experience more success when trying to influence them. Failing to do all of this could be detrimental, especially when an administrator was perceived in a negative light. After all, perceptions do matter.

You're given a certain amount of influence when you come into a position, but then you're always being evaluated by everybody that you interact with... You have a continuum of how influential you are and it's really the measurement of each of these individuals' perceptions and identification of where they think you rank in influence. (P3)

Another indication of an administrator who engaged in politically perceptive administrative behavior was his/her ability to reflect on his/her decisions before taking action. By being thoughtful and carefully analyzing what needed to be done, these administrators prepared themselves to make sound decisions, especially those that would be embraced by various stakeholders.

I want to have all my ducks in order. I want to have done what I needed to do so that I feel like I've covered my bases. I don't like to make decisions on the spur of the moment. I like to think about them, I like to get input. I like to think about things overnight or over the weekend before I make a slapdash decision. (SLA22)

Furthermore, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tended to have a plan for action and/or a process in place that guided their decision-making processes when leading planned change. Central to their plan or process was the importance placed on identifying and involving change champions.

To be most successful, you need to do three things. First of all, you need to make sure that the change idea is mission related, mission driven. Second, make sure that your facts and figures are correct and double-check them. The next piece is to find those champions, those agents of change who can support you or are comfortable enough with change that you can bounce these things off them. Get them on your team and get them to at least understand what you're doing. (SLA15)

To be successful in making any kind of true change, administrators who

engaged in politically perceptive administrative behavior recognized that they had to find a common ground for all those involved. When these administrators focused their attention on working towards a win-win solution, they were more likely to be able to establish and maintain positive relationships with different stakeholders who may have had little in common at the outset.

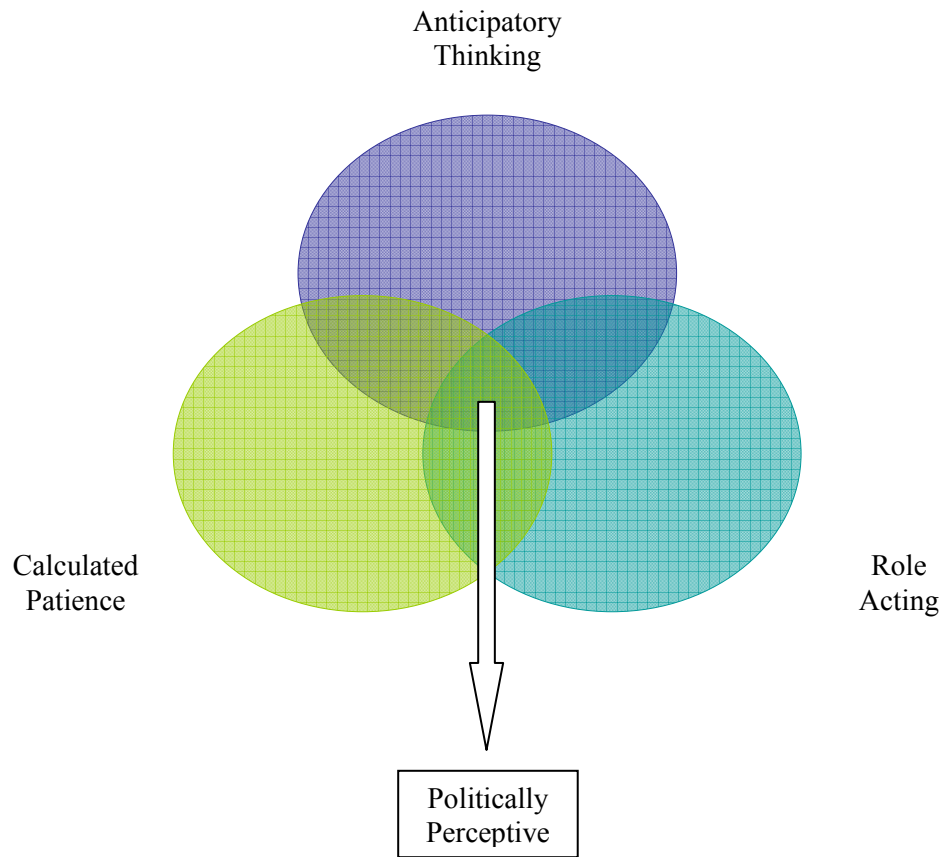
You have two sides that have to reach a middle ground so the negotiation needs to be win-win. Both parties have to lay out their true emotions and feelings of what they're after and try to find what would be the best outcome. There's got to be give-and-take on both sides, but not at the risk of destroying what you're initially going after. (MLA9)

Furthermore, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tended to model positive behavior because they knew that others were watching and looking to them for direction. It can also be said that they saw themselves as an integral part of the team, not simply as the leader who managed others by standing on the sidelines.

Leading by example has been my management style for all these years. I'm not afraid to roll up my sleeves and get into it. My staff would say that I'm not afraid to work. I'll get in there and do what needs to get done. (MLA7)

In summary, the 20 aforementioned quotes reinforced the concept of politically perceptive. That is, an administrator who engaged in politically perceptive administrative behavior was someone who had the faculties to understand the political dynamics that existed in and around the community college as well as the ability to successfully engage in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change in order to achieve desired organizational outcomes. In other words, an administrator who engaged in politically perceptive administrative behavior had a keen observation about what was taking place and what was happening around him/her from a political standpoint. To varying degrees, most of the administrators in this study (a) were aware of workplace politics, and (b) knew how to engage in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change with various political actors and constituencies to get change done.

The concept of politically perceptive can also be seen as the interconnection of three spheres (i.e., anticipatory thinking, calculated patience, and role acting), as illustrated using the following Venn diagram:



### Anticipatory Thinking

The first sphere is “anticipatory thinking.” Anticipatory thinking means having the foresight and mindfulness to anticipate how others will react in order to respond with tact and logic. In other words, administrators who engaged in anticipatory thinking demonstrated the ability to think ahead, be strategic, sense how others might respond, have a well-conceptualized plan as well as a back-up plan, know how to be professional, use diplomacy when communicating, and rely on sound judgment when reasoning with others. Essentially, those who displayed anticipatory thinking acted like chess players—they determined which influence tactics to engage in when planning their next move (and subsequent moves) and deliberately charted their course of action in response to what others might or will do.

This administrator exhibited anticipatory thinking by taking into account the impact of potentially straining existing resources if he were to pursue an additional

service function. By thinking ahead and considering how best to allocate his limited resources, he decidedly said no to a widely supported request.

It's not a question of whether or not the proposal is meritorious. It's a question of whether or not the institution can commit to moving in that direction or should commit to moving in that direction. It's this question of "can you really be all things to all people?" For instance, there was an effort to maybe transfer the role of the adult education system to the community colleges. I disagreed—not because it wasn't a good idea but realistically how much can you do about this complex issue and do it well? I don't know that we're ready to open our arms to people at all levels, all reading levels. (P2)

Preparation was another critical component of anticipatory thinking. Those who took the time to understand the positions and perspectives of their colleagues, supporters, opponents, and/or critics exhibited a sense of awareness of potentially volatile scenarios as well as a sense of readiness to tackle the issues and conflicts head on. By being prepared, those administrators capitalized on their anticipatory thinking to influence others in a positive way—therefore allowing them to move and/or push their change agendas forward.

A lot of my approach does come from my...training. [I was] trained to never ask a question you don't already know the answer. So you prepare, investigate, and anticipate answers...your preparation is absolutely critical to being successful. (SLA11)

Those who demonstrated anticipatory thinking also were mindful of who they were dealing with and what those individuals/groups wanted or were advocating for. Knowing that different individuals/groups have different sources of power, those keen administrators recognized who they needed to meet with to have those executive-level conversations because these individuals/groups had the authority to make key and/or final decisions, as opposed to those who had limited authority and/or influence.

Depending on who I'm talking to, I am aware of the answers that I'm going to get from them. I am aware of the authority that a person has to move something along... You need to really understand the authority of the position you're talking to so you don't create a situation that can't get you what you want. (SLA18)

By being in tune with what others needed or expected from them, the administrators were able to accurately anticipate and do what was necessary to appeal to others' interests and agendas.

I look for what makes people tick. I can watch from the outside, see what their management style is, and then fashion my presentation or myself to adapt to their agendas. If the president doesn't like change, will I come in and charge, charge, charge, we'll going to change the world? No! If the president wants to change and he's preaching change, will I be a little bolder? Absolutely! (MLA8)

In the same vein, administrators who exhibited anticipatory thinking also knew what not to say. They made time to build relationships because they valued the importance of generating goodwill from having these relationships. At the same time, the administrators built these relationships as a means to increase their awareness of various political dynamics. Having this knowledge and sensitivity has proven to have been invaluable, particularly for the administrators to avoid putting themselves in a potentially politically-charged scenario or a no-win situation.

I'm watching the dynamics in the room and I know enough about how they feel to not say the wrong thing...I talk to people, I try to be friendly, how's it going, this and that. I learn a lot about what's going on around me so I don't walk into those political minefields. Sometimes I do but I try not to. (MLA11)

Moreover, administrators who demonstrated anticipatory thinking knew how to accurately read others' body language and interpret non-verbal communication. They knew how to read between the lines and noticed inconsistencies in others' responses, behaviors, and actions. By noticing both subtle and obvious clues, the administrators adjusted their thinking, approach, and/or demeanor accordingly as a means to minimize the chances of committing a political faux pas, especially a preventable one.

Other than just knowing when to do things, you have to be able to read the people around you and take your cues because you can't always go by what they say. You have to look at their body language and look at the decisions that they're making so that you can get a feel for just how things are so you can make your decisions. There's absolutely nothing to be gained by making a good decision and having your own career cut short because of it...You have to do things wisely. (MLA18)

In brief, administrators who demonstrated anticipatory thinking were observant individuals. They took notice of the issues and concerns of others and fashioned their responses and interactions accordingly. It was as if the administrators were able to craft a compelling central message and deliver that message differently to different individuals/groups without deviating from their positions and values.

## Calculated Patience

The second sphere is “calculated patience.” Calculated patience means having the patience and wisdom to know when to wait, when to act, when to plant seeds, and when to let go. Community colleges, like many other organizations, are political arenas. Therefore, timing of certain decisions and actions is crucial—when to be quiet, when to speak up, when to simply go along, when to respectfully disagree, when to forge ahead, when to pull back, and when to graciously exit. Taking into account these timing decisions, administrators who displayed calculated patience demonstrated the ability to be deliberately patient, take in as much information as possible before acting, weigh the costs and benefits of acting too soon or waiting too long, think analytically about various options, and discern the most appropriate time to do something.

You learn that it takes time for people to digest information and direction, for people to change, and for situations to clarify themselves. I have a twist on an old saying: “Don’t just stand there, do something!” My new favorite saying is: “Don’t just do something, stand there.” It means every now and again, you just have to look at it for awhile. Make sure that you do understand exactly what you are looking at before you take action. I think that’s been probably the most profound learning. (P1)

Administrators who understood the importance of calculated patience tended to look at change as long-term. It was not necessarily about how *fast* change could be implemented but rather the emphasis was on how *best* change could be implemented. They recognized that by doing so, they could be more strategic and intentional about how best to achieve desired outcomes every step of the way. One of the critical steps was to identify the early supporters and change champions to get them on board.

You have to be patient, you have to strike when the time is right, and you have to take a long-term view...you need to identify the people in the organization who share your orientation and partner with them to get things done. You need to be clear and straight from the beginning about what you’re trying to do and why you’re doing it. (SLA17)

Having the wisdom to know when to push others and how much to push the change agenda forward was another critical aspect of calculated patience. Administrators recognized that when they were faced with resistance, especially strong resistance, they needed to reexamine the path they were on and whether it was worth continuing on that direct path. By making the decision to take a slight detour whether it was to avoid a head-

on conflict or to pursue a slightly different course of action, the administrators were met with a different level of resistance—one that ended up being more amenable to what they and the other party wanted.

If you're dealing with resistance, you can't push people. If you push, it's not going to happen. It's just not going to happen—you have to sit back. Maybe you have to make changes if you have a plan and it's not going the way you want. Learn from it and make the changes that you need to make...you need to be open and receptive. (SLA8)

The administrators who recognized the importance of calculated patience also knew that they would not get everything they wanted nor would they win every battle. Despite grasping this, they were okay with this reality because they understood the nature and dynamics of change. They continued to push for the changes they believed in and put their best effort forward because they also understood that the timing of various change initiatives could work in their favor or against them. To the best of their abilities, those administrators who were mindful of calculated patience used timing to their advantage.

If I get half the things I try to change, I'm overjoyed. If I don't get the other half, I'm at it again, one way or another. But I only try to do those things that make sense...I'm always trying to look for where can I do the best job at changing things that will address the problem and not just alleviate it. I try to do that wherever I can but it takes a huge amount of effort and a lot of energy. And to have patience—I'm not always the guy getting things done first. (MLA1)

The more seasoned and tested the administrators were, not necessarily by years of experience but by challenges faced, the more they were able to exhibit calculated patience and make better use of timing. They gained insights into how to best play the cards they were dealt, how much they could realistically get done at the present time, and how much progress could be made in the weeks and months ahead. Knowing that not everything would go according to plan, the administrators knew that some things would have to be on hold for a while longer.

There's nothing to replace experience and maturity because you know how to read people and how to test the temperature. You can decide if what you're attempting to do is right or wrong, or good or bad, or if it can really realistically be done right now. I see very clearly for me that some things just have to wait until their time. (MLA18)

In short, the administrators recognized that it took a great deal of effort and energy when leading planned change. There was simply no easy win, no shortcut to getting things done. The more they engaged in calculated patience, the more they knew how to work with, not against, timing. And often times, they did.

### Role Acting

The third sphere is “role acting.” Role acting means having the willingness and professionalism to perform functional responsibilities associated with the role. The higher the position, the more the administrator had to fulfill the functional responsibilities associated with that role. From this perspective, administrators who engaged in role acting demonstrated the abilities to check/remove their egos, understand the nature of their positions, meet pre-determined expectations from internal and external stakeholders, accept (not avoid) challenges/difficulties that come with the position, and do what was best for the organization. In brief, role acting comes down to fulfilling the role that one is occupying.

When people say to me that I need to talk to a group about so and so, I’d say, “Sure, what is it you want me to talk about?” In other words, I’ll fulfill the role if you want me to talk on this subject or that subject, if you want me to play this role, that’s fine. I need to find out what it is. Again, I’m fulfilling the role that comes with being a president. (P3)

Administrators who understood the importance of role acting recognized the seriousness of doing what they were hired to do. They knew they had to be competent in performing their functional responsibilities in order to meet expectations. Likewise, they had to be mindful of their supervisors’ positions and support those positions the best they could. Moreover, the higher up the position in the organizational hierarchy, the more those administrators were expected to “role act.”

The president didn’t hire me to tell me how to do my job. At my level, I was hired for my expertise and I am expected to implement certain things...there’s no hand-holding. I need to do what I was hired to do. On one hand, I have enough resources to do it. But on the other hand, nobody has as many resources as they need to do the job. (SLA6)

Role acting also implied that the administrators focused on doing what was best for the organization, not necessarily for themselves. Many administrators realized this and adapted their performance accordingly in order to align themselves with the



president's agendas and/or the board's priorities. By doing this, the administrators did not subject themselves to being viewed as a non-team player—someone who was difficult to work with.

I learned a long time ago that there comes a point in time where you just don't bang your head against the wall. I'm not here to do what I want to do or what I think is right. I'm here to do what's good for the organization and what the organization wants me to do. (SLA17)

As a manager, each and every administrator realized that one of the central aspects of role acting was to get the right people on board. The administrators needed to coach their respective staff so that they could perform their roles to the best of their abilities. Similarly, the administrators needed to step out of the way so as to not interfere with the details and/or the processes of getting change done for those that did not necessarily require their involvement.

Getting the right people and getting rid of the wrong ones is the biggest thing. Get the right people and then don't micromanage. Support them and move them in the right direction if they need it. If they don't, let them do what they do best. That's why you hired them. (SLA19)

Administrators who understood the importance of role acting were mindful of the fact that they needed to do what was best for various stakeholders or constituent groups. Specifically, they avoided taking an antagonistic approach when dealing with these political actors because doing so was counterproductive. By being respectful of their critics' roles and positions, the administrators positioned themselves to be able to work with others towards shared goals and common interests.

To be effective, I need to build trust because my interests may differ from the union. My role is to not take an anti-union position. I'm not out to break the union and to embarrass people. I want the best for the union and need to be respectful of the leadership... Ambiguity and tolerance are the key words you learn early on in the labor relations area because you don't settle everything you want. (SLA13)

Another important aspect of role acting was the emphasis on viewing oneself as a chief steward of the college. Administrators who cared deeply about their institution tended to expend more energy and focused their attention on doing what was in the college's best interest because they felt that they had a stake in making it better.

Likewise, those administrators chose to wear many different hats because of personal choice, not necessarily because they were required to.

Here I try to act as if I “own” the college in the sense that the college is my responsibility. I’m responsible to represent it to the community. I see my role as a diplomat and a whip cracker. I have to be all those kinds of things in order to own the college so that’s how I act. What’s the best for the college because I own it? (MLA13)

In sum, the findings suggest that most administrators were politically perceptive when leading planned change. That is, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tended to have the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action. Specifically, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior (a) exhibited a high level of awareness of workplace politics, (b) recognized how to manage their relationships with other organizational members in a socio-political environment, and (c) considered timing when taking action. Also, the findings indicate that most administrators engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change “by choice and by necessity.” That is, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior wanted to utilize political behavior and at the same time knew that they had to engage in other political behavior in order to get change done. The more that the administrators engaged by choice and by necessity, the more they paid attention to how best to influence others and overcome resistance so that they can move change along at a faster pace.

#### Implications for Future Research

Leaders can achieve desired organizational outcomes in a politicized environment by engaging in political behavior that influences others to agree with their positions or viewpoints (Carmeli & Tishler, 2006; Julius, Baldrige, & Pfeffer, 1999; Rosenzweig, 1998). Yukl (2002) adds that an important determinant of one’s leadership skill is the ability to get others to carry out requests, perform assigned roles and responsibilities, and implement decisions. Yukl and Tracey (1992) note that the success of an attempt made by the agent to influence the target person depends in part on the influence tactics used by the agent. As presented in the previous three chapters, the findings from this study support the literature on influence behavior on three fronts: 1) Leaders often engage in

influence tactics (Cialdini, 2001; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkerson, 1980; Yukl & Falbe, 1990); 2) Leaders seek to develop positive working relationships when leading change (Miles & Miles, 1999; Mills, 2000; Mowday, 1978; Porter, Allen, & Angle, 1981; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990); and 3) Leaders adapt their influence tactics to achieve desired organizational outcomes (Patterson et al., 2008; Pfeffer, 1992; Schriesheim & Neider, 2006).

Since the early 1980s a number of studies have been conducted to determine the outcomes of specific influence behaviors (Yukl & Chavez, 2002; Yukl & Tracey, 1992). These studies found that the influence tactics most likely to elicit task commitment included rational persuasion, consultation, collaboration, and inspirational appeals. The four tactics have subsequently been termed core tactics (Yukl, 2002). This unique study sought to add to the literature by exploring and examining the range of political behavior as perceived by the 18 mid-level administrators, 27 senior-level administrators, and three presidents at three Michigan community colleges. To some extent, the five core behaviors (i.e., get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and respect others, and do homework/research) proposed were rather different to the four core tactics by Yukl (2002). However, the findings from this study should not be generalized because they were specific to three particular groups of administrators.

There are many different directions for future research to shed new light on change management. First, scholars might want to interview administrators at other community colleges (within Michigan and outside the state) and institutional types (i.e., research-intensive universities, regional universities, and liberal arts colleges) to explore whether those administrators might engage in similar political behavior (e.g., building a compelling case, involving the faculty to give them ownership, sharing information to sell ideas, and discerning others' personal agendas) or share analogous perceptions about their political behavior when leading change. In other words, would other administrators at various institutional types employ similar political behavior as these 48 community college administrators? The question of frequency of use would also help to uncover new insights into change management.

Second, it would be fruitful for scholars to expand on what other higher education administrators, particularly those employed at community colleges, perceived to be

political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. Although this exploratory study attempted to identify political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (as discussed in chapters 5, 6, and 7 and also in Table 5), it would be worthwhile to ascertain whether other administrators, regardless of institutional settings, would also employ the five high-leverage core behaviors to influence others, overcome obstacles, and achieve desired organizational change outcomes.

Third, scholars might want to delve deeper to better understand the underlying reasons why the three groups of administrators (i.e., presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators) engaged in rather similar political behavior regardless of their positions. Since there was no distinctive difference amongst the administrative levels, the curiosity then is why not. Conventional wisdom suggests that presidents (because of their positional power) have an easier time (than mid-level administrators, for example) when trying to influence others and therefore not have to engage in the kinds of political behavior that others have to engage in (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkerson, 1980; Mowday, 1978; Schriesheim & Neider, 2006). However, the three presidents reasoned that this conclusion was flawed because their role was to serve everyone, which was often difficult at times when different stakeholders had divergent interests and competing demands. From this perspective, it appeared that presidents, vice presidents, deans, and directors alike had more in common with one another when leading the change process than might have been expected.

The fourth research direction is to solidify which political behavior are the high-leverage ones. This study suggests that there were five core behaviors: 1) Get buy-in; 2) Build relationships; 3) Involve others; 4) Listen and respect others; and 5) Do homework/research. Scholars might want to examine whether these five core behaviors are indeed universal. In other words, can leaders employ these five behaviors in any organizational setting to achieve desired organizational outcomes? In addition to interviewing community college administrators, scholars might want to converse with other non-higher education leaders (e.g., business, non-profit, and government) as well as leaders from other countries about which core behaviors are critical to them when successfully leading others. The researcher believed that it would be particularly captivating to comprehend what these leaders think of this universal phenomenon and

whether or not they view organizations as political arenas. Doing so can shed more light on what are the best practices to influence diverse organizational members and external stakeholders to get on the same page (Buchanan & Badham, 1999; Yukl, 2002).

Since there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding the significance and impact of a politically perceptive leader (Reardon, 2000), the fifth area of research could focus on substantiating and/or expanding this concept. The researcher has defined and proposed the concept of politically perceptive as someone who has the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action. After perusing the literature and researching on the Internet, it appears that this politically perceptive concept is in its nascent stage. Therefore, it seems that additional research regarding this concept can result in a more complete understanding of how leaders learn to develop and employ their political sharpness. For example, researchers might want to explore what leaders think of their political intelligence, to what extent do they view themselves as a politically perceptive leader, and what their perceptions are of individuals who are (or are not) politically perceptive. To advance the concept of politically perceptive, other questions for further research might include:

- 1) Do leaders believe it is necessary to be politically perceptive in order to be successful when leading planned change? Why or why not?
- 2) How do leaders develop this awareness and sharpness to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action?
- 3) How do leaders cultivate the foresight and mindfulness to anticipate how others will react in order to respond with tact and logic?
- 4) How do leaders increase their patience and gain the wisdom to know when to wait, when to act, when to plant seeds, and when to let go?
- 5) How do leaders acquire the willingness and professionalism to perform functional responsibilities associated with their respective roles?

Sixth, further research could investigate administrator perceptions, reactions, and interpretations to various words/terminologies such as politics, office politics, organizational politics, political perspective, political behavior, politically savvy, and influence tactic, to name a few. In the past, these terminologies, generally speaking, tended to invoke negative responses largely because people viewed politics as

manipulative and those who engaged in politics as crossing over to the “dark side” (Lichtenberg, 1998). Therefore, having a better understanding of what educational leaders think of these words/terminologies could uncover (a) deep-seated beliefs about this complex concept, (b) perceptions of individuals who engage in political behavior to advance personal agendas and/or organizational goals, and (c) undisclosed motives for utilizing political behavior (Vigoda, 2003). Perhaps this line of research might get at why the administrators in this study tended to talk about their referent, expert, and/or reward power, as opposed to their coercive and/or legitimate power (Raven, 1990).

The seventh area of research could expand on why some leaders tended to use conventional power tactics (e.g., manipulating, coercing, controlling, pressuring, using ambiguity, and blocking) as a means to getting change done, as opposed to those who preferred to engage in positive influence tactics (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl & Chavez, 2002). Although this study only attempted to uncover the reasons why administrators favored using positive influence tactics, it is still somewhat unknown as to why some administrators might favor using conventional power tactics when leading planned change. As such, shedding light in this area could perhaps provide more information about personal choice and motivation. Moreover, scholars might want to expound specific ideal conditions, situations or scenarios that might make one political behavior better suited than another.

The eighth approach to future research could focus on using another distinctive frame/viewpoint to better understand how educational leaders influence others during the planned change process. The conceptual framework for this original study utilized the political perspective, one of the four frames posited by Bolman and Deal (2003). Further research could certainly use the structural, human resources or symbolic frames, or a combination of the four frames to take a more comprehensive approach to examining this organizational phenomenon. There is a possibility that such findings might yield different conclusions if scholars were to view the higher education organization as a circus or a family, as opposed to a political arena. Undoubtedly, this inquiry presents a fertile ground for those interested in pursuing a similar line of inquiry (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The ninth area for future research would be to continue to explore and examine the perceptions and experiences of mid-level administrators, senior-level administrators,

and presidents when leading planned change. In addition to focusing on these three groups, scholars might want to also interview lower-level administrators, faculty members, faculty unions, and department chairs to better understand their reactions and experiences during the change process, especially when they had to respond to the change and/or implement the change (Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989).

Correspondingly, the literature on board members' perceptions and experiences, especially the board chair and vice chair, to change is sparse or nonexistent (Schriesheim & Neider, 2006). Further research could discern how board members utilize their political behavior to exert influence on the president and vice versa (Rosenzweig, 1998). If scholars were able to examine the contextual conditions in which the board-president relationships are positive and/or negative, it would make this line of research that much more fascinating.

Lastly, an additional point of interest that emerged from this study which could be further explored relates to Kotter's (1995) Eight Steps for Leading Change Model. Although the researcher found that that the administrators interviewed for this study illustrated the eight steps to some extent throughout their interviews, albeit not explicitly, not all the steps in totality, and not in its linear order. It would be worthwhile to inquire what higher education leaders think (a) of Kotter's model (e.g., whether they find it to be useful and which step they tend to spend the most time doing), (b) to what extent they have used Kotter's Eight Steps Model when leading change, and (c) what other leadership strategies, theories, models or approaches they have employed to influence others, overcome resistance, and achieve desired outcomes. Similarly, scholars might want to explicitly use Kotter's model to look into how leaders advance their change efforts/initiatives during each of the eight steps. Three potential research questions might include: 1) To what extent do leaders recognize Kotter's eight steps and adapt their political behavior accordingly? 2) Which one of the eight steps is the most challenging and why? and 3) How would leaders recognize when to "move on" to the next step?

In sum, the suggested ten areas for scholars to expand on this research study could shed new insights into change management for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Given that today's administrators are expected to facilitate several concurrent change initiatives, it becomes more imperative to delve deeper into this leadership practice. That is, further

investigations would aid to broaden the scope of understanding about the challenges that administrators face when engaging in political behavior at the community college level and in other organizations where the environment is politicized.

### Implications for Practice

In this research design, there were five assumptions (in chapter one) embedded in this as exploratory study. The assumptions will now be revisited by addressing whether or not they were supported by the data. In doing so, the researcher will discuss some implications for practice.

The first assumption—community college administrators at different levels in the organization lead planned change—was substantiated. In fact, every administrator discussed his/her experiences when leading change, whether it was at the departmental, divisional or institutional level. Not only were they instrumental in facilitating and getting change implemented, they were also involved in leading concurrent change efforts/initiatives, as opposed to simply leading one change effort at a time.

Three implications for practice can be drawn from this first assumption. The first implication is that virtually every administrator has the ability to initiate, facilitate, and implement planned change, regardless of their position. Having said this, it is important to note that the administrator's ability to lead change will vary depending on which political behavior he/she utilizes, how often he/she engages in those political behavior, and whether he/she utilizes the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change listed in Table 5 (e.g., getting buy-in, building relationships, involving others, listening and showing respect, and doing homework/research). As such, it behooves today's administrators to enhance their abilities by intentionally engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change on a regular basis with other organizational members and stakeholder groups.

The second practice implication is that many administrators can be influential during the change process, especially when they know how to leverage their influence. Since the administrators in this study leveraged their influence by engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, it stands to reason that today's administrators can and should do the same. Not only will they increase their chances of



achieving desired organizational outcomes, they will also be in a better position to shape the outcomes in their favor.

The third practice implication is that leading change is a process that involves many stakeholders. As such, this phenomenon is not something that an administrator can easily accomplish without the support of his/her colleagues, supervisors, and direct reports. Put differently, for today's administrators to be successful they must not only receive the support of internal and external constituents, they also need the support from key stakeholders, change champions, and/or potential critics to accomplish change.

The second assumption—presidents and senior-level administrators lead institution-wide planned change initiatives and mid-level administrators lead department specific initiatives—was also confirmed. Even though the administrators were encouraged to discuss whatever change initiatives they wanted to discuss, the presidents and senior-level administrators tended to disclose their involvement leading institutional changes and the mid-level administrators tended to reveal their efforts in leading departmental changes.

Three practice implications can be drawn from this second assumption. The first implication is that mid-level administrators are capable of leading planned change initiatives at the institutional level. Evidence for this inference comes from the fact that the mid-level administrators in this study achieved their desired organizational outcomes when leading departmental change. Also, since the mid-level administrators engaged in similar political behavior that the senior-level administrators and presidents engaged in, it is very plausible that they can also lead change at the institutional level and be successful in doing so when given the opportunity.

The second practice implication is that there is usually no one right approach to leading change. Rather, there are many different paths that can be taken—each potentially affecting the change process as well as producing different change outcomes. The key for today's administrators is to (a) distinguish which political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change to employ, (b) be perceptive of timing throughout the change process, and (c) consider how best to employ those political behavior.

The third practice implication is that senior-level administrators and presidents should focus on leading institutional, not departmental, change efforts, especially

considering their roles and functional responsibilities. Generally speaking, they are expected to provide oversight, direction, leadership, and management of various units/divisions/departments, not to entangle themselves with the day-to-day operations of a department, especially when there are capable mid-level administrators who can perform the functions associated with the task of leading departmental change. In other words, senior-level administrators and presidents need to start delegating various departmental tasks to their mid-level administrators, if they have not done so, and refrain from micromanaging as much as possible.

The third assumption—the political behavior of community college administrators shape planned change initiatives both in process and outcome—was also confirmed. Without a doubt, the administrators were quite intentional about engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading change because they perceived this as a means to an end. To varying degrees, they knew what they needed to do to advance, adapt, and sell their change ideas/initiatives. They also demonstrated persistence and conviction to stay focused on their goals and outcomes, especially in light of having to constantly deal with both active and passive resisters. Therefore, the administrators' choice of which political behavior to engage in was largely dependent on who they were dealing with, what the issues were at hand, and how best to get the other political actors to understand and accept the merits of their proposals/ideas in order to get their buy-in and support.

There are three practice implications associated with this third assumption. The first implication is that administrators must be cognizant of and have a good grasp of how to best utilize the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading planned change. The more familiar, comfortable, and adept they are at employing these behaviors, the better. If an administrator is not familiar with the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, now is a good time to take notice of the political behavior that often lead to achieving desired organizational outcomes. Likewise, if an administrator does not feel comfortable at utilizing the range of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, it would be worthwhile to reexamine the reasons behind this sense of discomfort in order to reframe what it means to engage in these proactive and positive influence tactics. In the same vein, if an administrator is not

as adept at employing the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change, a good starting point is for that administrator to observe and learn from those who are more skilled. Moreover, every administrator (regardless of his/her level of familiarity, comfort, and skill) needs to consider the costs of not engaging in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change as well as the benefits of engagement. By doing so, one can decide for himself/herself what he/she needs to pay attention to and/or work on to be more successful when engaging in political behavior.

Given that leading change is a complex phenomenon, the second practice implication is that administrators might want to be more reflective and contemplative about the change process and outcome. Instead of making decisions one-at-a-time when a decision needs to be rendered, perhaps administrators might want to take a more integrative, “big picture” approach to decision-making by reflecting on how best to proceed during the change process. For example, administrators might want to contemplate these questions: 1) How will this change process directly lead to achieving the desired outcomes?; 2) How can the change process be tweaked or made better?; 3) At this point in time, who else should I involve in this change process?; 4) Is there a sense that we are compromising our process in order to get to the outcome?; and 5) Will achieving the desired outcomes benefit our organization in the long run?

The third practice implication is that administrators might want to identify ways to develop or strengthen their political perceptiveness. For instance, administrators would benefit tremendously if they were to take into account the following questions: 1) How can I develop the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action?; 2) How can I increase my foresight and sense of mindfulness to anticipate how others will react in order to respond with tact and logic?; 3) What can I do to cultivate my patience and wisdom to know when to wait, when to act, when to plant seeds, and when to let go?; and 4) What can I do to expand on my willingness and professionalism to perform the functional responsibilities associated with my role?

The fourth assumption—presidents and senior-level administrators engage in a wider range of political behavior because of their positions in the hierarchy, prior experiences in leading planned change, and expectations of subordinates and staff—was

not supported by the data. There was no distinct difference among the three groups of administrators in terms of the range of political behavior used because they all engaged in a myriad of political behavior, from getting buy-in to building relationships.

Regardless of differences in levels of authority, prior experiences, and expectations of subordinates and staff, the administrators reported utilizing similar high leverage core behaviors (i.e., get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research) to achieve desired organizational outcomes. In brief, the mid-level administrators were just as likely to engage in a wide range of political behavior as the presidents and senior-level administrators. However, there were some differences regarding the utilization of certain political behavior (as noted at the end of chapter four and in Table 5). For example, the one political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the presidents consistently employed was to press forward despite resistance. For the senior-level administrators, it was to involve key players; for the mid-level administrators, it was to get buy-in by selling.

Three practice implications can be drawn from this fourth assumption. The first implication is that mid-level administrators should avoid downplaying their roles and abilities when they have the opportunity to lead planned change. Instead, they need to realize that regardless of their position in the organizational hierarchy and levels of authority, they can be just as successful as those administrators in higher positions. Moreover, mid-level administrators need to start (if they have not already done so) believing that “yes, I can” engage in a wider range of political behavior (and they should).

The second practice implication is that administrators (especially mid-level administrators) need to realize that those administrators in higher positions do not necessarily have all the answers nor are they that much more knowledgeable about how to lead planned change. One can assume that in most cases, senior-level administrators and presidents tend to have more years of experience and perhaps more resources to draw from or to allocate. However, having years of experience and resources do not automatically translate into being successful. It simply implies that senior-level administrators and presidents might have more experience and resources than mid-level administrators at the outset. It all comes down to what each administrator decides to do—

whether he/she engages in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change and knows how to leverage his/her influence with key political actors throughout the planned change process.

The third practice implication is that administrators (regardless of their positions) might want to seek out a mentor or two, particularly if the mentor has demonstrated a track record of successfully leading planned change. What better way to enhance one's ability to move change forward than to learn from those who would be willing to dispense invaluable insights about how to get change done. Besides, developing a mentoring relationship with someone who is politically perceptive can make a big difference in the context of surviving and thriving in a political arena.

The fifth assumption—mid-level administrators engage in a narrower range of political behaviors because of their positions in the hierarchy, inexperience in leading planned change, and limited spheres of influence—was also not supported by the data. In fact, the mid-level administrator perceptions of their abilities to influence others and lead planned change were not affected by the fact that their positional status was that of a mid-level administrator. In other words, mid-level administrators often viewed themselves as being influential when they needed to influence other administrators, even those in higher positions. Perhaps the only slight difference is that the presidents and a few senior-level administrators had to appeal to the board more often than the mid-level administrators. However, this political behavior was to be expected given the nature of their functional responsibilities.

Three practice implications can be drawn from this fifth assumption. The first implication is that any administrator can be successful when leading change if they work hard at it and focus on utilizing the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change throughout the planned change process. The key is to spend considerable time engaging in high leverage political behavior on a regular basis and with key political actors. The more administrators make it a priority to develop the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action, the more they can ensure their own success throughout the change process.

The second practice implication is that the identified political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (e.g., involve key players, build relationships to

garner support, get buy-in, know when the timing is right, make incremental changes) are skills that can be learned and over time, can be strengthened. By honing these critical skills, administrators can certainly elevate their competencies in ways that will add tremendous value to their organizations. At the same time, administrators must be patient and persistent because the change process is often slow and can be frustrating. As such, it is imperative to stay focused on the goals and make as much progress as possible despite any perceived and/or actual resistance.

For purposes of assessing and ascertaining the political landscape, the third practice implication is that administrators might want to be more intentional (and perhaps make it a higher priority) to increase their visibility and presence on and off-campus with internal and external stakeholders. One suggestion is to invest more time attending various college-wide events and functions as well as to deliberately develop rapport and build relationships with key individuals. Not only is it important to be seen and to network with various political actors, doing so deftly can significantly increase one's social and political capitals.

In summary, since all three groups of administrators in general achieved their desired organizational outcomes, it can be said that they were all fairly successful at getting change done. Their success was largely attributed to the fact that they engaged in a wide range of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change (Table 5), to satisfy the needs of diverse constituents, generate minimal resistance, gain trust and commitment, and produce generally positive feelings throughout the planned change process. To ensure their chances of success, today's community college administrators might want to keep in mind the aforementioned 15 practice implications, such as (a) virtually every administrator has the ability to initiate, facilitate, and implement planned change, regardless of their position, (b) there is usually no one right approach to leading change, (c) the need to identify ways to develop or strengthen political perceptiveness, (d) the need to be cognizant of and have a good grasp of how best to utilize the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading planned change, and (e) the ability of administrators to be successful when leading change if they work hard at it and focus on utilizing the political behavior throughout the planned change process.

## Limitations of the Study

As with any research study, it is critical to recognize the limitations inherent in the design of the project and in the analysis/presentation of the findings. There are eight limitations that need to be acknowledged. The primary limitation is inherent in the case study methodology itself. In brief, the most critical limitation of the case study approach is the ability to generalize the findings to other groups of individuals, situations or organizations (Merriam, 1998). Since this was a unique exploratory study examining 48 administrator perceptions of their political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change when leading organizational planned change, readers are advised to take caution when attempting to generalize the findings from this study to other administrators, organizations, and contexts, even if those administrators and organizations were also presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators at community colleges. However, the results from this study may be informative and useful if scholars are interested in (a) conducting similar case studies, (b) expanding this line of inquiry, and (c) looking for patterns or trends over time, to name a few possible research directions.

The second limitation is the fact that the researcher was employed as a mid-level administrator at another community college in Michigan. To minimize any potential conflict of interests during this research project, the researcher was particularly sensitive to his professional and researcher roles. As such, every effort was made to objectively approach the research from a neutral perspective when collecting, transcribing, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Specifically, the researcher followed the sage advice of Wolcott (1994) to systematically “watch, ask, and review” the data to ensure this entire process was interactive, holistic, and free from bias. Although great lengths were taken to analyze the data in a manner that minimized researcher bias, this reality may have had some impact on the presentation of these findings.

The third limitation is that the researcher chose only the political frame of Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four frames to understand the leading change phenomenon, instead of choosing the human resource, structural, or symbolic frame. Also, the researcher could have selected a combination of the four frames or all four frames, but decided not to for the purpose of keeping this exploratory study more manageable. Admittedly, choosing

one frame or perspective can at best capture one dimension of understanding this reality, as opposed to perhaps capturing this complex phenomenon from all four dimensions (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Had the researcher examined this phenomenon using all four frames, there probably would have been greater understanding of how the community college administrators perceived their political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change. Although all four frames are useful and insightful for understanding a myriad of phenomena, the researcher has a slight positive bias for the political frame in this particular study because it best captures how a diverse group of organizational actors get work done in a politicized environment, especially when there are shrinking resources and limited budgets to contend with.

Since the terms political behavior, power, and politics could be perceived as highly sensitive subject matters, another limitation is that the community college administrators in this sample might have chosen instead (a) to give their politically-correct versions of their political behavior, (b) to portray themselves in the best possible light, (c) to exaggerate the success of their political behavior, and/or (d) to inflate their roles and involvement in achieving desired organizational outcomes. Since each semi-structured interview was an open invitation for the administrators to discuss their political behavior and how they utilized them when working with others to achieve desired organizational outcomes, they were encouraged to freely share whatever information they felt comfortable sharing. Although the researcher asked some follow-up, clarifying, and probing questions throughout the interviews, it was really up to the administrators to decide how much (sensitive) information they were willing to divulge, how much risks they were going to take when opening up about their political behavior, and how they wanted to portray themselves. It should also be noted that the researcher took the position to not challenge what the administrators shared so as to avoid being perceived as judgmental and confrontational.

The fifth limitation is that the researcher only interviewed administrators at three public community colleges in the state of Michigan and not in other region or other states. However, the researcher concluded that three community colleges were adequate for the purpose of this initial study primarily because it adequately satisfied the need to make this a robust study in terms of sample size. Put differently, one of the key criteria



for this study was to interview a robust sample of administrators, not necessarily to interview at a lot of community colleges.

Along the same lines, another limitation was the sample of 48 administrators (i.e., 3 presidents, 27 senior-level administrators, and 18 mid-level administrators). Although it is a rather robust sample size for a dissertation study, the researcher believed that to some extent this study would have been exceptionally robust had more administrators been interviewed, particularly more presidents. Regardless, it is believed that this study hit the saturation point (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Merriam, 1998) with respect to interviewing senior-level and mid-level administrators. For this reason, the sample size and data obtained were adequate for this study.

The seventh limitation is that the researcher only interviewed each administrator once (with each interview lasting approximately one hour). With a limited amount of time, it was believed that some administrators were just warming up in their disclosures. Perhaps an additional 30 minutes would have allowed them to delve further into their thought processes and to reflect on a deeper level. However, given their availability and schedules, the researcher was grateful to have had one hour with each of them, as opposed to 30 or 45 minutes. In the same vein, although the researcher believed that a rich amount of data was gathered from conducting these cross-sectional interviews, it would be interesting to perhaps interview the participants again in a year or two to determine if their responses would be similar to their first initial interview.

The eighth limitation is that this exploratory study did not capture the perceptions of those who worked with the 48 administrators in the sample. The researcher believed that more could have been learned about the administrators' political behavior had the research design included interviewing those who were familiar with the administrators' role during the planned change process. However, it would have been beyond the scope of this study to pursue this additional research inquiry despite the fact that this added perspective could have provided some invaluable insights. Indeed, having a 360 degree perspective on how administrators perceived their political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change and whether they achieved desired organizational outcomes would have been very interesting because this might further illuminate how administrators perceived themselves and contrast this information with how others

perceived them. Again, this research idea could be further explored in another study and/or perhaps using a different research design.

The ninth limitation is that the researcher did not get a lot of mileage out of the Harvard case study during the interviews. Although the purpose for using a case study was to provide a common context as a means to understand the administrator perceptions about their political behavior, a good number of administrators provided short and vague responses. This could have been because (a) they did not get a chance to read the case study before the interview, (b) they quickly glanced at the case study and did not have time to process the information, (c) they did not have much to say about the case study, or (d) they were not interested in reflecting on the case study. As such, it was difficult for the researcher to use the case study as a means to ground the analysis of the kinds of political behavior that the administrators employed when leading their change initiatives. In retrospect, the researcher could have done things differently to make better use of this pedagogical case study, such as (a) remind the administrators to read the case study 2-3 days before their interviews, (b) come up with specific questions about the case study as opposed to general reaction questions, and (c) delve deeper into the case study as opposed to being satisfied with the administrators' short and vague responses. As such, the researcher acknowledged that the case study was not used in a way that could have further illuminated the administrators' views, beliefs, and values about employing a range of political behavior.

For the nine limitations described, generalizations about community college administrators during the planned change process should not be made on the basis of the research results. Instead, readers are advised to use caution when drawing conclusions about the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change in this study.

### Conclusion

Power, influence, and politics have always been inherent parts of any human activity that occurs in and around organizations (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1992). However, very little is known about how leaders utilize their power, influence, and political behavior to achieve desired organizations outcomes, particularly when leading planned change (Cropanzano et al., 1997; Kipnis et al., 1980). Although recently more scholars have focused on planned change in community colleges, there continues to be a

dearth of research that investigates: 1) What are administrator perceptions of political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change during planned change; 2) What kinds of political behavior administrators engage in when leading planned change; 3) Do the kinds of political behavior used vary across administrative levels; 4) Do the types of change initiatives led vary across administrative levels; and 5) Do administrators believe they achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change. By conducting this unique exploratory study, the researcher hoped to contribute to the literature on planned change, political behavior, and higher education to generate more interest in these topics.

At the same time, the researcher wanted to provide higher education leaders, especially community college administrators, with some new insights into change management. For instance, findings from this study suggest that the administrators achieved their desired organizational outcomes because, in general, they engaged in political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change on a regular basis with key political actors and constituent groups. Also, this study found that the administrators (regardless of position) consistently employed five high leverage core behaviors (i.e., get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research) when leading planned change.

One unexpected finding was that the administrators recognized the importance of timing. That is, they knew when to act, when to slow down, when to pause, when to let go of a change idea/initiative, and when to resurrect it. In the same vein, the administrators demonstrated the ability to separate the merely interesting from the truly important by knowing their priorities, meeting others' expectations, and/or aligning their change ideas/initiatives with their supervisors' (e.g., senior-level administrators, presidents, and board members) agendas.

Another major finding was that many administrators exhibited the concept of politically perceptive. Politically perceptive means having the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action. In today's political environment at community colleges, the more administrators are politically perceptive, the more they will be able to position themselves "by choice and by necessity" to influence others in order to achieve desired outcomes when leading the

planned change process. Since employing political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change often leads to positive interactions and favorable outcomes, it behooves today's administrators to be as intentional as possible when engaging in anticipatory thinking, calculated patience, and role acting.

Additionally, administrators need to be aware of the confluence of the enabling and constraining forces in a politicized community college environment as well as the influence of internal and external actors and coalitions. Given that these forces interconnect, administrators must always be mindful of the political dynamics from start to finish while working diligently to collaborate with various actors and coalitions who may have divergent interests and competing values. Therefore, when outside forces (e.g., board demands, escalating enrollment, and economic recession) exert powerful influences on the organization, administrators cannot and should not be blindsided by the political reality of the change process or his/her personal change agenda. Instead, administrators need to recognize both the perils and the opportunities that exist in a political arena because being in one can subject many administrators to the harsh reality of modern day office politics and the messy process of getting change done.

Organizations change all the time, each and every day (Burke, 2002). The inevitability of change and the necessity for administrators to adapt to it make it one of the most important concerns facing higher education. To be successful, administrators will still need to (a) view differences not as obstacles to getting things done but as opportunities to gain synergy from various political actors and coalitions, (b) continue to embrace the fundamental, enduring job of mobilizing and motivating individual human talent in pursuit of collective ends, and (c) encourage people to seek change, share their knowledge, and collaborate with other actors to successfully implement the planned change (Kanter, 1992).

In a political environment where interdependence is a fact of life, politics and power dynamics are inseparable components of work life. Therefore, scholars and practitioners must recognize that leading planned change is ultimately about building relationships and getting buy-in from as many political actors and constituent groups as possible. After all, as Kanter, Stein and Jick (1992) have noted, "Managing change today is actually managing a cascade of changes" (p. 391). Undeniably, doing so will enable

leaders to leverage their influence, better position themselves to advance their change efforts, and achieving desired outcomes.

## APPENDIX A

### Invitation to Participate in Research Study

Dear (Name of Administrator):

You are invited to participate in a research study titled, "Administrator Perceptions of Political Behavior During Planned Organizational Change." The purpose of this study is to examine the political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change used by community college administrators when leading planned organizational change. This study is being conducted for a dissertation in the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education, located in the School of Education at the University of Michigan. Attached you will find a consent form and a brief description of the study.

I intend to interview 45 administrators at three Michigan community colleges. All the administrators (i.e., presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators) who participate in this study will be individually interviewed for approximately one hour. The interviews will be conducted at a location and time convenient to you. When you agreed to be interviewed, I will send you a brief case study for you to read so that you could consider your responses. Also, I will send you the interview protocol so that you will know in advance what questions will be asked when I interview you.

Information provided during this study will be kept completely confidential. Please see the attached consent form for a more detailed explanation of how your information will be kept private. We will discuss the consent form at the beginning of the interview, and you will have the opportunity to ask questions about it.

If you are interested in participating in this study, please complete the attached consent form and return it in the pre-addressed envelope to:

Geisce Ly  
Center for the Study of Higher & Postsecondary Education  
School of Education, University of Michigan  
610 E. University Drive, 2117 SEB  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to e-mail me at [geisce@umich.edu](mailto:geisce@umich.edu) or call me at (626) 241-2030. Thank you for your consideration and willingness to participate in this study. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Geisce Ly  
Doctoral Candidate

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form

1. **Title of the Research Project**

Administrator Perceptions of Political behavior During Planned Organizational Change

2. **Name of the Researcher**

Geisce Ly, Doctoral Candidate, Center for the Study of Higher & Postsecondary Education, School of Education, University of Michigan

3. **Description of the Research**

The purpose of this study is to explore and increase understanding of the kinds of political behavior (or influence tactics) community college administrators engaged in when leading planned organizational change.

4. **Description of Involvement**

Participants in this study will be asked to respond to a series of semi-structured interview questions about their influence tactics. At the start of the interviews, participants will read a case study about a fictional administrative situation and they will be asked how they would respond and what they would have done differently. After reflecting on the case study, participants will be asked to discuss what kinds of influence tactics they have engaged in when leading planned change and to share their perceptions of their influence tactics. One individual interview of approximately one hour in length will be conducted with each participant at a convenient, private campus location and time to accommodate the comfort of the participant.

Each participant will be asked to allow the researcher to digitally record and take notes during the interview to ensure accuracy. Participants will be advised that their participations are totally voluntary, that their responses will be kept confidential, and that they may freely choose not to respond to any interview questions which make them feel uncomfortable. Codes rather than the participants' names will be used on all recordings, interview notes, transcripts, and other materials to ensure confidentiality. Participants may be contacted by the researcher following the interviews to provide clarification and assure accuracy.

5. **Length of Participation**

Individual interviews will be conducted from October to December 2007.

6. **Risks and Discomforts of Participation**

The risks of participating in this study are minimal. Some participants may feel challenged by the process of examining their influence tactics, and may feel discomfort reflecting on their planned change experiences.

7. **Measures to Be Taken to Minimize Risks and Discomforts**  
Risks to participants will be minimized by measures to assure confidentiality. The following assurances are provided to minimize employment or economic risk: Participation in the study is totally voluntary and will not affect the participants' employment status in any way, interview questions will be phrased in a manner to avoid placing the participants in a judgmental role, and participants may freely decline to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable.
8. **Expected Benefits to Participants or to Others**  
Some people may feel participation to be beneficial because it gives them a chance to talk about things that matter to them. Although the participants in this study may not receive direct benefit by participating, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained in this study.
9. **Confidentiality of Records/Data**  
I will transcribe most of the interviews and will also employ a transcriber. After each interview has been transcribed, only I will have access to the tapes and interview transcripts. Any information about you that gets recorded, analyzed, and interpreted will be anonymous. You will not be identified in any way in this study or in any future study using this data. Records/data will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office to the extent provided by federal, state, and local law. However, the Institutional Review Board, or university and government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.
10. **Availability of Further Information**  
If significant new knowledge is obtained during the course of this research which may relate to your willingness to continue participation, you will be informed of this knowledge.
11. **Contact Information**  
Geisce Ly, (626) 241-2030 or geisce@umich.edu  
Project Advisor: Dr. Richard L. Alfred, (734) 647-1979 or ralfred@umich.edu
12. **Required IRB Contact Information**  
Should you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Institutional Review Board at 540 E. Liberty Street, Suite 202, Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2210, call (734) 936-0933, or e-mail: irbhsbs@umich.edu.
13. **Voluntary Nature of Participation**  
Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled.
14. **Documentation of the Consent**  
One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.



**15. Audio Recording**

An audio recording device will be used during the individual interviews. Upon completion of the study, the tape files will be deleted.

**16. Consent of the Adult Subject of Research**

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Print Name

Consenting Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**17. Consent to Be Audio Taped**

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Print Name

Consenting Signature

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX C

### Brief Description of Dissertation Proposal

#### Statement of the Problem

In the past, when the environment was much more stable and predictable, the use of positional power tactics by community college (CC) administrators to enact change resulted in some success. However, in today's highly competitive, complex, and political environment, engaging in these positional power tactics might engender more resistance throughout the planned organizational change (or planned change) process. Since the CC environment is significantly different than when most of them were found in the 1960s, today's administrators would benefit tremendously by gaining new insight into change management, particularly what political behavior (or influence tactic) that effectively initiates and guides change to engage in when leading planned change. Therefore, the specific research gap this study will address focuses on the kinds of influence tactics CC administrators engaged in when leading planned change.

#### Conceptual Framework

Contemporary CCs face a new reality in which the only predictable constant in their environment is change. From this perspective, initiating, leading, and communicating purposeful change has become one of the most important and challenging functions of organizational leadership. However, numerous administrators are rushing into the multifaceted process of planned change without fully recognizing and understanding three critical realities: 1) The complexities associated with facilitating, implementing, and institutionalizing planned change; 2) The political perspective that pervades organizational life; and 3) The power dynamics in work relationships. As a result, most planned change initiatives have failed despite good intentions, noble causes, and valiant efforts. For that reason, this study will pay close attention to these three interconnected forces. Specifically, this study will utilize John Kotter's Eight Steps for Leading Change Model and the political perspective as the two key pieces of this conceptual framework.

#### Research Questions

The primary research question that guides this study is, "What are community college administrator perceptions of political behavior during planned change?" There were also four sub-questions:

- 1) What kinds of political behavior do administrators engage in when leading planned change?
- 2) Do the kinds of political behavior used vary across administrative levels?
- 3) Do the types of change initiatives led vary across administrative levels?
- 4) Do administrators believe they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change?

## Significance of the Problem

This study is designed to provide educational leaders with a more comprehensive perspective on what kinds of influence tactics administrators engaged in when leading planned change, thus contributing toward more effective leadership. The more leaders can understand both the process of purposeful change and how to ensure that change efforts ultimately benefit the organization the more knowledgeable they will be to lead various planned change initiatives, minimize resistance, and institutionalize the change. Given that the role of higher education administrators has shifted from that of a traditional bureaucrat to a collaborative politician who makes decisive decisions, having an informed understanding of the kinds of influence tactics that lead to successful planned change is invaluable.

## Methodology

I will employ a qualitative case study approach using three case studies (i.e., presidents, senior-level administrators, and mid-level administrators) to inform my research questions. To get these three groups of administrators to discuss their influence tactics during my interviews, I will ask them to read and reflect on a case study (written by the Harvard School of Education) about a fictional administrative situation as a springboard for discussion. The rationale for including a case study is threefold: 1) To minimize analytic chaos; 2) To avoid positive bias; and 3) To provide a common context to understand administrators' influence tactics.

I intend to gather my data primarily from conducting individual interviews with 45 administrators: 15 from each CC. The interviews will be approximately 60 minutes in their office at a time convenient to them. Throughout the data collection and analysis process, I will use inductive coding procedures to analyze the interview transcriptions. Results from the three CCs will be reported and key findings associated of the three groups of administrators will be discussed.

I will commence each interview with the following preliminary information: 1) Describe the study and review assurances stated in the IRB application; 2) Request permission to digitally record and take notes during the interview; and 3) Reinforce the need for candor in presenting both positive and negative experiences and perceptions of their influence tactics during the change process. When it is clear to me that the participants understand these points, I will review the consent form and request that the participant signs it. I will give the participant a copy of the consent form for his/her record.

## Standards of Quality

In designing this study, factors such as validity, reliability, and generalizability will be carefully considered to provide different lenses for viewing the phenomenon. Every effort will be made to examine the research problem to fully understand the findings. For example, I will identify and re-examine individual data elements that may

seem inconsistent with the body of data collected. Also, I will be very mindful to proceed in a careful and thoughtful manner to ensure objectivity and accuracy throughout every step. As such, there will be some deliberate and specific checks-and-balances built into the data analysis process to minimize research biases as much as possible.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, power and influence have always been inherent parts of any human activity that occurs in or around organizations. However, very little is known about the kinds of political behavior, particularly during planned change. As suggested by Ferris et al. (1996), “there is a vast area of social and political dynamics in organizations that remains largely unexplored.” (p. 262). By engaging in this research study, I hope to contribute to the literatures as well as to provide community college administrators with some practice implications because politics and power dynamics are inseparable components of work life whether we like it or not.

## APPENDIX D

### Interview Protocol

#### About the Case Study:

- 1) What do you think Karen needs to do to be more successful in handling this administrative situation?
- 2) If you were Karen's supervisor, what additional advice would you give her about how to approach this situation?
- 3) If you were in Karen's shoes, how would you convince President Mitchell to go along with what you think is the right thing to do?
- 4) If you were President Mitchell, what would you say to Karen when you meet with her?
- 5) From your experience, what would you have done differently if you were Karen?

#### About You:

- 1) Have you led a change initiative or been in a situation similar to Karen's? If yes, tell me about this situation.
  - a. What were the desired outcomes?
- 2) Did you achieve the desired outcomes? If yes, how did you do that?
- 3) Did you meet any resistance? If so, what type of resistance?
  - a. How did you overcome resistance?
- 4) When trying to overcome resistance, what did you find to have worked and what didn't work?
- 5) What have you learned about yourself from this change situation?

APPENDIX E

List of Participants

| Administrative Level | Institution | Code  |
|----------------------|-------------|-------|
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA1  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA2  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA3  |
| Mid-level            | A           | MLA1  |
| Mid-level            | A           | MLA2  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA4  |
| President            | A           | P1    |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA5  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA6  |
| Mid-level            | A           | MLA3  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA7  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA8  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA9  |
| Mid-level            | A           | MLA4  |
| Mid-level            | A           | MLA5  |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA10 |
| Senior-level         | A           | SLA11 |
| President            | B           | P2    |
| Mid-level            | B           | MLA6  |
| Senior-level         | B           | SLA12 |
| Mid-level            | B           | MLA7  |
| Senior-level         | B           | SLA13 |
| Mid-level            | B           | MLA8  |
| Senior-level         | B           | SLA14 |
| Mid-level            | B           | MLA9  |

|              |   |       |
|--------------|---|-------|
| Senior-level | B | SLA15 |
| Mid-level    | B | MLA10 |
| Senior-level | B | SLA16 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA17 |
| Mid-level    | C | MLA11 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA18 |
| Mid-level    | C | MLA12 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA19 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA20 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA21 |
| Mid-level    | C | MLA13 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA22 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA23 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA24 |
| Senior-level | C | SLA25 |
| Mid-level    | B | MLA14 |
| Senior-level | B | SLA26 |
| Mid-level    | B | MLA15 |
| Mid-level    | B | MLA16 |
| Senior-level | B | SLA27 |
| Mid-level    | B | MLA17 |
| Mid-level    | C | MLA18 |
| President    | C | P3    |

## APPENDIX F

### Eight Steps for Leading Change Model (Kotter, 1995)

#### Step 1: Establishing a Sense of Urgency

- Examining market and competitive realities
- Identifying and discussing crises, potential crises, or major opportunities

#### Step 2: Forming a Powerful Guiding Coalition

- Assembling a group with enough power to lead the change effort
- Encouraging the group to work together as a team

#### Step 3: Creating a Vision

- Creating a vision to help direct the change effort
- Developing strategies for achieving that vision

#### Step 4: Communicating the Vision

- Using every vehicle possible to communicate the new vision and strategies
- Teaching new behaviors by the example of the guiding coalition

#### Step 5: Empowering Others to Act on the Vision

- Getting rid of obstacles to change
- Changing systems or structures that seriously undermine the vision
- Encouraging risk taking and nontraditional ideas, activities, and actions

#### Step 6: Planning for and Creating Short-Term Wins

- Planning for visible performance improvements
- Creating those improvements
- Recognizing and rewarding employees involved in the improvements

#### Step 7: Consolidating Improvements and Producing Still More Change

- Using increased credibility to change systems, structures, and policies that don't fit the vision
- Hiring, promoting, and developing employees who can implement the vision
- Reinvigorating the process with new projects, themes, and change agents

#### Step 8: Institutionalizing New Approaches

- Articulating the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success
- Developing the means to ensure leadership development and succession



## APPENDIX G

### Original Set of Proactive Influence Tactics (Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980)

- 1) Assertiveness
  - a. The agent keeps checking up on the target.
  - b. The agent simply orders the target to do what was asked.
- 2) Ingratiation
  - a. The agent tells the target, "Only you have the brains and talent to do this."
  - b. The agent inflates the importance of what is needed to be done.
- 3) Rationality
  - a. The agent presents information that supports the point.
  - b. The agent writes a detailed plan that justifies the ideas.
- 4) Sanctions
  - a. The agent gives no salary increase or bonus.
  - b. The agent threatens the target's job security.
- 5) Exchange
  - a. The agent tells the target, "If you do this for me, I will do something for you."
  - b. The agent reminds the target of having done past favors.
- 6) Upward Appeal
  - a. The agent files a report about the target with higher-ups.
  - b. The agent sends the target to meet with the agent's superior.
- 7) Blocking
  - a. The agent threatens to notify an outside agency if the target does not give in to the agent's request.
  - b. The agent threatens to stop working with the target until he/she gives in.
- 8) Coalition
  - a. The agent obtains the support of others to back up requests.
  - b. The agent gets the target come to a formal conference at which the agent makes his/her request.

## APPENDIX H

### Revised Set of Proactive Influence Tactics (Yukl, 2002)

- 1) Reasoning/Rationality/Persuasive Arguments
  - a. The agent uses logical arguments and factual evidence to show a proposal or request is feasible and relevant for attaining important task objectives.
- 2) Apprising
  - a. The agent explains how carrying out a request or supporting a proposal will benefit the target personally or help advance the target person's career.
- 3) Inspirational Appeals
  - a. The agent makes an appeal to values and ideals or seeks to arouse the target person's emotions to gain commitment for a request or proposal.
- 4) Consultation
  - a. The agent encourages the target to suggest improvements or to help plan something for which the target person's support/assistance are desired.
- 5) Exchange of Benefits
  - a. The agent offers an incentive, suggests an exchange of favors, or indicates willingness to reciprocate later if the target will do what the agent requests.
- 6) Collaboration
  - a. The agent offers to provide relevant resources and assistance if the target will carry out a request or approve a proposed change.
- 7) Personal Appeals
  - a. The agent asks the target to carry out a request or support a proposal out of friendship, or asks for a personal favor before saying what it is.
- 8) Ingratiation
  - a. The agent uses praise and flattery before or during an influence attempt or expresses confidence in the target's ability to carry out a difficult request.
- 9) Legitimizing Tactics
  - a. The agent seeks to establish the legitimacy of a request or to verify authority to make it by referring to rules, formal policies, or official documents.
- 10) Pressure
  - a. The agent uses demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target person.
- 11) Coalition Tactics
  - a. The agent seeks the aid of others to persuade the target to do something or uses the support of others as a reason for the target to agree.

## APPENDIX I

### Power Tactics to Influence Others (Fairholm, 1993)

- 1) Controlling the Agenda
  - a. The agent determines beforehand the issues, subjects, or concerns for group action or decision.
- 2) Using Ambiguity
  - a. The agent keeps communication unclear and subject to multiple meanings.
- 3) Brinkmanship
  - a. The agent disturbs the equilibrium of the organization to control choice options.
- 4) Displaying Charisma
  - a. The agent uses the respect that others have for his/her character traits, presence, or method of operation to affect another's behavior in desired ways.
- 5) Forming Coalitions
  - a. The agent secures allies—both employees and other stakeholders in the organization or associated with it.
- 6) Co-opting Opposition Members
  - a. The agent places a representative of the opposition group on his/her decision-making body to induce the representative to favor, rather than oppose, the body's interests.
- 7) Controlling Decision Criteria
  - a. The agent selects criteria by which decisions are made so that desired decisions result regardless of who decides.
- 8) Developing Others
  - a. The agent increases the capacities of others, thereby increasing overall power.
- 9) Using Outside Experts
  - a. The agent involves congenial experts in organizational decisions, thus allowing the experts to effect results without personally deciding.
- 10) Building a Favorable Image
  - a. The agent creates a persona of skills, capacities, values, or attitudes to which others defer.

- 11) Legitimizing Control
  - a. The agent formalizes others' right to decide through appeals to hierarchy or legal precedent.
- 12) Incurring Obligation
  - a. The agent places others under obligation to get them to do what the agent desires.
- 13) Organizational Placement
  - a. The agent places allies in strategic positions or isolating potential opponents.
- 14) Pro-activity
  - a. The agent unilateral takes action to secure desired results.
- 15) Quid Pro Quo
  - a. The agent negotiates trade-offs with others to secure desired results.
- 16) Rationalization
  - a. The agent uses conscious engineering of reality to secure desired decision results.
- 17) Allocating Resources
  - a. The agent distributes resources in ways that will increase power in relationships to others.
- 18) Dispensing Rewards
  - a. The agent rewards or punishes others to win their support.
- 19) Ritualism
  - a. The agent induces institutionalized patterns of behavior in others or in the organization.
- 20) Using a Surrogate
  - a. The agent uses an intermediary to secure compliance in others.
- 21) Using Symbols
  - a. The agent reinforces control through symbolic objects, ideas, or actions.
- 22) Training and Orienting Others
  - a. The agent transmits skills, values, or specific behavior to others to instill in them their goals, values, philosophy or desired behaviors.

## APPENDIX J

### People-Oriented and Organizational-Oriented Behaviors (Van Wart, 2005)

- 1) Agenda Setting
  - a. The agent outlines goals and schedules series of activities to create an agenda for change by including two major elements—a vision and a strategy for achieving the vision.
- 2) Bargaining
  - a. The agent seeks concessions in exchange for commitments on terms favorable to his/her own interests.
- 3) Coalition Building
  - a. The agent joins with other individuals or groups in order to achieve a level of power and influence that cannot be achieved by acting alone.
- 4) Coercion
  - a. The agent uses legal or legitimate authority, withdrawal of rewards, threats or force as the means of achieving compliance.
- 5) Co-opting
  - a. The agent involves individuals in the decision-making process as a means of obtaining their support.
- 6) Consulting
  - a. The agent checks in with people on work-related matters and involves people in decision-making processes.
- 7) Decision-Making
  - a. The agent makes major personal and organizational choices by understanding the fundamental values and factors involved and by structuring an appropriate decision framework.
- 8) Goal Setting
  - a. The agent reaches agreement on priorities among competing goals. It involves data gathering, value judgments, and politics on the part of members and constituents who have power to influence the organization.
- 9) Influencing
  - a. The agent uses sources of power through concrete behavioral strategies.
- 10) Managing Conflict
  - a. The agent handles various types of interpersonal disagreements, builds cooperative relationships, and harnesses the positive effects of conflict.

- 11) Manipulating
  - a. The agent conceals or distorts information or otherwise creates conditions favorable to his/her own interests and hurts the other party.
- 12) Motivating
  - a. The agent enhances the inner drives and positive intentions of subordinates (or others) to perform well through incentives, disincentives, and inspiration.
- 13) Negotiating
  - a. The agent meets with two or more parties to discuss some interest in common and others in conflict to reach an agreement.
- 14) Networking
  - a. The agent broadens and develops useful contacts outside the administrator's immediate circle of influence.
- 15) Partnering
  - a. The agent develops working relationships that are voluntary but substantive outside the organization or within the organization but outside the normal chain of command.
- 16) Persuading
  - a. The agent uses facts, logic, and appeal to convince others that a request or proposal is likely to successfully achieve an objective.
- 17) Planning and Organizing Personnel
  - a. The agent coordinates people and operations, and ensures that the competencies necessary to do the work are, or will be, available.
- 18) Problem Solving
  - a. The agent collaborates among individuals or groups in the identification and diagnosis of problems and the search for solutions.
- 19) Mapping the Political Terrain
  - a. The agent gathers and evaluates data related to the political dynamics, external trends, opportunities, and threats on an ongoing and relatively informal basis.
- 20) Team Building
  - a. The agent creates and supports "true" teams by enhancing identification with the work, synergistic cooperation, and esprit de corps of both work groups and teams.

## APPENDIX K

### Political Behavior Presidents Utilized (Not Listed in Any Particular Order)

1. Align Goals/Initiatives with Institutional Mission, Values, Vision, and Priorities
2. Appeal to the Board
3. Discern Needs and Importance
4. Exhibit Respectable Qualities
5. Get Buy-in and Support
6. Initiate Actions and Execute Them
7. Know and Perform Presidential Role
8. Leverage Sources of Power
9. Recognize and Deal with Resistance
10. Recognize and Operate in a Unionized Environment
11. Recognize Timing
12. Share Information to Sell Ideas
13. Think and Do What's Best for the Institution and the Students
14. Uplift and Encourage Others
15. Avoid Aggressive and Passive Aggressive Behaviors
16. Build a Compelling Case and Have a Business Plan
17. Build and Maintain Relationships
18. Collaborate with Others to Pursue Common Goals
19. Develop Rapport and Connect With Others
20. Discern Others' Personal Agendas
21. Identify Change Champions and Key Players Early On
22. Involve the Faculty to Give Them Ownership
23. Listen to Understand
24. Notice Landmines and Tread Carefully
25. Reflect On and Think Through Decisions
26. Scan the Political Landscape
27. Seek, Consider, and Incorporate Others' Ideas/Suggestions

## APPENDIX L

### Political Behavior Senior-Level Administrators Utilized (Not Listed in Any Particular Order)

1. Leverage Sources of Power
2. Build a Compelling Case and Have a Business Plan
3. Coach and Uplift Others
4. Get Buy-in and Support
5. Recognize and Deal with Resistance
6. Collaborate with Others to Pursue Common Goals
7. Recognize the President's Style and Appeal to the President
8. Initiate Actions and Execute Them
9. Share Information to Sell Ideas
10. Notice Landmines and Tread Carefully
11. Involve the Faculty to Give Them Ownership
12. Know Self and Work Towards Self-Improvement
13. Recognize and Operate in a Unionized Environment
14. Exhibit Respectable Qualities
15. Align Goals/Initiatives with Institutional Mission, Values, Vision, and Priorities
16. Develop Rapport and Connect With Others
17. Discern Others' Personal Agendas
18. Recognize Timing
19. Think and Do What's Best for the Institution and the Students
20. Appeal to the Board
21. Identify Change Champions and Key Players Early On
22. Ask Questions and Seek Feedback
23. Avoid Aggressive and Passive Aggressive Behaviors
24. Build and Maintain Relationships
25. Listen to Understand
26. Reflect On and Think Through Decisions
27. Respond to the Politics of Position
28. Scan the Political Landscape
29. See Around the Corners



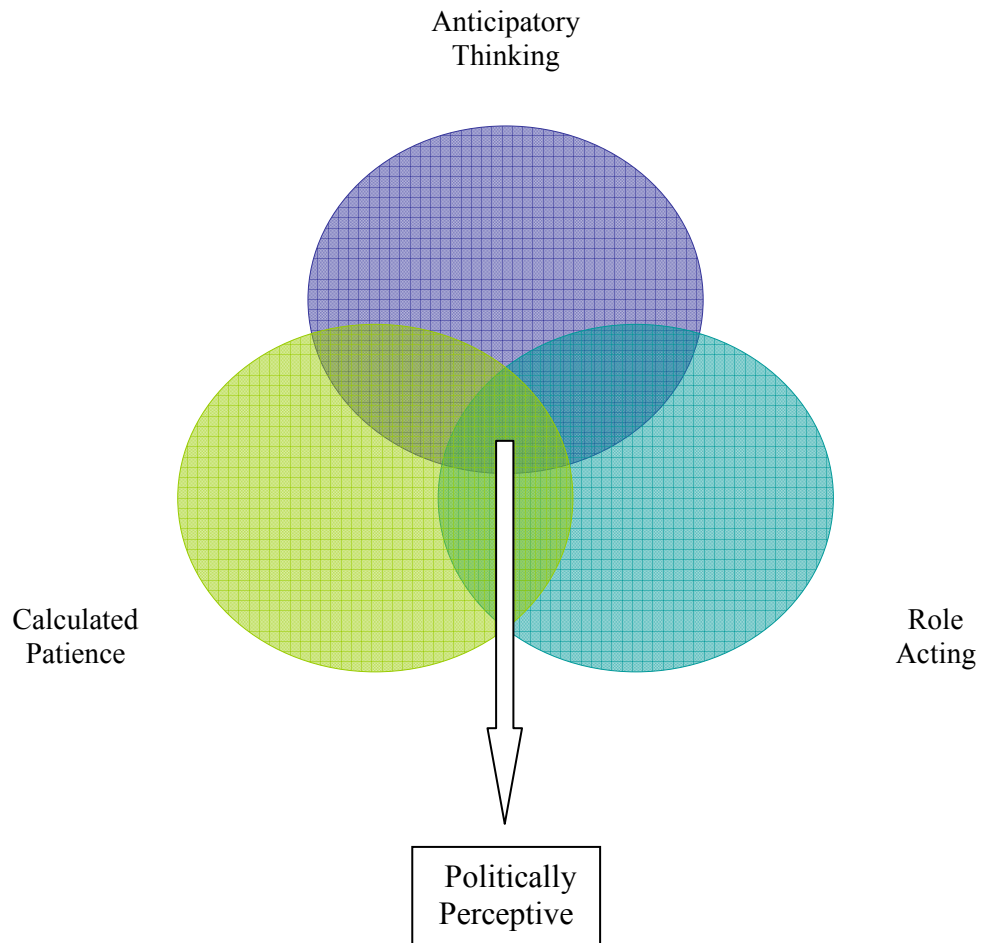
## APPENDIX M

### Political Behavior Mid-Level Administrators Utilized (Not Listed in Any Particular Order)

1. Getting Buy-in and Support
2. Leveraging Sources of Power
3. Building a Compelling Case and Having a Business Plan
4. Collaborating with Others to Pursue Common Goals
5. Building and Maintaining Relationships
6. Involving the Faculty to Give Them Ownership
7. Sharing Information to Sell Ideas
8. Uplifting and Recognizing Others
9. Recognizing and Dealing with Resistance
10. Discerning Others' Personal Agendas
11. Initiating Actions and Executing Them
12. Knowing Self and Willing to Learn
13. Exhibiting Respectable Qualities
14. Recognizing and Operating in a Unionized Environment
15. Making Difficult Decisions
16. Aligning Goals/Initiatives with Institutional Mission, Values, Vision, and Priorities
17. Recognizing Timing
18. Noticing Landmines and Treading Carefully
19. Developing Rapport and Connecting With Others
20. Appealing to the Board
21. Identifying Change Champions and Key Players Early On
22. Listening to Understand
23. Scanning the Political Landscape
24. Seeing Around the Corners
25. Focusing on the College and Students' Best Interest
26. Responding to the Politics of Position
27. Appealing to the President
28. Asking Questions to Get Feedback
29. Avoiding Aggressive and Passive Aggressive Behaviors

## APPENDIX N

### Politically Perceptive and Its Three Spheres



**Politically Perceptive:** Having the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action.

- 1) Anticipatory Thinking:** Having the foresight and mindfulness to anticipate how others will react in order to respond with tact and logic.
- 2) Calculated Patience:** Having the patience and wisdom to know when to wait, when to act, when to plant seeds, and when to let go.
- 3) Role Acting:** Having the willingness and professionalism to perform functional responsibilities associated with the role.

## APPENDIX O

### Executive Summary of Findings

The research question that guided this study was, “What are community college administrator perceptions of political behavior during planned organizational change?” Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 48 administrators at three Michigan community colleges. The political perspective and John Kotter’s Eight Steps for Leading Change Model served as the conceptual framework for this study. The qualitative case study methodology was used and results were presented in three case studies: mid-level administrators, senior-level administrators, and presidents. The political behavior that effectively initiates and guides change that the 3 presidents, 27 senior-level administrators, and 18 mid-level administrators engaged in are listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Political Behavior That Effectively Initiates and Guides Change

| <b>Presidents</b>                            | <b>Senior-Level Administrators</b>         | <b>Mid-Level Administrators</b>                |
|--|--|--|
| 1--Press forward despite resistance          | 1--Involve key players                     | 1--Get buy-in by selling                       |
| 2--Get buy-in                                | 2--Pay attention to what is going on       | 2--Involve others by incorporating their input |
| 3--Perform and fulfill the presidential role | 3--Build relationships to garner support   | 3--Build relationships to garner support       |
| 4--Encourage others to share ideas           | 4--Build a case by doing homework/research | 4--Explain to increase understanding           |
| 5--Share information to educate others       | 5--Get buy-in                              | 5--Build a case by doing homework/research     |
| 6--Respect others and their viewpoints       | 6--Listen and show respect                 | 6--Align change with college’s mission         |
| 7--Communicate the vision                    | 7--Know when the timing is right           | 7--Collaborate to build consensus              |
|  | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes        | 8--Make subtle, incremental changes            |

Five other major findings emerged from this original study have the potential to provide scholars and practitioners with some new insight into change management.

1. The administrators engaged in a myriad of political behavior (e.g., building a compelling case, involving the faculty to give them ownership, sharing

information to sell ideas, and discerning others' personal agendas) when leading planned change.

2. The kinds of political behavior used to lead planned change varied across administrative levels.
3. Change initiatives varied across administrative levels.
4. Administrators believed that they achieved desired organizational outcomes when leading planned change.
5. Five core behaviors were typical of all administrators when leading change: get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research.

### Five Core Behaviors

Core behaviors were those that consistently led to achieving desired outcomes. There were five high-leverage core behaviors. First and foremost, the administrators knew that they must have sufficient buy-in from key political actors and constituent groups to move their change efforts forward or else their ideas for change will be just that—ideas. To do so, the administrators focused their attention and expended considerable energy on those who were most receptive and willing to listen and therefore less resistant to the proposed change. From the perspective of return-on-investment, the administrators made intentional decisions to spend less time with resisters, especially those who were the “active” resisters. Nonetheless, the administrators seldom overlooked this group because they recognized that this small pocket of dissenters could pose major short-term and long-term obstacles if not dealt with adeptly.

Second, the administrators purposefully built relationships with as many internal and external stakeholders as possible to garner their support for the change initiative. They went beyond developing rapport to truly investing in maintaining meaningful and mutually supportive relationships because by doing so they knew that they would reap incalculable benefits later when they desired to enlist these individuals' support. Many administrators reasoned that relationships were the key ingredient to every successful change process because ultimately, being able to influence others to act on their own volitions came down to whether the administrator had built and developed positive working relationships with those they needed to convince or work with.

Third, the administrators actively sought to involve others, especially key political actors and constituent groups, as much as reasonably possible to participate in collective decision making. Involving others meant more than simply having people at the table; it required a sincere outreach to those key players whose involvement and support can materialize the change initiatives. To get the most mileage out of this crucial political behavior, the administrators intentionally involved others by (a) inviting them to partake in discussion early rather than late, (b) encouraging people to openly share their ideas, and (c) considering and incorporating their input and recommendations. Moreover, the administrators comprehended that it was wise to also invite and involve those organizational members (internal and external) who tended to be critics because these

potential resisters could become ardent supporters once they believed in the project, as opposed to excluding this small but potentially vocal group at the outset.

Another core behavior was to listen attentively and respect others regardless of their roles and/or viewpoints. The administrators understood that the most fundamental element of every human interaction boiled down to respecting others by means of listening to what people had to say, even if they were to fervently disagree due to divergent interests or dissimilar positions. Because the administrators worked in a highly unionized environment, they truly grasped this key principle. They understood that for them to successfully lead, implement, and institutionalize change in a political organization, they had to continually demonstrate their commitment, willingness, and professionalism in order to agree to disagree on many contentious issues, especially when negotiating with faculty and the faculty union.

Lastly, the administrators grasped that in order to be influential when trying to sell an idea, share a vision, and/or communicate the benefits associated with the proposed change initiatives, they had to diligently do their homework or research. For the senior-level administrators and mid-level administrators, they often assembled a solid proposal that resembled a business plan before they pitched it upward. Likewise, the presidents knew that they had to appeal to and convince the board of their visions and strategic initiatives with the aim of garnering their support. In fact, doing homework and gathering research data was almost second nature to many administrators because they knew that they had to provide supporting evidence (e.g., patterns, trends, and projections). Given the reality of limited resources and competing priorities, the administrators often turned to numbers and figures to present a more compelling illustration of unmet needs for their proposed change initiatives. This was particularly true because the presidents and board members relied heavily on these data when making critical organizational decisions.

In sum, it appeared that the administrators engaged in these five high-leverage core behaviors on a regular basis and with a multitude of political actors and constituent groups. Likewise, when the administrators encountered resistance or potential resistance throughout the change process, they utilized these five core behaviors to deal with both passive and active resisters.

### Politically Perceptive

After transcribing, analyzing, and interpreting the data, I am becoming more convinced that there were some administrators (based on their interview responses) who perhaps were more successful than other administrators at getting buy-in, building relationships, involving others, listening and respecting others, and doing their homework/research to influence others in order to achieve desired outcomes when leading change. There was something distinctive about these administrators who seemed to know what they were doing, every step of the way. For instance, when communicating the message of change, some administrators appeared to intuitively know (a) what to say to convincingly sell their change ideas/initiatives, (b) who they were dealing with, (c) how best to articulate the ideas to these political actors, (d) where and when to pitch their

ideas, and (e) why they chose to engage in various political behavior. Also, when overcoming resistance, some administrators gave the impression that they were masterful at building trust, getting people to the table, mending differences, preparing people for the change, and resolving conflicts. Moreover, when leading change in general, some administrators seemed to have a penchant for being able to articulate a compelling vision, recruit change champions, garner widespread support, incite action, and lead by example.

Since the 1970s, scholars and authors have sought to distinguish and characterize those individuals who appeared to possess remarkable human relations skills using various terminologies, such as: “true political player” (Reardon, 2000); “salespeople” (Gladwell, 2000); “effective executive” (Drucker, 2001); “positive energizer” (Baker, 2003); and “influencer” (Patterson et al., 2008). Based on the findings of this study, I would like to add another terminology to describe those administrators who were successful at engaging in different kinds of political behavior. I coined this new terminology “politically perceptive.” That is, administrators who displayed politically perceptive administrative behavior tended to have the awareness and acumen to scan the political landscape for social cues and hidden agendas before taking action. Specifically, politically perceptive leaders (a) exhibited a high level of awareness of workplace politics, (b) recognized how to manage their relationships with other organizational members in a socio-political environment, and (c) considered timing when taking action.

*Anticipatory Thinking.* To elaborate, there are three spheres to being politically perceptive. The first sphere is “anticipatory thinking.” Anticipatory thinking means having the foresight and mindfulness to anticipate how others will react in order to respond with tact and logic. In other words, administrators who engaged in anticipatory thinking demonstrated the ability to think ahead, be strategic, sense how others might respond, have a well-conceptualized plan as well as a back-up plan, know how to be professional, use diplomacy when communicating, and rely on sound judgment when reasoning with others. Essentially, those who displayed anticipatory thinking acted like chess players—they determined which influence tactics to engage in when planning their next move and charted their course of action in response to what others might or will do.

*Calculated Patience.* The second sphere is “calculated patience.” Calculated patience means having the patience and wisdom to know when to wait, when to act, when to plant seeds, and when to let go. Because community colleges (like many other organizations) are political arenas, the notion of timing comes into play—when to be quiet, when to speak up, when to simply go along, when to respectfully disagree, when to forge ahead, when to pull back, and when to graciously exit. Taking into account these timing decisions, administrators who engaged in calculated patience demonstrated the abilities to be deliberately patient, take in as much information as possible before acting, weigh the costs and benefits of acting too soon or waiting too long, think analytically about various options, and discern the most appropriate time to do something.

*Role Acting.* The third sphere is “role acting.” Role acting means having the willingness and professionalism to perform functional responsibilities associated with the role. The higher the position, the more the administrator had to fulfill the functional

responsibilities associated with that role. For instance, it was no longer what “John Smith,” who happened to be the college president, would do. Instead, it was more about what John Smith needed to do to become a good president or be perceived as doing a good job as the president. From this perspective, administrators who engaged in role acting demonstrated the abilities to check/remove their egos, understand the nature of their positions, meet pre-determined expectations from internal and external stakeholders, accept (not avoid) challenges/difficulties that come with the position, and do what was best for the organization.

### Summary

Having judgment means knowing when to act and when to pause. Perspective is the ability to separate the merely interesting from the truly important. In today’s political environment, community college leaders must possess both judgment and perspective when engaging in political behavior to influence others, overcome resistance, and achieve desired organizational outcomes when leading the change process. More specifically, leaders need to become more intentional about utilizing those high-leverage core behaviors—get buy-in, build relationships, involve others, listen and show respect, and do homework/research—to better position themselves to effect change at the organizational level. In doing so, leaders can become more politically perceptive by strengthening their abilities to engage in anticipatory thinking, calculated patience, and role acting.

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